

Title: The Human Side of PBL: Psychological Wellbeing in Problem-Based Learning among Health Sciences Students and Academic Staff through an Ubuntu Lens: An Integrative Review

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Abstract

Problem-Based Learning is widely used in health sciences education to promote student-centred, collaborative and clinically authentic learning. However, its psychological implications for both students and academic staff require deeper scholarly attention, particularly within humanizing and culturally responsive approaches to higher education. Guided by an Ubuntu lens, this integrative review explored how PBL and related active learning environments shape psychological wellbeing among health sciences students and academic staff. Whittemore and Knafl's integrative review framework informed the review process. A structured search of MEDLINE (PubMed), ERIC, PsycINFO, CINAHL and EBSCO identified peer-reviewed primary studies published between January 2010 and December 2024 that examined stress, anxiety, burnout, self-efficacy, resilience, motivation and emotional experiences within PBL or comparable active learning contexts. Twenty-four studies from 18 countries were included and synthesized thematically, with methodological quality appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. The findings revealed a dual pattern of benefit and burden. Students reported improved critical thinking, motivation, confidence, self-efficacy, resilience and peer support, yet some experienced emotional stress, uncertainty, anxiety, procrastination-related challenges and burnout risk. Academic staff experienced role uncertainty and facilitation anxiety, but also reported professional enrichment, psychological respite and stronger relational engagement with students. Across studies, wellbeing was influenced by facilitator support, clear tutorial structure, authentic cases, group harmony, resource availability and institutional responsiveness. Through an Ubuntu lens, the review positions wellbeing as a shared educational responsibility, supporting human-centred innovation, student engagement and transformative higher education.

Keywords: *problem-based learning, psychological wellbeing, health sciences education, student mental health, faculty stress, student anxiety, stress*