



Commentary

Strengthening nursing students' mental well-being

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I read the article by Al Maqbali et al. (1), which was recently published in your esteemed journal, with considerable interest. The article examines the aspect of mental well-being among undergraduate nursing students in Oman two years following the onset of the pandemic. The authors not only discussed a significant problem in nursing education but also emphasized the significance of finding suitable interventions to enhance the mental well-being of undergraduate students. This commentary seeks to reflect on a few potential interventions that may be deemed appropriate.

To begin with, the pandemic's aftereffects are still being felt, particularly by students who were beginning their nursing education when COVID-19 first emerged. On multiple occasions, students have come forward to share their feelings about how they are now struggling with managing their mental health. To address student worries about their mental health, Al Maqbali et al. (1) recommended that educational institutions offer access to mental well-being support services, as well as online seminars and training material. However, this appears insufficient on its own. To offer emotional support to their students, it is crucial that educators consistently enhance their awareness of their students' mental well-being. One way of increasing awareness is to use appropriate screening tools to identify students who are at a high risk of psychological distress. This can be achieved by utilizing evidence-based screening

tools or simple questionnaires that assess a student's mental health (2).

Along with this, educators may also need to engage in critical dialogue, provide consistent feedback, and engage in regular conversations with students (3). Moreover, educators must be acquainted with a diverse array of mental health and well-being resources to provide their students with the necessary resources. One such example is the use of mindfulness applications that are both accessible and cost-effective (4). Similarly, it is deemed salient that students continue to receive personalized one-on-one support to feel a sense of value despite the vast array of formal and technological support networks and interventions that are available to them (5).

Next, Al Maqbali et al. (1) postulate that the capacity to manage crises in nursing programs is an additional strategy that can be adopted to improve the mental well-being of students. In this respect, educators are urged to incorporate grit and resilience theories into the curriculum and devise effective strategies for cultivating these attributes (6). In addition to this, it is important to recognize the crucial role of peers in the context of nursing education. This is particularly true in the context of the recent pandemic, as the absence of support from their peers might significantly challenge the resilience of nursing students (1). Enhanced students' mental well-being is associated with the numerous social and emotional supports and adaptive coping strategies that involve soliciting guidance from peers (7). Furthermore, stress-

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reduction seminars and peer support groups on campus may be favorable in terms of enhancing students' self-efficacy and reducing their stress levels (8).

Lastly, are the roles of the students themselves. Individual factors such as self-efficacy, self-regulation, and self-reliance may contribute to the sustainable well-being and mental health of students in online learning (9). For example, students are reported to employ a diverse array of coping strategies to alleviate the stressors associated with their clinical work during the pandemic. Engaging in activities, seeking peer support, and engaging in interactions with family and friends when possible were particularly critical strategies for self-care (10). As such, nurse educators may strategically incorporate self-care into all aspects of nursing education to better prepare future nurses for all kinds of situations (10) and to facilitate the development of effective coping strategies that result in a healthy nursing workforce (4). Nevertheless, it is also the responsibility of the students to be prepared to receive and seek the support that is provided. That is, students need to learn how to deal with problems in situations that make them feel anxious. One way to do this is to use the counseling services that their universities offer (11).

In summary, Al Maqbali et al. (1) have made an important contribution by highlighting the mental well-being of undergraduate nursing students. In the wake of the pandemic, this study emphasizes the significance of identifying risks to student confidence and detrimental mental health outcomes. Last but not least, it is imperative to maintain a robust and healthy nursing workforce. To realize this goal, the educator's engagement with students, the teaching of crisis-coping skills, the involvement of peers, and the student's participation in the utilization of university resources may be some of the interventions to strengthen the student's mental well-being that merit consideration.

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