

Chapter 1

Well-Being and Mental Health Initiatives for Students in Universities

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ABSTRACT

There are increased mental health and well-being concerns among students at universities worldwide. By adopting a conceptual review of literature, this chapter analyzed well-being and mental health initiatives for students in universities. On the bases of the literature review in this chapter, it is concluded that there is need for supportive work environments, mental health in universal health coverage, creating opportunities for student engagement, mentorship at various academic departments building social networks, and finally, individual coping strategies are also useful in enhancing well-being and mental health of academic staff at universities. It is recommended that universities should develop holistic mentorship for students so that this can take care of all aspects of their lives.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2833-0.ch001

INTRODUCTON

The concept of wellbeing within the university teaching and learning environment has been undertaken in several studies. It is useful here to make the distinction between mental wellbeing and mental health. Stanton, et al., (2016) define wellbeing from their student participants that includes “social, physical and mental dimensions” that require “balance” in order to achieve a “sense of happiness and fulfilment” (p. 92). Well-being reflects a broader social, physical, and economic experiences. It is often indicative of how closely an individual can live their life in accordance with how they want to. Good well-being is associated with developing robust relationships, reaching individual potential, and being able to engage in activities of personal value and meaning (Nicholls, et al., 2022). The World Health Organization on the other hand uses the term well-being to define mental health as ‘a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’ (WHO, 2018). Mental health encompasses a spectrum of experience, ranging from good mental health to mental illness. Good mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness, but rather the presence of particular skills, habits and capacities that enable an individual to effectively react to, or deal with the environment around them (Nicholls, et al., 2022). According to Karimzadeh, et al., (2017), mental health is used for describing ‘the cognitive and emotional levels of well-being as well as lack of psychological disorder’ (p. 4497). In fact, positive psychology defines mental health as one’s ability to enjoy life, create balance between daily activities and attempt to achieve psychological well-being (p. 4498). Mental health in this research is conceptualized as the continuum of neurophysiological and cognitive state that is related to emotion, mood, thinking and behaviour. Mental wellbeing has been argued to have both positive and negative dimension (Franke, et al., 2017). Positive dimension of mental wellbeing is considered as a complete state of cognitive functioning whereby the individual can cope with adversity, whereas, the negative dimension refer to the psychological distress and psychiatric disorder (Schütte, et al., 2014).

BACKGROUND

Students have major roles to perform at the universities including research, teaching, community service and administrative responsibility. Student members carry a significant responsibility of training and developing students to become future leaders of the country by obtaining tertiary education (Adewale & Abdulsalam, 2017). Their responsibility is not only teaching but they are also responsible for the academic achievement of their students. Student members are, therefore, expected to spend considerable amount of time writing proposals for research support and collaborating with other institutions for them to be able to get support for their research activities (Kyvik, 2013). The increasing quantity of students pursuing postgraduate studies has placed pressure on students to supervise large number of candidates at the same time. This has resulted into students suffering from burnout and stress (Adewale & Abdulsalam, 2017). Student members are expected to build their network and community with industry, government and civil society (Alback, 2013). They can do that by being part of societies and organizations formed in community to deal with those social issues. Student members also serve as social and cultural critics in society. The academic community also provide a valuable voice in analyzing the cultural, religious and other social issues in the society. These students’ members still have to proceed with their daily academics responsibilities of teaching, conducting research, offering community service and being su-

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