

***The Mental Well-being Experiences of  
International Nursing Students***

*A qualitative study*

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## ABSTRACT

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This research describes the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students from a subjective perspective. The mental well-being experiences of these students, aspects that support/improves their mental well-being as well as issues that pose a threat to their mental well-being were the three main themes from which the three main research questions were formulated.

The research was mainly qualitative, and data was gathered through semi-structures interviews on the three main themes. Six students were interviewed, and the data was transcribed and analysed using guidelines of the "grounded theory" approach of content analysis.

The findings indicated that mental well-being to international student is psychological and entails aspects of present mental state such as emotions, stress, depressive tendencies, relationship needs and coping with everyday experiences of being an international nursing student. Furthermore, the mental well-being experiences of international nursing student entailed how they sustained their mental well-being during stress, having a positive mindset during tough times as a student, resources available during stress and the social norms that could either be linked to the community at large, the cultural diversity of the classroom or individual cultural background of the student. Aspects that strengthened students' mental well-being are contact with the natural environment, favourable social interactions, effective use of resources and counselling facilities, physical activities and some personal habits such as planning and priority setting. Mental well-being of these students threatened by insufficient resources to deal with school related stress, nature of school curriculum, insufficient social support, issues with acculturation as well as individual psychological disturbances present in the personal life of the student.

Increase in awareness regarding the dynamics mental well-being is recommended and could serve as a valuable tool for successful health promotion in communities.

Key words: International students, mental well-being, nursing student

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä tutkimus kuvaa kansainvälisten hoitotyön opiskelijoiden kokemusta henkisestä hyvinvoinnistaan subjektiivisesta näkökulmasta. Tutkimusaiheita olivat kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden henkinen hyvinvointi sekä sitä tukevat ja uhkaavat tekijät.

Tutkimus toteutettiin pääosin laadullisella menetelmällä puolistrukturoituina haastatteluina keskeisistä aiheista. Haastateltavana oli kuusi opiskelijaa. Saatu aineisto kirjoitettiin puhtaaksi ja analysoitiin käyttäen sisällönanalyysin havaintoihin perustuvaa teoriaa.

Tutkimuksessa tehdyt havainnot osoittivat, että kansainvälisen opiskelijan henkinen hyvinvointi on psykologista ja siihen sisältyy henkisen tilan näkökohtia, kuten tunteita, stressiä, taipumusta masennukseen, ihmissuhteisiin liittyviä tarpeita ja selviytymistä kansainvälisen hoitotyön opiskelijan jokapäiväisistä kokemuksista. Lisäksi kansainvälisten hoitotyön opiskelijoiden henkiseen hyvinvointikokemukseen vaikuttaa kyky psyykkisen hyvinvoinnin ylläpitämiseen stressin aikana, kyky positiiviseen ajattelutapaan vaikeina aikoina opiskelun aikana ja millaisia resursseja on käytettävissä stressaavissa tilanteissa. Vaikutusta on myös sosiaalisilla normeilla, jotka voivat olla yhteydessä koko ympäröivään yhteisöön, opiskelijaryhmän monimuotoisuuteen tai yksittäisen opiskelijan kulttuuristaustaan. Asioita, jotka vahvistavat opiskelijoiden henkistä hyvinvointia, ovat yhteys luontoon, suotuisat sosiaaliset vuorovaikutussuhteet, resurssien tehokas käyttö ja neuvontapalvelut, fyysiset aktiviteetit ja jotkin henkilökohtaiset toimintatavat, kuten suunnittelu ja priorisointi. Opiskelijoiden henkistä hyvinvointia uhkaavia asioita ovat riittämättömät resurssit koulunkäynnin aiheuttaman stressin käsittelyyn, koulun opetussuunnitelmaan liittyvät ongelmat, sosiaalisen tuen riittämättömyys, sekä yksilölliset psykologiset häiriötekijät opiskelijan henkilökohtaisessa elämässä.

Tietoisuuden lisääminen henkiseen hyvinvointiin vaikuttavista asioista on suositeltavaa, ja se voisi olla arvokas työkalu hyvinvoinnin ja terveyden edistämiseksi yhteisöissä.

Asiasanat: ulkomaalaiset opiskelijat, henkinen hyvinvointi, sairaanhoitajaopiskelijat

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, talks on immigration appear to champion most political discourses across Europe. Similarly, the movement of people across international borders for purpose of studying is gradually gaining popularity. Finland like many other countries provides opportunity for people to have quality education by organizing several international programs taught mainly in English. The English nursing program in Lahti University of Applied Science (LUAS) is one such program mainly with students from different nationalities. Diversity while developing a wide range of competencies in health care is key to the nursing program. This creates a milieu for persons of different nationalities to interact with one another resulting in rising issues regarding cultural awareness and as such, the need for cultural adjustments (D'Souza et al. 2016, 909). Nevertheless, while immigration for study purpose presents an opportunity for some to get quality education, immigrants in general are faced with complex cultural problems as they try to settle in an unfamiliar environment (D'Souza et al. 2016, 908). The implications are extensive to include possible psychological and physiological effects such as depression and stress (Winkelman 1994, 121). This puts the general mental well-being of these immigrants at risks. Although there have been studies around the world related to international students and how they strive to cope with unfamiliar environment, to the best of our knowledge, there have not been significant and comprehensive studies with international nursing students regarding how they describe their mental well-being. Furthermore, there is also little information on the practical ways of ensuring mental well-being based on the facilities available in general. Studying in a foreign country far away from home can be challenging in several aspects. In Finland, besides the inability to communicate effectively with the locals on arrival, cultural differences, the feeling of lack of cooperation and 'not being accepted' by the locals constitutes some of the challenges faced by international students (Gauli & Xu 2015, 40). This can result in depression and school-related stress associated with coping with these challenges and as such, their mental well-being and academic performances can also be affected (Serin, Serin & Özbas, 2010, 1-4). Therefore, educational institutions that need to understand the subjective experiences of students' mental well-being. Special interest in this research are the threats as well aspects that enhance the mental well-being of these students. As a nurse, such information will enable the proper development of strategies needed for good guidance regarding students' health and better support more complex life situations than just treatment or cure of diseases among students and these are the fundamentals of nursing science and nursing care (Jormfeldt 2014, 1).

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research is to describe the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students from the students' perspective. Generally, the aim is to provide useful information on the mental well-being of international students. Specifically, the interest is on aspects that support/improves and issues that pose a threat to the mental well-being of these students. Based on these, three fundamental research questions are posed.

1. What are the experiences of international nursing students regarding their mental well-being?
2. What experiences threaten the mental well-being of these nursing students?
3. What supports or strengthens their mental well-being?

While this research acknowledges the presence of somatic causes to the general deterrence in health, about 23% of ill health situations are known to be psychological and are linked to mental well-being (WHO 2008). For this reason, our research seeks to unravel the different conceptual orientation of what mental well-being means to international nursing students. Exploring how they describe their experiences of their mental well-being remain beneficial to student, the school administration and the entire Lahti population.

### 3 MENTAL WELL-BEING AND ITS THEORITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Defining mental well-being

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines well-being from a mental perspective as the ability of an individual to be able to maximize his/her potentials, effectively manage normal stresses associated with life, be productive, fruitful, and make valuable contributions to the community (WHO 2014). This definition emphasizes on several factors that influence mental wellbeing such as personal relationships, standard of living, health and personal security. However, well-being incorporates three major factors which are hedonic in nature to entailed (1) feelings of self-importance, (2) self-accomplishments and (3) satisfaction with life in general (Smith & Khawaja 2011, 1-15). Nevertheless, while mental well-being includes the individual's capacity to interact with other people and integrate with members of the community (Serin, Serin & Özbas 2010, 3), our research is grounded in the idea that mental well-being is psychological and includes having a "sense of purpose in life" and a possibility to comfortably fit in the society. This is in line with some researchers who argue that mental well-being is "subjective" and consist life satisfaction, unpleasant effects of life and pleasant effects of life which are three major interrelated components that shape our individual mental well-being (Diener and Suh 1997, 1-2; Dodge et al. 2012, 222). Other researchers have come up with the idea that mental well-being spans across several aspects that interact together to ensure a stable mental state. Some of these aspects includes psychological and emotional concepts such as happiness, self-confidence, life satisfaction, relationships, illusions, depression (Taylor & Brown 1988, 1-13), physical aspects such as sports and physical activities (Penedo & Dahn 2005, 189-193), environmental considerations such as frequent contacts with natural environments like parks and city gardens (Guite 2006, 1117-1126), and recently the social orientation of our society which includes aspects like social equality, racism, access to opportunities and social services (Rubin 2018, 236-251). Though some researchers argue that attaining well-being in a domain can influence the well-being in another (Heckman et al. 2006, 1-80), there is still limited substantial evidence on the extent of interaction of these components and how they influence our mental well-being. Our research therefore examines the concept of mental well-being from a much broader perspective. We consider mental well-being to be subjective, psychological and to constitute a combination of good feelings and effective functioning in life (Huppert 2009, 139). Theoretically, our considerations in describing mental well-being is multidimensional (Diener 2009, 11-13; Michaelson et al. 2009, 18; Stiglitz et al. 2009, 14) and cuts across

broad aspects such as the feeling of being in control of the fate of your life, a sense of achievement or personal growth, a sense of being comfortable in your learning environment, building positive relations with others, developing a purpose in life as well as developing a feeling of self-acceptance (Ryff & Keyes 1995, 719-727).

Conceptualizing mental well-being in recent times is challenging. Recent definitions of mental well-being should go beyond a description or what it accounts for and make more precise statement on the exact meaning of the concept (Dodge et al. 2012, 222).

Therefore, what constitutes a description of the mental wellbeing of International nursing students should [NOT] solely be based on the "theoretical" considerations of mental well-being having a multidimensional orientation but should have an exact dimension or a more specific dimension[s] hence the rationale for our studies. However, the reality is that what constitutes mental well-being remains "complex", "multi-faceted" and will continue to elude academicians in their attempts to describe the concept (Pollard & Lee 2003, 9). Therefore, our thesis aims from the students' perspective, to unravel a more precise orientation /dimension/perspective of the mental well-being of international nursing students from a much broader multidimensional, complex or multi-faceted theoretical orientation.

Generally, research on mental well-being is centered on two main perspectives. There is the objective and the subjective perspective. The "objective" perspective considers the biological changes associated with mental well-being. According to the Psychiatric Research Unit in Denmark (BECH), objective perspective takes into consideration clinical analysis and pharmacotherapy in ensuring mental well-being (BECH 2012). In simpler terms, objective well-being can be understood as "others" defining your state of well-being and from an outsider's view [psychiatrist], make conclusion from research facts and findings and dictating to you how you should react or live your own life (Vuori 2012, 13). This is in contrast with the subjective perspective which considers mental well-being to be an individual ideology which is personal and influenced by a wide variety of factors (BECH 2012). Subjective mental well-being takes into consideration the individual meaning of "mental well-being" in our daily lives. Our studies consider mental well-being as "subjective", with the aim of establishing a self-reflective description of mental well-being among international nursing students.

### 3.2 Theoretical considerations in describing mental well-being

The complexity of the meaning of mental well-being is not only limited to how the concept should be "spelled" in academic writings [well-being or wellbeing] but differs greatly in individual expressions. Some individuals consider mental well-being in terms of happiness, others in terms of contentment (WHO 2018a). Mental well-being can also be described in terms of physical fitness (Penedo & Dahn 2005, 189-193), economic prosperity, individual challenges associated with attaining personal set goals, and in terms of social factors beyond our control such as finances, employment and secured housing (WHO 2018a). Nevertheless, for convenience, mental well-being is considered psychological and includes having a sense of purpose in life and self-acceptance (Ryff & Keyes 1995, 720). Self-acceptance in this case is defined as: -

*"a breadth of wellness that includes positive evaluations of oneself and one's past life" (Ryff & Keyes 1995 p.720).*

Other aspects such as self-confidence, desire for autonomy, optimism, relationship skills, happiness, self-content/satisfaction could also constitute mental well-being.

Most academic writings consider mental well-being to be broad, complex and can broadly be described in terms of environmental mastery, purpose of life, personal growth, autonomy, self-acceptance, building positive relationships (Ryff & Keyes 1995, 719-727; Ryff 2014, 1-19; Garcia et al.2014, 4). Besides these dimensions, others describe mental well-being in terms of spirituality (Soleimani et al. 2015, 1-6). Generally, concept or aspects mostly considered when discussing mental well-being include resilience, positive psychology, social capital, quality of life and the Salutogenic perspective of mental well-being (WHO 2018a). However, more concrete concepts like depression and stress manifest through the deterrence of some of the aspects of mental well-being.

When we try to explain how individual retain or maintain their mental well-being during or after stressful moments, the concept of resilience is considered. Resilience can be defined as the ability of an individual to cope, overcome, and grow over challenges that were stressful, hence gathering resources to comfortably face further challenges (de Carvalho et al. 2007, 1; McGowan et al. 2017, 1). It is the ability to cope with unpleasant situations and avoid breakdowns during stressful moments (WHO 2018a). Resilience draws experience from the past and prepares the individual for future challenges. It is

characterized by aspects such as developing a strong purpose for life, steadiness and composure towards goals in life, perseverance, self-acceptance and autonomy (McGowan 2017, 1). Spirituality can be considered as resilience technique linked to mental well-being (Soleimani et al. 2015, 1-6). Therefore, it is necessary to consider resilience when exploring the mental well-being.

Studies in Hong Kong show that students with higher levels of resilience reportedly have higher life satisfaction and show low signs of depression (Mak et al. 2011, 610-617). Nevertheless, this study fails to mention whether the students were nursing students or international students. Furthermore, we cannot assume that the conditions of students in Hong Kong are the same as the conditions of students in Finland. Other studies among medical students suggest that mental well-being can be sustained if students' coping mechanisms are closely studied and promoted (Dunn et al. 2008, 44-53). Therefore, based on this theoretical foundation, pertinent to our studies is whether the International nursing students describe their mental well-being in terms of their ability to cope with the challenges and stresses as students. Since the nursing program in LUAS is implemented in close collaboration with real-life working experiences, stress among international students can come from their working environment or clinical training placements. Work-related stress among nurses can be chronic and manifest via overall workload, lack of cooperation, and developing a personal vulnerable feeling described in terms of instances of immediate feedback or complaint hence the need to promote resilience through support from other workers, peers, mentor and supervising teachers while encouraging self-discipline in implementing a work-life balance (Foster 2016, 1155).

The term "positive psychology" broadly describes positive character traits and emotions geared towards relieving suffering and enhancing well-being (Seligman et al. 2005, 414). In nursing, the focus is geared towards optimizing functioning by complementing the strength-based orientation approach of nursing care (Seligman et al. 2005, 410-421; Skerrett 2010, 488). It stems from the idea that optimistic people less likely suffer from psychological worries associated with poor health, life challenges or stress (WHO 2014). Positive psychology seeks to find the source of happiness even in stressful situations. Pertinent in nursing in that it explains how some patients find happiness or still hang-on even in sickness giving rise to a more stable mental well-being than others with

comparable situation. Central to this idea is building positive psychological strength in preparation for tougher times in the future. Describing mental well-being based on positive psychology takes into consideration individual happiness characterized by positive emotions, positive life engagement, and positive meaning of life (Seligman 2012, 5-26; Seligman et al. 2005, 410-421; Seligman & Csikszentmihaly 2014, 279). Therefore, international nursing students through positive psychology can describe their mental well-being experiences in terms of hope, creative ability, future mindedness, courage, spirituality and responsibility (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly 2014, 279-280). A study on happiness and well-being shows that developing emotional intelligence among nursing students is essential in ensuring happiness and life satisfaction (Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, and Pineda-Galán 2014, 1-14). However, this study only took into consideration female nursing students. Moreover, it also does not consider their diversity of the sample population.

Widely known as the Antonovsky's approach to health promotion (Antonovsky 1979, Antonovsky 1987), describing mental well-being based on the Salutogenic perspective entails making efficient use of available resources in preventing deprivation of general health by subjectively maintaining mental well-being (Mittelmark 2013, 30-31), seeing health [mental well-being of international nursing students] as a continuous form of "ease" not "dis-ease" (Antonovsky 1979, Antonovsky 1987). It considers the subjective nature of disease [stressful situations and mental well-being], then make optimal use of resources such as available money, information, experiences, social network, culture, traditions and ideologies to ensure well-being (WHO 2014). Taking into consideration individual capacities, if mental well-being is continuously maintained throughout life [successfully cope with stress and other situations through guidance], there will be continuous health-ease as to dis-ease in contrast (Heiman 2004, 505). Central to this idea is sustainable use of available resources in a continuous process as a way of life. It entails supporting the process of health promotion geared towards coping and adaptive strategies to ease well-being (Vinje, Ausland, Langeland 2013, 307). Salutogenesis involves the concept of "coherence" which is a global view of a society taking into consideration social norms, cultural orientation and life experiences in a society as integral part of individual formation (Heiman 2004, 505-506). Hence, in describing the mental well-being of international students, focus this perspective is on the availability of resource and how well it is being managed vis-a-vis social norms, cultural orientation and life experiences in the Lahti area. It can be likened to the principle of "self-care" in nursing where patients are assisted by

healthcare professional so that they can experience good health and mental well-being based on efficient use of available resources (Vinje, Ausland, Langeland 2013, 307-317). In other words, more importance should be paid to enhance interaction of students and their environmental or social settings (Heiman 2004, 505-520).

Social capital commonly denotes social connections, norms and standards for trust and reciprocity aimed at facilitating communication, coordination and support between individuals that ensures advancement towards achieving personal goals in life (Lisakka & Alanen (eds) 2006). It takes into consideration societal values, norms and beliefs. Some of these values include trust, interrelatedness, cooperation and interdependence. In other words, social life and social institutions that shape the quality of social life are highly regarded (WHO 2014).

International nursing students who describe their mental well-being in terms of cultural norms, societal settings or beliefs reflect more aspects of social capital experiences in their mental well-being. This implies, social capital and well-being includes the individual's capacity to interact with other people and integrate with members of the community, social acceptance and having the ability to contribute to the society (Smith & Khawaja, 2011, 8). Under this perspective, issues like discrimination, cultural shock and racism are considered. Social capital and mental wellbeing constitutes related constructs examined in the past and characterized by acceptable views of individuals or communities from a political, economic and health perspective (Hartwell 2013, 230). Nevertheless, mental wellbeing also known to incorporate all aspects of being healthy physically, emotionally and socially. It does not only involves being healthy in the body but also being healthy in the mind and emotions as well as being healthy in the interpersonal relationships with other people and the community (Omobowale and Temitayo 2014, 1760). Factors generally considered to contribute to the overall well-being of individuals from a social perspective include personal relationships, standard of living, health statues, personal security (Hartwell 2013, 230; Swallow 2008, 54-78), support networks, social norms and culture (WHO 2014).

Mental well-being is generally considered an essential marker of a good life. "Quality of life" as a concept is multidimensional and reflects a broad view of mental well-being such

as social indicators, state of health, happiness, positive aspects of coping, resilience and life satisfaction (WHO 2014). Perhaps a more concise definition of quality of life is that it “is a feeling of overall life satisfaction, as determined by the mentally alert individual whose life is being evaluated” (Meeburg 1993, p. 37). To paraphrase this, a self-assessment of good life satisfaction from a mentally sound individual denotes quality of life (Meeburg 1993, 37). This implies quality of life is a subjective measure reflecting mental well-being. However, such a concept seems to be too broad to enclose physical health, social orientation, environmental considerations and quality of relationships from an individual perspective taking in consideration societal value systems and culture (WHO 2014). However, others are of the view that the definition is likely [not] to be satisfactory except specific conditions for quality of life are generated especially in health care research (Guyatt, Feeny, and Patrick 1993, 622-623; Poradzisz 2013, 116-120). Therefore, in our research, we will consider the concept of Quality of life as an umbrella concept covering an overall individual assessment of one’s mental well-being. Whatever perception of mental well-being individuals decide to adopt when subjectively describing mental well-being, the bottom line is that individuals are different and react differently to several stressors that influence mental well-being.

## 4 STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' MENTAL WELL-BEING

Mental well-being of international students can be promoted from a vast perspective of possible interventions. Extensive research shows mental wellbeing can be positively influenced by the environment (Richardson et al. 2017, 729-736; Triguero-Mas et al. 2017, 1-17; McCracken et al., 2016, 211-221), the societal orientation (Cattan 2009, 4; Windle et al. 2010, 652-669), managing psychological issues (Bíró et al. 2010, 253–258), the nature of school program and adequate physical activities or exercise (Guite 2006, 1117-1126; Penedo & Dahn 2005, 189-193).

### 4.1 Frequent contact with the natural environment

Many scientific works have established the importance of contact with natural environment and its positive health outcomes. A study in Japan for example shows that forest visits have a lowering effect on blood pressure and pulse, decreasing the level of cortisol and lowering to safe levels nervous sympathetic and parasympathetic activities (Lee et al., 2012, 327; Park et al. 2010, 18-26; Tsunetsugu et al. 2013, 90-93). In humans, cortisol is a stress determinant that is released by the hypothalamic pituitary gland where its concentration levels can be associated with general stress levels of the person (Ockenfels et al. 1995, 460; Seplaki et al. 2004, 201). In a similar study in Finland, frequent visits to Urban parks and Urban woodland show positive results in relieving stress-related symptoms (Tyrväinen et al. 2014, 1-9). Although these studies were not carried out on international nursing students, there is no gainsay in that contact with natural environment influences aspects of mental well-being. International nursing students also live in Finland during their studies. Therefore, the natural environment influences their mental well-being. In order to strengthen the mental well-being of international nursing students, outdoor programs that encourage contact with natural environments can be organized frequently.

### 4.2 The social community and personal social skills of the student

Social factors such as communication, interpersonal skills and relationships, networking and other social skills can have strengthening effect on mental well-being of international students. Skills like effective communication, politeness and cooperation are sometimes associated with the qualities of good mental well-being in some Western worlds and as such, constitutes the social orientation of that society. Positive mental health indicates a quality of life associated with individual qualities established by the Western societies and

thought to be the norms of the society (Cattan 2009, 28). This considers aspects of mental well-being such as favorable interpersonal relationships, networking, cooperation, interdependence, tolerance, common participations in activities and every other thing that shapes the social environment in Lahti Finland. The *raison d'être* is that changes in social environment can influence mental-well-being. This might be through isolation, loneliness, language barrier, marginalization, cultural differences and limited interactions beyond the four walls of the classroom. With the rising tension of threats of terrorism in Europe nowadays, common norms of the society such as tolerance and cooperation that once strengthened mental well-being seems to wane. It is for such reasons that calls for the need to improve trainings on skills such as social interaction, decision making, trust building and cooperation to enhance humanity by reducing the effect of several stressors in life (Anderson & Jané-Ilopis 2011, 147–155). It can be concluded that effective communication, interpersonal skills, favorable relationships, networking could strengthen the mental well-being of persons in a society and as such, should be encouraged. Under social factors, one major challenge of international students is culture shock which remains very difficult and stressful to manage even with awareness (D'Souza et al. 2016, 909-920). The mental well-being of new international students can be affect by several factors including cultural shock if appropriate measures are not put in place to help them to adjust to the new culture (Serin, Serin & Özbas 2010, 3). These appropriate measures can be put in place through increase awareness and sensitization of both the society and the new students about possible societal expectations as they move into their new location for studies.

#### 4.3 Availability of resources and counselling opportunities in schools

It is no news that psychological issues such as depression, stress, loneliness, sadness, homes sick, and others constitutes mental well-being. In such situations, the availability of resources and counselling opportunities greatly strengthen mental well-being. Among international nursing students, students that show signs of psychological distress manifesting sometimes in missing of classes, failing to complete school tasks, failing to meet up with target credits, can be targeted and, training developed to improve their coping skills (Bíró et al. 2010, 253–258). This might be through the development of support programs or groups that deal with students that have comparable situation.

Recently, research shows that the nature of curriculum design can generate, strengthen and maintain mental well-being of students (Slavin, Schindler & Chibnall, 2014, 573- 577; Tang & Ferguson, 2014, 27-51). On the other hand, good mental well-being should be a prerequisite to studying (Seligman 2012, 5-26). Whatever the direction of flow, school related stress can be limited if the entire schooling process is designed in the interest of the learner. For such reasons, well-being essentials such as autonomy, building relationships, initiating a sense of belonging and motivation must all be part of the learning process (Baik et al. 2017, 3-62). Therefore, our research cannot fail to highlight the importance of the educational process or curriculum in ensuring mental well-being.

#### 4.4 Routine physical activity as a life-style

Finally, regarding strengthening mental well-being, sufficient physical engagement is considered to have positive effects on mental well-being. The term ‘physical engagements’ denotes’

*“any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure” (Department of Health PA, Health Improvement and Protection 2011 p. 54, WHO 2018b, p. 14).*

It entails activities like exercise and sports, play, games and even daily routines such as biking to school. Physical activities are known to have impacts on psychological adaptations such as mood enhancement, enhance feeling of control or mastery of one environment and increase social interaction. (Mental Health Foundation. 2013, 14). In a recent community-based studies on physical activity via gaming and mental well-being, there shows a significant improvement on mental well-being after increase levels in physical activity (Harris 2018, 1-8). Among student-nurses, promoting physical activity is essential in that it increases self-esteem, life-satisfaction and decrease anxiety and depression risks (Hawker 2012). Therefor mental well-being of international nursing students can also be strengthened through physical activity.

## 5 THREATS TO MENTAL WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The implications of studying in a different country could be enormous to constitute stress and even depression. Stressors might include anxiety related to facing new experiences, meeting personal or family expectations, academic pressure, financial concerns, relationship issues and disturbing feelings such as neglect or isolation (Bradley 2000, 417-420). These stressors are the principal causes of poor mental well-being among international students. Threats to mental well-being of international students can be widely discussed under aspects such as the presence of psychological disturbances in life, issues with socio-cultural adjustment, limited social support, stress due to studies and nature of study environment.

### 5.1 Psychological disturbances in the student's life such as loneliness and stress

Prior or during studies, psychological disturbances can be present in the life of a student. International students face several difficulties which includes possible psychological and physiological defects such as loneliness, depression and stress (Winkelman 1994, 121). These puts their mental well-being at risks. Youths nowadays are faced with increase in level of depression linked with social pressure and low life satisfaction (Brown & Holloway 2008, 33-34). Mood swings, hopelessness, and elevated levels of anxiety associated with the challenge of living in unfamiliar environment are common among youths studying abroad. In this regard, such conditions can be serious enough to initiate episodes of chronic depression (Swallow 2008, 54-78). In Hungary, psychological distress was found to have a strong relationship with the mental well-being of medical students (Bíró et al. 2010, 253–258). Therefore, is imperative to clearly identify the presence of any psychological disturbance in international students as they are a direct threat to students' mental well-being.

### 5.2 Problems related to the acculturation process into the Finnish society

Besides psychological disturbances, international students in Finland are known to face several problems related to acculturation during their studies. Acculturation is defined as the process in which individual beliefs, behavior and cultural identity change as they meet people in their new and unfamiliar environment (Zhang & Goodson 2010, 614). During this process, several issues arise that generate stress and as such, affects students' mental well-being. These issues include cultural shock and cultural misunderstandings, racism,

perceived discrimination, language barrier and discomforts due to present political climate of their unfamiliar environment (Prieto-Welch 2016, 54). Therefore, there are reasons to constantly improve on acculturation process of international students in order to ensure their mental well-being.

### 5.3 Insufficient social support from social groups during studies

Furthermore, social support can be beneficial to the overall success of international students. Studies show that less social support to international students makes them more sensitive to school-related stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004, 73–82). Besides, the process of acculturation can have severe mental health outcomes if sufficient social support is not provided to students (Prieto-Welch 2016, 55). These can be provided through creation of extracurricular activities, social groups, or any other activity beyond the four walls of the classroom.

### 5.4 Nature of the nursing curriculum

In recent years, studies have shown that there is a link between the nature of the curriculum and the mental well-being of students. For example, young university college students experience a substantial risk of depressive, anxiety and stress-related symptoms compared to non-college youths in the same community (Baik et al. 2017, 3). Furthermore, more visual learning aids are known to improve the mental well-being of chronically ill students (Zhu 2016, 1429-1442). Therefore, the importance of the educational process cannot be sidelined when dealing with threats to the mental well-being of international nursing students. It is on such a note that we identify well-being essentials such as autonomy, competence due to experience, building relationships, initiating a sense of belonging and motivation (Baik et al. 2017, 8) and conclude that these well-being essentials should be the fundamentals of any educational process.

### 5.5 Nature of study environment at the university

Nature of study environment plays a significant role in the mental well-being of international students (Lee 2017, 6-11; Baik et al. 2017, 8; Zhu 2016, 1429-1442; Wasson 2016, 2237). This can range from the presence of surrounding noises, nature of classrooms, teaching-learning experiences such as visualization, learning resources such as library, just to name a few. Some researchers suggest that some specific environment of learning

is associated to improved mental-well-being among medical students (Wasson 2016, 2237). The learning environment also can enhance positive relationships and the feeling of belonging which are both linked to improved mental well-being (Baik et al. 2017,3-8). Other researchers advocate the need for study environment to strive to support students with poor performances and build their competences rather than act principally as a center for evaluation of these competences during clinical trainings (Lee 2017, 6-11). This is to ensure that all students develop a more stable mental well-being during their studies.

Generally, threats to mental well-being of international nursing students can be more diverse to include several stressors that might result from normal life experiences prior to school commencement or during school, the process of acculturation, social orientation of the community, nature of curriculum or educational process and the nature of study environment. The result of these stressors can be manifested physically in complaints such as fatigue, disorientation, cultural confusion, difficulty in concentrating and of cause psychological issues such as feeling of loneliness, sadness, homes sick, and all these symptoms usually will have no physical or somatic origin (Prieto-Welch 2016, 55). These constitutes mental well-being which can be under threats but pertinent to our theses is also how mental can also be strengthened.

## 6 INTERNATIONAL NURSING STUDENTS IN FINLAND

### 6.1 Defining international students

Some academicians liken international students to "sojourners" defined as people who travel abroad to attain specific goals in life within a period (Bochner 2006, 181). This is different from refugees and other immigrants in that sojourners often stay in their host countries for a specific time after which they return home (Bochner 2006, 181; Li et al. 2014, 301). Furthermore, sojourners are known to be more mobile with temporal residence and in practical term, less likely to be included in the formal structural organizations of their host countries (Hamann 2001, 32). However, a clearer definition of International Students is that of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO defines international students as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin" (Global Education Digest, 2006,178). To paraphrase this definition, international students are students who go across their national border for studying (Global Education Digest 2006, 178). Extrapolating from the above definition, our thesis considers international nursing students in LUAS as students from Non-Finnish background, studying nursing in a language other than the national languages of Finland which are Finnish and Swedish, and are registered as full-time students for over 6 months. Therefore, our studies consider Exchange students for a period of about six months to be international students valuable enough to provide reliable data needed to deduce our findings.

### 6.2 The situation of international students in Finland

In the last years, there has been increasing numbers of international students in Finland because such some study programs are created with the aim of attracting students from around the world. With the possibility of having quality tuition-free education, Finland experienced an influx of students of different nationals in the previous years. However, though popular opinion suggest that this situation will change in the coming years due to the recent introduction of tuition fees for international students studying in English Language, there is rather a general increase by 1% from the previous year of the number of students attending higher education (Official Statistics of Finland 2018).

At the level of a bachelor's in nursing, the Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland are responsible for training of nurses. Training in these institutions is done in close collaboration with the healthcare working environment (Ministry of Education Finland 2001).

### 6.3 English Nursing program in LUAS

The nursing degree program for international students takes 3.5 years with a total of 210 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) of which 75 ECTS attained through clinical trainings. These clinical trainings are arranged in working environment such that the student faces de facto situations in 'real life' work experiences. The aim is to provide the student with tailored orientation towards their professional life (Mattila 2010, 153). Supervision during such training involves the nursing mentor [and of course the entire staff via the mentor] and the supervising teacher from the university both providing feedback to the student during the entire training. Development of learning skills is tracked via a student's learning journal or a research quarter written throughout the training process and later evaluated by the supervising teacher and the nurse mentor at the end of the training. While the principal role of the nurse mentor is to guide the student and provide daily feedback, the supervising teacher acts as a bridge between the school administration and the training facility receiving feedback that will be necessary in developing or updating the theoretical teaching aspect of entire nursing curriculum. This is to ensure that that graduates as nurses should meet societal demands. Nevertheless, studies have shown that international students during clinical training are faced with the feeling of being excluded despite attempts to belong and as such find it difficult to cope with the entire training (Rogan et al. 2006, 72–86; Mattila 2010, 154). In Finland, the language problem is known to be associated with poor achievements in clinical training settings and the students often feel they are not encouraged to freely express their dissatisfactions with their mentors (Mattila 2010, 155) at least till the end of the training. This can account for more school-related stress among students and perhaps their mental well-being. However, measures to ensure smooth integration of new students into the society includes the availability of Finnish language programs alongside major courses, numerous Student Union activities like welcome parties for freshmen, sports and site-seeing events to reduce the stress associated with fitting in the new school environment.

## 7 METHODOLOGY

A research methodology can be defined as the choices we make regarding how we intend to carry out a research procedure.

*It is "a way of thinking about studying a social reality" (Strauss & Corbin 1998, 3).*

Methodology entails the choices we make regarding planning what we want to research about, how we intend to gather data, forms of data and manner of data analyses (Silverman 2005). It can broadly be classified into qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Quantitative methods entail mainly statistical calculations and correlations to make research conclusion (Strauss & Corbin 1998, Silverman 2005, Silverman 2011, 8; Denzin & Lincoln 2011) while qualitative method is more descriptive. In other to have a broad picture of the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students, this study will be qualitative.

### 7.1 Qualitative research method

A qualitative research is defined as a research procedure where findings are not arrived at through some statistical calculations nor by quantifying using other means (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Rather, qualitative method uses words, is concerned with meanings, and focuses on how people describe themselves or see others' behavior in a unique setting (Silverman 2011, 8). As Denzin & Lincoln (2011, 3) writes: -

*"A qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world". It "consist of a set of interpretative, material practices that makes the world visible" [.....] "study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them". (Denzin & Lincoln 2011 .3)*

This implies in qualitative research, people explain or describe what a phenomenon means to them in a natural setting. Our thesis looks at the experiences of mental well-being of international nursing students from a subjective perspective. Associated with behavior, our research intends to explore mental well-being base on what the concept individually means to selected group international nursing students. Therefore, a qualitative method of approach is most suitable because describing a concept like "mental

well-being” from a subjective perspective requires an in-depth knowledge of the respondents’ feelings, reactions, beliefs and attitudes and these can only be well covered qualitatively through face-to-face interviews (Strauss & Corbin 1998, Silverman 2005, Silverman 2011, 8; Denzin & Lincoln 2011). This is because in such interviews, aspects of non-verbal communication which is also critical information for the research can also be taken into considerations. Besides, we intend to look at mental well-being form an everyday experience and a qualitative method is best if the researcher seeks to explore behavior from everyday life (Silverman 2011, 8).

## 7.2 Sample size and sampling method

A sample size can be defined as a smaller number participant selected from a population and considered to be a representation of the total population such that any conclusions made from these participants can be generalized to the entire population (Kadam & Bhalerao 2010, 55). The way the students were selected to form the sample size is called “sampling method” (Beyea 1997, 722). After obtaining permission from appropriate authority (see Appendix 3), students for this research were selected randomly by sending a general e-mail to all international nursing students in LUAS (see Appendix 1). A Facebook post was also made on all private Facebook groups of international nursing students in LUAS (Appendix 1). Students who were interested in taking part in our studies were expected to respond by sending to us an e-mail. The first 6 students who responded were selected making a sample size of six (6). Interviews were conducted on 6 international nursing students to obtain an insight on their mental well-being experiences, their threats as well as aspects that supports their mental well-being (see Appendix 2). These students have actively engaged in school work for a minimum of 6 months with no interruptions. They represent a group assumed to be facing the challenges associated with ensuring mental well-being while studying in the international nursing program. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a preferred location of the respondent.

Table 1: List of respondents, their sex and number of years of active schooling

<b>SN</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>sex</b>	<b>Years of active schooling</b>
1	Respondent 1	Female	2 years
2	Respondent 2	Male	3 years
3	Respondent 3	Female	1 year
4	Respondent 4	Female	1 year
5	Respondent 5	Female	3 years
6	Respondent 6	Female	2 years

The table above shows the size and quality of the sample. It shows the number of respondents in total, their sex and level of completion of studies (Table 1).

### 7.3 Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are formal interviews where the interviewer has a guide or list of questions intended to cover specific themes orderly, yet the respondent can be allowed to deviate from the guide if the interviewer regards the information to be valuable (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). It entails some probing while engaging the respondents to express their opinions that will aid the researcher to the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Silverman 2011). Semi-structured interviews are often conducted followed by observation of the respondents, and in addition, some form of informal and unstructured interviewing via developing relevant follow-up questions so that the interviewer can better understand the phenomenon from the interviewee's perspective (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). The main questions for the interview were formulated from the three main themes of our research which includes mental well-being experiences of international nursing students, threats to their mental well-being and aspects that strengthen their mental well-being (see Appendix 2).

From these main themes, pre-planned questions were asked to the respondents. Unplanned follow-up questions were also asked depending the responses of the main

questions. This was aimed at getting a clearer view of the respondent's idea regarding the "themes" under discussion.

The interviews lasted averagely for about twenty-five minutes at a preferred place of the respondent. The interviews were taped after obtaining consent from the respondents and later transcribed and analyzed using guidelines of the "grounded theory" approach of content analysis.

#### 7.4 Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed and then the content analyzed. The analysis was done using the "grounded theory" approach of content analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Burnard 1991, 461). In this approach, the transcriptions were categorized based on the three main theme of our research. These themes are mental well-being experiences of international nursing students, threats to their mental well-being and aspects that strengthen their mental well-being. Green, red and yellow were the respective color codes assigned to parts of the transcription that expresses or falls under the respective "themes". Any part of the interview that did not fall under any specific theme were first categorized under "others" and then later grouped to form another theme "individual or subjective meaning of mental well-being".

Table 2. Research themes and respective color codes during data analysis

<b>Research themes</b>	<b>Respective color codes during data analysis</b>
Mental well-being experiences	Green
Threats to their mental well-being	Red
Strengthening their mental well-being	Yellow
Others	Bold black

The able above shows the main "themes" and respective color codes assigned during data analysis (Table 2).

The notes collected during the interviews were first transcribed. This acted as "memory joggers" (Burnard 1991, 462). It is important in having these memory joggers because they aid in remembering ideas that we considered more important for our research during

the interviews (Holloway & Wheeler 1998). Every information on the transcripts was grouped under similar themes and even those considered as “out of topic” were accounted for via a process called “open coding” (Burnard 1991). It is during this process that an additional theme “individual or subjective meaning of mental well-being” was generated. Basically, this new theme is a higher-order stage category generated from a list of the newly generated categories that could not fall under the three main themes of our research. This also enabled us to eliminate a situation in qualitative research called “saturation” whereby respondents’ descriptions become repetitive (Gillis & Jackson 2002). Categorization was done first independent by the three of us and then compared with each other. This was aimed to enhance “categorizing validity” and reduce categorization bias (Burnard 1991).

## 8 MENTAL WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL NURSING STUDENTS

This research seeks to describe the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students. Specific interest was on aspects that support as well as aspects that threaten the mental well-being of international nursing students. The findings reveal that mental well-being can mean different things to different people. Besides, individual experiences of mental well-being remain unique to everyone including international nursing students. However, such unique subjectivity of mental well-being experiences converges to form a general conceptual framework of mental well-being among international nursing students. Furthermore, mental well-being experiences of international nursing students are characterized by resilience, positive psychology, salutogenic use of available resources as well as the social. By showing resilience, the students never thought of quitting school despite the challenges they face as a student. Positive psychology is shown as international nursing students still hope that life will one day be better at some point. Furthermore, international nursing students also acknowledge their mental well-being experiences linked to the presence of some school resources such as pool activities and gym as well as availability of tutor-teachers and tutor-students. Nevertheless, these international students also have threats as well as some aspects that support their mental well-being.

### 8.1 The meaning of “mental well-being” to international nursing students

Generally, regarding international nursing students, there is a consensus that mental well-being is psychological and entails emotions, feelings, and thoughts regarding challenges of being a student (Fig. 1). These challenges differ with each student. However, it ranges from financial needs, need for new friends, coping with the present environment, dealing with new educational system and fear of failure especially among student who hold strong attachment to their main goal of coming to Finland which is to graduate as a nurse and make their family back at home proud.

*“I think that mental well-being something related to my mental state, like health and physiological health, not physically but mentally”.*

*“ emotions, if there is stress, or happiness or some fun with friends but also I can say that my own physical issues can relate or connect with mental health”.*

*“ if I think about mental well-being as a student, I think about being psychologically okay, if am equal to task, if am going to school, if I am doing the courses or that am doing other normal things without pressure”.*

The mental state of the student is important in conceptualizing mental well-being among international nursing students. It takes into considerations the student's emotions and personal assessment on general psychological state. International nursing students also perceive mental well-being to be the absence of stress regarding life experiences as a student. They generally think mental well-being is either being stressed or being relaxed. In other words, mental well-being can either be a positive mental state where international students feel more relaxed or negative mental state where they feel more stressed depending on the present life experiences. However, some international students think of mental well-being as the presence or absences of depressive tendencies.

*“Well actually, when you asked me the question about what mental well-being means to me personally, the first thing that came to my mind is depression”.*

International nursing students have many issues to deal with as they arrive in Finland. Some of these issues include financial need, need to adapt to the environment, need to adapt to new educational system, and need for new friends. This constitutes stress and as such, the students are more likely to experience depression tendencies. However, mental well-being among these students is also seen as that ability to cope with the stress of studying with the aim of being productive in the society at some point in the future.

*“.....can realize my own potential, cope with the normal stresses or hustle, work productively and be able to contribute in the community in one way or another”*

Therefore, there is no gainsay in that mental well-being to international student is psychological and entails aspects of their present mental state such as their emotions, stress, depression tendencies, feelings, relationship needs and skills of coping with everyday experiences of being an international nursing student.

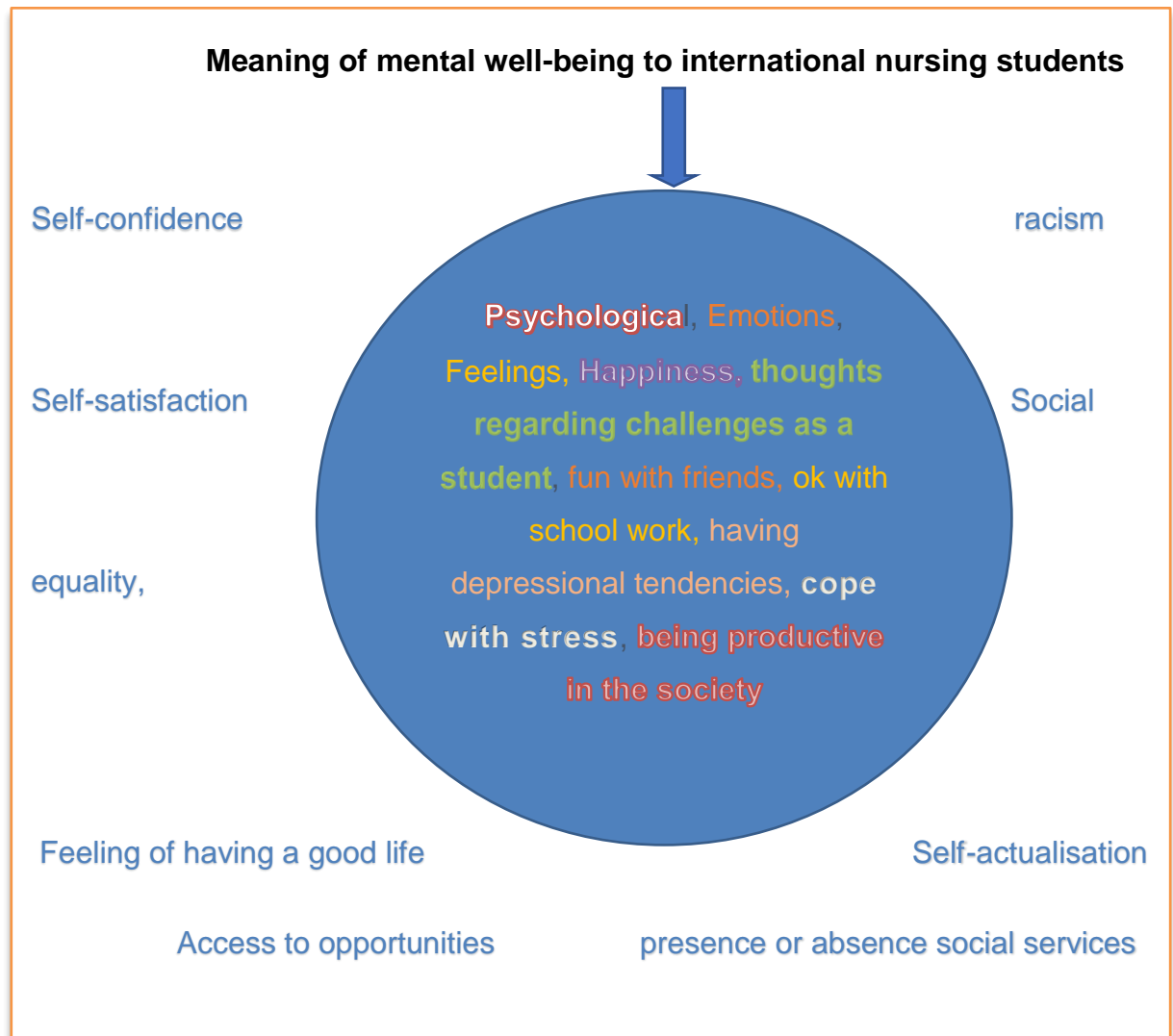


Fig 1: The meaning of mental well-being

The figure above is a box with a circle inside the box. This is to illustrate the conceptual meaning of mental well-being in general and the conceptual meaning of mental well-being of international nursing students. The box contains several aspects linked to mental well-being in general such as self-confidence, self-satisfaction, racism, emotions, social equality, happiness, self-actualisation, challenges, depressional tendencies, social equality, just to name a few. However, the circle in the box encloses aspect of mental well-being in general that are peculiar to international nursing students (see Fig. 1 above).

## 8.2 International nursing students' experiences of their mental well-being

Generally, describing the mental well-being experiences of international nursing student ranges from how they retain their mental well-being after being through tough times, the presence of a positive character in times of challenges as a student, the use of available resources in overcoming challenges as a student and their experiences regarding social norms of the society such as relationships with peers, teachers and the entire Finnish population. Specifically, they show resilience in their mental well-being experiences where they try to retain their mental well-being during stressful moments, make use of positive psychology, apply salutogenesis in that they make efficient use of available resources to deal with stress and make use of aspects that entail social capital such as building favourable relationships and learning the Finnish language (Fig. 2).

The mental well-being experiences of international nursing students are associated with poor performances usually at the beginning of studies due to difference in educational systems. Specific aspects of education system in Finland such as frequent scheduling and adhering to these schedules are new to some international students. Besides this, international students also find it difficult to adapt to new teaching strategies and as such, the entire educational system appears to be challenging to them at the beginning of their studies. Finances is also a problem since basic items in Finland can be too expensive than previously thought by these students. This generates worries which eventually affects their studies at the beginning. However, most international students in such situations would rather put more effort and stay focused on their studies. Though giving up might cross their mind, the mostly strive to make changes that can improve their present situation and prevent them from deviating from school. This shows resilience on the part of international nursing students regarding such experiences.

*“...at some point, I know I had to change certain things in my life and focus on what will help me attain my main goal which is my studies. For example, when I do exercise or spend time listening to music, how do I say it? I feel better, I enjoy studies more when with friends or when I do exercise, I try not to think about some bad issues that is happening to me”*

Mental well-being during tough times is retained by identifying the things that must be done to support mental well-being rather than giving up. Resilience is observed as international students take the responsibility to make the changes that will help them focus on their main goal which is school.

Another mental well-being experience of international nursing students that shows resilience is when they are failed in a clinical training and they feel that it was an act of injustice on the part of the nurse-mentor. Some international nursing students think that an absentee nurse-mentor who leaves a student without supervision or specific assigned tasks for several days only to fail the student as the end show lack of interest on the side of the mentor to train international students. This can be a very rare possibility. However, if such situation arises, it greatly affects the mental well-being of the student. Nevertheless, in such situations, international nursing students feel that it is quite a challenge to be stronger and strive to one day be co-workers with such nurse-mentors rather than giving up.

*” ... based on what happened I knew I had to turn it into something that will help me boost my mental well-being and made me to be strong enough to withstand any future challenges”*

Resilience is also shown in mental well-being experiences of international nursing student when they suddenly realised they must manage their own life as they move to Finland. This means that as the students learn to buy their own food, pay their own bills, and plan their own lives in general, worries on how to get all these going will be part of their daily lives. The reality is that this is new to some international students because back in their home countries, their parents take more responsibility in planning their lives as long as they are still studying.

*“... the underlying things that bothered me was for a while was responsibilities associated with me moving away from home, living far from my family and friends, having to cook my own food, do laundry, pay bills and having too much work load in school which is quite hard. So much responsibilities shifted to me which is kind of difficult to handle at some point. This took a lot of time for me to adjust and accept but I knew I had no other option than to just do so”.*

Despite being in such a situation, quitting is not an option for these students. No matter how difficult the situation was, international nursing students tried to manage, and this entailed resilience. Some acknowledged using other senior students or family members who already have been in Finland for some time as her role models. Others rely on friendly teachers, tutor-teachers and tutor-students but the overall idea is resilience and ensuring that everything goes back to normal at some point in future.

Besides describing their mental well-being experiences in terms of how they try to maintain mental well-being during tough times, some international students also portray a positive character in their mental well-being experiences. To students who had difficulties in studying at the beginning, it was more important to stay focused on the primary goal in life which was to become a nurse. Even if difficulties in school and finance had huge effect on mental well-being as a student, it was important to keep pushing towards the main goal of coming to Finland. The idea here is “thinking positive” and hoping that the future will be bright.

*“ ..... like even money or finances is important when you are living alone but you can have money today but tomorrow you don't have, or have like double, but in studies I must concentrate now [ no matter the difficulties], I should not lose this chance”*

Some students are more specific in that in every experience that negatively affects their mental well-being is considered a lesson or an opportunity to strive to better. This for example can be a failed clinical training. To some students, such an experience only made them stronger and more focused hoping for better days ahead. A positive mind-set is adopted in the senses that international students always hope to overcome any tough situation during their studies.

*“ .... since I want success or increment in life [better life], then in challenges, you should look for ways to turn them to success. Like every challenge that come in your way should be an indication that will make you work harder and succeed”.*

Sometimes, experiences of mental well-being of international nursing students is centred on the resources available in dealing with study-related stress. Most students talk about stress related to finances mainly to renew their visas and also stress because of being new on campus. The stress for finance is more when visa renewal is approaching.

*“ I think everything boils down to finance at some point” [ during visa renewals]  
“and this makes doing other things sometimes more difficult”*

By “other things”, it means school work when visa renewal is by the corner becomes more difficult. Most students at this point concentrate more in looking for job rather than worrying about school. Besides resources such as finances, some students also describe their mental well-being experience in a more positive way in terms of other school

resources such as gym, tutor-teachers, student tutors, pool and even friendly interaction with teachers. A mental well-being experience is that some international students find it difficult to make friends in school at the beginning. They are mostly lost in aspects regarding school. Some could not find classes nor understand how to sign-up for courses. There was hardly anyone to depend on when they face difficulties as a student. However, discovering that there exist tutor-teachers, student tutors and friendly teachers who are always ready to listen was like a “game-changer” to some international students. This made them more comfortable and able to face these challenges of being an international student and new on campus. Besides, other school resources such as pool and gym make international nursing students even more comfortable.

*“...there are tutor teachers, there are students who help you also if you have any type of questions” [ student tutors], “there is gym and pool activities that also help me physically. So, these are the things that supported me [in tough times]. And this type of support makes my mental well-being to be in balance. If something happens, or that I need something, I like to go and ask for help”*

The experiences on mental well-being of international nursing students are also centred on the social norms of the community in which they are attending school. This community can either be the classroom environment which is characterised by diversity, or the Finnish population with strong societal orientations commonly known as the “Finnish way of life”. In the community, international nursing students sometimes feel culturally different and this puts some additional stress on them as a student.

*“.... sometimes too, challenges come like cultural issues that arise in the country and this sometimes makes me feel really depressed even though in minimum, but it occurs sometimes”*

Cultural issues in Finland such as the language, individualism and egalitarian behaviour of Finnish people seems challenging to adopt by some foreign students. Besides cultural issues in the society, some international nursing students are more concerned with the dynamics of the study groups mostly characterised by diversity during group presentations in class. Some group members are more understanding and willing to cooperate than others. This is a fundamental cause of stress as an international student and as such, a mental well-being experience.

*“.....and we had an assignment and the day before [that is, on day to the dateline] you just tell me few sentences that you copy-pasted from somewhere and for me is not enough. So, I was changing the group to try and find the correct people, but I did not find. So, after I kept this problem for a couple of months there was a point it was affecting me to my studies and to me emotionally and psychologically because also there are people who will not accept my criticism”*

It is evident that dealing with a diverse group of students can be challenging. This is because every individual student has unique cultural experiences in learning. They all come from different countries with different educational and cultural backgrounds. However, there are greater chances to benefit more from such diversity by learning from each other. Therefore, even though students might face such difficulties in dealing with other students, teachers always try to establish positive experiences in such occasions. Another mental well-being experience of international nursing student is also in terms of relationships or social norms of the society in that some students feel it is difficult for them to make new friends with people of Finnish origin. Stress is generated in the senses that some international students sometimes feel that native Finnish people do not want to talk to them. Though these students identify themselves as “very social” and “out-spoken”, to them, friendship-making with the natives is still challenging.

*“First of all, having friendships with Finnish people is very hard [for me], many people seem not to want to talk to me, so I prefer to just keep my head down and not bother. This has affected me because am very social, but I have no friends. Most people in my class live in Helsinki, so it is hard to keep contact during other times except during class”*

Mental well-being experience of international students is not limited to cultural dynamics of the society in and out of classroom but also to individual cultural expectation. Some international nursing student hold strong value to their individual cultural norms and as such, their mental well-being experiences are linked to individual cultural expectations. An example of such an expectation is the willingness to succeed as your predecessors. Some students see other senior students as role models, other students look upon their relatives or friends who came to Finland before them as role models too. The raison d'être is that international nursing students hardly think of quitting because no matter the challenges, if others were able to succeed, then they too can succeed. For those who had

friends or relatives who had been in Finland before, the relationship with such friends and relatives was a major resource to their mental well-being experiences which was mostly favourable.

*".... having a person to talk to and communicating with my family eases things in some-way. I have a sister here, so I always imagine how she struggled herself, so this motivates me to move on".*

In the same vein, mental well-being experience was also linked to individual cultural background in that some international nursing students have unique cultural aspects characterised by competition and fervent desire to make their family back at home proud.

*"..... in the first semester, three of my friends [ all from same country] passed all the courses, and only me of the four courses I took I failed three. Because of this I felt sad and disappointed and somehow, I had a feeling I want to quit" [she laughed showing that it does not mean literally quitting]. "It was like in the first semester, all my motivation died. I could not share this with my family back at home because I was embarrassed. I felt I was a disappointment to them and this was so much stress to me".*

This explains the common phenomenon of students from the same country trying to compete among themselves. The failure of a student could be an embarrassment to their family back home. This makes the student worried. However, they work harder to avoid such embarrassment rather than quitting.

Therefore, the mental well-being experiences of international nursing student entails how to sustain their mental well-being during stress. This entails resilience that includes making changes that will enable the students to achieve their main goal of becoming a nurse. Furthermore, their mental well-being experiences also entail having a positive mindset during tough times as a student. This entails pushing forward with studies no matter the challenges with the hope that they will overcome the present situation. Besides, some students also describe their mental well-being experiences in terms of resources available during stress. This entails efficient use of these resources to prevent stress. Also known as salutogenesis, it includes the efficient use of available resources such as finance, student tutors, gym activities, pool activities and friendly teachers always willing to listen to prevent deteriorating health due to stress. Finally, mental well-being

experiences of international nursing students are centred around social norms that could either be linked to the community at large, the classroom diversity or individual cultural background of the student.

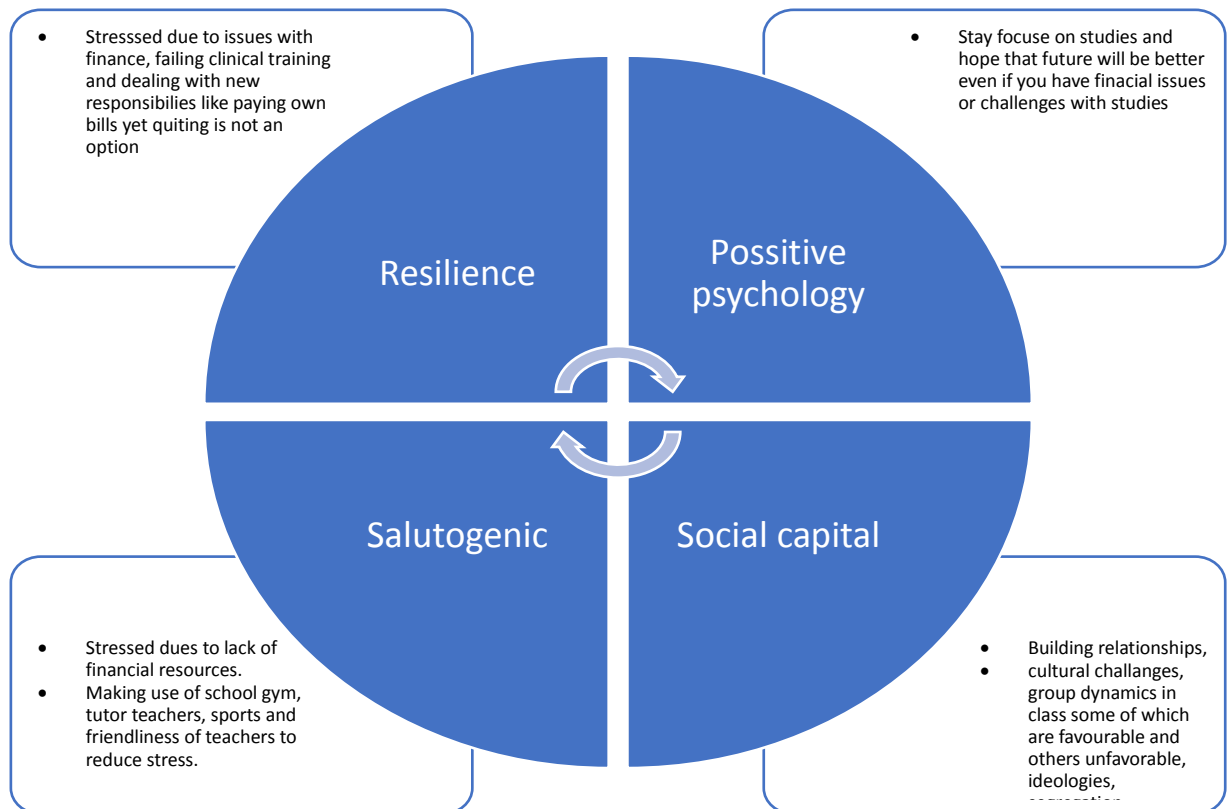


Fig. 2 Mental well-being experiences of international nursing students

Figure 2 above shows four interactive components of mental well-being experiences of international nursing students. There is resilience, positive psychology, salutogenesis and social capital. These components manifest in specific ways in the life of the students and as such, are important aspects of their mental well-being experiences.

### 8.3 Menaces international nursing students' mental well-being

The findings in this research shows the mental well-being of international nursing students is threaten by the presence of individual psychological disturbances such as loneliness and stress in the life of a student, issues with acculturation into the Finnish society, insufficient social support from social groups on campus, insufficient resources to deal with school related stress as well as nature of the University's curriculum in nursing (Fig. 3, 37).

Regarding psychological disturbances, most international nursing students are mostly disturbed about finances especially during visa renewal. Furthermore, psychological disturbances can also result from fear of not graduating on time, fear of being a failure to their family back at home as well as feeling of being considered as an "outsider" by the Finnish population. This initiates episods of psychological disturbances in the life of a student characterized by loniliness and stress. For most international nursing students, to earn money is pertinent when visa renewal is by the corner.

*"....it is important to earn money especially now because my visa expires soon, and I need so much money in my account to renew my visa. Am constantly anxious about being sent back home, so I must work and get the money in the account. If I do my exams and get even the lowest results, I know I will still get a visa. But money is a must. Also, we are now paying for school fees. So, working is a must".*

This indicates that at some point in the life of an international nursing student, finances for visa renewal becomes more important than school. This creates additional psychological disturbance in the form of stress. Moreover, stress is more because some students have difficulties in school, coping with life in Finland in general, or have the thoughts of being considered as a failure by family back at home. This initiates constant psychological disturbance in the life of the students.

*"when I failed some courses"....."the more I thought about home, I just kept the feeling of being a disappointment, and the sadness remain with me for a long time".*

Besides the presence of psychological disturbances in the student's life, some international nursing students had issues with the acculturation process into the Finnish society and this was a threat to their mental well-being. These issues can be language-related, feeling strange at the beginning about the individualistic life-style of Finnish people, or be amazed by the egalitarian nature of the society. This can be depressing to some students.

*"... sometimes too, challenges come like cultural issues that arise in the country. Sometimes, this makes me feel really depressed"*

Cultural issues that mostly pose a problem to students is language, individualism and the egalitarian nature of the society. Besides the fact that Finnish language can be challenging to learn at the beginning, some students come from areas where hierarchy and interdependence is important for survival. They came to Finland with the same mentality respecting hierarchy while hoping to be respected in return under the same circumstances. Hierarchy due to age for example is common among most Africans and this can be misunderstood by some who suddenly realise egalitarianism is more accepted in their pristine environment.

In a similar note, international nursing students consider learning the Finnish language very challenging and depressing and as such a threat to her mental well-being. However, the students acknowledge the fact that it is pertinent to overcome this challenge in order to have a favourable life in Finland.

*"... I feel if I study Finnish language, my life will be easier. I can make friends and get a job here in Finland"*

The findings in this research also show that inadequate social support from various social groups was also a threat to the mental well-being of international nursing students. This can be due to poor circulation of information regarding the availability of various social groups on campus. The social support can also be insufficient because an international student finds it difficult at the beginning to relate with other social groups due to language barrier. Some of these students feel deserted simply because they could not express themselves in Finnish language at the beginning. Some students believe that social support offered to international nursing students by their supervising teacher, nurse mentor and other staff during their first clinical training is insufficient.

*"I went to an elderly care home for my first clinical training, my nurse mentor got sick and got 6 weeks leave from work. So that meant I did not have a mentor going forward. Nobody there wanted to be with me. It was a strange feeling. I know I do not speak Finnish, but I just lived here few months. I will slowly learn. I felt like I was nothing. I spoke to my teacher, unfortunately my teacher for that training was hard to communicate with her".....and "I doubt if she was understanding me. It was frustrating. I just finished my training weeks for the credits. I felt I learnt nothing".*

In such situations, the students feel that communication with the teacher from school is inefficient at the beginning of their studies especially as they are new to the system. This is likely to generate a sense of worthlessness in the students especially if they think language barrier was the problem. In the same vein, international nursing students feel that it is difficult to create and maintain meaningful relationships in Finland. Social contact with the other students from Finnish background is insufficient and as such, international students are less prepared to face the reality about Finnish culture and perception when they go out for clinical training.

*"sometimes you go to the campus and see Finnish students on one side and foreign students on the other side and they are never together"*

Such perceived segregation between nursing students studying in Finnish language and international nursing students also initiates worthlessness in international students.

Besides insufficient social support, some international student feel they have insufficient resources to deal with school-related stress. These resources can be finances or counselling services.

*" I think everything boils down to finance at some point". "*

*"many people seem not to want to talk to me, so I prefer to just keep my head down and not bother"*

Though opinions on resource issues such as finance can be realistic, the idea that persons will not want to talk to international students remains vague. It is more realistic to say some international nursing students are not aware of the counselling services

available or who to talk to when in stressful moments. In other words, there is inadequate sensitisation on the availability of counselling resources during stress.

Besides resources, the nature of the nursing program also came up as a threat to the mental well-being of international nursing student. Some students complain that a clinical training can be cancelled at the end without any credit given to the student. Though the school has guidelines for failing a clinical training, International nursing students believe assessment during clinical training should have been continuous on weekly basis so that reasons for possible failure can be identified early and dealt with rather than waiting till the end of the training to fail the student. Sometimes, the nurse mentor and supervising teachers are seen by the student to be unfair during clinical training assessment because they often side with each other during assessment.

*".....one of my clinical training was cancelled after five weeks of training. This is something that normally happens to all the nursing students but at the end the tutor teacher will always give the credit or part of the credits but mine was not the case. I felt like I was unfairly treated by my teacher mentor from school and mentor nurse. That really affected my mental well-being. Imagine five weeks of intensive study gone with no credits. It is catastrophic in somebody's life"*

It is unclear whether guidelines for failed clinical training are strictly followed by all supervising teachers. However, it is logical that if there is frequent communication between the teacher from school and the nurse mentor on weekly basis, there will be less failed clinical trainings because any situations that will cause the student to fail will be noticed and necessary measures for interventions through feedback will be taken to avoid failure.

In the same line of thoughts, regarding the nursing curriculum, some students think that group work was too much during the beginning of their studies. This is an entirely new study method to some students that requires collective work with other classmates who are sometimes absent or considered "not serious" about completing the task on time or in a satisfactory manner.

*“ my mental well-being was affected a little at some point because we had a lot of group assignments in my class. I was not enjoying some groups with some of my classmates because I was always having some problems [misunderstanding]. This was because group members for an assignment would just disappear and then reappear on the day before the deadline of the assignment. And everything was like chaos and the group members were not very interested in the assignments”*

Generally, the educational system in Finland was completely different from what most international nursing students had in her home country. This can be challenging to some international students and as such, coping with school becomes difficult.

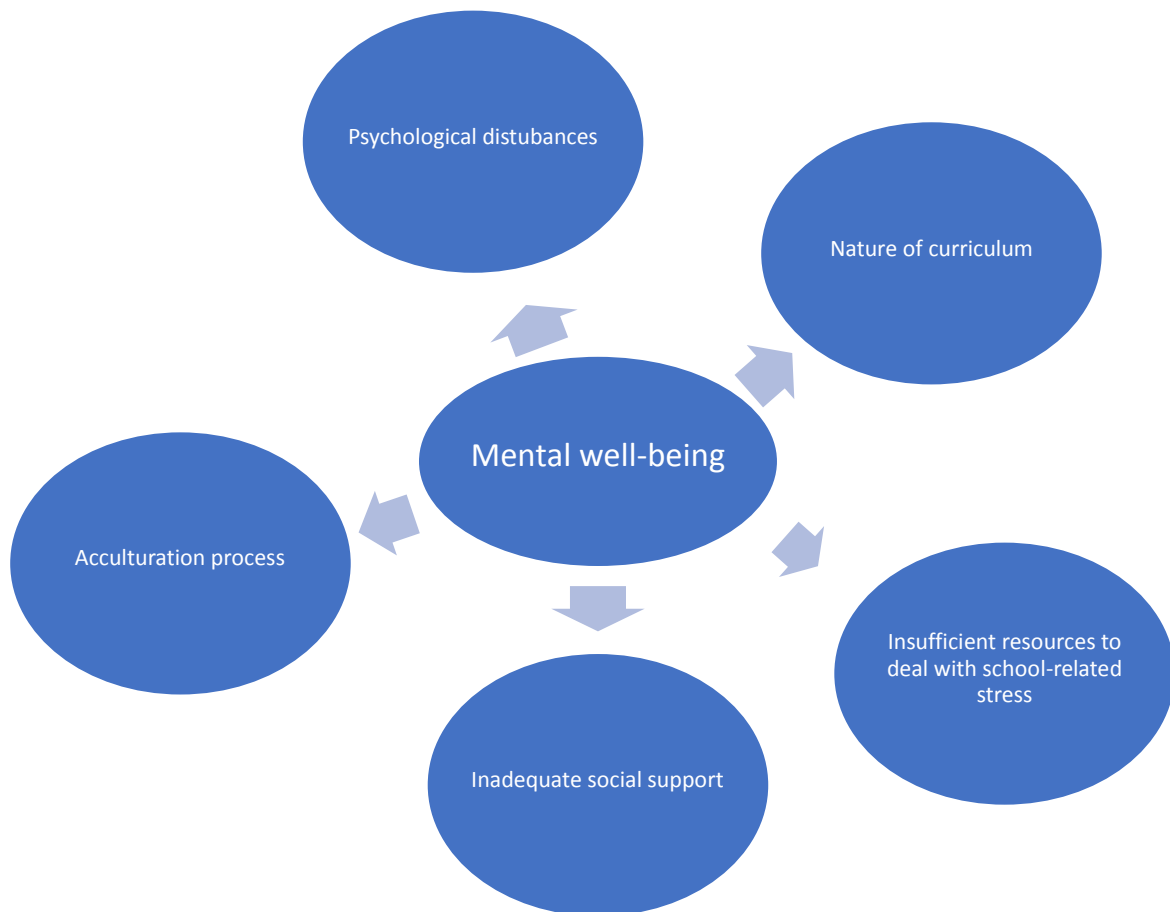


Fig 3: Aspects that diminishes mental well-being of international students

The figure above illustrates mental well-being at the centre relating to four main factors in a unilateral direction only towards these factors. It indicates a relationship that diminishes

mental well-being at the centre as the arrows only point to these factors away from mental well-being.

#### 8.4 Enhancing mental well-being of international nursing students

The mental well-being of international nursing students is strengthened by aspects such as contact with the natural environment, favourable social interactions, effective use of resources and counselling facilities, physical activities and some personal habits such as planning and priority setting.

Regarding contact with the natural environment, some international students found the environment comfortable to take walk after a stressful day at clinical trainings especially during favourable weather conditions. Favourable weather provided an opportunity to play outside with clients in the elderly home during a clinical training. However, what is more interesting is that a long walk back home through a quiet path with natural vegetation provided peaceful opportunity for students to reflect on her life. As a respondent narrates:

*“Also, I did my clinical trading at the end of spring, so the weather was much more favourable. The clients at the elderly home gave me hope. I liked them and playing with them outside. [.....] It was also a long walk to the elderly home from my apartment through a calm path, so it was good to do some exercise and reflect on life on my way to or from home”.*

Besides contact with natural environment, social factors such as favourable relationships also strengthen the mental well-being of some students. As an international nursing student, creating relationship with the right persons is important for mental well-being. Furthermore, connecting with people who share similar goals remains vital for survival regarding mental well-being.

*“ it is important to seek every opportunity and find good people who share your same life values to talk to and try to enjoy life everyday”.*

Therefore, regarding favourable social factors, international nursing students believe that relationships are important in strengthening mental well-being. Relationships foster mental

well-being in a manner that even with no financial resources, having someone like a friend to talk to in confidence is all that is needed to stay positive.

Another aspect that strengthened the mental well-being of international nursing is the effective use of resources and counselling facilities or counselling opportunities. These counselling resources can be provided by siblings, friends or the staff. Most international nursing students are stressed about school and making a life in Finland. However, talking to someone can make a student better understand priorities and stick to them.

*“Yeah, she [her sister she meant] told me that I need to concentrate on what was more important and yes it was my studies first and then the second one was a job. So, I was concentrating more on studies even though I had problems in finance. I tried to do everything in time such as assignments. It really helped me. When I felt I had achieved this goal, like at the end of the 2nd year, [.....] then I got a job and then everything was like a flow”*

Furthermore, the importance of counselling services in strengthening mental well-being is illustrated in situations where students are greatly troubled with inability for group tasks to be completed satisfactory and on time by some group members. In such situations, some students always considered peer assessment as a personal attack on their personalities.

*“.....you know, if suggest that a group member should a more detailed material for a presentation, or that I think it [the group member’s work] is incomplete and he/she should read a bit more, and maybe write more, they take it personally and do not want to be my friend anymore. Things like that had been happening. So, it was affecting to me. Then I decided to go and talk with the teacher. She really of great support to me. She listened to me and she support me and gave me tips on how to complete group tasks”*

There is therefore a need for counselling services on the importance of cooperation in group work. This improves the mental well-being of international nursing students. Nevertheless, other resources such as school nurse, student tutors, tutor teacher, gym and pool activities are at the disposal of students in need to also strengthen their mental well-being.

*".....for example, in school to get friends they cannot help me as much as I thought they could. But there is a nurse, there are tutor teachers, there are students who help you also if you have any type of questions. There is gym and pool activities. That also help you physically. So, these are the things that support my mental well-being. And this type of support makes my mental wellbeing be in balance".*

Some international nursing students are more concerned about the way the teacher took special interest in teaching. The teachers are always very patient to ensure that the students understand the lesson of the day. Moreover, other resources of interest to international student was the cheap food in the restaurant.

*"The teachers are very supportive in class, they give good instructions and always ready to explain if I do not understand. They are patient as well if I do not finish the assignment on time. The food also in school restaurant is cheap so I do not spend a lot of money on food".*

Engaging in physical activities also strengthened the mental well-being of international nursing students. Some international nursing students turn to hobbies and sports during stressful moments and this has proven to help a great deal in strengthening mental well-being.

*"when I feel too stressed, I do things like my hobbies which is sports, because I once read an article that sports help to relieve stress. Presently, if I have problems with relationships or with studies for example, sports will really be of help [.....] Yes, and after doing sports, my brain, like my thinking will changes and I feel better".*

Therefore, it is important to at least take a walk in the nature during favourable conditions as a student. Moreover, other international nursing students acknowledge changes in their mental wellbeing after the use of the gym or going swimming.

Finally, this research also finds out that practicing some personal habits such as planning and priority setting also enhances mental well-being of international nursing students. The idea of planning and scheduling was like a "game-changer" to some students with

difficulties in school especially in the first year. Therefore, as a student, there is the need to make plans and strive to follow them. A respondent explains that:

*“Planning and scheduling that you should follow is what helped me personally, because before I didn’t have a schedule in my country. I was always messy and always in a hurry and wouldn’t make what I needed to do in a week I do in 2 weeks. But here it’s like an order, it’s good for me. It was like a game changer to adopt such a habit.”*

In the same note, international nursing students are more concerned about the goal of coming to Finland and that should be the highest priority. Graduating on time and being ready for the job market is the “master plan”. This entails learning to communicate in Finnish while building a career in the nursing speciality of interest.

*“First of all, thinking about the appropriate time to graduate was of greatest priority. This gives me the positive and optimistic strength to face any challenge as a student and wanting to go directly to the job market and get a job in “kotihoito” [homecare]. With this, I push forward in life everyday with no chance for failure”*

Generally, most international nursing students think that their mental well-being is supported by a range of factors or situations such as effective planning and scheduling, physical activities, available resources and counselling opportunities, other social factors such as relationships as well as contact with the natural environment.

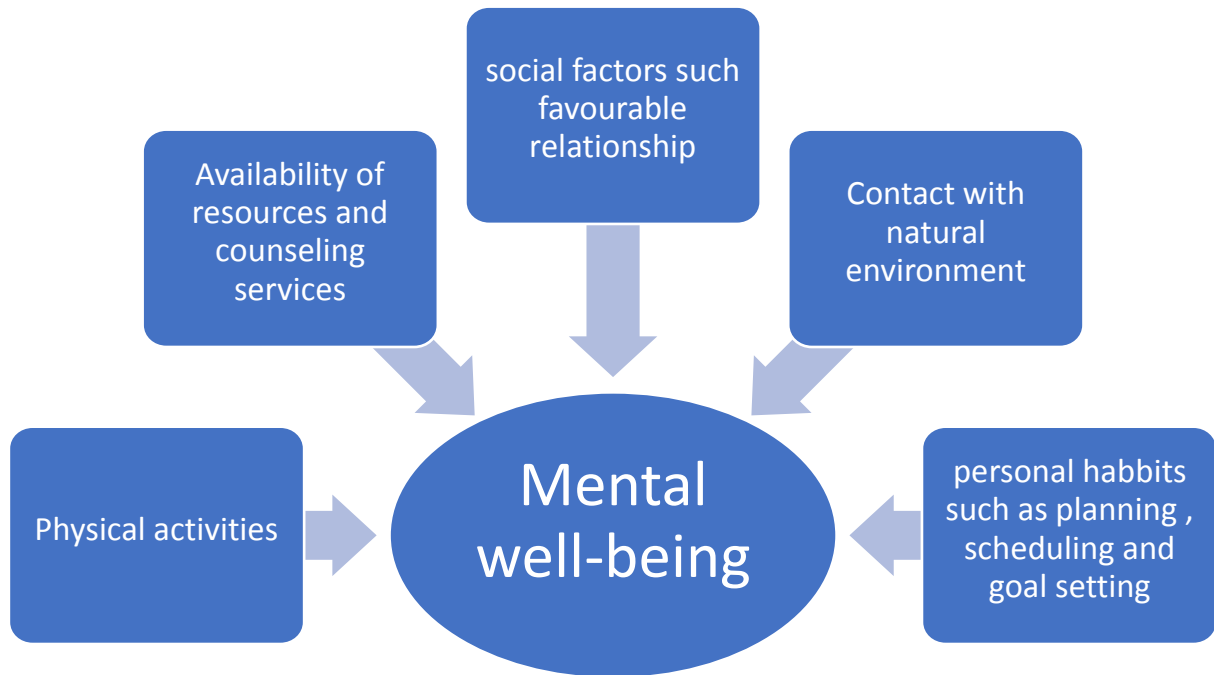


Fig 4: Aspects that promotes the mental well-being of students

The figure above shows how mental well-being interacts with certain factors. The arrows pointing towards mental well-being at the centre indicate strengthening.

## 9 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to describe the mental well-being of international nursing students from the students' perspectives. Generally, the aim was to provide useful information on the mental well-being of international students. This research had specific interests such as mental well-being experiences of the students, aspects that support/improves their mental well-being and also issues that pose a threat to the mental well-being of international nursing students. Generally, one major finding in the research is that the meaning of mental well-being is different among every international student. Furthermore, mental well-being experiences of international students when expressed are centred around availability of resources to deal with stress or avoid stress, social orientation of the society, developing a positive mindset as well as ways in which students individually retain their mental well-being after going through challenges. In this line of thoughts, this chapter is geared towards initiating a re-think on the mental well-being of international nursing students by presenting mainly the findings of our research vis-à-vis practical implications. Specifically, this chapter will attempt to conceptualise a concise meaning of mental well-being among international students, highlight some key mental well-being experiences, bring out threats and later express how mental well-being can be promoted among international nursing students.

### 9.1 Conceptualizing mental well-being among international nursing students

There is a consensus that subjective mental well-being means different things to different people. In the case of international nursing students, our findings point out that mental well-being from the students' point of view is generally psychological and includes aspects like emotions, feelings, happiness, thoughts regarding challenges as a student, fun with friends, being ok with school work, presence of depression tendencies, coping with school stress as well as being productive to the society (Fig. 1). By being psychological, mental well-being is associated with the mind and affects mainly the cognitive ability of students.

Generally, conceptualizing mental well-being has always proven to be problematic. The World Health Organisation (WHO) looks at the concept in terms of maximising individual potential, coping with general stress and being productive to yourself and the society (WHO 2014). While some researchers conceptualise mental well-being in terms of individual's capacity to interact and integrate in the community (Serin, Serin & Özbas 2010, 3), others include concepts like happiness, self-confidence, life satisfaction,

relationships, illusions, depressional tendencies (Taylor & Brown 1988, 1-13), as well as physical activities (Penedo & Dahn 2005, 189-193). Recently, the concept of mental well-being takes into consideration the social orientation of the society such as friendliness, social equality, access to opportunities, racism and presence or absence social services (Rubin 2018, 236-251). Nevertheless, such conceptualisations though claim to be subjective fails to consider the unique challenges or experiences of international nursing students and their mental well-being experiences. It is for such reasons that researchers called for more specification of the context in which we attempt to describe or conceptualise mental well-being (Dodge et al. 2012, 222).

In search of a subjective conceptual meaning of mental well-being in the context of international nursing students, our research findings were in line with WHO (2014). In other words, to international nursing students, mental well-being means to be able to maximise their individual potential, cope with school-related stress and hope of being productive to themselves and the society. Furthermore, a conceptual definition of their mental well-being entails happiness, favourable relationships, emotions and depressional tendencies. This is also in line with Taylor & Brown (1988, 1-13). However, unlike in Taylor & Brown (1988, 1-13) where life satisfaction and self-confidence are included in the conceptual definition of mental well-being, international nursing students are less likely to consider life satisfaction in their subjective meaning of mental well-being. This is because they are still a long way to achieve their main goal of becoming a successful nurse. Most international nursing students consider mental well-being from a more degrading perspective focusing more on their challenges as students while highlighting either how they managed their stress or hope that the future will be better. The conceptual definition of mental well-being among international nursing student also takes into consideration social orientation of the society such as friendliness. This is in line with the work of Rubin (2018, 236-251). However, other aspects mentioned in Rubin (2018, 236-251) such as social equality, access to opportunities, racism and presence or absence of social services were rear and hardly identified among international nursing students. Nevertheless, there is no gainsay in that mental well-being means different things to different people.

Therefore, concerning international nursing students, mental well-being means the state of the mind. It entails the psychological orientation of the student taking into consideration present emotions, feelings, thoughts regarding school challenges, relationship with friends, progress in school, presence or absence of noticeable depressional tendencies,

coping with stress in life and the possibility of being productive in the society. All these depends on the individual experiences of every international nursing student.

## 9.2 Learning from mental well-being experiences of other students.

The findings of this research show that the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students are centered on how they strive to retain their mental well-being during difficult moments. This entails resilience (Fig. 2). Furthermore, their mental well-being experiences is also shown in that some students develop a positive mind-set during stress. Also, the presence or absence of resources that can help them deal with stress was also a mental well-being experience. This entails salutogenesis. Finally, the social orientation of the society can also be linked to the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students. This entails social capital. However, international nursing students are less likely to experience mental well-being in terms of "Quality of Good Life" or life satisfaction. Nevertheless, a description of the students' mental well-being experiences could be important to other students in a comparable situation hence an increase in awareness of the possible source of stress as a student and possible ways to handle them.

### 9.2.1 Resilience and its importance to students' mental well-being experiences

Regarding how students strive to retain their mental well-being during difficult moments, some specific mental well-being experiences includes students being stressed out due to issues with finance, failing a clinical training or dealing with new responsibilities like paying their own bills. However, in describing these experiences, international students show no desire to quit. Most international nursing students link their mental well-being experiences to financial stress especially during visa renewals where they are expected to have up to six thousand, seven hundred and twenty euros (6720 euros) in their bank account (Finnish Immigration Service 2018). This is huge amount of money to everyone in Finland. Most international students have no jobs and can barely support themselves especially in their second year of studies. Furthermore, some international students feel unfairly treated during clinical trainings and as such, this constitutes their mental well-being experiences. Some believe they are mostly neglected by their nurse mentors because of language barrier. Other students believe that clinical training supervisors are siding mostly with nurse mentors during clinical training assessments. However, an important conclusion in these findings is that such students never think of giving up.

Theoretically, when individuals describe their mental well-being experiences with emphasis on how they strive to overcome these challenges with no intention of giving up, the concept of “resilience” is highlighted. Resilience is defined as the ability of the student to cope, overcome, and become stronger when faced by stressful events in life (deCarvalho et al. 2007, 1; McGowan et al. 2017, 1). It entails coping with stress or unpleasant situations and avoiding breakdowns (WHO 2018a). Resilience entails aspects such as building a strong life-purpose, steadiness and composure towards life-goals and perseverance (McGowan 2017, 1).

Resilience is important to every international nursing student in that it helps the student to maintain focus in their main goal as a student. Some international nursing students see nursing as what they have always wanted to do in life. Others see the idea of becoming a nurse in Finland as a way it to make their family back at home proud. Some are in search of a good life abroad and hope that a career in nursing will enable them to have one. All these contributes in making sure that international nursing students stay focus on their studies despite the challenges. There is a sense in which intrinsic motivation should be developed within every international nursing student. Is nursing really what they want? Are they aware of the possible challenges of becoming a nursing in Finland? These questions remain pertinent in developing an intrinsic motivation among students such that they will never think of giving up despite the challenges that come their way. Therefore, developing intrinsic motivation could be a secured path towards resilience.

### 9.2.2 The importance of developing a positive mind-set as a student

Another finding in this research is that international nursing student generally develop a positive mind-set in their mental well-being experiences (Fig. 2). Whether or not they have financial difficulties or difficulties with studies or issues with clinical training assessment, they just stay focus on studies and hope that future will be better. In such situations, emphasis is more on hope for a positive future not on how to struggle to make things better. This entails developing positive emotions and being optimistic in life. In situations where a student is failed for a clinical practice, international nursing students acknowledge the fact that they are aware of what they want in life and are willing to take more clinical training until they succeed. Hope for success later in life is the present source of happiness even though there is huge stress now.

Developing a positive mindset during such mental well-being experiences is associated with the concept “positive psychology” that takes into consideration individual happiness,

developing positive emotions, positive life engagement, and searching for positive meaning of life (Seligman 2012, 5-26; Seligman et al. 2005, 410-421; Seligman & Csikszentmihaly 2014, 279). In such situations, international nursing students see their mental well-being experiences in terms of hope, creative ability, mindfulness of the future, courage to face any outcome, spirituality and the responsibility to be successful (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly 2014, 279).

The implications of developing a positive mind-set is that it prepares the route to happiness for the individual. Even during tough times, positive psychology explains the possibility to still find happiness. Therefore, as an international nursing student, it is recommended to engage in developing positive emotions, positive life engagements and positive meaning of life to ensure a favourable mental well-being. The idea here is finding a reason to be happy despite the difficult moments.

### 9.2.3 Making use of resources to deal with stress

In describing the mental well-being experiences of international students, some international students talk of stress due to lack of financial resources, others talk of making use of resources such as school gym, tutor teachers, sports and friendliness of teachers to reduce stress (Fig. 2). The fundamental aspect here is the presence or absent of resources that can alleviate stress thereby ensuring favourable mental well-being. Specifically, some international nursing students shared their mental well-being experiences whereby they used to find studies difficult because they felt they were always in the wrong group during group work, or perhaps thought that coming to class for lecture was too strenuous, or perhaps they felt that the entire Finnish educational system was a difficult one to adapt. However, findings in our research show that some students were happy with the willingness of some teachers to advise them anytime, the functions of tutor teachers, the availability of school gym and pool activities as well as the role of some of their siblings in guidance and counselling.

Theoretically, mental well-being experiences based on the availability of resources in preventing the deprivation of health is associated to the concept of "salutogenesis" where by health [mental well-being of international nursing students] is seen as a continuous form of "ease" not "dis-ease" (Antonovsky 1979, Antonovsky 1987). In this theoretical formation, stressful situations regarding the mental well-being of students is seen as a form of "dis-ease" whereby there is need to make optimal use of resources such as available money, experiences, information, social network, culture orientation, traditions

and social ideologies to ensure some form of “ease” which in our case in favourable mental well-being (WHO 2014). Pertinent to this theoretical formation is the idea of sustainable use of available resources in a continuous process and as a way of life. In describing the mental well-being of international students in this perspective, focus is on the availability of resource and how well it should be managed vis-a-vis social norms, cultural orientation and life experiences.

Therefore, there is no gainsay in that it is pertinent for students and school administrations to recognise the importance of vital resources to the mental well-being of international students. Such resources include finance, recreational facilities such as gym and pool, student/teacher tutoring and availability of counselling facilities. All these plays a crucial role in the mental well-being experiences of international students and as such, remains a pertinent aspect in ensuring mental well-being.

#### 9.2.4 Taking into consideration the social orientation of the society

International nursing students also have mental well-being experiences associated with the social orientation of the society in which they are schooling (Fig. 2). These includes stress related to relationships, cultural challenges, group dynamics in class some of which are favourable and others unfavourable, and other social issues such as ideologies and believes systems. Some students believe that it is difficult to create genuine friendship with other Finnish students. Other students find the Finnish culture strange and difficult to adapt. Mental well-being experiences of international students are also associated with the diversity of the learning group. Some students see the learning experiences as being detrimental to their mental well-being in that they find it difficult to cooperate with other students of different nationals during group task. Meanwhile some students see diversity as a strength, others are more concerned with the inability of some students to work together effectively as a group. Furthermore, there is a consensus in that “individualism” is a Finnish ideology by nature where by everyone in Finland will prefer to be left alone to enjoy their peace in silence (Swallow 2008, 8-9). In the same line of thoughts, some international nursing students feel segregated by the other nursing students who study nursing in Finnish language. Such an experience is considered odd by some international students who see themselves to be out-going, and as such, detrimental to their mental well-being.

Research in the past indicates that social standards such as trust, reciprocity, communication, believes, ideologies, norms and in a larger picture culture, constitutes

social capital which in turn contributes to the mental well-being of individuals in the society. It denotes social connections, standards for trust and reciprocity, social norms and believe systems aimed at facilitating support, communication and coordination between individuals in the society and ensures advancement towards achieving personal goals in life (Lisakka & Alanen (eds) 2006). In other words, they constitute social life and social institutions that are highly regarded and are believed to be the fundamentals of the quality of social life (WHO 2014). Mental well-being experiences in this perspective constitutes the individual's capacity to interact with others and integrate with members of the community, social acceptance and having the ability to contribute to the society (Smith & Khawaja, 2011, 8). Under this perspective, issues like discrimination, cultural shock and racism are considered.

Practically, it is pertinent for every international student to understand the norms of the society in which they live and understand that such norms must be accepted. A good example is language. This is a key aspect of a social setting. If you which to accepted in a society, learn to express yourself in their way. A popular African leader by name Nelson Mandela once said "if you speak in a language a man understands, you speak to his head but of you speak to him in his language, you speak to his heart". Therefore, acknowledging that the challenge of learning Finnish language is a reality that must be dealt with will go a long way to prepare the minds of some international students. Finally, it is recommended that "ethnocentrism" should be discouraged and "cultural relativism" promoted. In other words, no culture is better than nother but relative to each other. This will enable the entire population to understand at some point that no culture should be judged as "bad" and others "good". Rather, we should try to understand people from their point of view while acknowledging that there is strength in the ability of people to be different yet work together towards a common goal.

### 9.3 Raising awareness on threats to mental well-being of students

There are several issues that threatens the mental well-being of international nursing students. These includes presence of psychological disturbances in the life of the student such as loneliness and stress, issues with acculturation process into the Finnish society, insufficient social support from available social groups, nature of the curriculum as well as insufficient resources to deal with challenges of being a student (Fig. 3). The findings in our research conforms to these issues as threat to mental well-being. However, though nature of study environment could also be a threat, our research found no evidence to support such a theoretical foundation.

Regarding the presence of psychological disturbances such as loneliness and stress in the life of the student as a threat to mental well-being, our findings suggest that such disturbances come from financial issues, fear of not being liked by others, fear of not being able to graduate on time, and fear of being a disappointment of their family back at home if they fail to graduate.

Generally, there is common trend of youths experiencing increase in level of depression or depressional tendencies associated with social pressure and low life satisfaction (Brown & Holloway 2008, 33-49). Furthermore, psychological distress is known to have a strong relationship with the mental well-being of medical students (Bíró et al.2010, 253–258). It is therefore imperative for international students and school administration to be conscious of the negative effects of psychological disturbances and mental well-being.

Practically, students in general needs constant and frequent encouragement from staff and senior students in the same field. In other words, it is imperative for older students to be in frequent contact with new students to motivate and encourage them to focus on their studies despite the challenges that may appear.

Besides psychological disturbances such as loneliness and stress, some international students consider the process of acculturation into the Finnish society to be a threat to their mental well-being. Specifically, international students are highly concerned about cultural difference and language barrier. Specific aspects of cultural differences might be individualism and egalitarianism.

The process of acculturation includes issues such as cultural shock and cultural misunderstandings, racism, perceived discrimination, language barrier and discomforts due to present political climate of their host environment (Prieto-Welch 2016, 54). However, a practical implication regarding international nursing students is more linked to language barrier and cultural difference. Specific cultural aspects included egalitarianism and individualism. In this regard, it is important to highlight these fundamental issues regarding acculturation process to all international students and brain-storm on possible ways to address or conform to them.

One major proposal is to discourage “ethnocentrism” and encourage “cultural relativity”. This in a long run will condition individuals to be accommodating in others’ cultural

settings and learn to accept diversity. Furthermore, leaning Finnish language should also be encouraged preferably through intensive language classes and joint projects with the Finnish nursing group. This will reduce the segregation perceived by some international students and wipe out the idea that nursing students of Finnish origin are less willing to mix with the international group.

Another threat to mental well-being besides psychological disturbances and issues with acculturation process is insufficient social support from available social groups. This can be because of poor circulation of information or inefficient communication between school administrators and students. Furthermore, some international nursing students believe that they are often neglected by nurse mentors during clinical trainings due to language barrier. Though such situations can be rare, it can initiate a feeling of worthlessness in the minds of international students. Also, some international nursing students feel that it is difficult to create and maintain relationship with Finnish natives at the beginning hence there is limited or insufficient social support from the Finnish population and as such, a threat to their mental well-being.

Sufficient social support is beneficial to all international students because less social support makes them more sensitive to stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004, 73–82). Besides, the process of acculturation can result in detrimental mental health outcomes if social support to student is not sufficient (Prieto-Welch 2016, 55).

Efforts to improve on the social support system are being established every year. This includes student-tutor programs, tandem learning groups, sporting activities and groups learning. However, with specific social support issues such as neglect of clinical training nurse mentors and difficulties to create and maintain relationship, there is need for increased awareness on the needs of international students and the necessity of accepting what they bring along which is "diversity". There is also a need for nursing mentors to be aware of the limitations of international students during clinical training which is obviously language barrier. Furthermore, international students should also put more effort in expressing themselves in the Finnish language.

Finally, the nature of nursing curriculum also threatens the mental well-being of international students in that they all come from different educational systems. Some might arrive Finland and find the system of education simple enough to cope. Others might find it challenging. Some students believe there are too many group work, others

say that they panic during presentations. One major finding was that international nursing students are dissatisfied with the fact that the most important part of clinical training assessment is mostly done at the end of the training whereby the nurse mentor, teacher and student have a meeting together. The findings suggest that the rate at which international nursing students are failed for clinical training could reduce if the nurse mentor and student have weekly reviews on the progress of the training. In other words, because some international students feel that the supervising teachers easily side with the nurse mentor during final assessment of the training, it is important to focus on continuous assessment whereby the supervising teacher finds out on the progress of the student on weekly basis. In such situation, any incident that might result in failure of a clinical training could be dealt with during the training and not used at the final evaluation to justify the decision to fail the student.

Though the nature of study environment plays a role in the mental well-being of international students (Lee 2017, 6-11; Baik et al. 2017, 3-8; Zhu 2016, 1429-1442; Wasson 2016, 2237), international nursing students in Finland expresses no threat to their mental well-being from this perspective. This is likely due to the calm nature of their school environment, increase use of visualisation technologies during teaching as well as an attitude of creating a friendly atmosphere during instruction. This enhances positive relationships and the feeling of being worthwhile which are both linked to favourable mental well-being (Baik et al. 2017, 8).

#### 9.4 Promoting mental well-being among international students

Besides highlighting the subjective experiences and the threats to mental well-being of international nursing students, finding of our research also brought aspects that promote their mental well-being. These includes contact with natural environment, social factors such as favourable relationships, availability of counselling resources, physical activities as well as some personal habits such as planning and scheduling (Fig. 4).

Regarding contact with natural environment, some international students think that they feel better after a stressful they when they take a walk through the forest path back home after clinical training during favourable weather.

Research shows that frequent forest visits reduces blood pressure and other stress factors (Lee et al., 2012, 327; Park et al. 2010, 18-26; Tsunetsugu et al. 2013, 90-93). Furthermore, in Finland, frequent visits to Urban parks and Urban woodland is known to show positive results in relieving stress related symptoms (Tyrväinen et al. 2014, 1-9).

Therefore, in order to promote the mental well-being of students, it is imperative for international students to practice getting in contact with nature. This can be done by organising some sort of camping activities or visits in a village resorts during summer time.

Furthermore, our findings show that social factors such as developing favourable relationships with others promote mental well-being of students. Specifically, most international nursing students believe that creating and maintaining a good relationship with peers, teachers and others with similar goals in life provides a comfortable milieu whereby they can develop and attain their potentials.

In the past, researchers have long identified some social factors as pertinent to the mental well-being of the society. This is the reason why calls to improve social skills of persons in the community such as social interaction, effective communication, decision making, trust-building, and cooperation are constantly made by many researchers to enhance humanity by reducing the effect of several stressors in life (Anderson & Jané-Ilopis 2011, 147–155). It can be concluded that effective communication, interpersonal skills, favourable relationship and networking could strengthen the mental well-being of persons in the society. One major challenge of international students is culture shock which remains very difficult and stressful to manage even with awareness (D'Souza et al. 2016, 909-920).

On the practical side, it is imperative that there should be increase in awareness among international students on the realities regarding the social setting in Finland. Some proponents argue that it takes time to connect and have meaningful relationship with Finnish people. Others believe that Finnish people are too shy to engage in a conversation with a total stranger. The reality is that social settings differ across Finland and it is also constantly changing. However, skills such as effective communication, interpersonal skills and networking remains vital in strengthening the mental well-being of persons in the society. We therefore recommend programs with international students and the Finnish population that develop such skills and hope that the society will one day be accommodating enough for the well-being of everyone.

Besides social factors, our findings also suggest that the availability of resources and counselling facilities could promote the mental well-being of international nursing students. Specifically, some students rely on siblings and family relations for counselling, others on friendly teachers and tutor teachers. Student-tutors are also valuable resources that promotes well-being among students. Some students admire how patient and willing some teachers are in helping them to succeed as a student during stressful situations. Other resources such as gym, pool activities, subsidised food in school restaurants and study-clubs are also pertinent in promoting mental well-being among international students.

Students might show signs of stress that might sometimes manifest as missing classes, failing to complete tasks, failing to meet up with target credits. It is the responsibility of counselling resources to target such students and emphasis that they develop or improve on their coping skills as students during stress (Bíró et al. 2010, 253–258). These might include information about the availability of recreational resources to students with different psychological needs, projects to combat loneliness, group meetings or any social gathering geared towards supporting international students.

Another finding is that physical activities promotes mental well-being of international students. Specifically, our research found that students take a physical activity as a hobby. This can be sports, swimming or visiting the gym regularly. Some students make it a habit of walking during favourable weather conditions.

Physical activity specifically via gaming has a significant improvement on mental well-being (Harris 2018, 1-8). Also, among student nurses, promoting physical activity increases self-esteem, confidence, life-satisfaction and decrease anxiety and depression risks (Hawker 2012).

Though there are several sporting activities that takes place on campus, suggestions can be made on yearly bases to review these activities and make them more interesting. The activities should be organised based on the needs of the students. The activities should include every student to promote integration, leadership skills and mental well-being in general.

Finally, regarding promoting mental well-being, our studies show that some personal habits such as regular planning and scheduling contributes favourably to the mental well-being of international nursing students. Specifically, some international students acknowledge that being able to attend classes regularly, complete school tasks such as group work and meet up with end of term target credits greatly promotes their mental well-being.

In this regard, international nursing students should be advised regularly on the importance of being autonomous as a student. They should focus on building relationships in school that promotes school-related aspects such as attending classes on time and completing other school-related tasks when required. Relationships on campus should be initiated when individuals share similar objectives and long-term goals in life. These are known to be the fundamentals of mental well-being. Specifically, these fundamentals include autonomy, building relationships, experiencing competence, initiating a sense of belonging and motivation (Baik et al. 2017, 3-62) and should be part of our learning experiences as international nursing students.

## 9.5 Ethical considerations of the research

Ethical considerations make the solid foundation on which credibility in a research is build. In a qualitative research like ours, it entails measures taken to avoid harm on the respondents, maintain their dignity, seek their consent, protect their privacy, maintain honesty, ensure confidentiality and anonymity and prevent anyform of misinformation (Bryman and Bell 2011, 122-145).

In other to ensure proper research ethics, we made sure that every respondent participated in our research voluntarily. They were asked to send an e-mail to any of us if they are willing to participate in our studies (see Appendix 1). In the invitation letter and at the start of every interview, the respondents were informed about the possibility to withdraw at anypoint of the process if they felt uncomfortable or avoid any question they felt was too sensitive. During our research, we also provided all respondents with adequate information on the nature of the study and possible implication prior to the interviews. Every respondent knew what the study was and what contributions is was going to make. Furthermore, we protected the confidentiality of every respondent by ensuring that their identities remain secret. Responses and information that will reveal the identities of any respondent will never be shared. The interview process was made comfortable as possible by informing the respondents prior to the interview on the length

of the interview and let them choose the place they feel most comfortable. No pressure was put on respondents and they were free to withdraw from the interview anytime they choose. We also made sure that there was no use of offensive language during the interviews. How the respondents were selected and clarity regarding the nature or aspects of the study was made known to the respondents before the interviews.

## 9.6 Reliability and validity of the research

There has been debates in the past whether findings in research are being modified to fit predetermined dispositions. Therefore, researcher nowadays try to ensure that comparable results can be obtain if a research is repeated under similar conditions. The term "reliability" in research is therefore used where there is consistency in analysis and possibility for research bias that might influence the research findings are all taking into consideration (Noble, & Smith 2015, 35).

In other to ensure reliability of a qualitative study like our research, it is important to maintain credibility and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003, 600-601). Besides ethical considerations, credibility can also be ensured by making sure that relevant information is sorted from reliable sources. During this study, information for literature review was searched on reliable academic data bases such as Mastofinna, SciELO, PubMed, academic search elite EBSCO, CINAHL (Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature), and Google Scholar. Articles that were relevant were first selected individually by all the autors of this research, and later compared to confirm relevance and authenticity. Credibility and trustworthiness of the findings of this research was also established by presenting the response of participants in the interviews just the way they responded. There were no changes even in grammatical erros nor change of content in extractions from the interviews that where analyzed in the research.

Validity in qualitative research is the extent to which finding reflect the data collected (Noble, & Smith 2015, 35). This research ensured content validity of literature reviewed by using evidence-based information from the renoued academic data bases mentioned above. The validity of the findings was established through the respondents in that initial finding were shared with respondents to see if they still affirm that it reflects their experiences. Furthermore, fndings in this research can also be generalized because all respondents had been in active studies for about a year or more and is assumed to have valuable mental well-being experience relevant to the study.

### 9.7 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Though the research took into consideration some literature mainly in Finnish language, the research was limited in that most more literature on the social setting of Finland that was mainly in Finnish language were not adequately exploited due to language difficulties. Furthermore, though the research acknowledged mental well-being from an “objective” perspective, only the subjective perspective of mental well-being was considered in the research. This implies the possibility of mental well-being to be determined by somatic causes was neglected.

However, further research could focus on the extent to which mental well-being of students are threatened by issues such as insufficient resources to deal with school related stress, nature of school curriculum, insufficient social support, issues with acculturation as a well as individual psychological disturbances.

## 10 CONCLUSION

Mental well-being has been an issue under research for several years. However, there has been limited information on the mental well-being experience of international nursing students, what threatens their mental well-being and how their mental well-being can be promoted. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to describe the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students from the students' perspective. Generally, the research was aimed at providing useful information on the mental well-being of international students. Fundamental research questions were formulated on the experiences of international nursing students regarding their mental well-being, what experiences threatens the mental well-being of these nursing students and what supports or enhances their mental well-being.

The research was qualitative and one of the main conclusions is that mental well-being means different things to different individuals. However, such unique subjectivity of the meaning of mental well-being and mental well-being experiences of international nursing students converges to form a general conceptual framework of mental well-being among these students. Therefore, regarding international nursing students, mental well-being is psychological and entails aspects of present mental state such as emotions, stress, depression tendencies, relationship needs and coping with everyday experiences of being an international nursing student.

Besides the meaning of mental well-being, this research also takes a final stand that the mental well-being experiences of international nursing students are generally centred on how they sustain their mental well-being during stress, the presences of a positive character in times of challenges as a student, the use of available resources in overcoming challenges as a student as well as experiences regarding social norms such as relationships with peers, teachers and the entire Finnish population. Specifically, mental well-being experiences entail some sort of resilience and includes changes that will enable students to achieve their main goal which is becoming a nurse. In a similar note, a positive character as a mental well-being experience includes students pushing forward with their studies no matter the challenges with the hope that they will overcome the present situation. The resources linked to mental well-being experiences of these students include finance, student-tutors, gym activities, pool activities and friendly teachers. Social norms as part of the mental well-being experiences on international nursing students could either be social norms of the larger Finnish community, or the classroom characterised by diversity or the individual cultural background of the student.

Mental well-being of international nursing students is threatened by issues such as insufficient resources to deal with school related stress, nature of school curriculum, insufficient social support, issues with acculturation as well as individual psychological disturbances. However, no substantial evidence was associated with the nature of learning environment though it could theoretically be a threat to mental well-being.

Finally, mental well-being of international nursing students is supported by situations such as effective planning and scheduling, physical activities, available resources and counselling facilities, other social factors such as building favourable relationships and contact with the natural environment.

It is therefore recommended that there should be an increase in awareness regarding the dynamics of mental well-being experiences of international nursing students and understanding such dynamics could serve as a valuable tool for successful health promotion in communities.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Invitation letter to students to participate in our study

“If your mother tongue is not Finnish or Swedish, and you are in the English nursing program in Lahti University of Applied Science (LUAS) and have been studying for more than six (6) months, we need your help”!!!!

Good day all,

As part of our studies for a Bachelor of Nursing in the English program in Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LUAS), Peninah Njuguna, Abigail Rutto and I (Fred Obi) are writing a thesis on mental well-being of International nursing students. The aim is to describe mental well-being experiences of international nursing students from a subjective perspective.

We are in need for 5-6 participants to take part in an interview with us (more like a discussion on the topic). The interview will last just for about 30 mins in a location of your choice and you are free not to talk about any issues that makes you feel uncomfortable. No worries at all about confidentiality because any information you share will be kept confidential and no reference will be made to your name.

Anyone who is interested should send an email to either one of us and we will try and schedule a time and place to meet with you for the interview/discussion. The first 5-6 emails we receive will be selected for the study.

While hoping that you respond to our request as soon as you can, as motivation to participate, a 10-euro voucher to a Chinese restaurant awaits participants after the meeting.

Regards,

Peninah Njuguna: [peninah.njuguna@student.lamk.fi](mailto:peninah.njuguna@student.lamk.fi)

Fred OBI: [fred.obi@student.lamk.fi](mailto:fred.obi@student.lamk.fi)

Abigail Rutto: [abigail.rutto@student.lamk.fi](mailto:abigail.rutto@student.lamk.fi)

## Appendix 2: The theme frame during the interviews

### Background information

- Name, sex, and duration of active studies

### Theme #1: Mental well-being experiences of international nursing students

- Individual meaning of mental well-being
- Most memorable mental well-being experience
- Individual reaction to such an experience
- Feelings after such experience
- Other mental well-being experiences

### Theme #2: threats to the mental well-being of international nursing students.

- Most memorable threat to their mental well-being
- Why it was considered a threat.
- How the threat was handled
- What could have been done to prevent the situation
- Anyother threats

### Theme #3: enhancing the mental well-being of international nursing students

- makes you feel better everytime during stress
- was done to make you feel better
- can/needs to be done to make things better
- can be recommended to other students in similar situations

## Appendix 3: Research permission application decision

**LAMK****RESEARCH PERMISSION APPLICATION**  
Thesis

<b>1. The author(s) of the theses</b> (names)	Name Faculty Degree Programme	Abigail Rutto (1302981), Fred OBI (1501111) and Peninah Njuguna (1501082) Faculty of Social and Health Care Bachelor of nursing
	Email Phone	Fred Obi: fred.obi@student.lamk.fi, Peninah Njuguna: peninah.njuguna@student.lamk.fi, Abigail Rutto: abigail.rutto@student.lamk.fi  Contacts via OBI: 0400595509 or Peninah 0456497299,
<b>2. Purpose of the thesis</b> (for what purpose and what kind of information will be collected)	The purpose of this research is to describe the mental well-being of international nursing students focusing on influences based on students' perspective. The students are expected to first say what mental well-being means to them personally, describe their personal experiences regarding their mental well-being. Interest is on what threatens and what supports their mental well-being as international nursing students.	
<b>3. Tool</b> (e.g. Webropol-questionnaire)	6 students will be chosen and interviewed face-to-face. A semi-structured interview will be used.	
<b>4. Schedule</b> (e.g. finalised approximately by the date)	The thesis needs to be completed by September ending	
<b>5. Extent</b> (e.g. how many questions and of what kind)	Three principal questions will be asked of which other followed-up questions can be asked depending on student's response. The questions will be about their experiences regarding mental well-being, threats to their mental well-being as well as what supports or strengthens their mental well-being.	
<b>6. Target group</b> (e.g. a group of students, how many students)	An email will be sent to all international nursing students. A face-book post will also be made in the private face-book group of international students in the first, second and final year of their students. Interested students will be asked to contact us by e-mail. The first six students who reply and show interest in taking part in our studies will be selected.	
<b>7. Ethical principles</b> (protection and archiving of material)	We intend to protect the confidentiality of every respondent by ensuring that their identities remain secret. Responses and information that can lead to the identification of any respondent will never be shared in anyway. The respondents will be given a free choice to choose a preferred location of the interview and will be allowed to withdraw at any point if they think the interview is becoming too sensitive for them to handle.	
<b>8. Supervisor of the thesis work</b>	Päivi Saares: paivi.saares@lamk.fi	

I shall comply with the guidelines for good scientific practice as published by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in Finland: [http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK\\_ohje\\_2012.pdf](http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf)

A thesis plan and an approval letter from the thesis supervisor is attached to the permission application.

**Returning of the permission application and additional information:**

Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu, Director Ms Tuula Kilpinen, Niemenkatu 73, 15140 Lahti, tuula.a.kilpinen@lamk.fi


**Applicant's signature**

20.8.2018

Place

Lahti

Date

 Peninah Njuguna


Signature and name in printed letters

**Decision maker's signature**

20.8.2018

päivitetty 8.9.2016

Lahti



**LAMK****RESEARCH PERMISSION APPLICATION**  
Thesis

Place

Date

Signature and name in printed letters

**9. Decision**(to be filled by the person giving  
the approval for the application)

- 
- Research permission application is approved
- 
- 
- Research permission application is not approved

Reasons for the decision:

Thesis process is according to  
Lamk thesis guidelines