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EVALUATING THE EFFICACY OF A GENERAL EDUCATION UNIVERSITY COURSE IN REDUCING STRESS AND ENHANCING WELL-BEING

Abstract:

The literature documents that a substantial percentage of university students experience considerable level of stress and psychological problems that negatively impact on their well-being. Though different student support programmes are often offered on campus, because of various reasons, such as limited number of places in the programmes, time constraint, and students' reluctance to seek-help; such programmes cannot adequately meet students' needs. To address this problem, the author has designed a general education course entitled "Stress and Well-Being" to teach students stress management skills and strategies to enhance their well-being. The course employed a holistic health framework which covers the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of health. It lasted for 14 weeks with two 2-hour sessions each week. Perceived stress, social problem-solving orientations and depression scores were obtained from one hundred and ninety nine students at the end of the course. Comparison with a control group of seventy-four students taking another general education course unrelated to stress and well-being was made. It was found that students in the "treatment" group reported lower level of interpersonal stress and had lower depression scores than students in the control group, though the social problem-solving orientation scores of the two groups were similar. Implications of the present preliminary study and recommendations for future studies are discussed.

Keywords:

stress and well-being, stress management, general education course, university students