



Bridging the Gap: Exploring Faculty Support for Law Student's Mental Health and Student's Perspective on Faculty Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the mental health of law students and their perspectives on faculty engagement. A sample of 10 law students and 05 teachers from the Law Department (academic years 2020–2025) participated in semi-structured interviews. Participants, including both male and female students, represented diverse experiences with faculty. The study focuses on the role of faculty support and engagement in influencing students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Key findings indicate that faculty approachability, responsiveness, and a supportive classroom atmosphere significantly alleviate academic stress and foster a positive learning environment. However, students also reported unmet expectations, including limited availability of faculty for guidance and insufficient consideration of their mental health needs, which adversely affected their psychological resilience. This research highlights the fault-finding role of faculty in forming students' mental health inside the demanding field of law studies. It involves institutional intentions to increase faculty student relationships through target practice and support programs. By talking the gaps in engagement, this study offers valuable insights into improving the academic and sentimental experiences of law students and emphasizes the significance of prioritizing mental health in university.



Introduction

In recent years, due to the demanding character of legal education, which involves hard educational program, aggressive ideas, and large opportunity commitments, the mental health of law students has collected a lot of consideration. Research highlights that law students experience larger rates of nervousness, concavity, and psychological distress than students in other disciplines

(Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). Additionally, a study by Sheldon and Krieger handled in 2007, reveals that stress levels amid law students are not only high but can also infuriate psychological distress and bring about a decline in prosperity over time. Students' connection in their studies and, accordingly, their general well-being may be imperiled by such stress. In challenging fields like law, research has shown that faculty support can have a main impact on students' academic success, professional personality establishment, and mental health (Braxton and others., 2014). Furthermore, the relationship between law students and faculty representatives plays a critical duty in professional socialization that refers to the process of cultivating the identity, approaches and values expected in the legal system. This socialization is powerfully affected by faculty interactions, as these connections serve as models for students' future professional conduct (Daicoff, 2004). Previous researches shows that when faculty members are actively involved in students' education, students are more likely to feel engaged, supported, and motivated to pursue their legal education with purpose (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Faculty members are the educators and academic staff responsible for teaching, advising, and guiding students within an educational institution. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), faculty members' actions and interactions with students significantly impact student engagement, learning, and development, highlighting the importance of faculty-student relationships in educational outcomes. This support can have direct academic benefits, as Torregosa et al. (2016) discovered, linking faculty encouragement with improved academic performance. For male students in STEM fields, supportive faculty interactions specifically enhance their confidence in mathematical abilities, according to Kim and Sax (2018). Interestingly, other research, such as Fredrickson's (2012) study, shows that while faculty support might not always directly increase student satisfaction, it plays an indirect role by strengthening the connection between the effort students put into their studies and the satisfaction they feel.

Problem Statement

The mental health challenges faced by law students have garnered growing consideration due to the extraordinary pressures accompanying legal education. These challenges frequently bring about raised levels of stress, nervousness, and different mental health concerns. Faculty representatives play a critical role in forming the academic and emotional landscape of students' experiences, Academic expectations play a main function in forming students' basic ideas of their educational journey. Lobo and colleagues in 2020, establish that students who expected embodied knowledge and cooperative teaching patterns frequently articulated disappointment when faced with traditional lecture-based approaches. This disparity not only impacted their commitment but also afflicted their overall academic performance. Students also hold expectations about the social atmosphere of their academies. According to Tinto (2012), social integration is critical for academic endurance, as students who feel connected to peers and faculty are more likely to succeed. For example, first-year students frequently hope spirited peer networks and friendly faculty. Emotional support from peers helps law students manage stress and nervousness accompanying their challenging syllabus. A study by Larcombe and others (2016) establish that law students who involved in auxiliary peer relationships reported lower levels of psychological distress. Similarly, research by Stallman (2010) highlighted the securing role of peer support against mental health challenges in university students, still there debris a critical gap in understanding how faculty engagement impacts students' mental health.

Despite the critical role of faculty, there is a lack of research directing expressly on law students' viewpoints concerning faculty engagement and support for mental health. Previous studies frequently statement discoveries across more obvious student communities, leaving the nuanced

needs of law students unaddressed. Exploring students' perspectives is owned by adjusting faculty interventions to better address the extraordinary stressors faced in legal education.

Furthermore, the connection between faculty engagement and mental health consequences for students is not slightly one-sided. Faculty members may face their own hurdles, such as restricted practice in mental health issues, lack of institutional support, and the need to balance academic responsibilities with counselling duties. These challenges can prevent faculty efforts to connect with students on a deeper level. This disengage highlights the requirement of bridging the gap between institutional resources, faculty engagement, and student expectations.

A qualitative approach to this matter grants for a rich and detailed investigation of law students' ideas of faculty engagement. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research provides the elasticity to capture the complicatedness of students' lived experiences, their expectations of faculty support, and the circumstantial factors that influence these ideas. By transporting interviews with law students, this study can reveal patterns and ideas that indicate how faculty engagement is experienced and valuable. Such visions are critical to informing institutional policies and supporting a culture of collaboration between faculty and students.

Ultimately, this research explores to address an urgent and understudied issue in university. By exploring the perspectives of law students on faculty engagement and support for mental health, this study aims to help along between student needs and faculty practices. The insights gained will contribute to the growth of strategies that prioritize mental health in legal education, constructing a more auxiliary and inclusive academic environment for future legal professionals.

Objectives of study

1. To evaluate the mental health challenges faced by law students during their academic journey.
2. To examine the role of faculty support in diminishing mental health issues with law students.
3. To explore students' aspects on faculty engagement and its affect their academic and emotional well- being.
4. To describe gaps in faculty-student interactions that influences the mental health of law students.

Significance of Study

This study holds critical worth as it addresses the developing concern of mental health challenges between law students, a community frequently overlooked in research on university and mental well-being. Legal education is famous for its strictness and aggressive environment that can infuriate stress, nervousness, and mental exhaustion between students. By analyzing the views of law students on faculty engagement and support for mental health, this research sheds touch down an essential but under surveyed aspect of academic life. The insights promote can inform faculty practices and institutional policies to create a more auxiliary and inclusive educational atmosphere.

One key importance of the study manifest its potential to help along between institutional efforts and student expectations. Additionally, this research contributes to the more extensive be concerned with mental health in university by highlight the role of faculty as critical shareholders. Faculty representatives are particularly positioned to influence the academic and emotional welfare of students. Understanding how students distinguish and importance faculty support can guide the growth of professional training programs for faculty, providing them with the skills and knowledge to address mental health issues efficiently. From a practical view, the recommendations can

symbolize a base for designing target interventions to lighten stress and promote flexibility with law students. For institutions, the research offers litigable recommendations for merging mental health support into faculty- student interactions, promoting a cooperative approach to welfare. For law students, the study advocates for a more receptive and understanding academic environment, eventually helping them balance the demands of their instruction with their mental health needs.

Literature review

Research frequently highlights that mental health issues are excessively greater with law students compared to their peers in other academic disciplines (Dyrbye and others., 2021). While the competitive and intensive nature of legal education is often cited as a primary contributor, the role of faculty support and engagement remains a critical yet underexplored area in addressing these concerns. Faculty support, characterized by mentorship, accessibility, and empathetic interaction, can significantly influence students' mental health outcomes and academic success (Beck et al., 2020).

Recent study conducted by Horia Mihai Raboca in July 2024 shows that Working students are an important and diverse category within today's higher education institutions. Part of the strategies necessary for the academic motivation of working students and implicitly the increase of their performance concerns a series of strategies that involve individual, institutional and structural factors. This study investigates the relationship between working students perceptions of faculty support and their overall level of academic motivation (intrinsic results indicate that faculty support for working students has a strong positive relationship with students' intrinsic academic motivation and respectively a weaker relationship with academic amotivation. These results show that any policy or strategy adopted by faculty decision-makers to help working students improve their academic motivation (performance) must include the provision of support on different dimensions (social psychological and functional).

Flynn and colleagues conducted research in 2019 to explore the mental health challenges faced by law students are a growing concern, driven by the rigorous demands of legal education and the competitive environment of law schools. Their study aimed to examine the prevalence of psychological symptoms among law students, evaluate the role of academic stressors in contributing to these symptoms, and provide actionable recommendations for college counselors to support this vulnerable population. A total of 316 law students engaged in the study, with findings displaying that more than half experienced critical symptoms of despair and psychological distress, while nearly half shown syndromes of anxiety. Analysis showed that law school- specific stressors, containing massive workloads, social challenges with peers, and incompetent instrumental support, were significant predictors of these psychological syndromes. These recommendations highlight the crucial need for target interventions in law schools, such as stress management workshops, peer support programs, and approachable counseling services. The study further stresses the role of college teachers in forwarding law students' mental health needs by providing tailor-made resources and supporting a auxiliary educational environment. By determining ultimate impressive stressors and their suggestions, this research contributes to establishing effective approaches to lighten mental health issues and embellish well- being between law students.

There is a growing body of research examining psychological distress in law students. Another research in this area was conducted by Skead and colleagues in 2020. This study investigates psychological well- being among 225 law students at two distinct Australian law schools using an online survey. The survey assessed emotional well-being, university appraisal, belongingness, perceptions of competitiveness and supportiveness, sources of pressure, and motivations for

studying law. Results indicated lower well-being levels among law students compared to the general public, aligning with prior studies.

Student-teacher relationships and students' perceptions of their instructors play a pivotal role in shaping academic engagement, encompassing effort, dedication, and learning success. Problem-Based Learning (PBL), a student-centered teaching approach, fosters self-regulation, teamwork, and intensive relationship-building. The study conducted by Carmen and Clara in 2021, explores the connection between students' academic engagement and their perceptions of instructors in a teacher education program for pre-service English teachers in Austria.

Using an online questionnaire, data were collected from 34 students to assess their academic engagement and perceptions of instructors' caring, credibility, communication style, and feedback in a PBL-based course compared to traditional teaching approaches. The findings climax how PBL definitely influences student-teacher connections and improves students' approaches of their instructors, leading to improved academic commitment. The study provides valuable visions into the influence of PBL in creating a auxiliary learning environment, exceptionally in the circumstances of connected to the internet education made necessary by the Covid-19 universal. These results underline the significance of promoting forceful social relations and creative teaching approaches to experience students' excitement for learning and their overall academic progress. Another study surveying the student's view was attended by Umbach and Wawrzynski in 2005, that study analyze the relationship between faculty engagement practices and students' ideas of support and learning in university. Recognizing the important role of ability in forming students' academic experiences, the research delves into the nuanced practices ability conducts influence student engagement and learning consequences. The researchers employed hierarchic uninterrupted shaping (HLM), a healthy statistical technique ideal for resolving data with reside constructions, to judge the impact of distinguishing ability practices at both individual and institutional levels.

Methodology

This study engages a qualitative research design to investigate the role of faculty support in advancing the mental health and welfare of law students. Given the complex and subjective type of the point, qualitative methods were preferred to capture detailed judgments into students' and faculty members' experiences. The study includes almost structured interviews with law students and faculty members to gain a deeper understanding of their ideas concerning the impact of faculty engagement on students' academic and passionate welfare. Thematic reasoning was used to analyze the data, admitting for the recognition of key ideas and patterns inside participants' reactions.

Participant Characteristics

The participants in this place study contain 15 law students and faculty members from the University of Sahiwal, representing diversified academic years (2020-2025). The sample consists of both male and female members, guaranteeing gender difference and conquering potential distinctnesses in experiences. Students were selected from both lower (2020-2025) and uppermost (2023-2028) academic years to provide a inclusive view of the emerging dynamics of faculty support. Faculty members participating in the study are stable staff, assuring long-term engagement with students and constant observations. The participants were preferred established their diverse roles in faculty-student interactions, containing Class Representatives, Group Representatives, and average students.

Procedure

The research process started with acquiring authorization from the law department, attended by presenting a detailed research proposal outlining the study's purpose and methods. After acquire authorization, members were identified established the inclusion criteria and contacted to participate willingly. Informed consent was acquired from all participants, guaranteeing they implicit the study's goals and their rights, containing the right to withdraw at whatever time. Semi-organized one-on-one interviews were scheduled at members' availability, each enduring nearly 20-30 minutes. The interviews were audible acoustic wave-recorded with consent, and the data was transcribed and analyzed through thematic reasoning. The entire data collection process took about 1 to 1.5 weeks.

Results

The results of the study told a powerful adjustment between students' and teachers' ideas of the significance of faculty support in both academic and individual domains. Students usually acknowledged the influence of faculty in leading them through academic challenges, such as complex coursework and course recommendation, but signified concerns about the lack of personal support, specifically in discussing emotional welfare and life struggles. Teachers, in another way, highlighted the need for understanding individual student needs, fostering trust, and contribution psychological support during stressful periods. They still advocated for bendable academic tactics to shelter personal or medical challenges. Both students and faculty highlight the value of unfaithful activities in promoting holistic development, with teachers emphasizing the significance of commitment outside the classroom to support teamwork, leadership, and elasticity. The issue of bias and partiality was a persisting concern, with students noticing gender prejudice and preferential treatment as important factors providing to feelings of injustice. Additionally, both students and faculty recognized the crucial role of mentorship in facilitating academic achievement and providing emotional counseling. Students appreciated the experienced exposure build up through activities like arguable courts and conferences, while teachers advocated for professional growth opportunities, containing stress management workshops and career counseling. Overall, the decisions highlight the need for a more inclusive and understanding approach to faculty- student interactions, individual that balances academic counseling with personal support, creating a nurturing environment for students' academic and emotional development.

Discussion

The findings concerning this study highlight the critical role of faculty engagement in both the academic and emotional welfare of law students. Students recognized the positive impact of academic guidance but meant concerns about the lack of personal support, highlight the need for a more holistic approach from faculty. The difference between academic and personal support cooperates with existent literature, that underlines the significance of faculty's involvement in discussing emotional and psychological challenges (Tinto, 1993; McClure, 2020). Furthermore, faculty interactions were raise to considerably influence students' mental health, with auxiliary connections lightening stress and promoting a sense of belonging. However, issues in the way that favoritism and bias were reported, that negatively concerned students' ideas of justice and meritocracy. These findings desire that faculty's approachability, compassion, and understanding of individual student needs are essential in supporting an auxiliary academic environment that promotes both academic success and mental welfare.

Conclusion

This study climaxes the critical role of faculty engagement in forming law students' academic experiences and mental health. The results highlight that while academic counseling is mainly well-known, there is a clear need for more inclusive support that addresses students' personal and emotional challenges. Proactive faculty engagement, containing personalized mentorship and mental health knowledge, was established to embellish students' flexibility and academic effects. The study also concedes that the demanding character of law education exacerbates mental health issues, making it authoritative for faculty to promote an all-encompassing and understanding environment. Future research should devote effort to something evolving institutional structures that encourage ability training in mental health and student-concentrated practices, ensuring a more equalized and auxiliary educational experience for all students.

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