

The Implementation of a Wellbeing Room:

Examining its Potential Impacts on Students' Emotional, Social, and Psychological Wellbeing

The mental wellbeing of higher education students in the Netherlands has been suffering. Institutions have tried to prevent it and have implemented interventions to increase students' wellbeing, such as establishing wellbeing rooms for students. However, these rooms vary in terms of their design and functionality, and their effects on wellbeing have not been empirically analyzed. Previous studies showed that students desire a room for socialization and relaxation on campus. The current study investigated how the different functions could potentially serve the three dimensions of wellbeing: emotional, social, and psychological.

Students (n=276) from two Dutch universities participated in an online survey and were randomly assigned to one of three scenarios: one room focusing on relaxation, one on socialization, and one with combined functionality. They were asked to imagine that the described rooms were implemented and that they would frequently interact with them. They then completed surveys to measure their mental wellbeing, sense of belonging (SoB), and emotional states before and after reading the scenarios. Additionally, cluster analysis was used to identify response patterns and differences across the three scenarios. Findings showed that the combined scenario led to the highest potential positive impact on wellbeing dimensions, while the relaxation scenario resulted in a high potential positive impact on psychological wellbeing as well. The potential positive impact was higher for international students than for non-international students. The cluster analysis showed no patterns regarding age, gender, pursued degree, or study program that could explain the effects.

The findings highlighted that all wellbeing room types could positively contribute to student wellbeing, with multifunctional spaces offering the highest benefits. International students seem to particularly benefit from all functions wellbeing rooms could offer. The results encourage universities to implement such spaces.