

Mental Well-Being in Special Education Teacher Education: Coping Strategies and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Mental health and well-being are key prerequisites for the professional competence and potential development of prospective teachers. Students studying special education – especially those specializing in emotional and social development – face unique challenges both academically and emotionally (Lutz-Kopp, 2019; Helm, 2024).

This study investigates the mental well-being of special education student teachers, focusing on stress factors and coping strategies. A participatory mixed methods online survey was conducted collaboratively by the University of Munich and the University of Leipzig. A total of 158 special education student teachers participated (Leipzig: $N=97$; Munich: $N=61$). The findings highlight significant stressors and protective factors among the participants.

Over 35% of students in the survey experience psychological stress. Moreover, a lack of knowledge about learning strategies and a demand for more opportunities to engage in group learning settings is revealed. However, the study also highlights a missing awareness among students about existing resources within the university.

The findings offer valuable insights for enhancing the quality of academic programs and ensuring sustainable, high-quality education for future teachers. The goal is to develop evidence-based measures that promote both well-being and professional development of prospective special education teachers.

Keywords: Higher Education, Mental Health, Protective Factors, Stress, Teacher Training