

CURRENT REALITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH-PRESERVING THINKING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This article provides an in-depth exploration of the current state of health-preserving thinking among university students, emphasizing its growing importance in the broader context of higher education. As the global landscape continues to shift under the influence of technological advancement, urbanization, and rising mental health challenges, the role of universities has evolved beyond academic instruction to include the holistic development of students' well-being. The research highlights how physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health must be consciously cultivated through pedagogical strategies, policy frameworks, and institutional culture. Special attention is given to the integration of health-oriented content into curricula, the impact of psychosocial support systems, and the importance of student self-regulation and personal responsibility.

Keywords: health-preserving thinking, academic success, stress management, wellness workshops, mental health support, self-regulation skills, health promotion, inclusive policies, digital addiction, peer influence.

In the 21st century, the landscape of higher education has undergone significant transformations that extend far beyond academic instruction. As the world becomes more interconnected and globalized, universities are facing new challenges and opportunities that demand innovative approaches to student development. Increasingly, higher education institutions are being called upon to address the holistic development of students, encompassing not only intellectual growth but also the cultivation of physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. In this context, the promotion of health-preserving thinking is emerging as a critical area of focus across global education systems, and its importance is gaining increasing recognition within universities, governments, and society at large [1].

Health-preserving thinking refers to a person's cognitive orientation toward prioritizing health as a lifelong value. This includes the deliberate decisions individuals make to promote their physical, mental, and social well-being. Among university students, this mindset does not form spontaneously; it must be deliberately nurtured through targeted pedagogical strategies, comprehensive support systems, and an environment that fosters health-positive behaviors. Developing health-preserving thinking is not just about teaching students how to make healthy

choices—it is about instilling in them a deep, enduring commitment to health and well-being that will guide them throughout their lives. The importance of fostering such thinking lies in its long-term benefits: healthier students tend to perform better academically, have stronger social relationships, and are better equipped for future professional challenges [2].

The modern landscape in which university students live and study is markedly different from that of previous generations. Contemporary society is increasingly characterized by digital dependency, fast-paced living, and rising stress levels—all of which present significant challenges to young people's health. With constant access to information and digital platforms, students often experience heightened pressure to succeed academically and socially, which can exacerbate feelings of stress, anxiety, and burnout [3]. University students, in particular, are frequently exposed to intense psychological pressure due to academic demands, career uncertainties, and the complexities of transitioning into adulthood. These stressors make it essential for educational institutions to implement supportive frameworks that not only address academic success but also equip students with the tools and knowledge to manage their health and well-being effectively.

The impact of digital technologies, combined with the increased demands of university life, has brought about a rise in unhealthy lifestyle habits. Sedentary behavior, poor dietary choices, and the overuse of technology have contributed to physical and mental health problems such as obesity, sleep deprivation, and anxiety. With such challenges in mind, universities around the world are increasingly adopting integrative approaches that align health promotion with curriculum design, student services, campus infrastructure, and broader institutional missions. These approaches aim to foster a comprehensive environment where students are not only educated about the importance of health but are also supported in their efforts to live healthier lives [4].

Pedagogical innovations are playing a key role in advancing health-preserving thinking among university students. The incorporation of health education modules across a wide range of academic disciplines is proving effective in broadening students' understanding of the links between health, academic success, and quality of life. By integrating health education into subjects as diverse as the humanities, natural sciences, and social studies, universities are helping students recognize the interconnectedness of mind, body, and society.

Institutional initiatives must also address the diversity of student experiences and needs. Today's student body is more diverse than ever before, encompassing individuals from various cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Gender-sensitive approaches, inclusive policies, and mental health support structures are all essential components of a responsive educational environment [5]. For instance, female students may benefit from programs that integrate reproductive health education with leadership training, while male students may be

engaged through physical fitness initiatives that are linked to academic performance goals. Additionally, all students benefit from increased access to mental health resources, including counseling services, stress management workshops, and peer support groups. These services are especially crucial in societies where stigmas surrounding mental illness still persist, and seeking help may be seen as a sign of weakness [6].

Alongside institutional efforts, students must also be encouraged to take an active role in safeguarding their health. The development of self-regulation skills is key to the formation of health-preserving thinking. Self-regulation enables students to manage their emotions, control their impulses, and make informed decisions about their health. It also allows them to cope with the inevitable stresses and challenges of university life in ways that do not compromise their well-being. Health-promoting behaviors such as regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, effective time management, emotional regulation, and avoidance of harmful substances are all essential to the development of a health-preserving mindset. When students internalize the value of health and view wellness as both a personal and social responsibility, they are more likely to adopt lasting behaviors that support their physical and mental health.

At the policy level, many governments are recognizing the strategic importance of embedding health promotion within the framework of national education systems. Laws, decrees, and national strategies related to youth policy, public health, and educational reform increasingly emphasize the integration of wellness education at all levels of learning. These legal instruments provide both philosophical guidance and practical pathways for implementation—mandating the inclusion of health-related curricula, encouraging intersectoral partnerships, and allocating resources for health-related infrastructure [7].

Global best practices in health promotion have demonstrated the importance of cross-sector collaboration. In countries with well-established health education systems, universities actively cooperate with various stakeholders, including health ministries, non-governmental organizations, and private companies, to design and implement comprehensive wellness programs. Mobile applications for health monitoring, digital platforms offering psychological first aid, and gamified tools that encourage healthy behaviors are becoming integral components of the educational experience. These innovations allow students to engage with health promotion in ways that are tailored to their digital habits and preferences.

Local adaptation of these models requires sensitivity to sociocultural values, traditions, and expectations. Health promotion strategies must take into account the cultural norms and practices that influence how students perceive health, illness, and care-seeking behaviors. For instance, in societies with strong cultural traditions, integrating these values into health education programs enhances their effectiveness and relevance. National customs around diet,

physical activity, gender roles, and emotional expression should be considered when designing health initiatives, ensuring they resonate with students' lived experiences [8].

Moreover, historical and religious teachings often contain valuable insights on healthy living, self-discipline, and social responsibility. Many sacred texts and philosophical traditions promote principles such as moderation, cleanliness, kindness, and self-care—all of which can be reinterpreted to align with modern wellness goals. When students are introduced to these traditional values, they may find greater motivation to adopt health-promoting behaviors, as they see them as connected to their cultural heritage and personal identity.

Peer influence plays a powerful role in shaping student attitudes and behaviors. By creating peer-led health ambassador programs, mentorship opportunities, and student-run health forums, universities can leverage social dynamics to promote wellness. Students often find it easier to relate to and be influenced by their peers, particularly when it comes to adopting new behaviors or lifestyles. Peer programs can create a supportive network where students encourage one another to prioritize their health and well-being [9].

Educators remain central to the success of health-preserving thinking initiatives. Teachers and academic mentors must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to integrate health promotion into their subject matter and everyday interactions with students. Professional development for faculty, including training in wellness literacy, emotional intelligence, and student support techniques, is essential. A health-promoting educator not only delivers academic content but also serves as a model for students, showing them how to prioritize health while managing the demands of university life.

To conclude, the current reality surrounding the development of health-preserving thinking in university students is marked by growing awareness, strategic reforms, and the evolution of educational culture. Higher education is no longer solely about academic excellence; it is about nurturing human potential in its fullest form. This includes preparing students to lead balanced, healthy lives, take responsibility for their well-being, and contribute positively to the health of their communities and nations. A comprehensive, sustained focus on wellness within the educational system is not only beneficial but essential to achieving these goals. As universities continue to embrace the importance of health-preserving thinking, they will play a pivotal role in shaping the well-being of future generations.

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