

Background

Research Question: What are the gaps in service and programming in Ontario colleges to support international students' mental health and well-being, and what needs to be done to fill those gaps?

The research is significant as it addresses the deficiencies in the literature about the mental health needs of international students in Ontario colleges. Analyzing such experiences is critical to developing support systems that foster international students' well-being and academic success.

Methods

Methodology: Mixed methods (Quantitative survey with qualitative responses)

Method: Anonymous online survey

Tools: Questionnaire collected via Microsoft Teams.

Participants: International students in Ontario colleges.

Recruitment: Recruitment was done through snowball method and involved personal and professional networks

Data Analysis: Statistics and Thematic Analysis

Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality was preserved in the process of anonymizing data. The results were in aggregate form to protect confidentiality.

Key Findings

Demographics and Backgrounds: 18-30 age group; the majority from Asian background with varied educational backgrounds.

Utilization of Mental Health Services: Many used services but academic workload and privacy issues were barriers

Comfort Levels talking about Mental Health: Cultural acceptance of mental health impacts the degree of openness.

Satisfaction with Mental Health Services: Many participants mentioned access to services as being an issue.

Preferences for Mental Health Resources: Advice and group support, skill development workshops, and language help are preferred.

Importance of Hometown Ties: Active relationships with family and relatives had a positive impact on mental welfare.

Discussion

Our findings are in line with the literature that international students face challenges related to mental health. Our work contributes to understanding how international students attending Ontario Colleges are impacted. Our research points to the importance of providing culturally specific supports and highlights the significance of eliminating obstacles to accessing mental health services in order to improve the mental health and wellness of international students while they are studying in Ontario.

Implications for policy and/or practice

Tailored Support Services: Provide suitable mental health services matching international students' specific requirements.

Multilingual Counselling: Offer counselling services in various languages for accessibility.

Peer Support Programs: Develop social programs that would promote a sense of community and support among international students.

Mental Health Education: Include mental health education in orientation and the curriculum to decrease the stigma.

Inclusive Community Programs: Initiate activities that promote diversity and integration.

Address Systemic Barriers: It is the job of policymakers to deal with financial, immigration, and cultural barriers to the availability of mental health services.

Culturally responsive and all-encompassing mental healthcare that responds to the varying demands of international students are needed to improve access to improve the mental health and wellness of international students.

References

