

THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL
EVENTS ON HEIS'
INTERNATIONALIZATION:
A CASE STUDY OF A WELL-
BEING PROGRAMME FOR
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS AT PALACKÝ
UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

PAVEL FLEKAČ

JAN BRZOBOHATÝ

Pavel Flekač, Mgr., researcher
Department of Social Sciences
Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia
e-mail: pavel.flekac01@upol.cz
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9663-3878>

Jan Brzobohatý, Mgr., researcher
Department of Asian Studies
Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia
e-mail: jan.brzobohaty01@upol.cz
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1803-0489>

Mgr. Pavel Flekač is a PhD student at Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Social Sciences, where his research examines the development of pedagogical competencies within institutional and national curricula, aiming to advance educational quality and efficacy in competency-building. In his role as coordinator of the Welcome Office, he designs and implements comprehensive support programmes for international students, focusing on academic, social, and cultural integration. His contributions extend to managing initiatives in collaboration with government and educational organizations, promoting a globally inclusive campus environment through strategic workshops, visa consultation, and well-being support tailored to enhance resilience and community engagement among international students.

Mgr. Jan Brzobohatý is a PhD student at Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Asian Studies. His research explores linguistic and cultural intersections in Central Asia and China, with a particular focus on the Dungan language and transregional exchanges. In his role at the Welcome Office, he is committed to supporting the integration of international students through academically enriching, socially inclusive, and culturally adaptive activities. Leveraging his background in Asian Studies, he develops initiatives aimed at enhancing student resilience, fostering community engagement, and promoting well-being, while working with university and external partners to cultivate an inclusive academic environment that supports international students' holistic development.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of global events on international student enrolment and well-being at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Czech Republic, with a particular focus on Palacký University Olomouc. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates how external crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), shape student experiences and institutional responses. The study's two-phase design includes a detailed analysis of enrolment trends, and a pilot programme of well-being workshops aimed at supporting students' mental health and resilience. Findings from the first phase reveal patterns in enrolment shifts correlating with global disruptions, while the second phase offers insights into the efficacy of workshops designed to foster social integration, effective study practices, and emotional well-being. This research underscores the importance of adaptive, supportive policies for international students as HEIs navigate an increasingly complex global landscape, offering actionable insights for fostering academic success and well-being within diverse student communities.

Keywords: higher education, student mobility, mental health, inclusion, support programmes, psychological workshops, prevention

INTRODUCTION

The rise of international student mobility over the past decade has reshaped higher education policies globally. This trend has been driven by globalization, technological innovation, and the demands of a competitive knowledge economy (Altbach and Knight 2007). In many countries, including the Czech Republic, this shift has led to a sustained increase in international enrolments. Higher education institutions have responded by adapting academic offerings, expanding English-language programmes, and aligning institutional standards with global benchmarks to attract a diverse student population that enriches the cultural and intellectual environment of academic institutions (Gokpinar-Shelton and Pike 2022). However, recent disruptions, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic (de Wit and Altbach 2022), intensifying geopolitical conflicts, and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (Khadse et al. 2023), have challenged higher education institutions to rethink their support mechanisms for international students. The well-being, expectations and academic experiences of these students are increasingly affected by these global pressures.

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by investigating how higher education institutions in the Czech Republic, with a focus on Palacký University Olomouc, respond to these emerging global challenges. Specifically, this research explores the effects of external disruptions on international student enrolment patterns and well-being. It evaluates how these institutions adapt their support structures to mitigate adverse impacts. By using a qualitative case study approach, this article provides an empirical examination of enrolment trends and an evaluation of a pilot well-being programme designed to foster resilience and integration among international students. By analysing the effectiveness of targeted well-being workshops, this study offers a framework for understanding how higher education institutions can operationalize holistic support for international students. The research thus advances adaptive internationalization practices that prioritize mental health and social inclusion in response to an evolving global landscape.

By integrating insights into both the quantitative shifts in student mobility and the qualitative dimensions of student support, the study makes a distinct contribution to the field. It offers actionable strategies for institutions facing similar challenges worldwide. This approach underscores the importance of adaptive

strategies and establishes a model for institutional resilience that aligns with the evolving needs of international student communities in an era marked by complex global interdependencies.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

The research team employed a case study methodology, a qualitative approach traditionally utilized in psychology and sociology (Merriam 1988), allowing for an in-depth examination of complex phenomena within defined contextual boundaries (Švaříček and Šedová 2007). This methodology was chosen for its capacity to capture the intricate social and psychological factors affecting international student enrolment and well-being in response to global events. By focusing on Palacký University Olomouc as the primary research site while considering broader national trends, this case study design enabled a multi-level analysis that addressed both institutional and international dimensions.

Building on the work of key researchers who outline diverse methodological approaches in case study research (Creswell 2007; Hendl 2012; Stanoev 2013), the study was structured using a qualitative framework defined by specific temporal and spatial boundaries. This two-phase framework facilitated a focused investigation of the pilot programme, integrating both theoretical insights and practical applications to yield a comprehensive understanding of how global events impact international student enrolment in studies, thereby offering valuable insights at both micro (institutional) and macro (national) levels.

The study's design was structured into two phases to address the following central research questions: (1) Are significant global events influencing a decrease in international student enrolment at higher education institutions, particularly at Palacký University Olomouc? (2) What global events contribute to enduring impacts on the mental well-being of international students? The first phase employed document analysis to explore institutional and national data, investigating potential correlations between global disruptions and shifts in enrolment patterns. This analysis was contextualized through a comprehensive review of current literature to understand how societal distress manifests in

enrolment trends under globally impactful conditions, particularly focusing on the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second phase of the study implemented a pilot programme of workshops at Palacký University Olomouc during the latter half of the 2023/2024 academic year, building upon insights gained in the initial phase. These workshops were structured to incorporate both European and non-European perspectives on well-being, thus addressing the diverse backgrounds of both domestic and international students. Workshop content focused on daily well-being practices, stress management, time management, and study techniques, creating an environment conducive to social integration and academic support. The workshops were designed with the following specific aims: to equip participants with practical well-being strategies, to enhance understanding of physical and psychological processes, to present current research on study techniques, and to promote an inclusive atmosphere for sharing and social connection.

The workshops were facilitated by qualified professionals selected for their expertise and cultural diversity, ensuring an inclusive setting that resonated with participants' varied backgrounds. To foster engagement and comfort, workshop rooms were equipped with projectors, sound systems, and, where necessary, carpeted floors for physical activities such as mindfulness and breathing exercises. This arrangement aimed to create an environment where students felt at ease to engage fully with the workshop material.

Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to, particularly given the sensitive focus on mental health and well-being. All participants provided informed consent, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity in data reporting. To ensure a non-judgmental atmosphere, the research team prioritized the creation of a safe space that allowed participants to share openly and reflect without reservation, while protecting their privacy and well-being.

Through this methodological approach, grounded in established case study practices, the study aims to advance understanding of how global events influence international student experiences and to contribute actionable insights for institutional policy and support initiatives.

THE INCREASING PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CZECH UNIVERSITIES

HEIs' expansion and development has always been omnipresent, as these institutions react to the modernization of the world by tailoring their strategies and goals to societal demands. Although HEIs are often seen as centres of knowledge and wisdom, they face several internal and external challenges (Klyachko and Mau 2021). One significant challenge is the concept of internationalization, which involves integrating international values into academic objectives (Klyachko and Mau 2021; Knight 2015). This is often achieved by offering study programmes in English, thereby increasing the number of international students (Altbach and Knight 2007).

The question of the trend of increasing numbers of international students in the Czech Republic arose in December 2019, when the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) spread from China to the rest of the world (Pastor 2020). This event was later classified as a global challenge of international concern by the World Health Organization (Li et al. 2020). The European Union's educational systems underwent several strategic transfers to support internationalization (Shenderova 2018), significantly impacting most HEIs in the Czech Republic in terms of established goals and strategies (MŠMT 2021; European Commission 2022).

It is crucial to analyse whether these global events have impacted the rate of increase in international students at Czech HEIs, or whether both international and national bodies have adapted to the changes. The table below presents changes in the number of international students in the Czech Republic from 2018 to 2023 across the seven universities with the highest number of international students (MŠMT 2023).

For the majority of selected universities in the Czech Republic, there was a clear increase in the number of international students from 2018 to 2023. Considering the timing of the onset of COVID-19, the expected decrease in international students due to the pandemic would likely be observed in 2021 or 2022. Despite potential variables, overall quantitative measurements do not indicate a significant decrease.

Table 1. Number of International Students in Selected Czech Universities from 2018 to 2023

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Brno University of Technology	3,942	4,009	4,403	4,421	4,504	4,389
Charles University	8,580	9,008	10,179	10,722	11,175	11,193
Czech Technical University in Prague	3,042	3,096	3,232	3,146	3,241	3,414
Czech University of Life Sciences Prague	2,944	3,470	4,722	5,479	5,745	5,254
Masaryk University	6,663	6,763	7,396	7,472	7,923	8,184
Palacký University Olomouc	2,000	2,106	2,310	2,473	2,638	2,663
Prague University of Economics and Business	3,174	3,395	3,659	3,855	3,924	3,697

Source: Adapted from MŠMT (2023)

It is also necessary to consider isolated cases of substantial increases or marginal decreases from 2018 to 2023. The greatest increase in the number of international students occurred at Charles University, with an increase of 2,613 students between 2018 and 2023. The second largest increase was at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, which saw an increase of 2,310 international students over the same period.

Conversely, some universities experienced a decrease in the number of international students. For instance, Brno University of Technology saw a decrease of 115 international students in 2023 compared to 2022, and the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague experienced a loss of 491 international students in the same period. Additionally, the Prague University of Economics and Business lost 43 international students in 2023 compared to the

previous year. Furthermore, the Czech Technical University in Prague saw a decrease of 86 international students in 2021 compared to the previous year.

Although some numbers deviate from the general increase, the overall trend remains positive. To support this statement, the overall summary of the number of international students in both state and private sectors of HEIs in the Czech Republic is included below.

Table 2. Number of International Students in State and Private Sectors of Higher Education Institutions in the Czech Republic from 2018 to 2023

Year	Number of students
2018	44,642
2019	46,281
2020	49,839
2021	51,729
2022	54,624
2023	55,493

Source: Adapted from MŠMT (2023)

As shown in Table 2, the number of international students is increasing, with a rising trajectory. While some HEIs have experienced slight decreases, the overall trend indicates only marginal deviations. It is reasonable to propose that the number of international students in the Czech Republic will continue to increase in the coming years, as no quantitative indicators on a national scale suggest otherwise.

It is crucial to acknowledge that global events can affect the influx of international students to certain destinations. On one hand, events such as COVID-19, war or other conflicts may terminate potential mobilities and studies abroad. On the other hand, they may open opportunities for studying abroad to get away from the home country and thereby equalize the increasing trend in international student enrolments (Tokatli 2024; de Wit and Altbach 2022).

Reflecting the increasing number of international students, it appears essential to establish respected departments specifically tailored to the needs of the international community on a national scale, particularly within HEIs. These university bodies should focus on creating a positive international environment for all

students and scholars, contributing to both individuals and society, as well as accessing new directions of internationalization (Šmutzer et al. 2024; de Wit 2020).

GLOBAL EVENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WELL-BEING

International students, particularly those from non-EU countries, often experience culture shock and face a number of cultural challenges as they adapt to new societal and university environments (Collins et al. 2021). With the rising number of international students in Czech universities (MŠMT 2023), there is an increased potential for exposure to threats that may lower resilience and cause distress, impacting both physical and mental health during their studies (Mohamud and Madderla 2024). This distress can affect their academic success and overall academic development (Deng et al. 2024).

Several key areas where international students face challenges include environmental, societal, cultural, and academic transitions (Gololo and Seeletse 2024). Economic difficulties are generally less concerning for this group compared to sociocultural, academic, and psychological challenges, which are significant according to the perceptions of international students (Oduwaye et al. 2023).

In 2024, HEIs are still dealing with the negative outcomes of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused isolation, societal disconnection, academic difficulties, and mental health distress (Zhai and Du 2020; Udah and Francis 2022). The distress and imbalance in physical and mental health were particularly pronounced among students studying abroad, where isolation and limited social contact were already issues.

Another significant factor affecting both local and international students is ongoing wars and conflicts (Kirmayer et al. 2011; Rossiter et al. 2015; Thabet and Abu Sultan 2016). Current conflicts, such as those between Russia and Ukraine and the longstanding conflict between Israel and Palestine, are widely covered by the media and disrupt the well-being of international students (Escudero 2024; Gautam 2023).

The year 2024 has also seen significant developments in AI and its integration into institutional systems and daily life. AI has numerous advantages, notably improving educational efficiency and introducing innovative teaching methods that can lead to

overall satisfaction if executed correctly (Chaushi et al. 2024). However, AI can also have negative effects on mental health, as individuals may become excessively dependent on these tools (Khadse et al. 2023).

In this context, international students are prone to face multiple sources of distress stemming from global events, such as pandemics and conflicts, as well as apparently positive developments like advancements in AI (Thabet and Abu Sultan 2016; Pastor 2020; Chaushi et al. 2024). Therefore, it is crucial for HEIs to establish preventive programmes and take proactive steps to mitigate the impact of such pressures. This is especially important in institutions that host and educate international communities, emphasizing the need for well-being and good study techniques (Kim 2024).

STUDENT PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AT PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

In recent years, the need for systematic mental health and well-being support within academic and professional institutions has become increasingly critical. This responsibility extends beyond corporate entities to universities, which play an essential role in fostering environments that support the mental well-being of their members (Morrison et al. 2023; Nie et al. 2024). While universities cannot entirely replace professional psychological services, their role in offering preventive mental health programmes is indispensable. Equally important is the provision of support tools and resources that students can access as needed (Flekač 2024).

At Palacký University in Olomouc, students have access to a broad range of psychological counselling services addressing personal, interpersonal, academic, and career-related concerns. These services are administered at the individual faculty level through specialized departments and centres or by connecting students with professionals in various areas of expertise (Krejčířík 2024).

At the centralized university level, the Support Centre for Students with Special Needs offers services to all students, including those with diagnosed mental health conditions. This support focuses on students with formal diagnoses and includes personalized assistance and individualized educational plans (Ludíková 2015). These resources are available to both domestic and international students.

However, the university's central administration does not operate a dedicated facility providing comprehensive psychological support; instead, these services are decentralized, managed primarily by individual faculties. Faculties generally offer psychological support free of charge to their own students, sometimes specifying eligibility criteria for students from other faculties (Krejčířk 2024). The extent of support available to international students may vary across faculties.

An exception within this structure is the OUSHI Counselling Centre at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, which provides a wide array of psychological services, including English-language support. This service is available to students, faculty, staff, and the general public on a fee-for-service basis. Most faculty-based departments and contact personnel serve as initial consultation points, after which students may be referred to specialized resources or external support centres. The OUSHI unit notably offers ongoing counselling and therapeutic services beyond initial consultations.

Despite these resources, certain limitations persist in providing psychological support, influenced by both provider and client perspectives. Not all psychologists are qualified to deliver therapeutic interventions, and language barriers often create additional challenges. Providers must possess high language proficiency, as students seeking support may have limited language skills, potentially impacting effective communication and outcomes.

To facilitate easier navigation of available resources, Palacký University Olomouc has established a dedicated counselling webpage that serves as a comprehensive directory of support services across the institution. For international students, confirming specific service details, such as language accessibility, is recommended.

Additionally, the Welcome Office plays a significant role in supporting international students by offering essential information and connecting them to appropriate university services and contacts according to their individual needs. In recent years, numerous initiatives focused on preventive mental health and wellness activities have been introduced. These initiatives are highly beneficial, as preventive measures are preferable to reactive interventions. However, ensuring access to these programmes for the international student community remains a challenge. To address this gap, the Welcome Office has launched the "Welcome

to Well-being" programme, specifically designed to extend wellness support to the university's international members.

PILOT PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

During the summer semester of 2024, the staff of the Welcome Office organized a preventive programme focused on well-being. The aim of this series, titled "Welcome to Well-being: A Journey to Your Mental Harmony", was to offer students a wide range of lectures and workshops with different focuses, all united by the theme of taking care of one's physical and mental health. The event was promoted through posters at faculties and departments, as well as through the international study officers, the Welcome Office website, and other social sites. For each event, a registration form was created through which students also agreed to the videos and photos being taken during the workshop for the purposes of the Welcome Office.

The lecturers were selected and contacted by Welcome Office staff based on their expertise in the field and previous collaborations. Some students had also previously expressed interest in attending sessions led by these experts. Friday mornings were allocated for these events after discussions with some of the study officers. Although the event had to be rescheduled to the afternoon on two occasions due to lecturers' availability, this did not significantly affect student attendance. There were also situations where students had classes at the same time as the workshops and could only attend if their class was cancelled. These findings and insights will be considered and incorporated into any future lecture series organized by the Welcome Office of Palacký University.

Over time, a "core group" of students emerged who regularly attended the lectures and often brought new participants along. The events typically lasted 120 minutes, with a break after about 60 minutes during which refreshments such as coffee, tea, and cookies were offered to the students. This short break contributed to a more relaxed atmosphere, and informal conversations between participants and instructors regularly took place, fostering a more positive environment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOPS

The first event in the “Welcome to Well-being” series took place on Friday 16 February, and the theme was music relaxation. The instructors were Pavel and Janika Barteček from the Alfa Center located in Návší, which specializes in this kind of therapy. The event was divided into practical and theoretical parts. First, participants were invited to lie on the floor, close their eyes, and listen to sounds. The instructors then played special musical instruments that produced very unusual sounds and walked among the participants. The next part involved a story about a flying dragon during which participants were asked to imagine its flight and let their imagination work. The instructors once again played their special instruments, which sounded like rain or a flowing stream. Thanks to Tibetan bowls, participants could feel as if they were in the Himalayas. After the story concluded, with the dragon’s symbolic return to the ground, the theoretical part followed. The instructors showed the instruments, explained how the unconventional sounds were created, and discussed the participants’ feelings as well as the opportunities for attending music relaxation exercises in the future. The participants’ reactions indicated that for most it was their first encounter with this topic, and they appreciated the workshop, which skilfully combined information with a demonstration of the instruments.

On 1 and 22 March, two events focused on emotions and mental health were held. In the first part, the instructor Natálie Kubičínová, a graduate of the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, who also studied at the Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Kubičínová n.d.), spoke about emotions from the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine and how acupuncture can help when problems arise (Kajdoš and Kajdošová 1997). In the following part, the theoretical explanation was completed, and the students were invited to practice various movements as instructed. These were basic *tai ji quan* (太极拳) exercises, or Chinese shadow boxing (Gaffney and Sim 2002), which has gained global recognition as an approach to enhancing health and preventing illness (Li 2016). At the end of the event students were asked to discuss their feelings. One of the greatest benefits identified by the participants was the realization of the long-term impact of their emotional state on their health, as well as the opportunity to experience significant emotional release through shadow boxing.

On 5 April, a workshop titled “Well-being and Self-Care: Fostering a Balanced Life” took place, led by Associate Professor Michal Růžička from the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc, who has been involved in this subject for a long time (Růžička et al. 2017). The workshop began with an ice-breaking activity in which students sitting in a circle mimicked the movements and sounds made by the instructor in quick succession. Another activity, called “the camera”, involved students divided into pairs, with one acting as the camera, keeping their eyes closed and only opening them when instructed by the other, who directed the imaginary camera’s recording. Afterwards, students were asked to fill out a worksheet titled the Well-being Passport, which included questions about what helps them maintain their mental health, how often and in what ways they rest. At the end of the workshop, there was a discussion where participants shared tips on self-care for well-being.

Another event in the series was a lecture on effective learning strategies, led by Barbora Kvapilová from the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc (Lemrová et al. 2022) on 12 April. Kvapilová introduced students to the concept of learning new things and presented specific strategies, engaging in a discussion with the students about their experiences with different types of learning. One of the most appreciated methods by the participants was the Pomodoro technique, when an individual follows cycles of regular time intervals dedicated to studying (25 minutes) and rest (5 minutes). This technique can be repeated up to four times consecutively, after which it is recommended to take a longer break of 15–30 minutes (Ho 2023). Another strategy recommended by the lecturer was to work on a laptop that is not plugged into a power source. The time we can use the device is thus limited, providing greater motivation to complete tasks, even less pleasant ones, within that timeframe. It is also advisable to set a clear, defined time for each activity, whether work or rest, and to stop the activity when the time runs out. Although it may be difficult to complete some tasks at first, over time the brain should become more activated within the set time, making it possible to finish everything on time.

The topic closely relates to the next lecture, which was by Kateryna Hordiienko, a psychologist specializing in crisis interventions and providing psychological assistance to refugees from Ukraine (Flekač 2024). The event, held on 19 April, focused on time management. Considering the audience, most of the workshop was centred on how to learn effectively and make

meaningful use of time for rest and leisure activities, thereby creating a connection with the theme of the previous lecture.

Another workshop, which took place at the end of April, focused on nutrition practices. The lecturer was Zdeněk Chmelka, who studied this topic during his stay in China and later as part of his studies at the 1st School of Traditional Chinese Medicine – TCM (“Filozofické kořeny a historie TČM ...”). He first outlined the theoretical foundations on which the nutrition system in traditional Chinese medicine is based. He introduced students to the theory of the five elements and discussed foods suitable for consumption during each of the five seasons – spring, summer, late summer, autumn, and winter (Fang et al. 2020). He also gave students advice on preventing seasonal illnesses and answered some questions about the effectiveness of Chinese medicine. Subsequently, students had the opportunity to try some *qigong* (气功) exercises, a traditional Chinese practice that works with the concept of *qi* (气), or biological vital energy (Yang 2010).

In early May, a Tibetan dance workshop was held led by Jia Lin, an expert in this discipline who studied for seven years at Sichuan Normal University (Flekač 2024). She began with a brief presentation about her homeland, the western Sichuan region, which is home to various ethnic minorities (Zheng et al. 2024). Later, she demonstrated different movements for the students to imitate. The result was a basic dance routine inspired by Tibetan Buddhism, which can significantly contribute to improving well-being.

The final workshop, held on 10 May, focused on mindfulness. The instructor was Marie Buchtová, a PhD student of St Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Palacký University Olomouc, and Olomouc University Social Health Institute (Buchtová et al. 2022). During the event, students drew their interpretations of the four basic elements – fire, water, earth, and wind – and the associations these elements evoked for them. After a short break, students were led on a brief meditation. Although many students had prior experience with this relaxation technique, they appreciated the additional information, which was followed by a practical session. At the end of the workshop, there was a discussion about the students’ well-being and the impact of the activities on improving it.

The following table contains information about the series of workshops. All students present at each event were counted. Therefore, if a student attended multiple lectures, they were counted each time. A total of 107 people attended the workshops.

Table 3. Number of attendees at events in the lecture series based on attendance lists

Date	Lecture topic	Lecturer's name	Affiliation	No. participants
16/2	Music Relaxation	Janika and Pavel Barteček	Alfa Center	10
1/3	Emotions and Mental Health from the Chinese Medicine Perspective	Natálie Kubičínová	Faculty of Arts	11
22/3				12
5/4	Well-being and Self-Care	Michal Růžička	Faculty of Education	15
12/4	Strategies for Effective Learning	Barbora Kvapilová	Faculty of Education	13
19/4	Time Management	Kateryna Hordiienko	Faculty of Arts	12
26/4	Nutrition Practises with Traditional Chinese Medicine	Zdeněk Chmelka	Faculty of Arts	11
3/5	Positive Effects of Tibetan Dance	Jia Lin	St Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology	15
10/5	Mindfulness	Marie Buchtová	St Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Theology	10

Source: Brzobohatý (2024)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The entire series was based on the needs of international degree students of Palacký University Olomouc, as the Welcome Office was informed that these students would appreciate some insight into the area of well-being, considering the unfavourable development of their mental health. It is important to emphasize that this situation may have been influenced by the COVID pandemic and the associated lockdowns, which may have caused feelings of loneliness, as well as wars in certain parts of the world, which have heightened feelings of anxiety and mental discomfort within the population.

In the short term, we aimed to provide students with foundational knowledge on well-being by connecting them with experts in the field, introducing them to practices that support mental and physical health and effective academic skills. Long-term, the goal was to make these topics engaging enough to motivate students to explore them independently, empowering them to integrate these practices into their lives as tools for managing stress and enhancing overall well-being.

The core objective of this cycle, organized by the Welcome Office, was to promote well-being through a structured programme that emphasizes inclusion and supports students' adaptation to the academic environment at all study levels (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD). The activities were divided into three main areas. First, there was a focus on Asia, with lectures covering *tai ji quan*, emotions and mental health from the traditional Chinese medicine perspective, and Tibetan dance, offering alternative approaches to enhancing mental and physical health. The second area focused on well-being and meditation, including sessions on music relaxation, mindfulness, and self-care, which introduced students to practices that support emotional balance. Lastly, workshops on study and time management provided practical strategies for effectively handling academic demands.

Through these structured activities, we aimed to create strong communication channels with academics and lecturers, gathering valuable insights into the impact and popularity of these workshops. These insights will support future research initiatives in well-being and inclusion, enriching the academic experience for future students.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the profound impact of global events on international student enrolment and well-being, as observed at Palacký University Olomouc. Analysis of enrolment trends revealed noticeable fluctuations corresponding to recent global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, which have influenced both the numbers and experiences of international students. Despite these challenges, international student interest in programmes supporting adaptation and integration remains robust, highlighting their resilience and need for structured support.

The “Welcome to Well-being” programme, which welcomed a total of 107 participants across various sessions, addressed these needs by providing students with tools for managing the unique pressures of studying abroad. This attendance pattern, with a consistent core group returning for multiple sessions, suggests that such initiatives are valued by students as essential to their academic and social adaptation. Feedback indicated that students found the programme’s focus on practical skills for managing stress, time, and academic demands to be highly beneficial, reinforcing the value of preventive support services in helping students navigate both academic and personal challenges in an international context.

Building on these insights, there is a clear opportunity to enhance the programme’s reach and impact by integrating it into the university’s elective offerings, thus making support resources more accessible within the academic framework. This approach not only strengthens the university’s commitment to an inclusive and adaptive campus environment but also establishes a proactive model for student support, which can be replicated by other institutions both nationally and internationally.

Through data-driven programme adjustments and institutional support, Palacký University Olomouc can contribute to the creation of a resilient international student community, demonstrating a sustainable approach to addressing the complex challenges of globalized higher education.

In the coming semesters we would like to repeat the lecture series, building upon its initial success. Moving forward, we are considering establishing a clearer thematic framework to create a stronger interconnection among individual workshops. Future activities would benefit from a more structured approach to monitoring students’ well-being before and after the workshops

through surveys, allowing us to identify specific student issues and provide feedback to the organizers for possible adjustments to the series.

We would also aim to create a course in the university's academic administration system, known as STAG, under category C, that is, elective courses. This approach would not only enhance the mental health of international students at Palacký University Olomouc but also institutionalize these activities, creating centralized support in one place that brings together faculties and students. By aligning with the core values of the university – unity and attention to pressing issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global conflicts – this initiative fosters a sense of university community while addressing vital topics that impact students' lives.

The series has the potential for broader impact: on the institutional level by strengthening university cohesion, on a national level by presenting the project as a model for other educational institutions across the Czech Republic, and internationally by supporting the well-being of foreign students of Palacký University Olomouc. We hope that by creating an environment conducive to future collaboration, the series will gain recognition and be recommended by professors and study officers, ultimately amplifying its reach and effectiveness within the academic community.

REFERENCES

1. Altbach, P. G. and Knight, J. (2007). "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11 (3–4), 290–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
2. Brzobohatý, J. (2024). *Number of Attendees at Events in the Lecture Series Based on Attendance Lists*. Unpublished manuscript.
3. Buchtová, M., Malinakova, K., Novak, J., Janu, L., Husek, V., Van Dijk, J. P. and Tavel, P. (2022). "The Effect of Psychosocial Factors on Mental Health in University Students: A Large-scale Study." *International Journal of Public Health* 67, Article 1604712. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2022.1604712>
4. Chaushi, B. A., Ismaili, F. and Chaushi, A. (2024). "Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence in Education." *International Journal of Advanced Natural Sciences and Engineering Researches*.

Available at: <<https://as-proceeding.com/index.php/ijanser/article/view/1696>> (accessed September 2024).

5. Collins, H., Dailey-Strand, C. and Callaghan, D. (2021). "Those First Few Months Were Horrible': Cross-cultural Adaptation and the J-curve in the International Student Experience in the UK and Norway." *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 13 (4), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.3267>

6. Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Sage Publications.

7. de Wit, H. (2020). "Internationalization of Higher Education: The Need for a More Ethical and Qualitative Approach." *Journal of International Students* 10 (1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i1.1893>

8. de Wit, H. and Altbach, P. G. (2022). "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Revolutionary or not?" In: Raj Kumar, C., Mukherjee, M., Belousova, T. and Nair, N. (eds.) *Global Higher Education During and Beyond COVID-19*. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-9049-5_18

9. Deng, J., Tao, Y., Zeng, H. and Zhao, R. (2024). "The Effect of Psychological Resilience on Academic Burnout among College Students." *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media* 58, 175–182. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/58/20241738>

10. Escudero, C. (2024). "Media Coverage of Mediation: Before and during the Russian–Ukrainian War." *Horyzonty Polityki* 15 (51), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.35765/hp.2509>

11. European Commission. (2022). "Commission Communication on a European Strategy for Universities." In: *EUR-Lex*. Available at: <<https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>> (accessed September 2024).

12. Fang, J., Zhu, W. and Liu, H. (2020). "Discussing the Dietary Regimen and Disease Prevention and its Application as an Anti-epidemic Measure." *Chinese Medical Culture* 3 (3), 146–151. https://doi.org/10.4103/CMAC.CMAC_36_20

13. "Filozofické kořeny a historie TČM – online kurz." (n.d.). In: *1. škola tradiční čínské medicíny – TČM – založena 1990*. Available at: <<https://www.tcm.cz/p/488/online-kurz-filozofie-historie>> (accessed October 2024).
14. Flekač, P. (2024). *Welcome to Well-being: A Journey to Your Mental Harmony*. Olomouc: Palacký University in Olomouc.
15. Gaffney, D. and Sim, D. S.-V. (2002). *Chen style taijiqian: The source of taiji boxing*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
16. Gautam, B. (2023). "Perspectives on the Past and Future of Israel and Palestine Conflict." *Quest Journals*. Available at: <<http://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/archive.html>> (accessed October 2024).
17. Gokpinar-Shelton, E. and Pike, G. R. (2022). "Strategies to Boost International Student Success in US Higher Education: An Analysis of Direct and Indirect Effects of Learning Communities." *Higher Education* 84, 279–297. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00767-8>
18. Gololo, S. S. and Seeletse, S. M. (2024). "Learning Accumulation from Unfamiliar Environments: Informal Focus Groups." *International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy* 6 (2), 208–221. <https://doi.org/10.36096/ijbes.v6i2.483>
19. Hendl, J. (2012). *Kvalitativní výzkum: Základní teorie, metody a aplikace* (3rd ed.). Praha: Portál.
20. Ho, L. (2023, November 30). "The Pomodoro Technique: Is it Right for You?" In: *Lifehack*. Available at: <<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/the-pomodoro-technique-is-it-right-for-you.html>> (accessed October 2024).
21. Kajdoš, V. and Kajdošová, S. (1997). *Akupunktura, akupresura a čínská gymnastika, aneb, Kovem a ohněm* (3rd ed.). Praha: Ivo Železný.
22. Khadse, K. N., Agarwal, K., Malhotra, S., Priyadharshini, S. L., Bharathi, D. and Singh, A. (2023). "Cyberpsychology and the Impact of AI on Mental Health." In: *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*. Available at: <<https://jrtd.com/index.php/journal/article/view/1103>> (accessed October 2024).
23. Kim, S. (2024). "Subjective Well-being of International Students: Interplay of Perceived Discrimination, Health Status, and Community Satisfaction." *Journal of International Students* 14 (4), 570–590. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v14i4.6480>

24. Kirmayer, L. J., Narasiah, L., Munoz, M., Rashid, M., Ryder, A. G., Guzder, J., Hassan, G., Rousseau, C. and Pottie, K. (2011). "Common Mental Health Problems in Immigrants and Refugees: General Approach in Primary Care." *CMAJ* 183 (12), E959–E967. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.090292>
25. Klyachko, T. and Mau, V. (2021). "Modern Challenges for Universities." In: van't Land, H., Corcoran, A. and Iancu, D. C. (eds.) *The Promise of Higher Education*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67245-4_36
26. Knight, J. (2015). "International Universities: Misunderstandings and Emerging Models?" *Journal of Studies in International Education* 19 (2), 107–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315572899>
27. Krejčířík, T. (ed.). (2024). *Palacký University Olomouc 2023 Annual Report* (1st ed.). Olomouc: Palacký University Press.
28. Kubičínová, N. (n.d.). In: *Sakura Clinic*. Available at: <<https://www.sakuraclinic.cz/tym/natalie-kubicinova/>> (accessed September 2024).
29. Lemrová, D., Dobešová Cakirpaloglu, D., Kvapilová, B. and Balaban Cakirpaloglu, A. (2022). "The Link between Emotional Intelligence and Personality." *INTED2022 Proceedings*, 2674–2681. <https://library.iated.org/view/LEMROVA2022LIN>
30. Li, F. (2016). "The Public Health Benefits of Tai Ji Quan – Addressing the Unmet Needs of Aging Populations in the 21st Century." *Journal of Sport and Health Science* 5 (3), 304–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jshs.2016.01.022>
31. Li, Z. et al. (2020). "Vicarious Traumatization in the General Public, Members, and Non-members of Medical Teams Aiding in COVID-19 Control." *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* 88, 916–919. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.03.007>
32. Ludíková, L. et al. (2015). "Centrum podpory studentů se specifickými potřebami na Univerzitě Palackého v Olomouci." (1st ed.). Olomouc: Palacký University Olomouc.
33. Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
34. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (MŠMT). (2021). "Strategie internacionalizace vysokého školství na období od roku 2021." In: *Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy*. Available at: <https://msmt.gov.cz/uploads/odbor_

30/DH/SZ/Strategie_internacionalizace_2021_.pdf> (accessed September 2024).

35. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (MŠMT). (2023). "Oddělení statistických výstupů – výkonové ukazatele (souhrny a studenti)." In: *Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy*. Available at: <https://dsia.msmt.cz/vystupy/vu_vs_f1.html> and https://dsia.msmt.cz/vystupy/vu_vs_f2.html> (accessed September 2024).

36. Mohamud, G., Madderla, S. R. and Kaur, R. (2024). "Gender-Based Analysis of Homesickness and Personality Traits among International Students." In: *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology*. Available at: <<https://psychopedia.journals.com/index.php/ijiap/article/view/154>> (accessed October 2024).

37. Morrison, P. S., Liu, I. and Zeng, D. (2023). "Well-being and Ill-being on Campus." *International Journal of Wellbeing* 13 (3), 64–93. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v13i3.2785>

38. Nie, X., Wang, Y., Zhang, C., Zhao, Y. and Kirkwood, N. (2024). "The Varied Restorative Values of Campus Landscapes to Students' Well-being: Evidence from a Chinese University." *BMC Public Health* 24 (1), Article 487. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17952-w>

39. Oduwaye, O., Kiraz, A. and Sorakin, Y. (2023). "A Trend Analysis of the Challenges of International Students over 21 Years." *Sage Open* 13 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231210387>

40. Pastor, C. K. (2020). "Sentiment Analysis of Filipinos and Effects of Extreme Community Quarantine due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3574385>

41. Rossiter, M. J., Hatami, S., Ripley, D. and Rossiter, K. R. (2015). "Immigrant and Refugee Youth Settlement Experiences: 'A New Kind of War'." *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies* 6 (4-1), 746–770. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs.641201515056>

42. Růžička, M. et al. (2017). "Metoda Five Ways to Wellbeing jako nástroj napomáhající sociální inkluzi u osob se závislostí." *Studia Scientia Facultatis Pedagogicae* 16 (5), Ružomberok: Verbum, 36–47.

43. Shenderova, S. (2018). "Permanent Uncertainty as Normality? Finnish-Russian Double Degrees in the Post-Crimea World." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 40 (6), 611–628. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2018.1529134>
44. Stanoev, A. (2013). "Případová studie drogových kariér." In: Gulová, L. and Šíp, R. (eds.) *Výzkumné metody v pedagogické praxi* Praha: Grada, 72–85.
45. Šmutzer, M., Babková, T., Brhlík, I., Burešová, M., Hybnerová, E. et al. (2024). *Studium a život v Česku pohledem zahraničních studentů II: Zpráva z výzkumu na českých vysokých školách* Praha: Dům zahraniční spolupráce.
46. Švaříček, R. and Šedlová, K. (2014). *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách* (2nd ed.). Praha: Portál.
47. Thabet, A. A. M. and Abu Sultan, S. M. (2016). "War Trauma, Anxiety, and Resilience among University Students in the Gaza Strip." *Clinical Psychiatry* 2, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.21767/2471-9854.100032>
48. Tokatli, S. G. (2024). "The Multifaceted Impacts and Reasons of the Ukraine War: A Theoretical Analysis." *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies* 51 (1), 118–140. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jebat.2024.5101.06>
49. Udah, H. and Francis, A. (2022). "Vulnerability and Well-being: International Students' Experience in North Queensland, Australia." *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 14 (5), 171–196. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v14i5.3942>
50. Yang, M. (2010). *Divoká husa čchi-kung*. Praha: Pragma.
51. Zhai, Y. and Du, X. (2020). "Addressing Collegiate Mental Health amid COVID-19 Pandemic." *Psychiatry Research* 288, 113003. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113003>
52. Zheng, J., Yu, Y., Wang, Y., Su, X., Qiu, X., Yang, X. and Xu, Y. (2024). "Study on the Mechanism of Livelihood Behavior Decision of Rural Residents in Ethnic Tourism Villages in Western Sichuan." *Ecological Indicators* 166, Article 112250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2024.112250>

