THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

The necessity for supportive environments in academic institutions is highlighted by the sharp rise in mental health issues among college students. This study investigates how the library at the ATSS College of Business Studies and Computer Applications (CBSCA) supports stress reduction and mental health awareness. Surveys, interviews, and observations were used to gather data for a qualitative case study. Results show that the library offers a peaceful, welcoming space that helps students focus and manage stress. Nonetheless, there are still a few organized wellness initiatives, mental health resource collections, and partnerships with counseling services. The report suggests creating wellness areas, planning awareness campaigns, implementing bibliotherapy, and providing mental health support training to library employees. Overall, the research highlights that academic libraries can play a vital role in fostering student well-being and emotional resilience alongside their educational mission.

Background of the Study:

One of the most urgent issues facing higher education globally is mental health. Today's university and college students face a range of issues, including social isolation, financial hardship, academic pressure, and uncertainty about their future careers. These issues all lead to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. A considerable percentage of students in higher education institutions struggle with mental health issues that negatively impact their academic performance, interpersonal connections, and general well-being, according to research by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO. The growing number of students experiencing stress-related problems highlights how urgently academic settings need proactive mental health awareness and support networks.

Higher education institutions have recently started to see the value of raising awareness of mental health issues as a crucial component of both student achievement and institutional health. Conventional support systems, including wellness initiatives, peer mentoring, and counseling clinics, have been reinforced. Academic libraries, which have long been seen as the intellectual center of universities, are now increasingly seen to be important for promoting students' mental health. Libraries are changing from their historical role as knowledge bases to being welcoming, secure, and encouraging community places that foster intellectual and emotional development.

Because of their accessibility, inclusivity, and pivotal role in student life, academic libraries are in a unique position to support stress management and mental health awareness. In addition to academic resources, they offer a serene and friendly setting that promotes social interaction, mindfulness, and relaxation. Libraries can promote mental health initiatives in a number of ways, such as curating mental wellness resources, holding workshops and awareness events, setting up "quiet zones" and "wellness corners," and working with counseling centers to distribute trustworthy information about mental health services.

As information specialists, librarians may also direct students to reliable mental health resources, assisting in the fight against stigma and false information.

Academic libraries' growing importance in fostering holistic well-being emphasizes the need for more research on how they could help raise awareness of mental health issues and manage stress. The purpose of this project is to investigate how academic libraries might incorporate mental health initiatives into their outreach programs, policies, and services and how doing so can enhance student engagement, resilience, and academic achievement in general.

1. Statement of the Problem

Even while students are becoming more aware of the value of mental health, efforts to promote mental well-being in the classroom are still not uniformly implemented and are frequently restricted to counseling or medical care. Despite being essential to students' academic lives, academic libraries are usually disregarded as possible allies in fostering stress reduction and emotional health. Many organizations still view libraries more as research and study hubs than as comprehensive support environments that might raise awareness of mental health issues.

Comprehensive knowledge and research on how libraries can actively assist mental health promotion, stress-reduction tactics they can use, and how much students believe libraries are safe and nurturing places for emotional well-being are lacking. Additionally, academic librarians might not always have the necessary skills or training to participate in mental health awareness initiatives, which could result in lost chances for fruitful cooperation with counseling and wellness departments.

By examining the changing role of academic libraries in promoting stress management and mental health awareness among college students, this study aims to close these gaps. It seeks to analyze current programs, gauge student opinions, and pinpoint practical strategies that might be used to improve libraries' support of students' wellbeing.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study's primary goal is to investigate how academic libraries might help college and university students manage their stress and raise awareness of mental health issues. The following are the precise goals:

1. To assess the frequency of stress-related and mental health problems among college students.
2. To look at the current efforts and programs that academic libraries are doing to raise awareness of mental health issues.
3. To find out how students view the library as a place that promotes mental and emotional health.
4. To determine the difficulties librarians encounter when putting mental health-related programs and activities into action.
5. To offer tactics and best practices for academic libraries to successfully assist with stress management and mental health awareness campaigns.

3. Importance of the Research

Higher education institutions are taking a more comprehensive approach to academic and personal development as a result of students' increased concerns about their mental health. The current study is noteworthy in this regard because it draws attention to a sometimes disregarded aspect of student assistance- the function of academic libraries in promoting stress reduction and mental health awareness.

First and foremost, this study advances scholarly knowledge of how libraries might serve as inclusive venues in addition to their conventional function as informational resources. The study highlights the growing social responsibilities of academic libraries

in higher education institutions and broadens the field of library science by finding methods that libraries might support well-being.

Second, by emphasizing how library spaces and services may lower stress and encourage a well-rounded academic experience, the study will help students. Students might learn about the services and resources for mental health that are accessible in their libraries, which would encourage them to get help in a welcoming and stigma-free setting.

Thirdly, the study is important for librarians and library directors because it offers information on new approaches, programming ideas, and joint ventures with student wellness departments and counseling facilities. This can assist librarians in creating more sympathetic and inclusive services that support the institution's student welfare objectives.

Lastly, the results could be a useful manual for legislators and academic institutions on how to incorporate mental health promotion into outreach initiatives, library regulations, and space design. Libraries may foster a more encouraging, egalitarian, and student-focused learning environment by taking an active role in mental wellness programs.

In conclusion, this study is crucial for developing a culture of compassion, understanding, and mental health among academic institutions in addition to enhancing scientific discourse in library and information science.

4. The Study's Scope and Limitations

The purpose of this project is to investigate how academic libraries may help students at higher education institutions manage their stress and raise awareness of mental health issues. Through resources, programming, space design, and partnerships with other campus departments, libraries can support students' mental well-being, according to the research.

The study's scope comprises:

* College and university academic libraries, especially in the context of Indian higher education institutions;

* Library programs and services pertaining to mental health awareness, including reading corners, wellness initiatives, bibliotherapy, stress-relieving activities, and informational campaigns.

* Views and experiences of academics, librarians, and students about the library's contribution to mental health Libraries can implement techniques and best practices to promote emotional health and stress reduction.

The study does, however, clearly recognize several limitations:

1. The study is limited to a specific institution and could not be representative of other academic libraries in the country or around the world.

2. Self-reported answers from questionnaires and interviews are the main source of data, and participants subjective perceptions may have an impact.

3. The study does not explicitly assess clinical or therapeutic mental health results; instead, it concentrates on awareness and support initiatives in libraries.

4. The scope of fieldwork and the number of collaborating universities may be restricted by time and resource limitations.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study seeks to offer insightful information about the potential of academic libraries as helpful spaces for stress reduction and mental health awareness. It aims to create opportunities for additional study and real-world application in higher education policy and library administration.

Original Research Article

Literature Review:

The content supplied is a review of academic research from the Journal of Health Information Research that looks at how academic libraries in Nigeria might help students with their mental health. According to the review, academic and socioeconomic pressures experienced by students around the world lead to stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems; among Nigerian students, these difficulties are becoming a greater concern. The study emphasizes that while academic libraries around the world are embracing support roles by providing resources, safe spaces, and wellness programs, there aren't many comprehensive mental health efforts in Nigerian academic libraries. The article promotes more organized, proactive treatments and cooperation with mental health services to improve student well-being, and it contends that libraries are in a prime position to provide stress-reduction strategies like mindfulness and bibliotherapy. The Growing Crisis in Student Mental Health: Frequency and Intensity. Students' reports of psychological anguish have significantly increased during the past ten years. The most commonly stated issues among students worldwide were anxiety (59.2%), depression (46.5%), and stress (42.8%), according to the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD) Annual Survey (Nance, 2022). Rates of depression, anxiety, and outcomes connected to suicide have increased at a startling rate, according to longitudinal examination of national datasets in the United States (Bladek, 2021). Young adulthood (years 18 to 25) is known to be a time when a number of mental health conditions, such as anxiety, mood, and substance addiction disorders, are more likely to manifest.

Connection to Academic Results: There is a direct and negative correlation between academic success and poor mental health. More students quitting college before earning their degrees is associated with a persistent loss of well-being (Cox & Brewster, 2020). Research has shown that eating disorders, anxiety, and depression are all highly predictive of a lower GPA, and that co-occurring anxiety and depression are linked to a higher chance of dropping out (Bladek, 2021). In 21 nations, the World Health Organization (WHO) discovered a negative correlation between mental illnesses and college graduation (Bladek, 2021). According to one study, "in order to do well in college, students have to be ready to learn—in a state of physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual well-being" Bladek, 2021).

The COVID-19 Impact: The pandemic was a significant stressor that made the situation worse. According to a 2020 US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report, around one-quarter of youths between the ages of 18 and 24 considered suicide, and three-quarters reported at least one negative mental health symptom (Bladek, 2021). Increased stress, worry, social isolation, sleep disturbances, difficulty focusing, and concerns about their own and their families' health were all experienced by students (Bladek, 2021; Hall & McAlister, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

1. Research Design

In order to investigate and evaluate the function of the academic library at ATSS College of Business Studies and Computer Applications (CBSCA), Chinchwad, Pune, in fostering student stress management and mental health awareness, the current study used a case study research design. An in-depth comprehension of the institutional framework, user attitudes, and library initiatives in an actual educational setting is made possible by the case study technique. Specific practices, difficulties, and possibilities that define the library's contribution to students' well-being are identified with the use of this qualitative and descriptive technique.

2. Rationale for Selecting the Case Study Method

Because it allows for a thorough analysis of how a single institution's library serves as a welcoming and inclusive environment for students' mental health, the case study technique is especially well-suited for this research. Because of its vibrant academic atmosphere, diversified student body, and increasing focus on holistic student development, ATSS CBSCA was chosen as the case study. The college library is an excellent setting for researching how library facilities and services support stress management and emotional wellness since it acts as a focal point for both academic and extracurricular activities.

3. Research Objectives

The following goals are intended to be addressed by the methodology:

1. To list the efforts the ATSS CBSCA library has made to promote stress reduction and mental health awareness.
2. To find out how teachers and students view the library as a place that promotes both intellectual and emotional well-being.
3. To investigate librarians' viewpoints on the prospects and difficulties of putting programs pertaining to mental wellness into action.
4. To suggest methods for improving the library's support services and awareness of student mental health.

4. Population and Sample

Undergraduate and graduate students study at ATSS CBSCA College. Employees and academics who frequently visit the library or participate in its programs. Purposive sampling was employed to choose people who could offer pertinent and knowledgeable viewpoints.

Among the sample were: 60 students (20 in each of the following streams: BBA, BSc Computer Science, and BCA), in addition to 5 academic members and 2 library staff.

This composition guarantees that academic consumers and library staff are fairly represented.

5. Data Collection Methods

To get thorough insights, primary and secondary data were gathered.

Primary Information:

1. A structured questionnaire was given to teachers and students in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative information about their engagement in library wellness initiatives, perceptions of the library as a stress-relieving place, and awareness of mental health resources.
2. Interviews: Performed with the librarian and library employees to learn about their perspectives, observations, and difficulties in carrying out activities pertaining to mental health.
3. Observation: To determine how students use the library for both academic and leisure purposes, on-site observations of the library's amenities, reading areas, and user behavior were conducted.

Secondary Information:

Secondary information was gathered from: Academic literature, journal articles, and case studies on library-led mental health programs; institutional records; library policy documents; and event reports pertinent recommendations and best practices from trade associations like IFLA and American Library Association (ALA).

6. Data Analysis Techniques

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to analyze the gathered data:

To find patterns and awareness levels, quantitative data from questionnaires were condensed into frequency tables and percentages. To find recurrent themes, insights, and experiences pertaining to library services and student well-being, qualitative data from interviews and open-ended replies were subjected to thematic analysis.

The institutional framework of ATSS CBSCA and the body of current literature were taken into consideration while interpreting the findings.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical guidelines for research. All participants were made aware of the goal of the study, and participation was entirely voluntary. There was no disclosure of identifying information, and responses were kept private. The data was only utilized for scholarly and research reasons. Before beginning the survey and interviews, prior approval was sought from the college administration and library.

8. Limitations of the Methodology

The results may not apply to other university libraries, even though the case study method offers deep, context-specific insights. Because ATSS CBSCA is the study's exclusive emphasis, institutional and cultural variations may limit its generalizability. Furthermore, the scope of data gathering is constrained by time restrictions and a small sample size.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The analysis and interpretation of data gathered from ATSS College of Business Studies and Computer Applications (CBSCA), Chinchwad, Pune, Students, faculty, and library staff are presented in this chapter. Assessing users' opinions, awareness, and experiences of the college library's contribution to stress management and mental health awareness is the goal. In order to arrive at significant results that address the goals of the study, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed.

67 respondents in all took part in the study:60 students, 5 faculty members, 2 library staff

The findings are categorized into five main themes:

1. Stress management and mental health awareness;
2. The library's contribution to mental wellness.
3. The environment and amenities of the library;
4. Involvement in wellness programs offered by the library.
5. Recommendations for enhancement.

1. Awareness of Mental Health Issues

Response	Number of Students (n=60)	Percentage (%)
Highly aware of mental health importance	24	40%
Somewhat aware	26	43%
Not very aware	10	17%

Interpretation: According to the statistics, most students (83%) understand the significance of mental health awareness. This indicates that students are becoming more aware of psychological well-being, which is probably a result of institutional initiatives and exposure to digital media. Nonetheless, 17% are still ignorant, indicating the necessity of ongoing awareness campaigns.

2. Perceptions of the Library's Role in Mental Health Support

Perception Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
The library provides a calm and stress-free study space	88	8	4
The library promotes mental wellness through its environment	75	18	7
The library staff are approachable and supportive	82	10	8
The library actively conducts wellness or relaxation activities	40	25	35

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Interpretation: According to the majority of respondents, the library is a calm, encouraging environment that promotes focus and stress relief. Less students were aware of ongoing wellness initiatives, though, which may indicate that these initiatives are not as well-known or frequent. The statistics show that although the physical setting of the library promotes mental peace, there is room to grow well-organized well-being programs.

3. Library Environment and Facilities

Facility/Service	Rated as "Highly Helpful" (%)
Quiet study areas	90
Comfortable seating	82
Access to recreational reading materials	55
Group discussion rooms	60
Digital resources on mental health	48

Interpretation: Most students value the library's peaceful study spaces and cozy amenities. But tools that focus on mental health, such as e-books, self-help books, or awareness posters, are still not widely used or adequately advertised.

4. Participation in Library Wellness or Awareness Programs

Program/Activity	Participation (%)	Found Helpful (%)
Book displays on mental health	30	70
Stress-relief reading sessions	20	80
Collaborative events with counseling cell	10	90
Yoga/Mindfulness workshops in library	25	75

Interpretation: Only 10–30% of students reported participating in wellness-focused library programs, indicating low participation rates. Nonetheless, participants reported that the programs were helpful, indicating that more frequent and extensive promotion might have a bigger effect.

5. Faculty and Librarian Perspectives

Several important revelations emerged from professor and library staff interviews:

Academics saw the library's potential as a stigma-free, impartial forum for talking about mental health. The librarian highlighted the practical difficulties that limit regular wellness programs, including staffing shortages, time limits, and financial constraints. Both parties felt that working together with the Cultural Committee and the Student Counseling Cell may improve mental health programs. A "Wellness Corner" featuring inspirational books and health awareness exhibits was proposed by the staff.

6. Key Results

1. The majority of students believe that the library is a calm, stress-free space that promotes focus and relaxation.
2. Although there is a moderate level of awareness of the library's role in promoting mental health, regular activities and communication can raise this level.
3. Faculty and library employees are willing to work together to promote wellness-focused programs.
4. Self-help and motivational literature should be increased in library collections.
5. The low level of student involvement in wellness initiatives emphasizes the need for improved promotion and incorporation into regular class schedules.

7. Analysis and Conversation

The results demonstrate that by providing a calm and welcoming atmosphere, the ATSS CBSCA Library improves students' mental health. The library's potential as a proactive force in raising awareness of mental health issues is still unrealized, though. The study backs up research showing that academic

libraries can greatly aid in stress management when incorporated into campus wellness initiatives (Komariah et al., 2022; Morin & LaVertu, 2025). The library might become an essential part of holistic education by improving student support systems and fostering greater cooperation between librarians, academics, and mental health specialists.

Results, Recommendations, and Conclusion:

1. Study Synopsis

This study looked at how the ATSS College of Business Studies and Computer Applications (CBSCA) library has changed over time in helping students manage their stress and raise awareness of mental health issues. The study aimed to determine how library materials, locations, and staff initiatives affect students' emotional well-being using questionnaires, interviews, and observation. According to the study, organized wellness initiatives and awareness campaigns are still in their infancy, despite the library's reputation as a calm and encouraging space.

2. Key Results

1. High Awareness but Limited Engagement: Despite the fact that 83% of students are aware of mental health issues, they continue to participate in few library-based mental wellness programs because of their low visibility and irregular scheduling.

2. Favorable Perception of the Library Environment: Most respondents (88%) believe that the library is a serene, stress-free space that promotes focus and relaxation. One important factor in lowering academic stress is the physical environment.

3. Kind Staff and Inclusive Environment: Students perceive the library staff as kind and helpful, creating a nonjudgmental environment that invites them to visit when they're feeling anxious.

4. Low Program Participation but High Impact: While only 10–30% of students took part in health initiatives like mindfulness training or book displays, those who did found them to be very helpful (satisfaction ranged from 70–90%).

5. Collaboration between Faculty and Librarians: Although faculty and library employees indicate a desire to incorporate health programs, they point to obstacles such lack of resources, time constraints, and established policy support.

3. Recommendations and Ideas

In light of the results, the following suggestions are put up to enhance the library's function in promoting stress reduction and mental health awareness:

1. Establish a "Library Wellness Corner": To promote calm and awareness, designate a specific area within the library with self-help books, inspirational writing, cozy chairs, and wellness posters.

2. Plan Frequent Awareness Programs: Hold recurring events like yoga or meditation classes, guided reading sessions, stress management workshops, and exhibitions with a focus on mental health.

3. Strengthen Cooperation with Counseling Cell: Assist the campus counseling unit and psychology specialists in organizing pertinent reading lists, creating informational displays, and organizing joint wellness initiatives.

4. Include Bibliotherapy Services: Under the direction of faculty mentors and qualified librarians, suggest therapeutic reading lists for students who are struggling with stress, anxiety, or burnout.

5. Training for Library Staff: Give librarians rudimentary instruction in communication techniques and mental health first aid so they can react appropriately when students ask for emotional support.

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6. Promote via Digital Platforms: Spread the word about the wellness programs and mental health resources the library offers via its website, notice boards, and social media accounts.

7. Assess and Maintain efforts: Regularly survey students to gauge the success of wellness programs and make necessary adjustments to efforts to meet their needs.

4. The Study's Implications

The results have applications in the following areas:

Librarians: Promoting a change in service delivery from a primarily academic position to one that is more holistic and promotes emotional health.

College Administration: Stressing the need to allocate funds and enact policies to promote library health programs.

Researchers: Offering a structure for upcoming comparative research on academic libraries and the mental health of students at other universities.

5. Final Thoughts

The study comes to the conclusion that the ATSS CBSCA Library supports students' stress management and mental health in a crucial, although still developing, way. Students' psychological comfort is already enhanced by its serene setting and friendly staff, but more organized and noticeable efforts are required to reach its full potential as a hub for holistic well-being.

Academic libraries offer a special chance to promote counseling and student support services since they are welcoming and non-threatening environments. Libraries may play a significant role in raising awareness of mental health issues in higher education institutions by incorporating

wellness-focused collections, initiatives, and partnerships.

In the end, supporting mental health via libraries is consistent with education's overarching objective, which is to promote not only intellectual development but also emotional fortitude, empathy, and long-term wellbeing.

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