Chapter 19
Institutional Support Available to Enhance the Mental Health of Students in Higher Education Institutions

Janet Auma Odhiambo
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Enos Barasa Mukadi
Laikipia University, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Mental health is important in every individual's life right from childhood through to adulthood. A state of good mental health accounts for an individual's ability to cope with life stressors and attain quality life. Students at the institutions of higher learning are exposed to a range of psychological variables ranging from financial constraints, family problems, and sicknesses, to social relations, which adversely affect their mental well-being. A majority of students are not able to deal with the risk factors or challenges that may affect their mental health. Some feel overwhelmed and experience various adjustment problems, which may eventually lead to mental illness. The services that are provided at school need to take care of all the areas that can be productive and counterproductive to the learning environment. There is a need for human resources who are experts in shaping the student's behavior and overall adjustment at school.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which each person realizes his or her own potential and can cope with the normal stresses of life, develop her or himself productively and fruitfully, and be able to contribute to him or herself and the community (Haile, et al., 2017). However, the admission and attendance of students at the university could affect their emotional state, since this formative period is considered critical and very stressful as they leave their homes, have to adapt

to a new social environment, must face greater academic pressure as previously described and have more access to the consumption of alcoholic beverages and psychoactive substances. Mental health issues affect 10-20% of individuals globally and the onset age of such individuals is at 14 years of age. Unattended mental health escalates to treatment gap which may be as a result of care seeking attitude. Hurdles of mitigating mental conditions in the institutions of higher learning include limited treatment options and the implied costs of treating mental illness. Mental health support services help students who are vulnerable and are at risk in developing coping mechanisms. A great deal of information is required for mitigation purposes in terms of utilization of mental health services for the improvement of mental wellbeing of students. Blanco et al., (2008) indicated that mental health problems are very common among college students. This may be since attending college corresponds to a challenging time for many traditional and non-traditional undergraduate students. Traditional college students start college after completing high school, are typically younger, depend on parents for financial support, and do not work or work part-time. Thus, in addition to stress related to academic load, these students may have to face the task of taking on more adult-like responsibilities without having yet mastered the skills and cognitive maturity of adulthood. Thus, this group of students may have to cope with meeting work and family demands in addition to academic requirements. In these contexts, many college students may experience the persistence, exacerbation, or first onset of mental health and substance use problems while possibly receiving no or inadequate treatment. With the increasing recognition of child mental health issues and the use of more psychotropic medications, the number of young adults with mental health problems entering college has significantly increased. For example, in a survey of 274 institutions, 88% of counseling center directors reported an increase in "severe" psychological problems over the previous 5 years including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance use, and sexual assaults (Gallagher, Gill & Sysko, 2000). Nonmedical use of prescription medications often co-occurs with heavy alcohol use a worrisome occurrence given that alcohol taken in combination with analgesic opioids may further inhibit activity in the central nervous system, increasing the risk of oversedation, respiratory depression, and death. Regrettably, college students do not appear to view prescription drug abuse as problematic. Practitioners should communicate with college students about the ethical, medical, psychological, addictive, and legal issues of prescription drug abuse. College students should be advised to take their medications as prescribed and not give or sell their medications to others. Safe storage of controlled substances such as benzodiazepines or stimulants is important (Arria & DuPont, 2010). The extent to which the increase in poor mental health is also being seen amongst non-students of a similar age is not well understood and warrants further study. However, the increase in poor mental health specifically within students in higher education highlights a need to understand what the risk factors are and what might be done within these settings to ensure young people are learning and developing and transitioning into adulthood in environments that promote mental wellbeing. Commencing higher education represents a key transition point in a young person's life. It is a stage often accompanied by significant change combined with high expectations of high expectations from students of what university life will be like, and also high expectations from themselves and others around their own academic performance. Relevant factors include moving away from home, learning to live independently, developing new social networks, adjusting to new ways of learning, and now also dealing with the additional greater financial burdens that students now face (Campbell, et al., 2022).

9 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/institutional-support-available-to-enhance-the-mental-health-of-students-in-higher-education-institutions/335995

Related Content

From Medical Student to Medical Resident: Graduate Medical Education and Mental Health in the United States
Warren G. McDonald, Matt Martinand Lenard D. Salzberg (2018). *Exploring the Pressures of Medical Education From a Mental Health and Wellness Perspective (pp. 145-169).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/from-medical-student-to-medical-resident/190263

Conceptualizing Digital Addiction as Glutamine Inhibition and Glutamate Acceleration (GIGA): Considering the Links Between Productivity Slow-Down, Wakefulness, and Workfulness
Jonathan Bishop (2019). *Multifaceted Approach to Digital Addiction and Its Treatment (pp. 73-99).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/conceptualizing-digital-addiction-as-glutamine-inhibition-and-glutamate-acceleration-giga/229192

Sexuality, Parenting Skills, and Related Issues in Persons with Intellectual Disability
Rejani Thudalikunnil Gopalanand Prathibha Agustus (2016). *Handbook of Research on Diagnosing, Treating, and Managing Intellectual Disabilities (pp. 386-395).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/sexuality-parenting-skills-and-related-issues-in-persons-with-intellectual-disability/150844

Job Characteristic Model and Relationship with Employee Performance: Case Study of Qurtuba University
Irfan Ullah, Yasir Hayat Mughaland Mahad Jehangir (2020). *Occupational Stress: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice (pp. 103-116).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/job-characteristic-model-and-relationship-with-employee-performance/240301

EHealth Interventions for People Suffering From Sleep Problems and Depressive Symptoms: Qualitative Findings and Future Research Directions
Sitwat Usman Langrialand Päivi Lappalainen (2021). *Research Anthology on Mental Health Stigma, Education, and Treatment (pp. 1180-1200).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/ehealth-interventions-for-people-suffering-from-sleep-problems-and-depressive-symptoms/276078