

Work Life Balances and Wellbeing for International Students

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Bachelor of Social and Community Development Capstone Project

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April 2024

Background

This study investigates challenges encountered by International students in post-secondary institutes in Canada focusing on factors influencing perceived work-life imbalances and overall well-being. Research predicts that the combination of tuition fees, government work restrictions, limited job opportunities, and inadequate social supports in Canada, adversely affects mental health.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, international students commonly struggle with financial pressures, anxiety about their loved ones and personal health, and feelings of loneliness (Hari et al., 2021).

Despite the prevalence of international students in Canadian post-secondary institutes, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the challenges they face, particularly in relation to perceived work-life imbalances and overall well-being.

Methods

The research used a non-probability sampling method to investigate factors influencing perceptions of work-life limitations among Canadian-international students. Data collection utilized an online questionnaire distributed via Microsoft Forms, spanning 11 weeks and involving 8 participants who responded to 15 survey questions. Recruitment was predominately through online social media platforms.

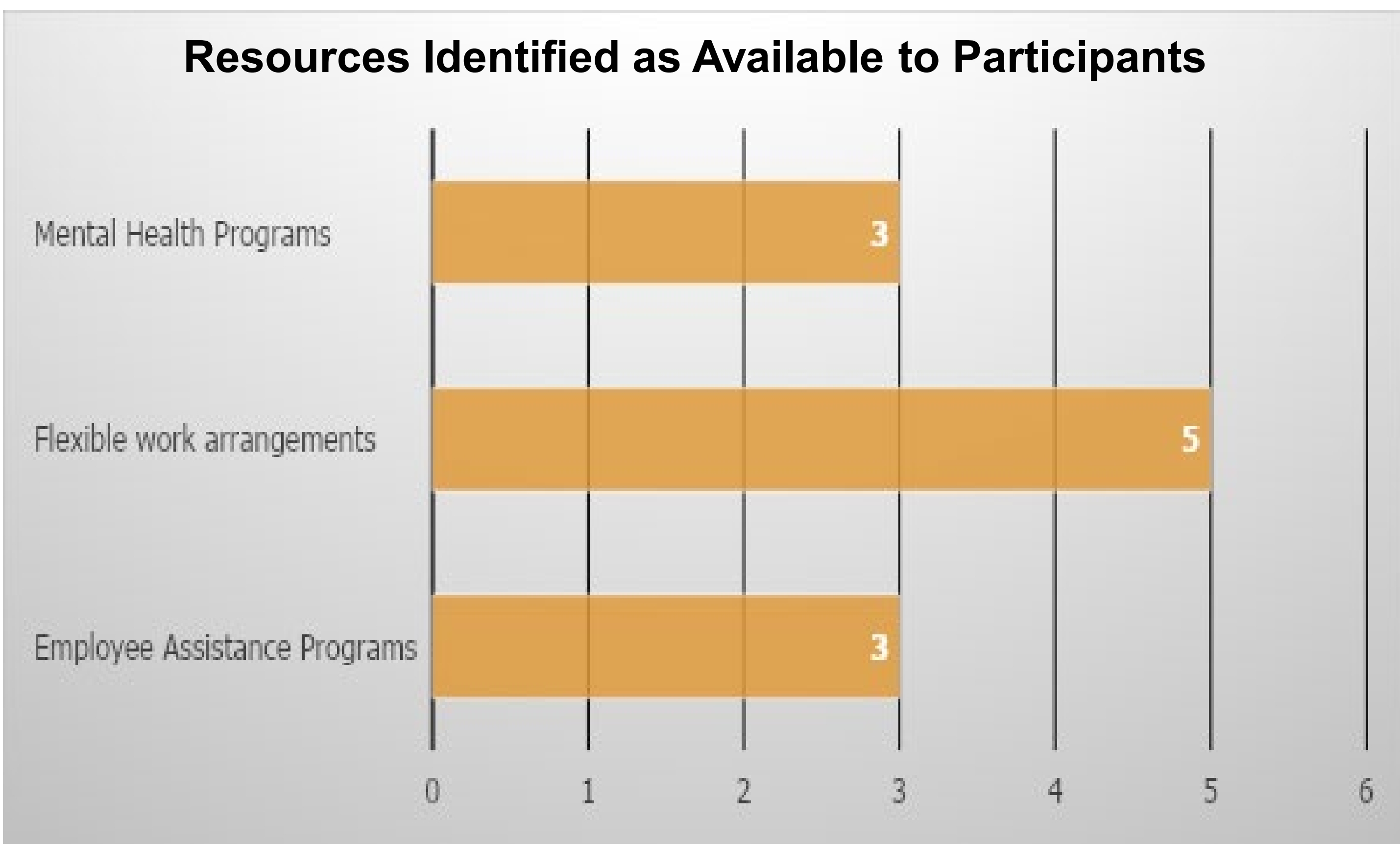
Ethical considerations, including informed consent, and ensured participant confidentiality. Ethical considerations, such as ensuring accessibility, were proactively addressed. No concerns were reported to the Research Ethics Board Chair. The process involved obtaining informed consent, distributing questionnaires and anonymous data collection which then was analyzed through excel tables and graphs. The study successfully upheld ethical standards, protected participant confidentiality, and provided valuable initial insights into the work-life experiences of Canadian-international students, with potential implications for policy updates.

Key Findings

8 participants, 75% of which are from Brampton, were involved in this study. Their Program of study ranged from Computer Science, Project Management, Interaction Design, Marketing Management, Business, Nursing and Social Service Work. 62% of participants were between the ages of 26-35, 25% between 18-25 and 13 % between 26-45. 75% indicated their highest level of study as a Bachelors degree and 88% highlighted being of single marital status. These findings indicated a group of diverse students managing various responsibilities.

63% of participants indicated part-time employment of 10 to 20 hours a week across diverse academic programs. The prevalence of part-time work aligns with the trend of students managing work and academics. Participants were asked to described their experience with challenges or difficulties in balancing work and personal life, 50% are struggling with finding stable employment and **60% highlighted work culture being overly forced and not having enough time for personal time.** "Since my school started I've been really busy for the huge academic load and long hours travel time (total 6hs), it's very difficult to put aside time for my personal life." Post COVID-19, students faced challenges, balancing study, work and personal life especially during initial stages of study and employment search.

Participants were asked about available resources, 37% of participants Identified resources such as Employee Assistance Programs and Mental Health Programs are made available while 63% indicated Flexible Work Arrangements support was received. 25% of participants provided feedback indicating language barriers hindering access to these opportunities.



Discussion

A recent Statistics Canada report also aligns with my research, emphasizing the need for change to support international students financial and mental well being. Findings indicate that the factors drawing a significant number of immigrants to obtain residence in Canadian provinces impact the mobility choices of international students post-graduation (Crossman et al., 2022). This connects with my findings **as 75% of research participants had a previous degree, yet 50% of participants are still struggling** to find stable part time employment.

A decreasing retention rate indicates students leave Canada after education, emphasizing the importance of social services for long-term wellbeing (Akbar, 2022). Studies from the Mental Health Commission of Canada addressing Immigrant, refugee, ethno cultural and racialized populations and the social determinants of health also reveal early intervention is crucial for enhancing outcomes and reducing economic costs, emphasizing the need for tailored mental health services for international students (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019).

Implications for Policy/Practice

In future research, a more diverse study with a larger sample size could offer a clearer understanding of challenges faced by international students across Canada and various institutions.

Suggestions Include:

1. Tracking students from academia to workforce could reveal work-life balance's lasting impact on mental health.
2. Considering factors such as ethnicity and culture could provide insights into specific student subgroups, guiding policy development.
3. Connecting current data to ongoing research enhances credibility, advocating for policy changes to support international student wellbeing in Canada.

References

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