

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT
STUDENTS TOWARDS THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

by

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findings. These findings revealed the nature of the mental health experiences of registered nursing students in UNIVEN and provided information required for the theoretical foundation of the programme. Then this was followed by the theoretical framework for the development of the programme which was informed by the elements of practice theory Dickoff et al., (1968:430). Then the programme was developed in an interactive interventive manner using the theoretical framework and approaches outlined in Chinn and Kramer (1999:110); Walker and Avant (1995:28).

A single case study was used to pilot and evaluate the developed programme. The essays were used as source of data to assess the effectiveness of the mental health support programme. The evaluation of the programme is ongoing, as it is a process and its outcomes will be gradual.

ABSTRACT

Mental health problems have a negative impact on academic performance, retention, and graduation rates. Not unlike elsewhere, The University of Venda (UNIVEN), as an under resourced, rural based university, has many challenges based on the type of students it serves. UNIVEN's student enrolment mostly comprises students from low income households with poor university entrance preparation. The majority of students are the first generation of their families and communities to enter higher education. As yet, there is no scientific data available about the registered nursing students' experiences of their mental health at UNIVEN.

A situational analysis, involving a single case study at UNIVEN was conducted, to explore and describe the registered nursing students' experiences of their mental health and to develop, implement and evaluate a mental health programme to facilitate student nurses' mental health. Data was collected from participants through naïve sketches and focus group interviews. One hundred and sixty eight registered nursing students participated in naïve sketches and forty eight of these participated in focus group interviews. All ethical issues were adhered to throughout the study.

Data was analysed through the use of Tesch's open coding. The findings from naïve sketch narratives and focus group interviews are integrated to avoid repetition. From the analysed data, themes emerged as follows: The nursing student's experience of disturbance in their sleeping patterns; Nursing student's experience of stresses and stressors as challenges to their mental health; Nursing student's experiences of their coping mechanisms; Nursing students' perceptions of support needed.

After the analysis of data, the phenomenon of registered nursing student mental health experiences was identified and literature control supported the