

## FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT'S MENTAL HEALTH IN UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA KELANTAN

Siti Nur Zahirah Omar\*<sup>1</sup>  
Nur Nadhira Husna Binti Jafri<sup>2</sup>  
Nor Hafidatul Najwa Binti Mohd Nazman<sup>3</sup>  
Nur Syahirah Binti Nawawee<sup>4</sup>  
Nur Wahidatun Najihah Binti Mohd Zahidi<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan Branch, Machang Campus, Kelantan, Malaysia. (E-mail: sitinurzahirah@uitm.edu.my)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan Branch, Machang Campus, Kelantan, Malaysia. (E-mail: 2022947369@student.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan Branch, Machang Campus, Kelantan, Malaysia. (E-mail: 2022907985@student.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan Branch, Machang Campus, Kelantan, Malaysia. (E-mail: 2022995663@student.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>5</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan Branch, Machang Campus, Kelantan, Malaysia. (E-mail: 2022970713@student.uitm.edu.my)

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**Abstract:** *This research is to undertake a comprehensive and nuanced investigation into the complex interplay of factors that contribute to the student's mental health of UiTM Kelantan. The mental well-being of students in a higher education context is paramount, given its implications for their academic success, personal development, and overall quality of life. This study seeks to delve deeply into several pivotal factors, encompassing environmental determinants, the consequences of protracted financial problems, the multifaceted influence of academic pressures, and the enduring impact of family dynamics. Each of these elements holds a critical place in shaping the mental health landscape of UiTM Kelantan Branch students. A comprehensive understanding of these intricate relationships is essential for developing effective interventions and robust support systems, fostering resilience and well-being in this unique student population.*

**Keywords:** *Mental Health, Environment, Financial Problems, Academic Pressures, Family, University Student*

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## Introduction

The landscape of students' mental health has been a growing concern, with a focus on university students (Hernandez, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue, leading to increased psychological distress (Gundim, 2020). Numerous factors intricately contribute to the complex tapestry of mental health, ranging from physiological elements such as genes and brain function to personal events and family history. Studies conducted in Bangladesh have shed light on the serious impacts of anxiety, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Sakib et al., 2020). A study involving Bangladeshi undergraduates during the COVID-19 outbreak reported a substantial proportion experiencing depressive symptoms and mood disorders, emphasizing the pandemic's influence on mental health (Mamun et al., 2020).

Malaysian students have witnessed a 20% increase in mental health issues between 2011 and 2016 (Hezmi, 2018). Similar trends are observed globally, with a quarter of students in the United Kingdom experiencing depression (Aronin & Smith, 2016). The prevalence of psychological distress among university students, including anxiety and depressive symptoms, is a significant concern (Sharp, 2018; Koppenborg, 2022). This distress is often linked to academic stress, which can be mitigated through the development of mindfulness-related skills (Koppenborg, 2022). The influence of family factors, including economic conditions, structure, and parent-child relationships, is particularly pronounced in medical students (Tao, 2022). Family communication and social support from friends are key factors associated with better well-being in higher education students (Yubero, 2018).

In contrast, the researcher's focus is on understanding the interplay between environment, financial problems, academic pressure, and family dynamics concerning students' mental health. The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute insights into the unique context of UiTM Kelantan, informing targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by students. Given the well-established link between students' mental health and academic success among students (Duraku et al., 2020), understanding the factors contributing to mental health issues is crucial for the well-being and success of students in UiTM Kelantan.

## Problem Statements

A mental illness is no crime. Treatment is required, not shameful. The disturbing trend of rising rates of mental health disorders around the globe is concerning. One of the primary contributors to the global illness burden is mental health issues. This research is to identify and figure out the factors that affect UiTM Kelantan student mental health which can help us to take some actions or give awareness and understanding about the importance of mental health to the people to enhance their quality of life. Mental health is common and can affect anyone. Greater awareness about mental health and early diagnosis can help students be away from suffering from mental health. Thus, administrators, counselors, lecturers, parents, and the concerned body need to master the knowledge, attitude, and skills in mental health to help these students cope with their emotions, and handle and manage their stress levels.

In Malaysia, the National Health and Morbidity Survey conducted by the Ministry of Health (MOH), indicates that the prevalence of mental health problems among people aged 16 years and above was 29.2% approximately 4.2 million. From this figure, it shows that one in three Malaysians has experienced mental health problems. The current situation is very worrying as the findings indicate a twofold increase in the reported cases related to mental health problems over the past 10 years 10.6% in 1196 and 11.2% in 2006. The sufferers of mental health problems may bring about devastating impacts on themselves and tend to develop suicidal

behavior. In other words, mental health problems are commonly higher among younger adults, with adolescents aged 16 to 19 (34.7%), followed by those aged 20 to 24 (32.1%), and those aged 25 to 29 (30.5%). Mental illness is expected to be the second largest health problem affecting Malaysians after heart disease by 2020 which was conducted in National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015. (Hassan et al., 2018). 12.3% of students were normal, whereas 30.5% were experiencing mild anxiety, 31.1% moderate anxiety, and 26.1% severe anxiety. In addition, around 57% of the anxiety among students in Malaysia were experiencing moderate to severe anxiety (Irfan et al., 2021).

In Malaysia, the prevalence of mental diseases has risen dramatically over the last decade. Malaysia is making the transition from a middle-income to a high-income country, with significant cultural and lifestyle changes because of growing urbanization and globalization, as well as higher levels of perceived stress. Furthermore, increased public and clinician knowledge of mental health issues has likely resulted in improved reporting and identification of mental disorders (Kumaran et al., 2022). The 2019 Annual Report of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health reported that anxiety continues to be the most common problem (62.7% of 82,685 respondents) among students who completed the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms, with clinicians also reporting that anxiety continues to be the most common diagnosis of the students that seek services at university counseling centers (Son et al., 2020). According to Kumaran et al. (2022), the experts declared that anxiety and depression are the top causes of mental health disorders among Malaysian students. In addition, Malaysian university students also exhibited greater levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than students in the United Kingdom.

University students in UiTM Kelantan, as in other institutions globally, face a plethora of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, stress, and feelings of isolation. It is paramount to unravel the factors that underlie these challenges to develop effective strategies that enhance students' mental health and well-being. By investigating how the university environment, financial problems, academic pressures, and family dynamics impact the mental health of UiTM Kelantan students, we can gain insights into the complex web of interactions influencing their well-being.

## Literature Review

### Students Mental Health

Students' Mental health, a complex and multifaceted concept, is a critical aspect of overall well-being (Hill, 2020). In the context of students, it encompasses a range of issues, from mild to severe, and requires a systematic, whole-institutional approach (Hill, 2020). Population mental health is a vital subject and is often discussed among medical and general societies. However, unlike any other physical illnesses, mental health problems often go undetected because many sufferers are unaware that they are experiencing symptoms of mental health problems (Omar et al., 2021). In addition, society's stigma against mental disorders, often associated with 'insanity,' dangerous and hereditary, rarely causes sufferers to come forward for evaluation. Clinically, experts divide mental health into three main dimensions, namely depression, anxiety, and stress (Samsudin et al., 2022). The mental health of university students is a complex and multifaceted construct that plays a pivotal role in their overall well-being and academic success (Omar et al., 2023). As the dependent variable in this study, it encompasses a wide array of emotional, psychological, and social well-being factors. Besides that, the mental health of students in UiTM Kelantan extends beyond the mere absence of mental illness. It

reflects the ability of students to effectively adapt to the unique challenges of academic life and personal development. University is a transformative period where students not only acquire knowledge but also develop essential life skills, make critical decisions about their future, and build relationships.

Mental health in the context of university students is integral to their overall well-being. It includes their capacity to manage academic stress effectively, establish supportive relationships with peers and mentors, handle financial and social pressures, and make informed decisions regarding their education and future. Lastly, a comprehensive understanding of the intricate concept of students' mental health is essential for examining the potential influence of factors such as the university environment, financial problems, academic pressures, and family dynamics. This section provides an initial overview of this crucial construct, establishing the foundation for a more in-depth exploration of its associations with the independent variables in subsequent sections. By delving deeper into the interconnections between students' mental health and these independent variables, our research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform effective strategies and interventions, specifically tailored to the context of undergraduate students at UiTM Kelantan.

### **Environment**

Environment refers to the surroundings, conditions, context, settings, circumstances, and external factors in which individuals, organisms, and systems. The environment is a causal factor in mental illness, especially the designed environment, which is particularly rich with meaning and perceptual demands. The definition of environment is the area or circumstance that envelops a person. It also describes the situations and settings that impact something or someone's development. The physical environment, then is defined as the surrounding conditions and elements with which a living thing interacts (National Counselling Society, 2020). A well-designed learning space is also characterized by the vital role of enhancing the teaching and learning experience. Although it is hard to measure the direct impact of the physical learning environment, many schools see the return on their investment through students' motivation and behavior as well as that of the teachers (Suraini & Aziz, 2023).

Social environment means the way a person interacts with the surrounding environment and their culture or way of life which is related to a relationship between the family, friends, officemates, and local society. With a good and positive environment, such as social support, the student will not be lonely and can avoid increasing their level of stress which can lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety disorder. A toxic relationship and lack of safety in the environment can lower self-esteem, increase irritability, cause anxiety, contribute to depression, and foster conditions like PTSD (National Counselling Society, 2020). Therefore, universities need to consider the quality of the campus environment, including outdoor spaces and social support systems, to promote the mental well-being of their students. It has also been shown that good indoor environmental quality such as thermal comfort, lighting, and natural view can be conducive to decreased stress, reduced anxiety, and improved mood (Xiao et al., 2022).

### **Financial Problems**

Persistent financial struggles can also contribute to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and depression, impacting individuals' overall well-being (Drentea & Reynolds, 2012).

According to Faulk et al. (2010) year after year, the total amount of costs for undergraduate and postgraduate education has risen. Besides, financial problems are severe problems that must be handled since they lead to a slew of other challenges, including health problems and poor academic performance. Even though students do not have the same obligations as other individuals in terms of paying monthly debt payments, their position as students requires them to pay their education fees, house rentals, and other basics. Besides, according to Sundarasan et al. (2020), financial problems can contribute to health issues such as anxiety, which in turn leads to undesirable behaviors such as alcoholism or out-of-control shopping. It shows that students who have financial problems to survive with high-cost living are more exposed to health problems. Apart from that, according to Norazlan et al. (2020), it is stated that some students are shy, unsocialized with their peers, and have less interaction in class as a result of their lack of involvement in learning knowledge due to lack of financial problems. Financial problems can have a bad impact on a student's mental health when they think too much about their studies, loans, or debt after they finish their studies.

### **Academic Pressures**

Academic pressure is a complex phenomenon that can have both positive and negative effects on students. Siregar (2022) defines it as the stress experienced by students in achieving their academic goals, which can be exacerbated by a lack of confidence in their abilities. This pressure is often attributed to parental and teacher expectations (Sangma, 2018), and can lead to sleep deprivation and depression. Academic pressure, as defined by Srinivasa (2021), is a subjective process that can lead to depression and anxiety. The ability to cope with this pressure or mental toughness, is a key factor in determining how students handle academic stress. Kurniasih (2020) further identifies specific factors that contribute to this stress, including academic demands, parent-child relationships, traumatic experiences, peer pressure, financial concerns, and self-expectations. However, Aina (2019) highlights the need for further research on how students cope with this stress, suggesting that more studies are needed to fully understand the complex nature of academic pressure.

Academic pressure, stemming from various sources, can have detrimental effects on students' well-being (Magazine & Magazine, 2023). A range of studies have highlighted the significant impact of academic pressure on students' mental health. A study found that academic pressure contributes to stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and negative well-being (Wang, 2020). Furthermore, academic pressure has transformed into a topic for students' mental health dialogue and engagement. It prompts discussions about coping strategies, stress management, and the importance of balancing academic and personal well-being. Students increasingly utilize these digital spaces to connect with mental health organizations, seek guidance on psychological well-being, and participate in discussions related to their mental health. On top of that, the increasing academic pressure on college students has led to a mental health crisis, with depression and anxiety being the most common challenges (Gilfillan, 2023).

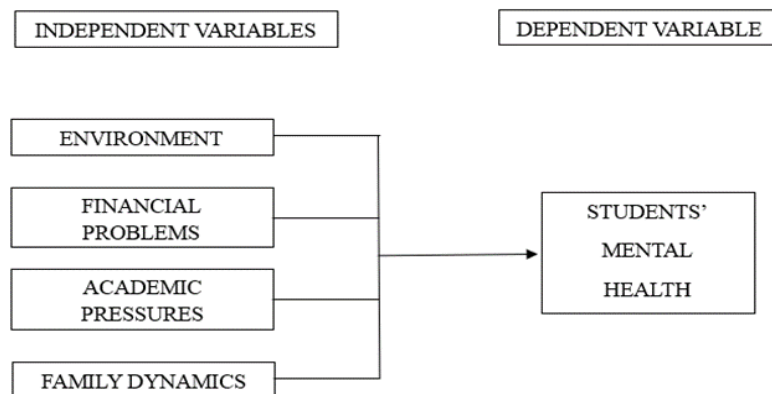
### **Family Dynamics**

Family dynamics, as defined by Noor (2023), encompass the interactions, relationships, and patterns of behavior within a family unit. These dynamics are influenced by various factors, including family formation and dissolution (Hewitt, 2021), and external forces such as forced migration (Abbasi, 2018). The understanding of family dynamics is crucial for sustainable urban development (Noor, 2023) and for addressing the impacts of forced migration on family formation and stability (Abbasi, 2018). Family members are one of the main sources of relationship security or stress since they depend on one another for emotional, physical, and

financial support. In contrast to stressful family connections, which are characterized by continual criticism, disputes, and heavy demands, secure and supportive family ties offer love, support, and care. Families' interpersonal relationships have long-lasting effects on a person's growth and well-being through behavioral, physiological, and psychological mechanisms. As a result, family dynamics and the caliber of family ties can influence health in either a positive or negative way (Jabbari et al., 2023).

Family dynamics have a substantial impact on students' mental health, which makes the relationship between family dynamics and students' mental health important. Developing interventions and strategies to enhance mental well-being requires an understanding of how family dynamics affect mental health. Understanding how family dynamics affect mental health can help people and families create healthy relationships and seek professional help when necessary (Ismail et al., 2021).

The hypothesized model of students' mental health is shown in Figure 1 and the hypotheses developed a relationship between environment, financial problems, academic pressures, and family dynamics.



**Figure 1: The Hypothesized Model of Students' Mental Health**

- H1: There is a positive significant between environment and students' mental health.*  
*H2: There is a positive significant between financial problems and students' mental health.*  
*H3: There is a positive significant between academic pressures and students' mental health.*  
*H4: There is a positive significant between family dynamics and students' mental health.*

## Methodology

The present study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design, employing a quantitative research method to delve into the intricate factors influencing the students' mental health. For our research, we have decided on a sample size of 384 students from this population. The methodology employed in this research underscores the need for methodological rigor and precision. To gather comprehensive data, we developed a carefully crafted questionnaire that incorporates established measures such as the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21) and the Self-Efficacy Scale. The use of Google Forms for data collection and distribution has been widely explored in the literature. In determining the scope of our study, careful attention was given to the sample size, a critical factor influencing the reliability and generalizability of our findings. The total population of students in UiTM Kelantan is 7,729.

## Result and Discussion

In this study, the researchers used a sample of 384 respondents in the survey. Table 1 below shows the findings that include frequency distribution analysis for the demographic profile of respondents.

**Table 1: Demographic Variable (N=384)**

Items	Frequencies (N = 384)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	122	31.8
Female	262	68.2
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	49	12.8
21-23	296	77.1
24 and above	39	10.2
<b>Campus</b>		
UiTM Kota Bharu	331	86.2
UiTM Machang	53	13.8
<b>Current Level of Education</b>		
Diploma	12	3.1
Bachelor's degree	372	96.9
<b>Academic Year</b>		
First Year	70	18.2
Second Year	186	48.4
Third Year	93	24.2
Fourth Year and above	35	9.1
<b>Programme</b>		
BA240	31	8.1
BA242	211	54.9
BA249	54	14.1
BA250	43	11.2
CS241	26	6.8
CS291	1	0.3
BA111	9	2.3
AC220	3	0.8
BA119	1	0.3
IC210	1	0.3
BA280	1	0.3
BA232	1	0.3
BA244	1	0.3
BA118	1	0.3

### Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a way to examine the consistency of a set of measurements. All five variables in this study are tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which is the most commonly used in measuring internal consistency. As a rule of thumb, a reliability value greater than 0.6 is considered acceptable. The table shown below illustrates the result of the reliability analysis. As all of the variables have internal consistency coefficients of 0.6 and above, it shows that the variables used are all statistically reliable.

**Table 2: Reliability Value**

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>		
<u>Variables</u>	<u>Cronbach's Alpha</u>	<u>N of Terms</u>
<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
Students' Mental Health	0.846	5
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
• Environment	0.842	5
• Financial Problem	0.833	5
• Academic Pressure	0.911	7
• Family Dynamic	0.920	6

Table 2 shows the result of the reliability test. This result implies that all four parameters can be utilized in the student's mental health. The value for the environment on the alpha scale is 0.842, which indicates that it is "Good". This means that all five aspects of the environment can be measured. On the other hand, the alpha value for financial problems is 0.833, which corresponds to the phrase "Good", and all five items can be used together to measure financial problems that affect students' mental health. In addition, the alpha value for academic pressure was shown as 0.911 which was interpreted as "Excellent". It also indicates that it is possible to rely on all seven components combined as a whole to the academic pressure. The value for family dynamic on the alpha scale is 0.920, which indicates that it is "Excellent", and it means all six different aspects of family dynamic can be measured.

The Cronbach's Alpha's value for the dependent variable which is students' mental health is recorded as 0.846, which indicates that it is "Good". It is clear from the fact that alpha values for both, independent and dependent variables are high, and as a result, the items in the instruments combined to measure the elements that affect students' mental health. As a result, the reliability alphas for all variables for this study are considered good.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Financial problems</b>	<b>Academic pressures</b>	<b>Family dynamic</b>
Mental Health	1	.817**	.661**	.747**	.508**
Environment	.817**	1	.689**	.836**	.429**
Financial problems	.661*	.689**	1	.779**	.448**
Academic pressures	.747**	.836**	.779**	1	.456**
Family dynamic	.508**	.429**	.448**	.456**	1



Table 3 shows the result of the correlation analysis performed on students' mental health, environment, financial problems, academic pressures, and family dynamics using Pearson Correlation. The procedure carried out was based on significant statistics of a two-tailed test at 99 percent (0.01 levels). Overall, the result shows that all variables involved were positively significant ( $p > 0.01$ ). The strongest relationship was between environment and academic pressures ( $r = 0.836$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). Overall, the result of the analysis explained that there is a significant relationship between all the variables.

**Table 4: Linear Regression Between Environment with Students' Mental Health**

Dependent Variable	B Coefficient	T Value	P Value	Result
Environment R <sup>2</sup> : 0.668 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> : 0.667 F-Statistic: 767.536 Note:	0.736	27.704	0.000	Supporting

\*\*\*Significant at 0.01

\*\*Significant at 0.05

Table 4 illustrates a significant, positive relationship between environment and students' mental health, as shown by the correlation value of  $R^2 = 0.668$  and  $R^2$  adjusted = 0.667.  $R^2$  showed that 66.8% of university students' mental health is affected by the environment. Meanwhile, the ANOVA test found the F statistic (1, 382) = 767.536,  $p < 0.01$  was bigger than the F-critical value = 2.96 (k-1, df). Therefore, the environment is significantly positive ( $\beta = 0.736$ ,  $t = 27.704$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and contributes to students' mental health.

**Table 5: Linear Regression Between Financial Problems and Students' Mental Health**

Dependent Variable	B Coefficient	T Value	P Value	Result
Financial Problems R <sup>2</sup> : 0.437 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> : 0.435 F-Statistic: 296.396 Note:	0.671	17.216	0.000	Supporting

\*\*\*Significant at 0.01

\*\*Significant at 0.05

Table 5 illustrates a significant, positive relationship between financial problems and students' mental health, as shown by the correlation value of  $R^2 = 0.437$  and  $R^2$  adjusted = 0.435.  $R^2$  showed that 43.7% of students' mental health is explained by financial problems. Meanwhile, the ANOVA test found the F statistic (1, 382) = 296.396,  $p < 0.01$  was bigger than the F-critical value = 2.96 (k-1, df). Therefore, the financial problems are significantly positive ( $\beta = 0.671$ ,  $t = 17.216$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and contribute to students' mental health.

**Table 6: Linear Regression Between Academic Pressures and Students' Mental Health**

Dependent Variable	B Coefficient	T Value	P Value	Result
Academic Pressure R <sup>2</sup> : 0.558 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> : 0.557 F-Statistic: 482.411 Note:	0.715	21.964	0.000	Supporting

\*\*\*Significant at 0.01

\*\*Significant at 0.05

Table 6 above illustrates a significant, positive relationship between academic pressures and students' mental health, as shown by the correlation value of  $R^2 = 0.558$  and  $R^2$  adjusted = 0.557.  $R^2$  showed that 55.8% of university students' mental health is explained by academic pressure. Meanwhile, the ANOVA test found the F statistic (1, 382) = 767.536,  $p < 0.01$  was bigger than the F-critical value = 2.96 (k-1, df). Therefore, the academic pressure is significantly positive ( $\beta = 0.715$ ,  $t = 21.964$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and contributes to students' mental health.

**Table 7: Linear Regression Between Family Dynamics and Students' Mental Health**

Dependent Variable	B Coefficient	T Value	P Value	Result
Family Dynamic R <sup>2</sup> : 0.258 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> : 0.256 F-Statistic: 132.625 Note:	0.543	11.516	0.000	Supporting

\*\*\*Significant at 0.01

\*\*Significant at 0.05

Table 7 illustrates a significant, positive relationship between family dynamics and students' mental health, as shown by the correlation value of  $R^2 = 0.258$  and  $R^2$  adjusted = 0.256.  $R^2$  showed 25.8% of university students' mental health is explained by family dynamics. Meanwhile, the ANOVA test found the F statistic (1, 382) = 767.536,  $p < 0.01$  was bigger than the F-critical value = 2.96 (k-1, df). Therefore, the family dynamics is significantly positive ( $\beta = 0.543$ ,  $t = 11.516$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and contributes to students' mental health.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The implications and contributions of this study extend the existing knowledge on mental health among UiTM Kelantan students, while also providing new insights and avenues for further research on meta-cognitive strategies. By examining the factors influencing mental health in this specific context, this study contributes to the broader understanding of student well-being and highlights the need for targeted interventions and support services. The practical implications derived from this study have several implications for various stakeholders involved in supporting the mental health of UiTM Kelantan students. For teachers and academic

staff, the findings emphasize the importance of providing training and professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of mental health issues among students. Workshops can be conducted to help teachers recognize signs of distress, promote mental well-being, and refer students to appropriate support services. Integrating mental health education into the curriculum equips students with the knowledge and skills to manage their emotional well-being effectively. For prospective researchers, further exploration of the impact of cultural factors, social support networks, and academic stressors on the mental health of UiTM Kelantan students is recommended. This deeper understanding can shed light on the specific challenges faced by students in this context. Investigating the effectiveness of various intervention strategies, such as mindfulness programs, peer support initiatives, and resilience-building workshops, can contribute to promoting mental well-being among university students. The theoretical implications of this study highlight the importance of creating a supportive and conducive campus environment that promotes a sense of belonging and social connectedness. Universities can implement policies and programs that foster positive peer relationships, enhance the physical and social aspects of the campus, and provide access to mental health resources. Recognizing the impact of financial problems on students' mental health suggests the need for targeted interventions and support services, such as financial literacy programs and resources for financial assistance. Addressing academic pressure through a balanced approach to education, as well as involving families in support systems, can further enhance students' mental health and well-being.

Understanding the influence of the environment on students' mental health highlights the importance of creating a supportive and conducive campus environment. Universities can implement policies and programs that promote a sense of belonging, social connectedness, and access to mental health resources. Providing safe and inclusive spaces, fostering positive peer relationships, and enhancing the physical and social aspects of the campus can positively impact students' well-being. Besides that, recognizing the impact of financial problems on students' mental health suggests the need for targeted interventions and support services. Universities can offer financial literacy programs to enhance students' financial management skills and provide resources for financial assistance, scholarships, and part-time job opportunities. Addressing financial stressors can help alleviate psychological distress and promote overall well-being.

In summary, for the culmination of our exploration into the factors influencing the students' mental health at UiTM Kelantan, this chapter concludes with a synthesis of key insights and overarching findings. The journey undertaken in this research has unearthed multifaceted relationships between various elements and students' mental health. By revisiting the primary objectives and aligning them with the discovered patterns, this section aims to provide a cohesive understanding of the complex interplay among environment, financial problems, academic pressures, and family dynamics factors. By instigating supportive measures, educational institutions can create an environment conducive to the holistic well-being of their student body. To this end, universities must proactively implement a comprehensive array of support services tailored to the diverse needs of emotionally vulnerable students. Simultaneously, an integral component of this strategy involves providing education and training for academics to better understand and support students navigating mental health issues. By fostering a collaborative and empathetic environment between academic institutions and mental health providers, universities can create a nurturing space where emotionally vulnerable students have a heightened likelihood of realizing their academic aspirations.

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