

***The Development of Student Mental Health Support System,
Udon Thani Rajabhat University, Thailand***

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Abstract

The mental health problem is one of the most important health problems in adolescence in Thailand. The number of mental health patients has doubled in 6 years, rising from 1.3 millions in 2015 to 2.3 millions in 2021. Data from mental health assessment of first-year students at Udonthani Rajabhat University, utilizing the MENTAL HEALTH CHECK IN questionnaire developed by the Department of Mental Health MOPH, indicated that 42.2% were in moderate to high-stress levels, 37.4% were at risk of depression, 4.8% displayed moderate depressive symptoms, and 1.3% had severe depression, 6.4% were at low risk, 2.5% at moderate risk, and 1.6% at high risk of suicidal. UDRU has established a student mental health support system. This initiative involves 1) screening and surveillance of mental health status among students 2) stakeholders and network analysis within and outside the university 3) collecting on data analysis, then used these data for planning operations. 4) Set up the mental health care center named “UDRU Care Plus” as a Consultation Center to coordinate cooperation among all faculties. 5) developed healthy public policies to address on mental health issues within the university. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with Mental Health Center 8 for academic collaboration and with Udon Thani Hospital to link referral systems for severe cases. The outcomes include implementing a monitoring system for the mental health of students, screening and monitoring 2,231 students, providing counseling to at-risk individuals, developing the capabilities of 30 advising professors, establishing a youth counseling network with 70 members, and a collaboration project.

Keywords: Mental Health Support System, Adolescence, Thailand

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Background

Mental health problem is one of the most important health problems in adolescence of Thailand. The number of mental health patients has doubled in 6 years, rising from 1.3 million in 2015 to 2.3 million in 2021. Data from mental health assessment of first-year students at Udon thani Rajabhat University, utilizing the MENTAL HEALTH CHECK IN questionnaire developed by the Department of Mental Health MOPH, indicated that 42.2% were in moderate to high stress levels, 37.4% were at risk of depression, 4.8% displayed moderate depressive symptoms, and 1.3% had severe depression, 6.4% were at low risk, 2.5% at moderate risk, and 1.6% at high risk of suicidal. Mental health problem not only has a huge size of problem, but it also impacts on students' holistic health, family member, community, social and economics. However, decreasing of this problem can be made by mental health support system management. Therefore, UDRU has established a student mental health support system.

Objective

1. To develop student mental health support system.
2. To provide mental health services for student.

Methodology

This initiative involves:

1. Screening and surveillance mental health status among students.
2. Steak holder and network analysis within and outside the university.
3. Collecting on data analysis, then used these data for planning operations.
4. Set up the mental health care center named "UDRU Care Plus" as a Consultation Center to coordinate cooperation among all faculties.
5. Developed healthy public policies to address on mental health issues within the university.
6. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with Mental Health Center 8 for academic collaboration and with Udon Thani Hospital to link referral systems for severe cases.

Results

The outcomes of project "The Development of Student Mental Health Support System" include, 1) set up the mental health care system and ccounseling system in the University 2) The university has flow chart for mental health care, counseling and referral system 3) developing the capabilities of 30 advising professors and establishing 70 youth counseling network 4) screening student's mental health 2,231 students, providing counseling to at-risk individuals 5) monitoring system via a collaboration project among Student Development Departments and Instructors from all faculties.

Conclusions

Project results found that "Development of Student Mental Health Support System" set up the mental health care system and counseling system in the University and provide a coverage of student's mental health care more than in the past. This project also improves an instructor's awareness on students' mental health. A collaboration project among Student

Development Departments and Instructors from all faculties can be made participation and mental health care sustainable system.

Discussions

Factors of Success of this project include memorandum of understanding has been recorded for the "Mental Health Network Project: Stepping Towards Quality Thai People" between the Department of Mental Health and 38 Rajabhat Universities under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation. The objective is to drive and expand mental health care and support for students across all Rajabhat Universities, integrating efforts between related agencies within the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation in each health region. This ensures that students and relevant personnel at all Rajabhat Universities receive mental health promotion and prevention support (Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health, 2023). This has garnered significant attention from university administrators.

The university has established a student mental health care system under the UDRU CARE+ Counseling Center at Udon Thani Rajabhat University (2023), which is responsible for providing mental health support, academic assistance, and aid to students facing various life problems. It also monitors mental health issues through methods and tools implemented in collaboration with the university, service centers, and related agencies.

The increase in stress, anxiety, depression, and mental and psychiatric illnesses has become more prevalent and noticeable, prompting universities to prioritize these issues. A strong referral network with partner hospitals ensures quick, confidential student care.

Key concepts in “Developing a Student Mental Health Care Model” using the “Whole School Approach (WSA)” which Including 10 main elements as follows (1) System management and implementation of WSA includes formal policies and a dedicated team. (2) Quality Control and Evaluation: Systems for planning, monitoring, and using data for decision-making, with support for personnel and financial resources. (3) Development of School Committees and Parent Networks: Regular meetings, informal working groups, and decision-making platforms. (4) Community Connection: Engagement with community leaders, alumni, parents, and networks to create learning and development opportunities for youth. (5) Student Leadership Development: Empowering student leaders in peer support roles. (6) Health and Social Services Connectivity: Establishing links with local health and social services for students, instructors, and other stakeholders, with health data management and access protocols. (7) Supporting system for students at risk group and facing mental health problems through youth counselling volunteer network, safety, and welfare, with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. (8) Curriculum and Activity Integration: Developing and adapting curricula and activities related to student mental health. (9) Learning Environment Management: Enhancing physical and social environments for well-being both inside and outside the classroom. (10) Instructor Capacity Building: Through various activities and support forms, reflecting existing and desired teacher competencies, with mechanisms for teacher development, monitoring, and evaluation.

Problems and Obstacles

Some problems of this project including (1) Perception of Mental Health: Mental health is often seen negatively, as a personal problem rather than a health issue, leading to a stigma

and underutilization of services until severe conditions arise. (2) Economic Conditions, because of Covid19 pandemic economic challenges affecting students and affecting to increasing of students' mental health problem. (3) Before conducting this project mental health issues is not including in a University Policy, therefore some instructors are not prioritized in this issues (4) Inadequate Staff: Insufficient student-to-staff ratios and outdated staffing frameworks for current situations.

Challenges and Recommendations for Future Steps

(1) Recommendations for University Administrators. *Policy Declaration:* Make mental health a primary role in university operations. *Budget and Action Plans:* Allocate budgets and personnel for mental health initiatives. *Understanding Promotion:* Educate faculty administrators about mental health strengthening systems. *Support and Monitoring:* Encourage and oversee plan implementations. *Advisor Evaluation Metrics:* Adjust metrics to include mental health screening and support. *Staff Motivation:* Boost morale for staff involved in mental health initiatives.

(2) Recommendations for the Student Development Division. Student Development Division should develop action plans and budgets for mental health initiatives. Mental Health Screening: Implement mental health checks for all students annually. Enhance students' Capacity Building on mental resilience and literacy, including skills like self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship building, and social understanding, along with basic counseling skills and recognizing warning signs.

(3) Recommendations for UDRU CARE+. Create action plans based on mental health situations from screening data and target groups needs analysis. Develop training courses media and materials on mental health issue for student. Promote UDRU CARE+ to university personnel and students. Effective Online Counseling: Provide efficient 24/7 online counseling services. Monitor factors affecting student mental health, such as life skills, sexuality, and drug use. Referral System Development to connect with external agencies, including mental health services. Application Development for screening, counseling system, support, academic data, research, and evaluation.

(4) Recommendations for All Instructors as a Student's Mentors. Regularly enhance skills development for mental health screening, basic support, and efficient referrals. Maintain mental health check-in records and initial support data for students under their care.

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