



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Mental Health Challenges in University Students and Staff: Factors and Support Systems

The Role of Teaching Staff and Universities in Supporting Mental Health

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Introduction

Mental Health Challenges in Universities

- **Universities often foster mental health issues due to academic and social pressures.**
- **Academic and social stressors contribute to mental health challenges.**
- **Transitional life stages increase students' mental health vulnerability.**
- **Students and staff face unique mental health challenges.**



Prevalent Mental Health Challenges in Students

- **Anxiety, depression, and stress are among the most common conditions reported by students.**
- **Factors include academic workload, financial stress, social pressure, and isolation.**
- **Post-COVID-19 increases in social anxiety and adjustment disorders.**

(Brown et al., 2021; Kessler et al., 2019)



Prevalent Mental Health Challenges in Staff

- Professors and staff experience work overload, burnout, job insecurity, and a lack of support.
- Role ambiguity and emotional labor contribute to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and exhaustion.

(Schaufeli et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2018)



Shared Factors Contributing to Mental Health Challenges

Underlying Factors Affecting Both Students and Staff

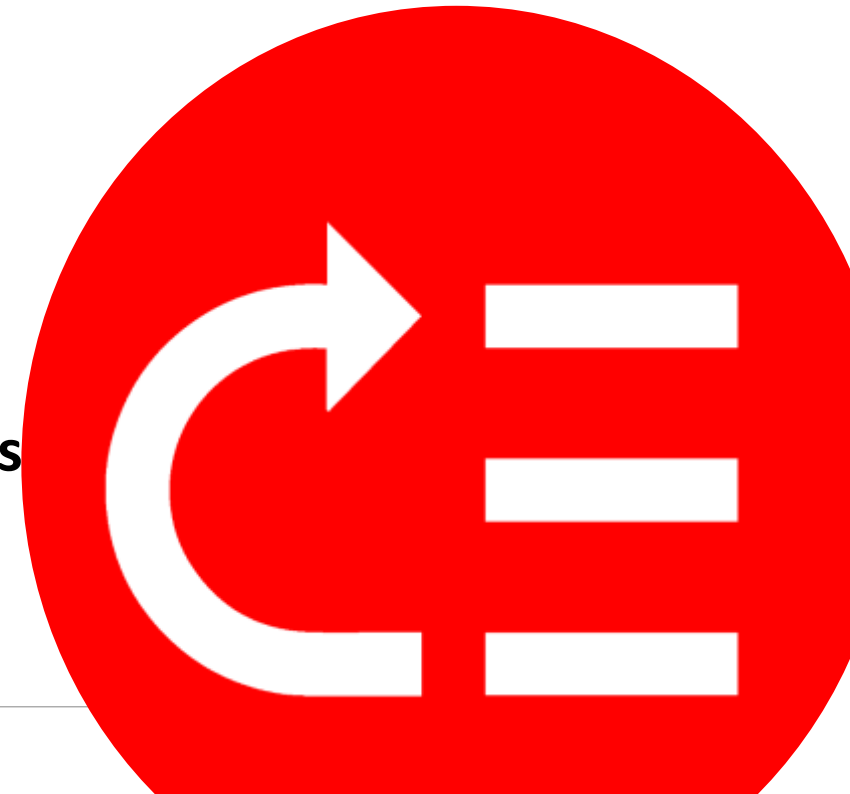
- **Academic/Work Pressure:** Intense academic and professional expectations lead to chronic stress.
- **Social Isolation:** Lack of social support networks exacerbates feelings of loneliness and mental distress.
- **Financial Stress:** Rising tuition costs and salary disparities affect both students and staff.
- **Technological Overload:** 24/7 availability through email and online platforms increases stress levels.



The Role of the University in Supporting Mental Health

University Initiatives for Mental Health Support

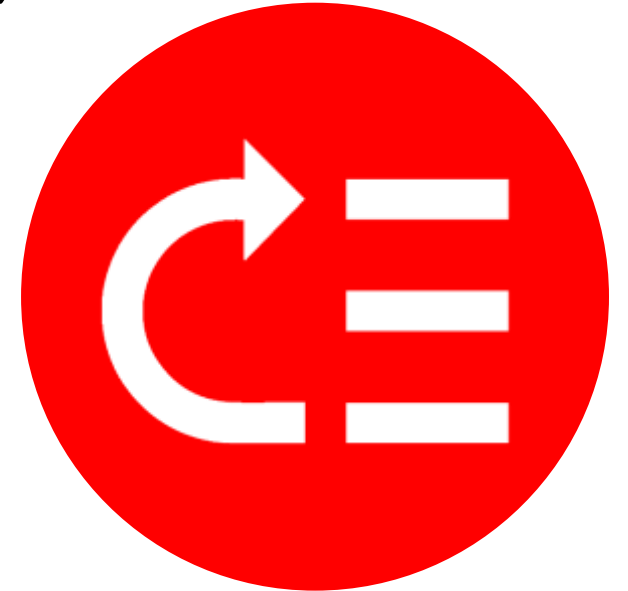
- **Counseling Services:** On-campus and remote counseling for students and staff.
- **Mental Health Awareness Programs:** Workshops, seminars, and events promoting mental health awareness.
- **Academic Flexibility:** Extensions, reduced workload options, and inclusive policies.
- **Peer Support Networks:** Student-driven support groups that encourage community and understanding.



Teaching staff as the First Point of Contact

The Role of Professors in Supporting Mental Health

- Teaching staff often interact with students daily, making them the first to notice signs of distress.
- Training professors, lecturers etc. to identify early signs of mental health issues, such as absenteeism, academic decline, and changes in behavior, is crucial.
- Building trust and creating a supportive, non-judgmental environment encourages students to seek help.

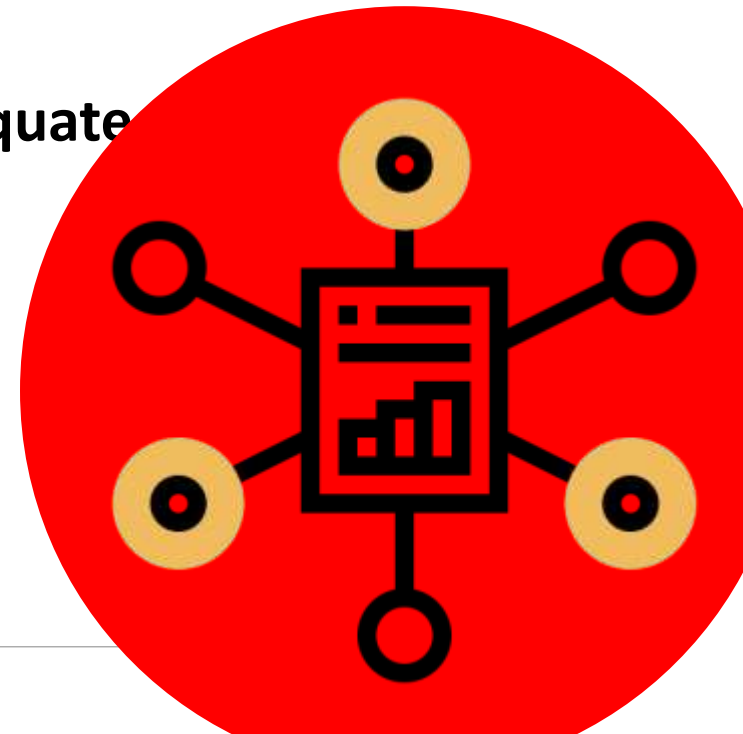


Challenges in University Mental Health Support

Gaps and Challenges in University Mental Health Systems

- **Stigma:** Mental health stigma prevents students and staff from seeking help.
- **Insufficient Resources:** Limited counseling services and long wait times.
- **Lack of Training:** Professors and staff may lack adequate training in mental health awareness.

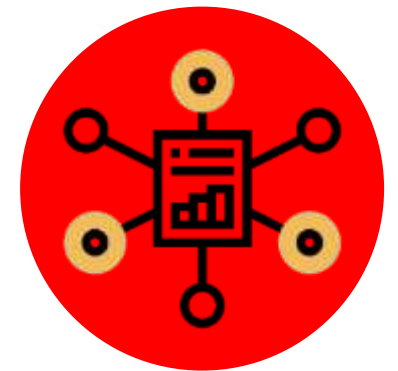
(APA, 2022; HEPI, 2021)



Solutions and Best Practices

Improving Mental Health Support in Universities

- **Increasing Funding for Mental Health Programs: Expanding services to meet the needs of both students and staff.**
- **Implementing Mental Health Training for Professors: Equipping academic staff with the skills to recognize mental health issues.**
- **Reducing Academic Pressures: Offering flexible deadlines, reducing workload expectations.**
- **Promoting Peer and Staff Support Networks: Encouraging openness and communication through structured programs..**



Learnings to Date

Learnings and Best Practices

- Integration of mental health into curriculum.
- Effective peer support networks to reduce stigma.
- Sharing best practices with other institutions.



The Way Forward

Future Directions

- Scaling up successful initiatives.
- Expanding research efforts on mental health.
- Continuing innovation, particularly in e-health tools.
- Adapting to emerging challenges in a rapidly changing environment.



Conclusion

Recap of Key Points

- Universities play a pivotal role in shaping the mental well-being of their communities.
- By training professors and expanding mental health services, we can create a healthier academic environment.



Call to Action

- Encourage prioritization of mental health in institutions.
- Importance of research, policy development, and direct support.
- Invitation to contribute to ongoing efforts in improving mental health support.





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