

Why student mental health should be a priority for universities

Over 30% of university students have experienced a common mental disorder in the past year, according to the World Health Organisation. In South Africa, statistics show that 20.8% of first-year students had experienced anxiety and 13.6% had experienced depression. Additionally, they found that 30.6% of students had thoughts of suicide in the past 12 months, 16.6% had made a suicide plan and 2.4% had attempted suicide.



Source: Karel Mragaya – 123RF.com

These rates are markedly higher than rates typically found among students in other parts of the world. There are no accurate data about the number of students in South Africa who complete suicide. But anecdotal evidence suggests that deaths as a result of suicide among students in South Africa are a cause for concern.

Because of the link between mental health problems like depression and anxiety and thoughts of suicide, it's important to promote student mental health as part of universities mental health prevention programmes.

"Covid-19 and the lockdown has affected many South Africans, and it has had a serious impact on people living with a mental health issue often making their symptoms more heightened. SADAG has been receiving calls from people with no history of anxiety or depression who are feeling overwhelmed, anxious and stressed," says SADAG's operations director, Cassey Chambers.



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Less than a third of students who need psychological support receive the care they need. As part of their student's mental welfare, Stadio Higher Education has ongoing mental health and wellness programmes running throughout the year, as well

as monthly invitations to students to attend mental health webinars and info sessions by SADAG.

“Understanding the importance of mental health and well-being is key to the development of a well-balanced, successful and happy human being. A holistic perspective between body and mind creates a higher level of living fully conscious, as well as accurate discernment of one’s emotions,” adds Thea Coetzee, Stadio’s Head: Student Support and Wellness.

If you are a student suffering from mental health, help is available, please contact the South African Depression and Anxiety Group at www.sadag.org or 24hr Helpline 0800 456 789.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>