Recent studies and prominent media reports show academics are reporting high levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression (Guthrie, Lichten, van Belle, Ball, Knack & Hofman, 2017; Thomas, 2014; Krause, 2018) and university students are increasingly likely to experience mental illness (Evans, Bira, Gastelum, Weiss, & Vanderford, 2018). Doctoral students in particular face multiple demands while completing their studies; these can include irregular working hours, funding uncertainties, and poor relationships with advisors (Barry, Woods, Warnecke, Stirling, & Martin, 2018), all of which can contribute to increased stress and in turn increased risk of mental illness. This Special Issue examines these issues within the context of business school faculty and students.

Research into mental health and wellbeing in the management education literature to date has been fragmented, but emerging. While researchers have explored some relevant topics, such as stress (Stixrud, 2012), faculty cynicism (Bedeian, 2007), management educators’ responses to a traumatic event (Clair, MacLean, & Greenberg, 2002), antecedents and consequences of mental illness in business students (Curran, Gawley, Casey, Gill, & Crumlish, 2009), the distressing impact of manuscript rejection (Day, 2011), and the knowledge needed to prepare MBAs to manage employees with mental health issues effectively (Martin, Woods & Dawkins, 2015), our knowledge overall is still limited. Tsui (2013) has also argued that management scholars should support and care about each other’s well-being, and cultivate courage and compassion within the academy.

University business students with mental health problems in United Kingdom statistics show increases from 13,060 in 2010 to 35,500 in 2015, even though enrolment numbers decreased during the same period (Kotera, Conway, & Van Gordon, 2018). Evidence also suggests that undergraduate business students may be at heightened risk of mental illness because of high coursework loads and pressure to succeed in a tight job market (Curran, et al., 2009; Tsui & Wing, 2009). In a recent press commentary, Matthews (2017) noted that MBA students experience high levels of stress and may be particularly reluctant to seek assistance for mental health issues. We suggest that the highly competitive culture in business schools (see DeAngelo, DeAngelo, & Zimmerman, 2005) may also contribute to these issues.

We posit therefore that the time is ripe for management educators to explore their own and their students’ experiences of stress and mental health in the context of business education. In particular, we aim to encourage an open and honest conversation about how mental illness can affect our students and ourselves, and how current faculty cope with the pressures of academic life in business schools.
This will require developments in the conceptualization, organization, and practice of management education, examining our values as educators, consideration of the culture in business schools, and re-thinking the capabilities that we aim to develop in business students. We should also prioritize our students’ well-being and psychological resilience in the classroom and problematize how we measure success in academia. It is also vital to recognize that the stigma of mental ill health remains a barrier to promoting effective responses. This is especially important for changing the climate around mental ill health disclosure and support. We hope that our proposed SI will represent a starting point for these conversations.

It is clear moreover that scope exists for further investigation of these issues along multiple avenues. In particular, we propose three broad themes that authors may wish to explore in the Special Issue:

1. **Antecedents and consequences of mental illness** e.g. how mental ill health may affect faculty members’ teaching and students’ learning, how the culture and leadership of business schools can influence academics’ psychological well-being;
2. **Sharing our stories and changing the narrative** e.g. how mental health issues may impact faculty at different stages of their careers, how educators’ lived experiences with mental illness can help them to become better educators and enhance student learning; and
3. **Building a culture of psychological health and wellness** e.g. exploring means to reduce management students’ and educators’ distress and promote greater psychological well-being.

Some research questions, issues, and topics that contributions might address include the following:

- What are the predictors of psychological ill-health in students (including both undergraduate and graduate) and faculty?
- How can symptoms of mental illness affect business students (e.g., learning, engagement in the classroom, etc.) and faculty?
- Are there particular groups within business schools who may be at particular risk of developing a mental illness (e.g., undergraduate students, international students, MBA students, doctoral students, tenure-track faculty, etc.)? If so, why?
- What kinds of strategies do students and faculty use to cope with the pressures of student and academic life in business schools?
- What kinds of interventions can be developed to address the stigma of mental illness in business schools (and university) settings?
- What is the role of management educators in developing students’ resiliency and promoting student well-being?
- What kinds of learning activities and approaches (e.g., mindfulness, mentoring, peer-to-peer coaching, gratitude journaling, etc.) encourage student well-being?
- What kinds of learning activities and assessment tasks facilitate student learning about mental illness, reduce stigma, and help them to support others effectively?
- How can we design department-wide programs to promote faculty mental health and well-being? What are the opportunities and challenges of implementation?
These questions are just examples, so authors should not feel constrained by them. A longer list of potential topics is available from the guest editors upon request. Addressing mental health and psychological well-being in management education will benefit from thoughtful, high quality contributions from many perspectives and of many kinds. Accordingly, we seek submissions across all of the Journal of Management Education’s sections: Empirical, Theoretical and Conceptual articles, Essays, Rejoinders, Instructional Innovations, and Instructional Change in Context. Submissions should be original, not submitted to or published in any other outlets, and fit the length and other requirements specified on the journal website. Please follow the JME submission guidelines available online at:


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Prospective authors and potential reviewers are invited to contact any of the editors noted above about this special issue. The submission deadline is November 30, 2019, but earlier submissions would be welcome from September 30, 2019 onwards.

REFERENCES


