

Mental Health of Business English Students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

Jennilou T. Plankraiphet¹

¹Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

*Corresponding author: jennilou.pl@ssru.ac.th

Abstract.

This study investigates the mental health status of Business English students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Recognizing the critical role of mental health in academic performance and overall well-being in higher education, the research aims to identify prevalent mental health challenges among university students and provide insights for effective support strategies. A quantitative approach was employed, surveying primarily first- and second-year students with a structured questionnaire that assessed eight dimensions of wellness: emotional, physical, environmental, intellectual, occupational, financial, social, and spiritual. The questionnaire was initially developed in English and translated into Thai to ensure clarity for participants. Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics to evaluate overall wellness among students. Findings indicated that a significant portion of students reported lower scores in the physical and occupational dimensions, reflecting uncertainty and pressure regarding future careers. Conversely, the emotional and social dimensions emerged as the strongest areas of wellness. The study also explored students' interest in gaining more knowledge about mental health, revealing a strong desire for resources and coping strategies. In conclusion, the results underscore the necessity for targeted mental health interventions and support services within the university to enhance student well-being and academic success.

Keywords: mental health, university students, Thailand, 8 Dimensions of wellness

1. Introduction

Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, influencing various aspects of life, including education, business, and social interactions. Recent reports indicate a significant rise in mental health issues in Thailand, particularly among adolescents, who often experience high levels of stress due to academic pressures, future job expectations, and financial concerns (The Office of the National Economic and Social Development, 2024). This situation highlights the need for educational institutions, especially in higher education, to engage actively with the mental health landscape of their student populations.

The World Health Organization (2022) defines mental health as a state of well-being that enables individuals to effectively manage life's stresses, realize their potential, engage in learning and work, and contribute to their communities. Swarbrick's '8 Dimensions' of wellness expands this definition to include emotional, financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical,

intellectual, and environmental dimensions (Swarbrick, 2023). This framework underscores the importance of balance across these areas for maintaining mental health.

Undergraduate students undergo a significant transition during which they develop behaviors that often persist long after graduation. Tangnoi and Lertpongmanee (2020) emphasize the necessity for higher education institutions to understand their students better, which can be achieved through comprehensive data collection. They argue that education must go beyond classroom learning to develop students' full potential—encompassing health, mind, body, and knowledge. In this context, fostering an environment that supports mental health is essential for student success and overall well-being.

Adolescents are among the most vulnerable groups concerning mental health issues. Poor mental health during this developmental stage can adversely affect physical health, learning capabilities, and social interactions (UNICEF, 2022). The implications of these mental health challenges extend beyond individuals, impacting families, communities, and society as a whole. Thus, it is vital for university students to prioritize their mental health to achieve their full potential (Carter et al., 2017). Understanding the current mental health landscape of students is a foundational step toward this goal. Moreover, prioritizing mental health research within educational institutions can play a crucial role in fostering resilience and well-being among future generations, ultimately benefiting society at large.

2. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are to examine the mental health of Business English students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, to determine their desire for mental health awareness initiatives, and to identify key areas of concern affecting their mental well-being.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs an exploratory research design utilizing a quantitative methodology. The primary objectives are to assess the eight Dimensions of Wellness—emotional, financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and environmental—and to evaluate interest in mental health awareness training, as well as to examine the current state of mental health awareness among participants. The participants comprised Business English majors at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, totaling 652 students across four academic years. To achieve an 85% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 158 students was required; however, 154 students completed the survey, with 91.6% of respondents being first- and second-year students. The survey was distributed online from October 4 to 8, 2024.

3.1 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a structured survey divided into three sections: personal information, mental health awareness, and the eight dimensions of wellness. For the assessment of the eight dimensions, questions were adapted from the Wellness in 8 Dimensions Guide (Swarbrick, 2023) and Personal Assessment: 8 Dimensions of Wellness (Health and

Wellness Services, n.d.), with the latter source selected for its relevance to university students. Each of the eight dimensions included eight questions, resulting in a total of 64 dimension-related questions. Additionally, the survey contained 11 yes/no questions, while the remaining 53 questions required respondents to rate their experiences using a 5-point Likert scale.

To gather pertinent personal information, the survey included minimal demographic questions, confirming that respondents were Business English students and noting their academic year. The survey was designed to be confidential to encourage honest responses. The mental health awareness section assessed participants' self-reported awareness of mental health issues, their personal connections to individuals facing mental health challenges, their potential responses to such concerns, and their interest in mental health initiatives. To ensure clarity and comprehension, all survey questions were translated into Thai.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and frequency. The personal information section primarily served to confirm that participants met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The mental health awareness section examined each question to provide an overall picture of students' understanding of mental health issues. The analysis of the eight dimensions focused primarily on the dimensions as a whole while also highlighting any unusual statistics that emerged.

4. Results

Among the 154 students who participated in the survey, 85 were first-year students, 56 were second-year students, 12 were third-year students, and 1 was a fourth-year student.

Regarding mental health awareness, participants rated their knowledge on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "no awareness at all" to "extremely aware." The mean score was 3.65, with 42.9% of respondents indicating that they felt aware of mental health issues. When asked whether they knew someone currently experiencing mental health challenges, 53.9% of students reported that they did.

In response to how they would address mental health issues personally, respondents could select multiple options. The most frequently chosen response was "share with friends," selected by 90 participants. The second most common response was "share with family," chosen by 74 respondents, followed closely by "deal with it on my own," which was selected by 70 students. Seeking help from a doctor and talking with a counselor ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

The final question in the mental health awareness section inquired whether participants were interested in learning more about mental health and coping strategies. An overwhelming 85.1% of respondents expressed a desire to gain additional information on these topics.

In the section pertaining to the eight dimensions of wellness, Table 1 presents the mean scores for each dimension, ordered from the lowest to the highest. The physical dimension received the lowest mean score, indicating a need for improvement in this area. Exercise and dental and physical checks were among the lowest rated for this dimension.

Table 1: Mean of the 8 Dimension of Wellness

Physical	Occupational	Financial	Intellectual	Environmental	Spiritual	Social	Emotional
3.40	3.58	3.61	3.64	3.68	3.75	3.77	4.01

The occupational dimension, which focused on preparation for future careers, exhibited moderate scores across its questions. The lowest mean score within this dimension was for volunteer work, which had a mean of 3.11, followed by the question concerning personal satisfaction derived from studies, with a mean of 3.32. The financial dimension closely followed the occupational dimension, with a mean score of 3.61. However, there was greater variability among the individual questions in the financial dimension compared to the occupational dimension. The highest mean score for the financial dimension was for the question addressing the importance of being financially responsible, which received a score of 4.56. Despite this, the financial dimension ranked among the lowest three, primarily due to moderate scores in other questions, with the lowest score being 2.91 for the item concerning giving to a worthy cause.

Notably, the emotional dimension, although ranked the highest among the dimensions, had a mean score of only 3.10 for the question regarding asking for help when needed. Out of the 154 respondents, only 42 indicated that they would ask for help when necessary, and of those, only 16 reported that they always seek assistance.

5. Discussion

Given the limited research on mental health among university students in Thailand, this study provides valuable insights into the mental health landscape of Business English students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The findings indicate that, despite a relatively high self-reported awareness of mental health issues, respondents expressed a desire for more information regarding mental health strategies. This presents a significant opportunity for universities to enhance their support services in this domain. Furthermore, the data suggest that students are more inclined to discuss mental health concerns with close relationships, such as friends and family, highlighting the critical need for expanded support services both for students and the broader community. As students are less likely to seek professional assistance for stress-related issues, increasing mental health awareness within the general population is essential. It is important to note that this research has limitations in terms of its scope and depth. Future studies should focus on a more comprehensive examination of mental health among university students, delving deeper into their specific mental health challenges.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the overall mental health of Business English students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University is assessed to be at a moderate level. Respondents have demonstrated a significant interest in acquiring more knowledge about mental health. However, further

research is needed to explore this area in greater depth, as it is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of university students.

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