STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS IN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

S Linda Sitoe
Supervisors:
Prof N Ndlovu
Prof MA Temane

Date: 08 January 2026

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

PRESENTATION FOCUS

- Introduction
- Background
- Problem statement
- Research purpose and objectives
- Research design

- Research methodology
- Results
- Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

- Mental health has become a pandemic affecting higher education institutions.

- With soaring rates of anxiety, depression, suicide ideation and self-harm, substance use disorders, sleep disorders, attention deficit disorders.

- Other psychological issues influence the mental health of students include financial stress, academic pressure, trauma and societal issues.

BACKGROUND

- HEIs have been battling with an increased demand for mental healthcare services by students.

- Poor resource, lack of funding, staff shortage, impact of COVID-19, and issues related to stigma all contributes to mental health challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTION

RESEARCH PURPOSE

To develop strategies to facilitate the mental health of students in an HEI.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **Phase1:** Explore and describe students' experiences using mental healthcare services.
- **Phase 1:** Explore and describe mental health practitioners' experiences providing mental healthcare services to students.
- **Phase 2:** Develop a conceptual framework to facilitate the mental health of students in an HEI.
- **Phase 3:** Develop strategies to facilitate the mental health of students in an HEI.
- **Phase 4:** Evaluate the conceptual framework and strategies to facilitate the mental health of students in an HEI.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative

Exploratory

Descriptive

Contextual

That followed a phenomenological and appreciative inquiry approach.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Phase one: used the 5D of appreciative inquiry.

- Participants selection: purposive and snowball sampling.

- Data collected using in-depth individual phenomenological interviews and naïve sketches.

- Piloted with 3 participants.

- Data analysis done using Giorgi's data analysis method

MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Credibility

Confirmability

Transferability

Dependability

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Informed consent

- Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

- Risks and benefits

- Gatekeeper permission

RESULTS FOR PHASE ONE

- The collected data was used to derive themes and sub-themes from both the students and the mental health practitioners.

- Seven themes were derived from the students and five themes were derived from mental health practitioners.

SUMMARY OF THEMES FOR STUDENTS

- **Theme 1:** Mental healthcare services are viewed as a setting to promote mental health.
- **Theme 2:** Meaningful experiences using mental healthcare services.
- **Theme 3**: Negative experiences using mental healthcare services.
- **Theme 4:** Mental healthcare services is a safe space to express oneself.
- **Theme 5:** Efficiency of working processes and systems to provide the best mental healthcare services.
- **Theme 6:** Establish inclusive and attractive mental healthcare services for students.
- **Theme 7:** Reconsider mental healthcare services' monitoring and evaluation approaches.

SUMMARY OF THEMES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

- **Theme 1:** Mental healthcare services are viewed as a source of holistic support.
- **Theme 2:** Mental healthcare provision is experienced as fulfilling and challenging.
- **Theme 3:** Mental healthcare services should be student-centred and engaging.
- **Theme 4:** Available, accessible, and responsive services to address students' needs.
- **Theme 5:** Mental healthcare services that integrate monitoring and evaluation strategies.

SUMMARY OF THE MERGED THEMES

- Theme 1: Promoting mental health and support

- Theme 2: A meaningful and fulfilling experience

- Theme 3: Safe and student-centred mental healthcare services

- Theme 4: Efficient, accessible, and available mental healthcare services

- Theme 5: Ensuring monitoring and evaluation of mental healthcare services
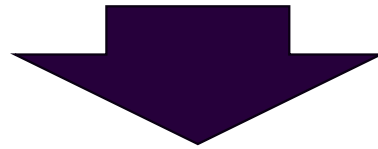
Facilitation of holistic mental healthcare services

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR RELATIONSHIP PHASE

STRATEGY 1: CREATE A SAFE THERAPEUTIC SPACE

Objective 1.1: Ensure physical and emotional safety.

Objective 1.2: Reduce threats to self, others, and the institution.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR RELATIONSHIP PHASE

STRATEGY 2: FACILITATE AUTHENTIC MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

Objective 2.1: Ensure safe and supportive mental health conversations.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR WORKING PHASE

STRATEGY 3: FACILITATE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Objective 3.1: Reduce stigma by increasing awareness of mental health support.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR WORKING PHASE

- **STRATEGY 4: STUDENT-CENTRED MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

- **Objective 4.1:** Improve the efficiency and accessibility of mental healthcare by optimizing the use of allocated
- resources.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR WORKING PHASE

- **STRATEGY 5: PROVISION OF HOLISTIC MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

- **Objective 5.1:** Achieve and maintain students' mental health.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR TERMINATION PHASE

STRATEGY 6: FACILITATE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Objective 6.1: Continuous improvement of mental healthcare services.

PHASE 3: STRATEGIES FOR TERMINATION PHASE

- **STRATEGY 7: ENSURE SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE**

- **Objective 7.1:** Plan, liaise, and collaborate with internal and external stakeholders.

THANK YOU