



Phenomenology of Student Wellbeing in Higher Education: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The present qualitative study explores challenges that influence student wellbeing and possible strategies to handle these challenges. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with university students from the faculty of sports sciences in a foundation university. The researchers applied phenomenological approach through snowballing and purposeful sampling. The findings reveal five main challenges that impact wellbeing of students negatively. These are loneliness, academic pressure, anxiety about uncertainties, lack of facilities and financial difficulties. The research also highlighted five main strategies to maximize wellbeing. These are time management, stress-relief techniques, cultivating a growth mindset, academic support mechanisms, and having a part-time job. The research underlines the importance of pointing out challenges of student wellbeing and applying efficient strategies to boost it. If universities address these challenges in a comprehensive perspective, it is more likely to create a more conducive environment for students who want to be engaged academically and emotionally.

Keywords: Challenges of wellbeing; Student wellbeing; Strategies for wellbeing; University students

1. Introduction

Wellbeing has been an attention of focus in higher education (Douwes, Metselaar, Pijnenborg, & Boonstra., 2023; Krägeloh, C.U., Dryer, R., Moir, F., Billington, R., & Hill, 2018; Chaudhry, 2024) because of its crucial impacts on students' emotional and academic engagement. A large body of research indicates that students with low level of wellbeing suffer from numerous adverse psychological effects such as decline in satisfaction with personal and school life, symptoms of low self-confidence (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2022); depression (Gilman & Huebner, 2006); hopelessness (Majumdar & Ray, 2010); and non-suicidal self-injury and/ or suicidal ideation (Bantjes et al., 2023). Furthermore, low level of wellbeing indicates itself in erosion on academic engagement in various ways including lack of concentration (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2022); impaired capacity to keep up with academic workload, poor educational outcomes (Goretzki & Zysk, 2017); student burnout and so on (Palos et al., 2019). Despite the existing body of research, there is relatively limited information about student perspectives on their well-being (Douwes et al., 2023). Student experiences is as equally valuable, though. From a phenomenological angle, their own experiences will provide deep insight for their counterparts. To put yourself in the shoes of others may be difficult, in this case, in place of students for other parties of higher education including university management, academic and administrative personnel, and parents. To approach the issue of well-being from student perspective will more likely shed on lights about the phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Additionally, being aware of possible challenges and preferable strategies of wellbeing will enable educational institutions to formulate more evidence-based policies and practices to strengthen students' wellbeing (Douwes et al., 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this present study is to attempt to reveal what are the possible challenges and

strategies to overcome them from the perspective of the students, who are the core subject of higher education. This study aims to answer the research questions below:

1. What are the main challenges impacting wellbeing of university students?
2. What are the main strategies to boost wellbeing of university students?

2. Literature review

2.1. Challenges and responsibilities of university students

University students excluding non-traditional students (Bendixen-Noe & Giebelhaus, 1998; Chung et al., 2014) can be defined as late adolescents who are aged between 18 - 22 years (Allen & Waterman, 2019). They are in a transitional period of time. According to Zarrett and Eccles (2006), they experience main challenges as they need to carry demanding roles in this phase of their lives. They have to manage their roles and succeed in these roles; identify their personality with strong and weak points, learn to coordinate; assess and make necessary life changes and cope with these changes. Additionally, they start higher education, which is another key stage in young people's life span. Combined with bodily and psychological changes, responsibilities of university life cause drastic occurrences in their lives. They may need to relocate, learn to lead an independent life, establish new social networks, adapt to new conditions and they may need to shoulder additional greater financial burdens (Campbell et al., 2022).

2.2. Stress and mental health challenges in university students

University life is a new chapter for students, which brings academic responsibilities alongside. Students are to develop an academic character and develop a wide range of skills to be able to cope with stress caused by acquisition of new knowledge, studying for examinations, keeping up with strict deadlines. They may feel under pressure stemming from expectations of parents and faculty members regarding their performance, from high workload, from managing time and so on (Weber et al., 2019). Furthermore, students who have difficulty in facing such challenges may show symptoms of anxiety and depression (Schönfeld et al., 2016). They may experience emotional and physical exhaustion and end up with insomnia (Waqas et al., 2015). According to an article by World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), adolescents may fall victim to eating disorders associated with food preoccupation, develop risk-taking behaviours (e. g. heavy episodic drinking and substance use). They may go extreme in some cases leading to self-harm and suicide.

2.3. Stress coping strategies for young adults

There is a growing body of research that explores coping strategies that can be exploited by young people against numerous challenges. According to a study by Freire et al. (2016), among 1,072 university students, three main coping strategies have been positive reappraisal, support-seeking, and planning. Similarly, as mentioned by Vavilova (2021), positive self-esteem and planning are used by students as strategies to boost their wellbeing. Being an active way of dealing with barriers in front of wellbeing, positive reappraisal gives university students the chance of avoiding psychopathology in the short and long term (Garza Varela et al., 2021). Also, planning provides students with soft skill of time management in which they are more likely to spend their time in structured activities and gain new interests, and it gives a positive reading of the ongoing period (Pigaiani et al., 2020). Another strategy for students is to engage in task-oriented activities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1974) in which they can practice sports, yoga and meditation and take time off for relaxation (Hagen et al., 2023). Another strategy which students benefit from is to seek for support. Students, who are emotionally more open, tend to look for support to keep their negative feelings under control. Support mechanisms that are functional for students can come in different ways such as peer mentoring and tutorial support systems (Chadha et al., 2020).

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research design

Acknowledging challenges that affect students' prosperity and investigating prospective suggestions to meet these challenges, the present study puts wellbeing in the centre. To this end, the researchers designed and conducted a qualitative study as it is relevant to the nature of the study focus. Indeed, the researchers adopted an exploratory approach to identify challenges and potential solutions affecting wellbeing through students' perspectives. They aimed of "understanding human beings at a deeper level by gazing at the phenomenon" (Qutoshi, 2018, p. 215). Within this respect, the researchers favoured a phenomenological approach as it is "good at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard" (Lester, 1999, p. 4). The responsibility of a researcher applying phenomenology is "producing categories to unlock meaning through the process of phenomenological interpretation, analysis, reflection and writing" (Stolz, 2023, p.825). Thus, the researchers, wearing phenomenological glasses, focused on the experiences that unravel the participants' emotions and thoughts about the research topic.

3.2. Participants

The sample of the study is students in Turkish higher education. Identifying challenges and possible solutions, the present study, specifically, tried to explore the wellbeing of students who are registered in sports sciences faculty of a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. At the start of the research, the researchers decided to recruit participants by following two main criteria, which would lead them to stay on the focus and manage time effectively. One criterion was to adopt snowballing to collect data. This meant that recommended participants provided the names of recommended participants involved in the research. By asking who to talk with, they accumulated new-information rich cases (Shaheen et al., 2019). Another criterion was to include convenient participants who were eager to be involved and who were available in terms of time and location (Dornyei, 2007). Next, keeping gender homogeneity in mind, four male and four female students were interviewed by one researcher for the study. While collecting data, one main concern of the researchers was to comply with ethical considerations of academic research. For this reason, the researchers were transparent and accountable with the participants. Sending an email to each participant, the researchers shared a consent form, which explains the research in detail.

3.3. Data collection procedure

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Turkish. The voice recorder was not used, and the researcher took detailed notes for each interview. Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes. There were eighteen open-ended questions for the interview at the beginning of the study. However, after the pilot study, which was done with one male and female student, the number of the questions were reduced to fifteen. At the end of each interview, the researcher showed her notes to the participant to avoid any missing information and /or vague statements. The participants were asked two sets of questions. The former was for personal questions on gender, start date of university, faculty etc. The latter addressed the questions about challenges students face, and solutions they suggest for improving their wellbeing. Next, at the end of each interview, the researcher showed her notes to the participants. In line with the feedback from the participants, the researcher did not use some responses in the analysis. Moreover, the researchers got a written consent of all the participants to eliminate ethical concerns about their study. At the stage of processing data, the researchers followed basic steps of phenomenological approach (Moran, 1999). In bracketing stage, trying to avoid prejudices about the phenomenon, the researchers read transcripts for a sense of the whole many times “to ensure that biases do not pollute the description of the observations” (Umanailo et al., 2019). To do so, the researchers had face-to-face and online meetings on a regular basis. During these meetings, putting an effort to make a detailed analysis of the data on the way to generate major themes revolving around challenges and strategies, the researchers used thematic analysis to reveal recurring themes within and across data (Greening, 2019; Umanailo et al., 2019). More specifically, they tried to evaluate if the units of meaning emerging from the responses of the participants were illuminating the research questions (Hycner, 1985, p.284). After establishing the relationships between the units of meaning and the research questions, they eliminated redundant parts through scrutiny (Groenewald, 2004). The responses that would be directly used in the publication were then translated by the researcher into English.

4. Results

Present study focused on the challenges that hinder student wellbeing and on the student strategies that minimize the adverse impacts of these challenges. It has put forth that five areas of challenges were stated by the participants. These challenges are loneliness, academic pressure, lack of facilities, feeling of uncertainty and financial difficulties. To overcome these challenges, based on the responses by the participants, five main strategies emerged, which are time management, stress-relief techniques, growth mindset, academic support mechanisms and part time job.

4.1. Challenges of wellbeing

4.1.1. Feeling of loneliness

In line with the perceptions of seven participants, loneliness has emerged as one main theme. To illustrate, Participant 4 highlighted that university opens a new chapter for all students including him. Students are exposed to a variety of possibilities such as coming across people from different walks of life:

“Especially if you come from another city, accommodation, food and drink, people's attitudes can be challenging. You may encounter people you have never known before. Of course, sometimes, it has positive and negative effects. At first, you may feel lonely because there are many people from every culture and race. You may encounter people speaking different languages and personalities with different thoughts. Because of this, I can think of myself as having a hard time making friends.”

Likewise, Participant 3 states that loneliness has become such an important issue that she feels there needs to be events that will encourage students to socialize:

“I think that various activities should be carried out to strengthen communication between students. I sometimes feel alone. I find it difficult to talk to people or faculty members. Social activities should be organized so that we can spend time with each other. Our university can organize events where students can socialize and relax.”

In parallel with Participant 3, Participant 1 focuses on the positive impacts of communication on reducing the feeling of loneliness at university atmosphere:

"I think universities should play a fundamental role in helping students manage their emotions. I spend at least 4 or 5 hours a day at university. Sometimes, I cannot find a friend to have lunch or ask some questions about our courses. If universities organize more events, we can make friends easily. At least, I can find some room to meet people and do not feel this much lonely. Network in university years will be very beneficial for our business and social lives in the future. For this reason, I would like to have various activities to communicate well with my friends."

4.1.2. Academic pressure

Academic pressure has emerged as the second main challenge. Six participants noted that they are often overwhelmed by academic responsibilities on their shoulders. In words of Participant 8:

"Academic expectations such as exams, assignments, projects and studying for courses create stress on students. Exam anxiety, performance anxiety and expectations regarding exam results cause concerns. Sometimes I cannot sleep at nights, and I know some friends who take pills or energy drinks to stay awake to study."

Participant 2 expresses his feelings in the following way:

"I feel like we are drowning in too many details. Subjects in some courses... are irrelevant. Instructors should minimize these subjects. This will be a good solution."

4.1.3. Anxiety about uncertainties

The third challenge, which is common based on the interviews, is anxiety about uncertainties. Five participants feel under stress during their academic life and for the upcoming years. Participant 6 underscores that university life causes students to bump into a lot of unpredictable situations:

"University is an important step for us for our future career. We have to make serious decisions now that they will affect our future. Future plans and the possibility of unemployment cause stress. What if I cannot find a high-paying job...Our families spend a lot of money for us and they have high expectations from us. They deserve to see us to have good conditions. These uncertainties make us feel anxious."

Being on the same page with Participant 6, Participant 4 states that the feeling of apprehension is so tense at times that it is a natural part of daily routine:

"As a student, I am concerned about my future. I usually feel this in my daily life. It comes to my mind every day."

Similarly, Participant 1 mentions that feeling anxious makes her to be more into her academic studies:

"There is a lot of anxiety about my future. What will happen to me? I'm trying to solve this by studying more. I research more, I read more. I know there are millions of young people with good qualities. Some of my friends have already started to work. They say it is good to include some experience on your cv before you graduate."

4.1.4. Lack of facilities

The fourth main challenge is lack of facilities. Four participants share that the difficulties, which they have because of the physical conditions of their campus, lead to limited resources for study. Participant 4 feels psychologically down because of restricted services provided:

"My department is a little bit easy. There aren't many things that I find difficult in my university life. My problem is limited university conditions, lack of facilities. In other words, the school doesn't even have a campus, it's mainly a concrete building. Why do I have to go to a café outside to meet my friends? This is the most boring part of my university life."

Likewise, Participant 5 admits that she does not feel content due to lack of resources on campus:

"I find our school inadequate. Some students are not happy because the space on our campus is not enough. For this reason, I do not find our school convenient and comfortable. I have to wait in a restaurant sometimes and the library is so crowded."

4.1.5. Financial difficulties

The fifth challenge emerging through semi-structured interviews is financial difficulties by four participants. Participant 8 brings up the issue of high cost of university life. He makes a comparison between his life and the working people:

"University education is very expensive. We have limited financial resources. School fees, accommodation, food, books, and other expenses create financial stress on us. I sometimes feel as if I am like my father. I do careful calculation of my expenses every month to balance my budget. How to pay the bills... How to buy quality food at reasonable price."

Participant 2 adds that in addition to basic expenditures, students are badly affected by academic costs:

"People think that our life is easy. We do not have responsibilities. Some of them even think that we are spoilt young people. But we have a lot of problems, too. It is not easy for us to meet financial needs, problems about our expenses... We look for scholarships or financial support. But it is not easy to find. You need network for this. This puts us in a difficult situation."

4.2. Strategies for wellbeing

4.2.1. Time management

In addition to these five main themes that are categorized as challenges of wellbeing, the research has revealed that participants have certain strategies to overcome these challenges. One main strategy is time management. Six participants including Participant 3 explains that tuning a balance between university and personal life is a key to deal with common challenges that students are exposed:

"I determine my priorities and allocate my time for academic studies, personal activities and then, I have a rest. I usually create a schedule at the beginning of the week. I plan my study hours, my free time activities in a balanced way. I prioritize important academic courses and focus on them by managing my time efficiently. This way, I reduce my stress level while getting things done."

In parallel, Participant 7 attracts our attention to managing time by studying on a regular basis to put stress level under control:

"Of course, the best way to cope with exam stress is to study. There is nothing more stressful than taking an exam that you have not studied for. That is why, I do my homework on time and study regularly. After I do these, I can perform well in exams. My best friend, on the other hand, she is frequently down. She says she does not have enough time to study and complains about this. To me, she is not well organized. I told this to her, too."

4.2.2. Stress-relief techniques

The second strategy, which is mentioned by five participants, is to apply stress-relief techniques. Participant 3, for example, aids relaxation through sports:

"I do sports to escape from stress and difficult situations or do activities to distract myself. I am enrolled in a gym and go there twice a week. While exercising, my mind is sharper. You know stress is not only about your mind. Your body affects your mental health, as well."

Agreeing with Participant 3, Participant 5 benefits from sports as a stress-relief technique, too:

"I usually play games or go outside for a walk. But it's not a normal walk. I love walking, sometimes I walk for 3-4 hours non-stop. It makes me feel very good."

Participant 1, in addition to physical exercise, soothes herself through art:

"I usually listen to songs when I'm stressed. I also paint since my childhood. Having a hobby that will help you express your feelings, I think, is a must for us. What else... Yes... Or in the evenings, I go for a walk to the beach."

4.2.3. Cultivating growth mindset

The third main strategy for five participants is cultivating growth mindset. Participant 6, to illustrate, takes actions to develop a positive perspective to face challenges:

"I try to stay calm. I force myself to turn to more positive thoughts. I share this situation with my family or friends. I do things that help me be less stressed. For example, I breathe deeply and walk in the nature for high oxygen during times when I have lots of assignments and examinations. I go to the seaside to watch the sea. The sound of water and the blueness of the sea make me happy."

Participant 2 spotlights seeking for outer sources to change misanthropic mindset:

"I lose motivation from time to time. When I feel down, I try to think of people whom I admire. I ask myself what my father would do if he were in my place? What else... Yes... I set goals for myself to overcome this situation. I break my goals into pieces and focus on achievable ones. Once I read a book about changing your attitude towards your responsibilities. I learned so many important points from that book. To increase my motivation, I follow inspiring sources and I do research on topics I am interested in".

In a similar manner, Participant 5 underlines that one needs to be goal oriented to avoid uneasiness caused by academic challenges:

"I always keep my goals in mind. The desire to achieve my goals motivates me to fulfil my academic responsibilities because I believe that successful people are goal oriented and planned. My personal life is also positively affected, too. I do not feel like I am in a loop. I am planned and programmed. This way, my life is progressing in a positive direction. In my opinion, it is necessary to always be planned, be it academic responsibilities, be it personal life or any other issue. I think I am more successful in everything when I have a plan."

4.2.4. Academic support mechanisms

Academic support mechanisms are seen as the next main strategy among four participants to face tough challenges. Participant 6 touches upon the fact that universities are of utmost important in that they are supposed to establish support mechanisms for students to minimize the adverse effects of challenges:

"I think universities should play a big role in helping students manage their emotions. University is not only for lessons. You know our instructors are experienced people. We can learn from them. Some of them are so approachable. They talk to you and listen to you. But others, I do not know, come to class and teach. They have boundaries. I think they should be more open to us."

Participant 1 holds the idea that universities can alleviate the burden on the shoulders of the students by being there as a reliable academic body that provides psychological and academic support for students:

“Schools should provide guidance to people experiencing psychological difficulties. Especially for students affected by the earthquake. So many students have suffered from this big earthquake because these students lost their mother, father, or relatives. Even if nothing else, they may have lost their homes. It is likely that they are experiencing a great trauma. These students need support and help. And not just those students, going to a university in a big city in Istanbul is causing a lot of problems. I wish there were a centre that we can seek guidance from our instructors.”

In fact, Participant 4 shares a similar perspective with Participant 1 in that universities, from his perspective, may bear responsibility by creating a well-rounded approach to fight off common challenges:

“I think universities should provide a free environment. They should not be exam oriented. We are human beings with feelings, and we have several problems. Our academics should understand this. I know some friends. They can go and talk to their instructors during office hours. But here, to be honest with you, I sometimes do not receive an answer even for my email.”

4.2.5. Finding a part-time job

The last theme emerging through four semi-structured interviews is finding a part time job. In line with the challenges caused by expensiveness, four participants have underlined that starting to work as a university student has helped them to feel financially secure. Participant 2 expresses his feelings in the following way:

“I don't have any free time because my work life and school life fill all my day. Working can be hard. But it gives you the feeling of freedom and strength. I feel better as I have a job. I am aware of my responsibilities and organize my time accordingly.”

Participant 3 words her feelings this way:

“These days, I have a part time job. Before this, life was even much harder. I could not concentrate on my lessons. But now, even if I have less time to study, at least, I feel safe and not as much as concerned before. I try to plan my time in the mornings and try to follow it all day. After attending my lessons, I spend a few hours with my friends. Then I go to work.”

5. Discussion

In the analysis of the present data, several issues have emerged, one of which is the link between loneliness and wellbeing. A large body of research (Dinu et al., 2022; Qu, 2022; Yang and Suryadhep, 2021; Cacioppo et al., 2009) discusses the effect of loneliness on student wellbeing. Irrespective of situational or genetic variables, one common impact of loneliness is that lonely students are prone to lower self-esteem that leads to negative evaluations of their physical and psychological state. They tend to suffer from low performance, which, in turn, may result in a psychological disorder such as depression, characterized by “sadness, loss of interest or pleasure or interest, feelings of guilt or low self-worth” (Rahman et al., 2012, p. 2). Thus, the finding of the present study is relevant to the current literature in terms of underlining the relation between loneliness and wellbeing. Second, a growing body of evidence underscores that academic pressure can serve as a predictor of mental health problems (Barbayannis, 2022; Katja et al., 2002). A recent study by Steare et al., (2023), reviewing 52 studies, exploring the association between academic pressure, and mental health outcomes, underscores that academic pressure highly contributes to reduced wellbeing among students. Moreover, the study is important in that it attracts our attention to international concern over the potential mental outcomes of academic pressure. The finding of the present study, which reveals the link between academic pressure and wellbeing of students, contributes to the body of academic literature that discusses the impacts of academic challenges of students on their wellbeing. Third, the findings of the present study underline the fact that the feeling of uncertainty causes low wellbeing. As put by Brashers (2001), “when details of the situation are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge, the state of knowledge in general (p.478),” people, especially with low intolerance of uncertainty, experience depression and anxiety symptoms. Moreover, the limited tolerance of responding to uncertain situations bear the risk of poor decision-making processes and deteriorated mental health conditions (Schweizer et al., 2023). Another issue that has emerged regarding the challenges is lack of facilities that hamper wellbeing of students. This finding is in line with Akomolafe and Adesua (2016)’s study which suggests that lack of inadequate physical conditions may lead to poor academic performance. Moreover, the study by Lawrence (2019) on the impact of place attachment among children and young people points out that place attachment is crucial for identity formation. That is to say, people sense who they are, by attachments built on “the country, region, city, neighbourhood, or town where they grew up; the house(s) in which they lived; the schools they attended; the shops they visited; and the ‘special’ places where they played and developed friendships...” (p. 56). Thus, sense of belonging, if disrupted, may result in psychological problems. The participants of this study also complain about the lack of facilities in their university campus which in a way hinders a kind of attachment to their physical environment. They need more facilities in the university campus where they can bond to other students and feel attached to their university environment. The definitions of uncertainty vary and include a state taking place when “details of the situation are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general”(Brashers, 2001, p. 478)“details of the situation are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is

unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general” (Brashers, 2001, p. 478). Fifth, a large body of research indicates that people’s mental state has been impacted by their financial status (Hassan et al., 2021; Brüggem et al. (2017)). To illustrate, a systematic review regarding financial stress and depression points out that a heavy economic burden is positively linked with low spirits, in particular among people from impoverished groups (Guan et al., 2022). The findings of the present research are in line with literature in that studying in one of the biggest cities in Turkey, just after a few months after Kahramanmaraş and Hatay earthquakes that demolished 518.009 houses and caused moderate and severe damage to 1. 417. 304, the participants were experiencing one of the most severe economic crises in the country, which costs 54,7 billion dollars of pecuniary loss (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2023). In addition to five main themes that give us deep insight regarding the challenges that contribute to negative well-being, the present study reveals that the participants are in favor of five strategies that will open way to the overall well-being of young people. One of these is time management. Time management can be defined as the process of self-regulation of your time through by planning and arranging (Pintrich, 2004; Irikefe, 2018). It is underscored that planning and arranging your time has numerous benefits such as improved personal productivity, work – life satisfaction and reduced stress levels (Dakshinkar & Nimsarkar, 2023). Another strategy mentioned by the participants is stress-relief techniques such as listening to music, going sports or socializing. They are highly mentioned as relaxation practices to combat stress in numerous studies (e. g. Gondo et al., 2023; Kim, 2014). One more theme in the form of strategy emerged is growth mindset, which can be defined as one’s capability that encourage people to be more persistent in tough situations (Schroder et al., 2017). The findings of the present study in terms of growth mindset are in parallel with a study that reveals that college students with low on the pressure subscale, perceiving that their abilities are too limited to be improved through effort, demonstrated negative emotions (Tao et al., 2022). Next, academic support has emerged as one main theme. As well put by Querstret (2019), because of the complex nature of psychological counselling, universities tend to run an approach in which staff with psychological degree oversee supporting student wellbeing. However, students usually seek help from not only experts on psychology but also from ‘academic’ staff in that they are in a regular contact with them and develop a bond that is based on trust (Crawford & Johns, 2018). The last strategy is part time job. The participants of the present study underscore that there is a strong link between working part time and financial wellbeing. The findings are line with a study by Chen et al. (2014) that lists main benefits of part time job as discounted prices, free meals and bonuses. Additionally, a study by Curtis and Lucas (2001) adds more advantages on the list as gaining experience, making new friendships, time management and team- building techniques on condition that is related to their academic field.

6. Conclusion

The present study is a contribution to the understanding of student wellbeing by putting them in the centre of the issue. To shed light on the issue, the study specifically focused on the challenges and strategies through the perspective of university students. The findings that lead to the emergence of five main challenges which are loneliness, academic pressure, anxiety about uncertainties, lack of facilities and financial difficulties imply that university students have difficulty at this point of their lives emotionally, academically, and financially. This highlights the fact that a more holistic perspective should be adopted that includes stakeholders of higher education including university administration, university administrative and academic staff, and parents to minimize challenges of student wellbeing. Furthermore, the findings that lead to the emergence of five main strategies which are time management, stress-relief techniques, cultivating a growth mindset, academic support mechanisms, and having a part-time job imply that wellbeing is a multifaced issue. For the implementation of efficient strategies, students need guidance in the form of centres which should be easily available to students on campus. These centres can contribute a lot on condition that they appeal to academic, psychological, physical needs of students. The present study is subject to several limitations. First, the study was conducted qualitatively. Even if it gives deep insight in terms of the experiences of the participants, the findings cannot be generalizable to a wider context. Second, the research sample is relatively low. The researchers hold the idea that a study with more participants would prepare the ground for providing more data to literature highlighting the importance of the issue. Third, the research setting is a foundation university in a big city. The study, within this respect, excludes university students who study at public universities in small or middle range cities.

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