Exploring Student Mental Well-being in Campus Spaces

01. Introduction

- The built environment has a substantial impact on emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing [1, 2]
- Prevalence of mental health and wellbeing issues experienced during the pursuit of post-secondary education [3, 4, 5]
- Institutions have a fiduciary responsibility for the safety and duty of care of students [6]

02. Methods

- Rapid scoping review
- Questionnaire
- Deductive thematic analysis
- Descriptive statistics

03. Analysis

Q1. Where students go on campus when experiencing emotions

- Library* (n=101)
- Go outdoors (n=73) (e.g., River*, Canal, Quad*)
- University Centre* (n=72)
- Athletics (n=41)
- Richcraft Hall* (n=25)

* spaces students go to across all emotions

Q2. How strongly do coping considerations factor into your decision?

- Avoidance-based and emotion-based strategies with negative emotions
- Social supports considered most when happy or surprised
- Religion-based strategies not a primary factor

Q3. How strongly do particular design features in a campus space influence your decision to go there?

- Layout, orderly, natural light, and noise control have perceived influence
- Cultural support, air quality, and temperature have less perceived influence

04. Insights

- Importance of multi-use spaces designed for connection, restoration, and learning
- Spaces can attract and detract students for the same reasons
- Use of restorative, natural spaces for emotional regulation
- Finding space to disconnect or for privacy (e.g., washrooms)

05. Recommendations

- Incorporate multi-use spaces: Ensure there are areas within the campus that can be used for different activities (e.g., emotional regulation, sensory).
- Enhance natural light and noise control: Prioritize natural lighting in design of buildings and control noise levels to create a supportive environment
- Create restorative spaces: Develop green spaces, gardens, or designated quiet zones where students can engage with nature or find a peaceful retreat for emotional regulation.
- Location of support services: Consider embedding support services or pop-up services in or near places where students frequent.

References

[5] American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Canadian Consortium Executive Summary, American College Health Association, Silver Spring, Maryland, Spring 2019.