

INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL WELLBEING OF POST GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT IN ONE UNIVERSITY IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND.

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Abstract

The aim of this research work was to investigate the factors that are associated with the mental wellbeing of post graduate students in one university in the North East of England. The study utilized a quantitative survey with a positivist epistemology approach in its investigative process. A convenience sampling technique that included all the post graduate nursing students at the university (98 students) was employed. The online survey link that contained the structured questions was distributed to participants by the gate keeper. Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS software. A significant association was found between good general wellbeing and religion ($X^2 = 9.291, p = 0.026$), Student status ($X^2 = 4.409, p = 0.036$) and marital status ($X^2 = 8.712, p = 0.033$). More so, significant associations were identified between good academic wellbeing and the respondent's gender, ethnicity, age, student status, marital status, religion, and previous mental illness ($p < 0.05$). The social and environmental wellbeing of the students had a positive relationship with the participant's religion ($X^2 = 36.588, p < 0.001$). Several factors showed positive correlation with the mental wellbeing of postgraduate nursing students.

Keywords: Mental, Postgraduate, Health, Students

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community¹. Mental health issues, hence, mental health issues are not restricted to the absence of ill health but involves unusual behaviour, feelings, interactions with others, depression, anxiety, which have significantly influenced individuals across the globe². Furthermore, it was added that adult mental health and wellbeing are determined by several biological, psychosocial, and environmental factors, and many of these factors are often impossible for the individual to change or control³. Wellbeing on the other hand, is a term that is used increasingly globally and in the United Kingdom (UK) government policy. Wellbeing covers a social, physical, and mental state and describes a satisfactory condition of existence characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity⁴. Therefore, mental wellbeing involves concepts such as self-efficacy and social inclusion of one’s ability to adapt to their environment and the society in which they function⁵. Mental wellbeing is undeniably a global public health issue⁶ and its issues accounts for more disability in developed countries including the Unites states than any other group of illnesses⁷. The United Kingdom in like manner is not left out as supportively, WHO asserts that associated mental health and wellbeing issues are of the top leading global health and wellbeing problems. In the UK, it accounts for the leading cause of disability hence contributing up to 22.8 % of the total health system burden of the country⁸. Mental wellbeing is a multidimensional measure of positive mental health that represent more than an absence of mental distress. According to studies people with best mental wellbeing can realize their potential and even flourish around health and its entirety⁹ and this can impact an individual’s mental health status¹⁰. Moreover, the American college health association [ACHA]¹¹ asserts that anything that can affect the mental health wellbeing of students could also influence their academic performance. Several studies around the subject of interest revealed that improvement in mindfulness, peer group influence, psychological flexibility, positive affect and good interpersonal relationship among both staff and student promotes wellbeing^{12,13,14}, while Ansari and stock¹⁵ in their research affirms that there exist associations between educational satisfaction, health, health behaviours, heath complaints and financial parameters with the three outcomes of educational achievement (actual module mark; perceived own performance; importance of achieving good grades) and this was not influenced by gender. Furthermore, Evans et.al ¹⁶ in their study revealed that post graduate students acknowledged that emotional issues, stress due to workload and other factors such as their relationship with the staff could have adverse effect on their mental wellbeing. These research studies and increased mental health and wellbeing issue of concerns are suggestive of the fact that it is expedient more than ever to understand the factors associated with the mental wellbeing of post graduate students as this undeniable have an effect directly and indirectly on the health burden of the nation at large. Regardless, however, of the frequency of research or its outcomes in this area of interest, it is less likely that the structure and demands of post graduate education will be amended but identifying these factors and its association to the wellbeing of the students would give a better and clearer understanding that would allow students, counselling facilities and even the university at large to endorse effective interventions ¹³.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A quantitative survey with a positivist epistemology approach in its investigative process was utilized. The study population consisted of 98 postgraduate nursing students in a University in the North East of England that started their programmes either in January or September 2021. A convenience sampling technique that included all the post graduate nursing students at the university (98) students, was employed and a response rate of 83.7% was recorded. Consent of the respondents was sought, confidentiality of information supplied by the respondents during and after the procedure was ensured and anonymity was also ensured by their names not appearing on the questionnaire. Ethical application process was duly adhered to and after due reviews by the university ethical team within a period of one (1) month, an approval to carry out the research was granted with a reference number which is 010833. The approval preceded distribution of the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS software database (version 22). The results are presented in charts and tables.

RESULT

Table 1.1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age	24 or younger	24
	25 – 34	30
	35 - 44	11
	45 or older	10
Sex	Male	22
	Female	53
Religion	Atheist	5
	Christianity	66
	Hindu	2
	Muslims	2
Marital Status	Single (Never Married)	49
	Married or in a domestic partnership	22
	Separated	2
	Widowed	2

Student Status	EU	4	5.3
	International	52	69.3
	Home	18	24.0
Employment Status	None	17	22.7
	Yes, Full time	9	12.0
	Yes, Part time	49	65.3
Ethnicity	Asian	8	10.7
	Black African	57	76.0
	Black or African American	6	8.0
	White	4	5.3
Accommodation	Home alone	14	18.7
	Home with family	11	14.7
	Private student accommodation	24	32.0
	Public student accommodation	26	34.7
	Total	75	100.0

Table 1.2 showing the psychological wellbeing of the respondents

Are you previously/ currently diagnosed of any mental health issue	n (%)	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	18.7
No	61	81.3
Total	75	100.0
If yes, which mental illness where you diagnosed of?		
Anxiety Disorder	5	35.7
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	2	14.3
Depression	4	28.6
Eating Disorder	2	14.3
Sleeping Disorder	1	7.1
Total	14	100.0
Was it easy to seek/ access medical care and support?		
Yes	10	71.4
No	4	28.6
Total	14	100.0

Table 1.3 shows the mean, range, and standard deviations of the students' General, Academic and Social and environmental wellbeing scores. All the scales showed valid internal consistency with their Cronbach's alpha coefficient >0.7.

Table 1. 3: Showing the wellbeing of the postgraduate students

Wellbeing Domain	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Mental Wellbeing	12.00	60.00	41.853	9.251	0.874
Academic Wellbeing	12.00	37.00	28.173	6.183	0.791
Social and environmental wellbeing	9.00	28.00	20.347	4.864	0.789
Total (Overall) Wellbeing	44.0	125.00	97.360	15.981	0.880

Table 1.4 shows the mental wellbeing of the students. A mental wellbeing score of <40 was classified as poor while ≥ 40 was classified as good. Chi square test of independence was used to test for significant associations between their sociodemographic variables and their general wellbeing. Significant associations were identified between good general wellbeing and religion ($X^2 = 9.291, p = 0.026$), Student status ($X^2 = 4.409, p = 0.036$) and marital status ($X^2 = 8.712, p = 0.033$). No significant association between good general wellbeing and other sociodemographic variables like the age group, gender, ethnicity, and previous mental illness.

Table 1.4 – Associations of Good Mental wellbeing

Variable	Mental wellbeing		Total	OR1	X2	P
	Poor (%)	Good (%)				
Gender						
Male	6(27.3)	16(72.7)	22	0.571	1.029	0.310
Female	21(39.6)	32(60.4)	32			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Ethnicity						
Asian	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	8	2.015	0.569	
Black African	20(35.1)	37(64.9)	57			

Black/African American	1(16.7)	5(83.3)	6			
White	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	4			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Student Status						
EU	1(25.0)	3(75.0)	4	1.689	4.409	0.036*
International	22(41.5)	31(58.5)	53			
Home	4(22.2)	14(77.8)	18			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Age						
24 or younger	12(50.0)	12(50.0)	24		7.673	0.053
25 - 34	11(36.7)	19(63.3)	30			
35 - 44	4(36.4)	7(63.6)	11			
45 or older	0(0.0)	10(100.0)	10			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Marital Status						
Single	21(42.9)	28(57.1)	49		8.712	0.033*
Married	4(18.2)	18(81.8)	22			
Separated	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Widowed	0(0.0)	2(100.0)	2			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Religion						
Atheist	3(60.0)	2(40.0)	5		9.291	0.026*
Christianity	20(30.3)	46(69.7)	66			
Hindu	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Muslims	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			
Previous Mental Illness						
No	19	40	59	0.475	1.730	0.188
Yes	8(50.0)	8(50.0)	16			
Total	27(36.0)	48(64.0)	75			

Table 1.5 shows the academic wellbeing of the students. An academic wellbeing score of <25 was classified as poor while ≥ 25 was classified as good. Chi square test of independence was used to test for significant associations between their sociodemographic variables and their academic wellbeing. Significant associations were identified between good academic wellbeing and all the sociodemographic variables as tested in table 1.5 ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1.5 – Association of Good Academic wellbeing

Variable	Academic wellbeing		Total	OR1	X2	P
	Poor (%)	Good (%)				
Gender						
Male	8(36.4)	14(63.6)	22	5.486	7.868	0.005*
Female	5(9.4)	48(90.6)	32			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Ethnicity						
Asian	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	8		8.149	0.043*
Black African	9(15.8)	48(84.2)	57			
Black/African American	0(0.0)	6(100.0)	6			
White	0(0.0)	4(100.0)	4			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Age (Years)						
24 or younger	0(0.0)	24(100.0)	24		20.374	<0.001*
25 - 34	3(10.0)	27(30.0)	30			
35 - 44	6(54.5)	5(45.5)	11			
45 or older	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	10			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Student Status						
EU	0(0.0)	4(100.0)	4		1.758	0.416*
International	11(20.8)	42(79.2)	53			

Home	2(11.1)	16(88.9)	18			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Marital Status						
Single	3(6.1)	46(93.9)	49	24.892	<0.001*	
Married or in a domestic partnership	6(27.3)	16(72.7)	22			
Separated	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Widowed	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Religion						
Atheist	2(40.0)	3(60.0)	5	22.954	<0.001*	
Christianity	7(10.6)	59(89.4)	66			
Hindu	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Muslims	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			
Previous Mental Illness						
No	5(8.5)	54(91.5)	59	1.831	15.147	<0.001*
Yes	8(50.0)	8(50.0)	16			
Total	13(17.3)	62(82.7)	75			

Table 1.6 shows the social and environmental wellbeing of the students. A social and environmental wellbeing score of <20 was classified as poor while ≥ 20 was classified as good. Chi square test of independence was used to test for significant associations between their sociodemographic variables and their social and environmental wellbeing. Significant associations were identified between good social and environmental wellbeing and religion ($X^2 = 36.588, p < 0.001$). No significant association was found between good social and environmental wellbeing and other characteristics such as age group, gender, ethnicity, student status, marital status, religion.

Table 1.6 – Associations of Good Social and Environmental wellbeing

Variable	Social and Environmental wellbeing		Total	OR ¹	X ²	P
	Poor (%)	Good (%)				
Gender						
Male	2(9.1)	20(90.9)	22	2.550	0.871	0.351
Female	2(3.8)	51(96.2)	53			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Age (Years)						
24 or younger	0(0.0)	24(100.0)	24		6.388	0.096
25 - 34	4(13.3)	26(86.7)	30			
35 - 44	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	11			
45 or older	0(0.0)	10(100.0)	10			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Ethnicity						
Asian	0(0.0)	8(100.0)	8		1.334	0.721
Black African	4(7.0)	53(93.0)	57			
Black/African American	0(0.0)	6(100.0)	6			
White	0(0.0)	4(100.0)	4			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Student Status						
EU	0(0.0)	4(100.0)	4		1.758	0.416
International	4(7.5)	49(92.5)	53			
Home	0(0.0)	18(100.0)	18			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Marital Status						
Single	4(8.2)	45(91.8)	49		2.242	0.524
Married or in a domestic partnership	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(100.0)			
Separated	0(0.0)	2(100.0)	2			
Widowed	0(0.0)	2(100.0)	2			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Religion						
Atheist	0(0.0)	5(100.0)	5		36.588	<0.001*

Christianity	2(3.0)	64(97.0)	66			
Hindu	0(0.0)	2(100.0)	2			
Muslims	2(100.0)	0(0.0)	2			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			
Previous Mental Illness						
No	2(3.4)	57(96.6)	59	1.104	2.069	0.150
Yes	2(12.5)	14(87.5)	16			
Total	4(5.3)	71(94.7)	75			

Discussion of Findings

Research objective 1: To identify the factors that could influence the mental wellbeing of post graduate nursing students. The result showed that seventy-five (75) post graduate students responded to the survey and their sociodemographic characteristics including gender, age, ethnic origin, marital status is consistently found to have impact on mental health of students alongside the various aspects of wellbeing identified which include the general, social, and environmental as well as the physiological are said to be factors that could affect their wellbeing as clearly shown in the table 1.3 where all the scales showed valid internal consistency with their Cronbach's alpha coefficient >0.7 .

Similarly, in a qualitative study conducted by Byrnes et al.¹⁴, on medical students' perception of curricular influences on their wellbeing, factors such as health (Mental, physical, and emotional), academic performance, ability to cope with stress were implicated by the students to be factors that influenced their wellbeing. Discussing these factors in line with the theoretical framework that underpinned the study, the social determinant of health, are factors that shape the health and wellbeing of individuals either positively or negatively¹⁷. This model shows the factors that ultimately determines the health and wellbeing of individuals¹⁸. Nearly two third of the respondents (49) are single and have never been married. According to psychologist, key influence on wellbeing includes marital status, as well as life circumstances, income, and material possession¹⁹. Majority of the student that participate were of the African origin, this might be implicated also as a factor that have affected the outcome of the work.

Research objective 2: To correlate the relationship between these factors and its impact on the mental wellbeing of the post graduate nursing student. From the result, table 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 clearly showed the associations between the factors linked and the student's general mental wellbeing. The implicated factors included the general wellbeing, academic wellbeing, and social and environmental factors. For the general wellbeing, a significant association was seen between good general wellbeing and religion ($X^2 = 9.291, p = 0.026$), Student status ($X^2 = 4.409, p = 0.036$) and marital status ($X^2 = 8.712, p = 0.033$). Moreso, for academic wellbeing, where a score of <25 was classified, significant associations were identified between good academic wellbeing and the respondent's gender, ethnicity, age, student status, marital status, religion, and previous mental illness ($p < 0.05$). Going furthermore, with the social and environmental wellbeing of the students, significant association was also identified between this aspect of their health and their religion ($X^2 = 36.588, p < 0.001$). The table 1.7 displayed the predictors of Total (overall) wellbeing. The overall wellbeing score as calculated by arithmetic sum of the wellbeing domain scores, showed that good general wellbeing ($B=22.19, p < 0.001$), Good Academic wellbeing ($B=17.98, p < 0.001$) and being married ($B=17.98, p < 0.001$) were positive predictors of student's mental wellbeing.

From the table 1.4, both gender, showed positive associations to their psychological wellbeing. This is supporting the opinion of Matud et al.²⁰, that asserts that there exist no significant differences in psychosocial wellbeing domain of male and female students. Although, evidence based, these opinion presents varied findings among different cultures and even sample populations²¹. Also, in this research study it was found that there was no significant association between the age group and good general wellbeing as well as between the age group and good social and environmental wellbeing. This result correlated with that of scholars such as Hudyma¹³ and Medlicott et al.¹² which showed that a good mental wellbeing reflected good socio-environmental wellbeing, and even good academic performance and satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study analyzed factors that are associated with the mental wellbeing of post graduate students in one university in the Northeast of England and have shown the significant associations between the factors and the overall mental wellbeing of post graduate nursing students.

Recommendations

There should be improvement in the post graduate student mental wellbeing population. In order to improve mental wellbeing of post graduate students, emphasis must be paid to health literacy as this must be seen as a priority. Also, a well developed and implemented policy especially as it relates to post graduate nursing students can be of help. Research should be carried out around the perception and attitude of post graduate nursing students to the factors affecting their mental wellbeing.

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