

Chapter 9

Mental Health Challenges in HigherEd Students: Framework and Implications for Institutions

Vivek Ahuja

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5073-4342>

FLAME University, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores challenges faced by higher education students related to adjustment, stress, and mental health. It focuses on stress's impact on students' well-being and academic, physical, social, and psychological aspects during their university journey. The transitional phase from secondary school to higher education is examined, shedding light on unique challenges. Additionally, a conceptual framework is introduced, offering structured insights into these challenges within the higher education context. Implications for institutions, management, students, and parents are discussed. This chapter aims to comprehensively analyze stress and mental health challenges among higher education students, raising awareness and promoting strategies for a supportive environment, guided by the presented conceptual framework.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of students, offering them opportunities for personal and academic growth. However, this journey is not without its challenges. Students entering higher education often face adjustment issues, academic stressors, and mental health concerns that can significantly impact their overall well-being and success in their academic pursuits. Understanding the complex interplay between these challenges and students' mental health is crucial for providing effective support and promoting an environment where students can thrive (Ross, 1999; Ong and Cheong, 2009).

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2833-0.ch009

Significance of Understanding the Impact of Stress and Mental Health

The significance of understanding the impact of stress and mental health on higher education students cannot be overstated. Research has shown that students' mental health is closely linked to their academic performance, physical health, and social relationships (Fletcher et al., 2009; Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). Moreover, the well-being of students is intertwined with their overall success in higher education. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of these challenges and their effects on students' lives is a critical step in addressing their needs.

This chapter aims to explore the challenges faced by students in higher education institutions related to adjustment, stress, and mental health. It seeks to shed light on the intricate relationships between these challenges and students' overall well-being. Additionally, this chapter outlines a conceptual framework developed to understand the interplay between mental health and various aspects of students' lives in higher education (Priestley et al., 2022). This chapter sets the stage for continued research, awareness, and action to support higher education students' well-being by examining the existing research and proposing a structured framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented herein provides a structured guide to understanding how mental health influences different dimensions of the student experience within higher education. This framework identifies key factors, including academic performance, physical health, social relationships, and overall well-being, and illustrates how they are interconnected with students' mental health. It also suggests propositions for future research and strategies to support students' mental health, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to address the challenges they encounter (Priestley et al., 2022).

With these objectives and the conceptual framework as a backdrop, this chapter discusses the complexities of students' experiences in higher education and offers insights into how institutions can create an environment that prioritizes student mental health and facilitates their success.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS DURING THE TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Students often experience difficulty in transitioning from secondary school to higher education. This transition can be marked by differences in curricula, teaching methods, and expectations between secondary schools and universities, leading to an *academic shock* (Briggs, Clark, and Hall, 2012). Academic shock refers to the significant and sometimes overwhelming challenges that students may encounter when they enter a higher education environment. These challenges often arise due to the differences in teaching methods, curricula, expectations, and the overall academic demands between secondary school and university or college. They are suddenly exposed to a more independent and rigorous learning environment. This can include larger class sizes, more complex course materials, higher expectations for self-directed learning, and greater academic responsibility. As a result, students might struggle initially to adapt to these new academic demands, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and difficulties in their academic performance. Fook and Sidhu's (2015) research explores a range of learning challenges encountered by students in higher education, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of these obstacles. Their findings

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/mental-health-challenges-in-highered-students/335985

Related Content

Wellness and Leadership in Higher Education: Leadership Styles and Organizational Well-Being in Zambian Colleges of Education

Jive Lubbungu, Ireen Moonga, Audrey Muyuniand Daniel K. Chola (2022). *Leadership Wellness and Mental Health Concerns in Higher Education* (pp. 137-155).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/wellness-and-leadership-in-higher-education/303273

Silent Witness: Tracing Campus Climate at Virginia Tech via Unobtrusive Measures, 2003-2017

Daisy Ball (2022). *Impact of School Shootings on Classroom Culture, Curriculum, and Learning* (pp. 245-270).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/silent-witness/289247

Counseling Ethics for the 21st Century

(2024). *Ethics for Mental Health Professionals* (pp. 168-186).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/counseling-ethics-for-the-21st-century/338936

Societal Intersections and COVID-19 Effects on Young Children Vulnerability: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Holistic Integration

Judith May Dirksand Dorothy McIntyre (2022). *Provision of Psychosocial Support and Education of Vulnerable Children* (pp. 228-262).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/societal-intersections-and-covid-19-effects-on-young-children-vulnerability/298255

Risk: What Is It, Whom Does It Protect, and What Happened to Care?

Kellie Grant, Jenny Martin, Jenni Whiteand Terry Haines (2019). *Mental Health Policy, Practice, and Service Accessibility in Contemporary Society* (pp. 20-40).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/risk/213557