



Evaluating a Peer Buddy System's Impact on Engagement and Wellbeing in Pre-registration Nursing Students

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Abstract

Student attrition, social isolation, and wellbeing challenges continue to affect pre-registration nursing students, particularly during their transition to university. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a student-led peer support buddy system designed to complement existing support services and enhance wellbeing. Using a mixed-methods design, the study examined the system's effectiveness through analysis of attrition data and thematic analysis of focus group interviews with students, peer buddies, and academic staff. Findings revealed strong positive perceptions of the buddy system, particularly in promoting a sense of community, facilitating social integration, and reducing anxiety. However, challenges such as academic pressures, time constraints, and limited mental health resources were also identified. The findings suggest that peer-led support initiatives can contribute to improved student engagement, wellbeing, and retention when integrated within a broader institutional support framework. The study recommends closer integration with existing support services and enhanced training for peer buddies. In particular, introducing mandatory annual Mental Health First Aid training is suggested to strengthen the system's impact and sustainability. Overall, the buddy system demonstrates strong potential as a practical strategy for supporting student success in nursing education.

Keywords

student wellbeing, peer support, buddy system, nursing education, social belonging

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