

Peer Review Report

Review Report on Inventory of mental health services in academia and researchers' awareness on their availability: Mixed method research protocol and pilot study in Switzerland

Original Article, Int. J. Public Health

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EVALUATION

Q 1 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

The actual study has an objective to inventory occupational health services (OHS) in European higher education institutions (HEI) and to assess researchers' awareness of these services. The protocol proposed by the authors and validated in Switzerland, combined a mapping study of OHS with semi-structured interviews of researchers.

Authors have found that each HEI has a different approach to OHS, but most offer help such as access to a general or occupational physician, psychological counselling/advice, and legal advice. About 90% of the HEIs surveyed offer psychological support to researchers. Almost 70% of the HEIs provide OHS within the institution. In the remaining HEIs, OHS are provided by an external specialized institution (e.g., Center for psychological support or psychotherapy). The regression analysis showed that the number of OHS provided by the HEIs is positively associated with the numbers of registered students and research staff employed by the corresponding HEIs. Additionally, a positive statistically significant association was observed between the availability of occupational medicine consultation and the number of research staff.

The qualitative part of the study has shown that less than half of the participants could name the services available and even fewer could give any details about them. Participants also expressed low interest and lack of confidence in existing OHS. The low level of awareness of OHS made it difficult to assess their usefulness or preventative effectiveness.

Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

These insights are based on a small sample size and data collected in a small and atypical HEI, where researchers represent only 10% of the staff. This calls for a cautious interpretation and limits the generalization of the results. To draw definitive conclusions, the study should be conducted in multiple HEIs, including both large and small universities and other HEIs, and in other countries. There were also limitation related to the availability and scope of OHS provided. Authors have found a limited number of OHS offered, which might not fully capture the diversity of services available across different institutions. There also might be a bias in the self-selection of voluntary participants in the qualitative phase, as those experiencing mental health issues might be more or less inclined to participate.

The study has several strengths: the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches, provides researchers with a multifaceted lens through which to analyze and interpret data. This combination allows for a comprehensive exploration of complex phenomena, using the numerical precision and statistical rigor of quantitative data alongside the rich context and nuanced understanding provided by qualitative data. By synthesizing these methods, researchers gain deeper insights into their research question, leading to improved interpretation of findings. The study design facilitates analytical generalizations and the transfer of findings across cases, thereby enhancing the applicability and relevance of the study.

Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

The actual manuscript should be accepted for publication after some minor edits:

- please consider whether the section "General requirements for a harmonized research protocol" should be a part of Introduction section or as it is (part of Methods section),
- please consider whether the section "Study protocol" should be a part of Methods section or as it is (part of Results section),
- please polish English language.

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

The title is appropriate, concise, and attractive

Q 5 Are the keywords appropriate?

The keywords are appropriate

Q 6 Is the English language of sufficient quality?

Please provide polishing of English language

Q 7 Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

Q 8 Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?

The reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 Originality



Q 10 Rigor



Q 11 Significance to the field



Q 12 Interest to a general audience



Q 13 Quality of the writing



Q 14 Overall scientific quality of the study



REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

Accept.

