Best Practice 1

1.1. Title of the Practice: Physical and Mental Well-being of Stakeholders in College Communities

1.2. Objective: The objective is to foster a supportive environment that prioritizes the holistic well-being of all stakeholders within the college community. This practice aims to promote physical health, mental wellness, and emotional resilience among students, faculty, and staff. It is grounded in the principles of preventative care and inclusion, striving to create a culture where individuals feel supported and empowered.

1.3. Context: In the context of Indian higher education, there is a growing recognition of the need to address the physical and mental health challenges faced by college stakeholders. Factors such as academic pressure, societal expectations, and lifestyle changes contribute to stress, anxiety, and other mental and physical health issues. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, highlighting the importance of proactive interventions to support well-being. Given this, the College has the responsibility to play an active role in the overall well-being of its stakeholders and cannot leave it only to the curative initiatives such as clinics and hospitals. 1.4. The Practice: The college implements a comprehensive well-being program that integrates physical health initiatives, and mental health resources. This includes periodic health screenings (sugar-pressure checks, facilitating the processing of employers' state-aided health insurance, and connecting students to state-aided subsidised health check-up services in collaboration with Students' Health Home. Conducting regular Yoga classes for students and staff, etc.), psychological counselling services and mental health workshops. Special attention is given to destigmatizing mental health conversations, student and teacher peer-mentor structure, and providing confidentiality in accessing counselling services. The practice is unique in its emphasis on culturally sensitive approaches and collaboration with healthcare providers. Challenges include financial resource constraints and the time needed for training for staff members.

1.5 Evidence: Performance metrics show increased utilization of well-being services, like yoga and counselling services, higher satisfaction rates among stakeholders, and improvements in self-reported health outcomes. Teachers report a reduction in stress levels of students, enhanced coping mechanisms, and a stronger sense of belonging within the college community. These results suggest that investing in well-being initiatives positively impacts academic performance, retention rates, and overall campus culture.

1.6 Problem encountered and resource required: Challenges include limited funding for availing services (as professional counsellor fees), routine vacations with the campus closed and a hectic academic schedule which makes organising these training and services difficult. To implement the practice effectively, additional resources such as funding for expanded programs, liaison with more trained health professionals, and time for ongoing staff sensitisation are needed.

1.7 Remarks: The college emphasizes a culture of care and empathy, promoting values of compassion, resilience, inclusion and self-care. Integrating well-being practices into academic

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and extracurricular activities fosters a more supportive and thriving college environment, ultimately contributing to the holistic development of all stakeholders. The College has plans of expansion of both physical and mental health services with collaboration with professional individuals and bodies, and inter-college affiliations.

Best Practice 2

2.1. Title of the Practice: Gender Sensitization Initiatives in College

2.2. Objective: The objective of this best practice is to foster an inclusive and respectful learning environment by raising awareness about gender diversity, and related discriminatory issues, promoting gender equality, and preventing discrimination. Through workshops, training, and curriculum integration, the practice aims to achieve the objective for stakeholders such as students, faculty, and staff. The underlying principle is to cultivate empathy, understanding, and active participation so that students and staff across the gender spectrum feel included and motivated to excel in their respective social roles. The larger aim is to contribute towards the making of a gender-equal society.

2.3. Context: Gender discrimination, especially of women, transgender people, as well as men in different ways, is a harsh reality of the Indian subcontinent. The College campus is no different from this. It is important to take care that gender biases, stereotypes, and discrimination do not hinder the holistic development or impede the academic and professional growth of stakeholders, especially students. Preventing gender discrimination and actively promoting gender diversity, inclusivity, and social justice in educational institutions, is the context under which this practice has been conceived and implemented.

2.4. The Practice: Various strategies such as mandatory gender sensitization workshops for students and teaching and non-teaching staff, integration of gender perspectives in curriculum and teaching methods, classroom teaching practices, structure of extra-curricular activities, and formulation of gender-sensitive policies at the institutional level have been implemented. These initiatives aim to challenge traditional gender norms, empower marginalized genders, and create a safe space for dialogue and awareness. The psychological counselling cell hosts a professional counsellor who is especially gender and sexuality-sensitive. Various students marginal from the gender and sexuality perspective, find special support in this service. The College also liaisons with specialized organizations working on gender equality, transgender people, and women's support services to provide support to students facing gender discriminatory issues.

2.5 Evidence: Performance indicators such as increased participation in gender sensitization activities, positive feedback from stakeholders, and reduction in gender-based incidents within campus demonstrate the success of these initiatives. Improved gender parity in enrollment, retention, and academic and extra-curricular performance further indicates the positive impact of gender sensitization efforts.

2.6 Problem encountered and resource required: Challenges encountered include resistance from conservative factions, insufficient funding for programme liaisons, and the need for ongoing training and capacity building. Resources required include financial support for

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workshops, training programs, and the establishment of gender resource centres, as well as collaboration with experts and organizations working in the field of gender equality.

2.7 Remarks: Additional measures such as establishing support mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence, promoting women's leadership and empowerment, and tailor-made programmes for transgender issue legal sensitisation programmes for transgender students, can further enhance the effectiveness of gender sensitization initiatives in higher education institutions.

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