Well-being at universities

Jana Matochová[1]

Well-being is a state in which individuals can work productively, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and maintain a sense of fulfilment. Feeling good plays, a critical role in determining the quality of life and affects various aspects of daily living, including academic, professional, and personal domains. This study explores key challenges in student life that hinder well-being, providing insights into areas that require targeted support. Specifically, it highlights the importance of counselling services, academic guidance, financial aid, social support, and promoting healthy lifestyles in fostering well-being among university students. Furthermore, the study examines the role of motivation in shaping students' overall well-being, offering practical recommendations to enhance their quality of life.

Keywords: Well-being, Motivation, Well-being Support, Counselling Services

1   Well-being and university studies

If schools aim to foster environments where students are enabled not only to acquire useful information and skills, but also to develop physically, socially and psychologically, they need to prioritize student well-being. The well-being of students is one of the topics of our time. The latest research confirms that well-being is closely linked to how students and teachers perceive the school environment. A relaxed atmosphere, a safe space where individuals can freely express their opinions and needs, and clearly defined boundaries all contribute significantly to fostering well-being in schools (Kaplan, 2021).

Well-being is a state in which we can fully develop our physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual potential in a supportive and stimulating environment and live a full and satisfied life together with others. It is the state of physical, mental and social health and happiness of an individual. It includes a sense of life satisfaction, balance and overall well-being. A good state of well-being refers to an individual feeling happy, satisfied with their life, maintaining a balanced lifestyle, managing stress effectively, and fostering healthy relationships with others.

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[1] VSB-Technical University of Ostrava, 17. listopadu 15/2172, 708 33 Ostrava – Poruba, Czech Republic.
E-Mail: jana.matochova@vsb.cz

Subjective well-being is highly personal and relies solely on the individual's own assessment. It encompasses life satisfaction, the experience of positive and negative emotions, and self-evaluation. Psychological well-being centres on an individual's feelings and experiences related to mental health. It encompasses key areas such as self-esteem, personal growth, autonomy, stress management, positive relationships, and finding meaning in life. Social well-being evaluates the quality of a student's relationships with their peers and their connection to the school community. It encompasses aspects such as community integration, cohesion, equality, and justice. Physical well-being focuses on factors like regular physical activity, a healthy diet, sufficient sleep, disease and injury prevention, and overall physical fitness. Economic well-being relates to material resources and financial stability, including factors such as income, employment, financial security, safety, and economic independence. All these sub-aspects shape the overall concept of personal well-being (Diener, 2013). Well-being is important for overall quality of life and can positively affect all areas of life, including work and academic performance, relationships, physical health and mental well-being. It is important to address well-being consistently and over the long term, even within an academic environment. University students frequently face high pressure, stress and pressure associated with their academic studies and personal life. Therefore, it is crucial for universities to offer support and resources that help students achieve optimal well-being. High pressure and a heavy workload can make students feel overwhelmed by the number of stimuli that negatively impacts their concentration. Students' lack of concentration can be caused by psychological issues or mental health conditions – depression, anxiety, or eating disorders. Students may be going through a difficult period in their life, an illness or a death in the family, or they may be resolving intergenerational conflicts and relationship crises with their peers. Under the influence of social media, students may find themselves comparing their lives to those of their peers. This can lead to dissatisfaction with their life, appearance, or how they spend their free time. They may feel overwhelmed by the number of unfinished tasks, struggle with managing exams and projects, procrastinate, and fall into a cycle of inactivity and dissatisfaction. They do not devote enough time to themselves, including the regeneration of the organism and their personal life is not fulfilled. They feel tired, unfocused, and limit their social contacts. All of this can lead to feelings of inferiority and anxiety. Young people, who are still developing their own strategies to manage difficult situations, are at risk of addiction or may resort to self-harm to cope with their problems. Ultimately, they may also struggle in the field of education and may end their studies prematurely.

1.1 Well-being in the context of motivation

It often depends on the students' personal characteristics and, to a large extent, on their motivation to study. In this context, internal motivation plays a crucial role. It is based on a sense of autonomy, on behaviour guided by free choice. In this case, we work with the idea that the journey itself is the goal. Pleasure and feelings of satisfaction come from the activity

itself. The first subtype of intrinsic motivation is referred to as the motivation to know, which involves a desire for knowledge. When students are motivated in this way, their curiosity drives them to continuously explore new possibilities and perspectives. They seek to understand these possibilities. At the same time, this motivation is associated with the lowest levels of stress experienced during the learning process.

Another type of intrinsic motivation is the motivation to achieve success. The driving force behind this type of motivation is the desire to make unique discoveries, with pleasure derived from the process that leads to these goals. Students motivated to achieve success works to feel as competent as possible in what they do, to be rewarded as much as possible for it, and simply to become a master in their field (Michou, Matsagouras & Lens, 2014).

Additional type of intrinsic motivation can be the motivation to experience stimulation. In addition to psychological states of bliss, this experience may also include physical states in the form of sensory pleasures. It always depends on the students' mental state and life values. This type of motivation increases with age (Hegarty, 2010). In general, people with a predominant type of intrinsic motivation are more successful in terms of academic performance. They are also more satisfied with their work or learning because they enjoy the learning process itself and feel more connected to what they do (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Students with a higher degree of intrinsic motivation manage stressful situations better not only during the learning process itself, but also in general during any activity that is intrinsically motivated. At the same time, they can perform tasks better and more creatively, because they find meaning in such work.

Novotný (2019) states that students who have not yet had the chance to exit the academic process and participate in other life stages such as work or family care, more frequently report a lack of internal motivation, because they consider their own condition to be inevitable. On the contrary, older individuals more often choose to study for personal, intrinsically motivated reasons. The same applies to foreign students who make more effort to be able to study a field abroad, therefore they show a lower level of lack of motivation to study and a greater degree of internal motivation (Novotný et al., 2019).

1.2 Procrastination resulting from a lack of motivation

When motivation is lacking, students become passive and are unable to complete their work. At times, they also struggle to initiate the necessary steps that should lead to success. Reasons for a lack of motivation may be different. It may be the fact that the required activity is not perceived as valuable by a student. An unmotivated student does not expect that the given activity will lead to the expected goal (Shen, 2010). Another reason may be the fact that the individual does not feel competent to perform the activity. They do not believe that they could achieve the goal by their own abilities. As a result, unregulated and completely unintentional behaviour occurs which is associated with low levels of well-being, high levels of perceived stress or poor psychosocial adjustment to university life. As a result of the absence of motivation, engagement and the desire to participate in learning during the study period are

also reduced. This is not only reflected in the academic performance and grades obtained but also affects the success of the degree completion on a larger scale.

This behaviour is closely related to academic procrastination. One of the reasons is a lack of self-esteem and confidence, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and a lack of motivation to solve problems. This leads to worse results compared to students who are intrinsically motivated (Bailey & Phillips, 2016). Academic procrastination can become chronic. This refers to the tendency of students to postpone academic obligations in favour of activities that offer immediate rewards or are more enjoyable. Most commonly, this includes activities such as browsing social media, watching videos, playing games, etc.

This tendency can have a negative impact on the student's academic performance and cause stress and anxiety due to unsatisfactory results (Sirois, Pychyl, 2013).

Tendencies to procrastinate may also be supported by certain traits such as impulsivity or neuroticism. People who are more neurotic and experience more negative emotions tend to procrastinate more frequently.

2   Counselling services to help students

To support students, universities should offer counselling services, therapists and psychological support. These services are set up for those who are dealing with emotional problems, stressful situations, anxiety, school failure, academic failure, lack of motivation, difficult life situations, etc. They should also support students with adaptation to the university way of studying and thus prevent early withdrawal from studies. Many universities offer psychological crisis interventions. Consultations take place in person, by phone or online and are offered to all students, including international ones. Foreign students frequently have problems adapting to a new, unfamiliar environment and may often suffer from symptoms of social isolation.

Counselling services offer the opportunity to work on students' own self-development. Services are implemented within career centres. Career counselling can provide students with the possibility of self-coaching. The Higher Education Counselling Standards were created at universities in the Czech Republic in 2023. In addition to career counselling, the standards also cover areas such as study, psychological, psychotherapeutic, special pedagogical, legal, socio-legal and spiritual counselling. One of the key aspects of the Standards is the clear definition of roles and responsibilities. The standards define what the client (applicant, student or university graduate) can expect from consultancy. They determine what types of advice are available to them and in what form. They also define the rights and obligations of both clients and advisers. The standards also protect counsellors in the sense that they establish the possibility of refusing service to a client, terminating cooperation with a client, or attending supervision. With the Standards, all universities in the Czech Republic have a framework they may rely on. In addition, the Standards allow sufficient flexibility for various details. Each university can build upon them with internal directives tailored to the specifics of its

institution. They also provide space for effective collaboration with other types of consultancies and enable the uniform setting of service quality for students.

3 Well-being support

3.1 Student well-being support

Promoting student well-being in higher education is a key element for overall student success and satisfaction. There are several ways that universities can support student well-being. In addition to psychological and counselling services, they also support students in other areas. Students often struggle with a lack of funds which may affect their diet, housing and other aspects of life. They must decide whether to work part-time or even full-time to have enough funds, or to attend lectures. They must also be able to balance a schedule that includes both work duties and academic responsibilities. Many universities have a system that allows students to create their own timetables based on compulsory, optional, or elective subjects. This gives students the flexibility to design their schedules according to their personal needs. Students generally view this independent approach to timetable creation positively, and it is often seen as a satisfactory method. Flexible study programmes also provide the opportunity for individual study plans and the recognition of diverse learning styles. The support of individual plans for students with special learning needs is one of the additional means of promoting student well-being. To support the financial ability of students, universities offer various forms of scholarships and loans. Students can use the offered options from some projects, e.g. when studying abroad, a part of the finances is covered by projects.

Another problem that affects the well-being of students can be social isolation. A new environment, a change in social relationships and a feeling of alienation can lead to loneliness and depression. This situation is not unique, and especially for more anxious, introverted students, it can be a major problem. Universities support the creation of student communities and their activities. Supporting student organizations, organizing social events and creating space for students to meet contributes to a better adaptation of students to the university environment and is a positive source of belonging to the university.

Supporting a healthy lifestyle is an important aspect of well-being. Universities should promote healthy eating habits and set schedules that allow students to visit the university's dining facilities during class breaks. The diet offered should be balanced, including regular exercises and enough rest are important elements for the well-being of students. Universities can build relaxation zones inside the buildings or outside on the school premises. The academic environment offers an opportunity for students to meet with each other or with teachers. It is used for academic work or relaxation, to stop and focus. Some schools offer fitness programmes and wellness activities as part of well-being for students. Lifestyle counselling can also be very beneficial for students. It is frequently implemented within the services of university counselling centres.

3.2 Support for the well-being of teachers

If we talk about well-being in universities, we cannot forget the psychological well-being of university teachers. Supporting teachers' well-being is crucial for their own well-being, but also for the quality of teaching and the benefit of students. If the teacher creates a good atmosphere in the classroom, if their teaching is interesting for the students, if the teacher is liked by the students for some reason, this can increase the positive attitude of the students towards learning and thus promote the motivation to study in general. There are several ways to promote the well-being of teachers. This is about providing sufficient support and resources and supporting work-life balance. Teachers need adequate resources and support to do their jobs effectively. This includes sufficient financial resources, material equipment, professional support and the possibility of professional development. Teachers have a demanding job, and it is important that they have enough time to rest, relax and take care of their personal needs. Schools should support the work-life balance of teachers and offer them flexible working hours, holidays and support when needed.

4 Conclusion

Well-being, defined as a state in which individuals realize their own potential and are able to cope with the regular stresses of life, is essential for the quality of life. It is crucial to support well-being even during university studies so that students feel good throughout their education and are well-prepared for their future career paths. This applies both from the perspective of their internal motivation to study and the support provided by universities.
To achieve this, universities utilize a system of counselling, psychological, and career services. Additionally, fostering social connections to strengthen student communities, promoting healthy lifestyles, and creating rest and relaxation zones are all vital. Together, these and many other activities contribute to the physical, mental, and social well-being of students.

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