

Mattering, Anti-Mattering, and Fear of Not Mattering on Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction of International Students in Canada During COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Loneliness, Perceived Stress and Social Support as Mediators

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Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has exerted unprecedented adverse effects on both physical health and mental health challenges, driven by elevated mortality rates and prolonged periods of social isolation from the onset of 2020 through 2023. Global restriction measures have intensified life stress and heightened feelings of loneliness, both of which may be adversely associated with individuals' psychological well-being and their life satisfaction. These challenges have been further intensified by persistent safety concerns, and widespread disruptions of daily routines, particularly among the vulnerable population of international students in Canada. This group has encountered a range of compounding difficulties, including heightened financial strain, limited access to social support and networks, and significant barriers associated with the transition to the remote learning environments. This quantitative study explored effects of mattering, anti-mattering, fear of not mattering, loneliness and social support on psychological well-being. 186 international university students (98 men, 84 women) in Canada were recruited online, and assessed the scales of mattering, anti-mattering, fear of not mattering, perceived stress, loneliness, social support, well-being, life satisfaction, and demographic questions. A \$10 Amazon gift card was offered for appreciation. Correlational analyses indicated that mattering was significantly positively associated with social support, life satisfaction, and overall well being, while it was negatively associated with anti-mattering, the fear of not mattering, perceived stress, and loneliness. This empirical study demonstrated that anti-mattering and fear of not mattering were significant negative predictors of both well-being and life satisfaction. Moreover, social support as a protective factor and loneliness were found to fully mediate the relationships between effect of mattering/anti-mattering and outcomes of well-being and life satisfaction. It will be essential to help international students enhance their adaptability to build stronger social support networks, ultimately decreasing their life stress and reducing feelings of loneliness while studying abroad in Canada. It is essential for international students to reduce anti-mattering, fear of not mattering, and loneliness and increase their mattering, social support, well-being and life satisfaction in Canada. Our discussion focuses on practical suggestion that can help international students feel like they matter and increase their practical experiences under COVID-19.