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Strategy for Well-Being in Universities: A Romanian Higher Education Approach

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Abstract: Student services represent one of the most important areas that has developed in every higher education institution and continues to evolve based on the students' feedback and contextual issues. All quality assurance systems for higher education include standards to evaluate institutional capacity to provide these services. Well-being is one type of student service that universities have high interest in developing. In the current pandemic situation, significant changes towards digitalization have occurred, but at the same time, new types of student services based on counselling proved to be the most needed. Academic leadership is facing a lot of pressure to increase research visibility and deal with limited resources; therefore, a decision on well-being development is not easy. The purpose of this study is to reveal the well-being concept and practice as applied in different universities in Romania in order to build a possible institutional strategy (an introductory model). Apart from a literature review, conceptual clarifications, and best practices, the methodology includes a gap analysis and a survey based on a questionnaire to determine the students' perceptions on the development of well-being services. The findings show the highest interest of respondents in contributing to the well-being service development. The conclusions indicate concrete steps for the establishment of a well-being strategy.

Keywords: well-being; student experience; university strategy; higher education; sustainable institutional development

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are dealing with several challenges, some specific to the century and generated from the societal characteristics and some provoked by the current pandemic crisis. The Global University Network for Innovation explains that the current world direction is directed towards sustainability, which imposes the need for a new higher education; in a society where everything changes fast, universities, as promoters of education for sustainable development, convey principles of lasting social and human development [1,2]. The role of education is to adapt to the century's challenges, especially for the youth in a global context, equipping them with values and dignity; in fact, the relationship between learning and human development can be discussed from several perspectives, such as knowledge, problem-solving, regulatory mechanisms, cultural context, and community context [3,4]. In a similar way, the role of education is described as that of equipping students with knowledge and skills, but also with common values and identity as members of society [5].

Human development is directly connected to well-being. Dahl considers human development a vision of well-being, which differs throughout life, as it is oriented towards the improvement of well-being of people; in addition, an important aspect of well-being is its measurability and a differentiation is made among human values, happiness, and well-being. The use of Gross National

Happiness as a multidimensional approach reveals the connection between well-being in a material sense and the other needs of the society, such as spiritual, emotional, and cultural needs [6,7].

Universities are direct contributors in the process of providing well-being in a society. In fact, the Times Higher Impact Ranking is a relatively new academic ranking that explores universities' performance in relation to their capacity for reaction and action towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The third goal (SDG 3) is "Good Health and Well-Being"; apart from research on these issues and the proportion of graduates in the field of health, this methodology considers and assesses institutional collaborations and health services, such as policies for non-smoking, cooperation with entities to promote health and well-being, mental support for the academic community, and access to sport facilities. So far, this ranking has been published in two editions in 2019 (when 420 institutions from 74 countries were ranked) and 2020 (when 620 universities from 80 countries were ranked) for SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being [8–10]. Therefore, higher education institutions' interest in well-being is increasing.

The way universities provide student services in general and well-being services in particular is distinctive from one university to another and from one country to another. There are two models that have been identified: one is an integrative model based on internally building an adequate structure and allocating resources for it, and the other one is a collaborative model based on external providers as partners of the university [11,12]. These two models can be jointly applied, as most universities do. In addition, a conceptual clarification is needed in any university well-being strategy, as well as an approach towards the entire student life, from application to graduation [13].

In many cases, student services are explained as determinants of students' experience or as a marketing tool to attract new students to university programs. In the former case, higher education institutions try to improve the efficiency of student services; in the case of national support, an institutional strategy becomes easier and is embedded in a national approach. In the latter case, university teams insist on describing the attractiveness of the learning environment to potential candidates, highlighting the diversity and quality of the student services [14,15]. At the same time, according to O'Farrell and Maguire, students' experience is described as a success factor, although it is different among students in different years; students consider the most important theme in defining their academic success to be the skills they need to increase employability, but do not ignore the importance of being happy or satisfied (12% of the students declared this theme as important) [16].

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of building a well-being strategy in universities in order to enhance student and institutional performance. The paper is structured in different sections. This introduction, Section 1, places the study in a general context, and Section 2, the Literature Review, considers approaches relevant to the well-being concept and the strategy development process within higher education, plus some practical experiences of the best-positioned universities in providing well-being services to students. After that, Section 3, the Methodology section, includes the design of the questionnaire and a gap analysis to validate the students' perceptions and the solutions applicable to a Romanian university and context. In the end, the Results section, Section 4, provides a pertinent description of a possible strategy for well-being. Section 5, Discussion and Conclusions, embodies the relevant conclusions and limitations of the study, as well as possible future research development.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis

2.1. Well-Being and Student Services in Higher Education

Quality assurance in higher education has caused the development of standards and guidelines for both internal and external quality. In the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), student services are explained as being of particular importance for students, who must be informed about these; in addition, administrative staff must be qualified in providing these support services, as they are part of the learning environment [17]. The general methodology for external

evaluation of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance describes the organization of learning through the institutional capacity in providing student services with both social and extracurricular focus; student services aim to provide exceptional student life quality and must be sufficient, adequate, and relevant by taking into consideration accommodation, sport facilities, counseling services, etc. For higher referential standards, student services must draw from good practices, comply with both national and international standards, and address diverse concerns and needs that students from various groups might raise. [18]. In addition to these, a strong cooperation among academics, administrative staff, and support staff is required for effective service design and improvement solutions. Student services are often designed in two phases and divided according to resource allocation and the impact on quality of services [19]. In fact, students' life is managed in two areas: academic performance (learning and academic success) and recreational activities alongside studies, often organized on or off campus [20]. Table 1 shows the combinations of student services.

Table 1. Students' services—based on the previous literature review.

Scope/Place	On-Campus Services	Off-Campus Services
Academic learning services	On-campus learning support (i.e.,: learning facilities)	Additional training (i.e.,: voluntary activity, internship)
Non-academic learning services	Extracurricular activities on campus (i.e.,: sport activities)	Extracurricular activities off campus (i.e.,: city events/competitions)

Source: author's own research.

Therefore, the student services are of different categories. The diversification of student services depends on the campus size, as well as on the number of students and financial resources; this is why larger universities can provide a larger variety of services to their students, compared with smaller ones, where services are selected and targeted to their specific students' needs [21].

These student services include well-being services, also known as health services that can be available to students either as a standalone service or as part of other services. As Stanton et al. state, well-being is easily created within learning experiences, as social connection and learning among other issues contribute to happiness, satisfaction, and student engagement; their study shows that students received satisfaction of learning while experiencing well-being in the academic environment [22].

Well-being is a multifaceted complex concept: psychological, economic, social, emotional, physical, etc., and refers to several activities, such as field-related activities able to generate satisfaction and engagement. It is also perceived as an aspect correlated to one's general and mental health and productivity, etc., thus its holistic nature. It can be objective or subjective, with the former being related to social and material matters, while the latter to someone's personal perception (assessment) of well-being. Table 2 includes some other clarifications on students' well-being, being synonymous with happiness and quality of life [23–26].

Table 2. Students' well-being conceptual description—based on literature review.

Concepts (Considered Synonyms)	Explanation
Well-being	Multidimensional concept Components: physical, psychological, cognitive, social plus happiness and satisfied life (all that contribute to the quality of life) Life expectations
Happiness	Overall satisfaction related to life Satisfaction with daily activities
Quality of life	Life control Living independently Social and economic status

Source: author's own research.

Considering synonyms trio, for a better student well-being understanding, more clarifications are needed. Therefore, different rankings convey some indicators and publish a list of colleges/universities with the happiest students in the country/world. Below are some examples:

- According to the methodology of Princeton Review's College Ranking, a survey was conducted to find the students' perceptions on eight areas: Academics/Administration, Quality of Life, Politics, Campus Life, Town Life, Extracurriculars, Social Scene, and Schools by Type. The Happiest Students survey is part of the second area abovementioned and is a collection of answers to simple questions; the latest list (August 2020) ranks Kansas State University as the first institution with the happiest students in the US [27,28];
- Another American ranking considering the freshmen retention rates and overall graduation rate provides a list for the "Top 10 Colleges and Universities with the Happiest Freshmen"; the latest report places Wellesley College first [29];
- A European student satisfaction survey dedicated to analyzing the students' study experience reported Finland as the best place to study and provided some recommendations for quality improvement, such as teaching by accepting a higher class diversity and employing more student-centered methods [30];
- According to the "Top 10 Study Abroad Countries in Europe—2019 Rankings", Spain is the most preferred place to study due to the attractiveness of the language, places to visit, culture, climate, career future, and nearby cities [31].

Therefore, student well-being is managed at an institutional level in many ways. Practical organization of the well-being process will be described in the next sub-section.

2.2. University Practices on Well-Being Services to Students

The universities selected to provide best practice examples are in the top 3 in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, which are: RCSI (The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland) University of Medicine and Health Sciences (Ireland), La Trobe University (Australia), and China Medical University Taiwan (Taiwan). Table 3 reveals the main characteristics of well-being organizational issues within universities.

Table 3. Well-being practices in the top 3 universities from the THE Impact Ranking SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being—based on universities' websites [32–35].

University	Institutional Practice
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences (Ireland)	Focus on health science (exclusively); academic community works together to improve human health Student welfare and well-being page: well-being resources to students, networking and partnering, guidance, etc.
La Trobe University (Australia)	Counselling and mental health page: self-resources, different types of counselling, programs, and workshops Outstanding student experience—part of the Strategic Plan
China Medical University Taiwan (Taiwan)	Office of Environmental Safety and Health 11 affiliations in medical domain

Source: author's own research.

Other universities may provide courses focused on well-being, such as at the University of Dundee (UK): Module on "Improving and Maintaining Health and Well-being" or might implement concrete wellness strategies as a general approach for the entire community. An example is the University of Saskatchewan, in Canada, supporting well-being for everybody studying or working on its campuses, promoting a double care—for yourself and for the community [36,37]. Figure 1 below presents various initiatives already implemented across different universities in order to foster awareness and enhance well-being.

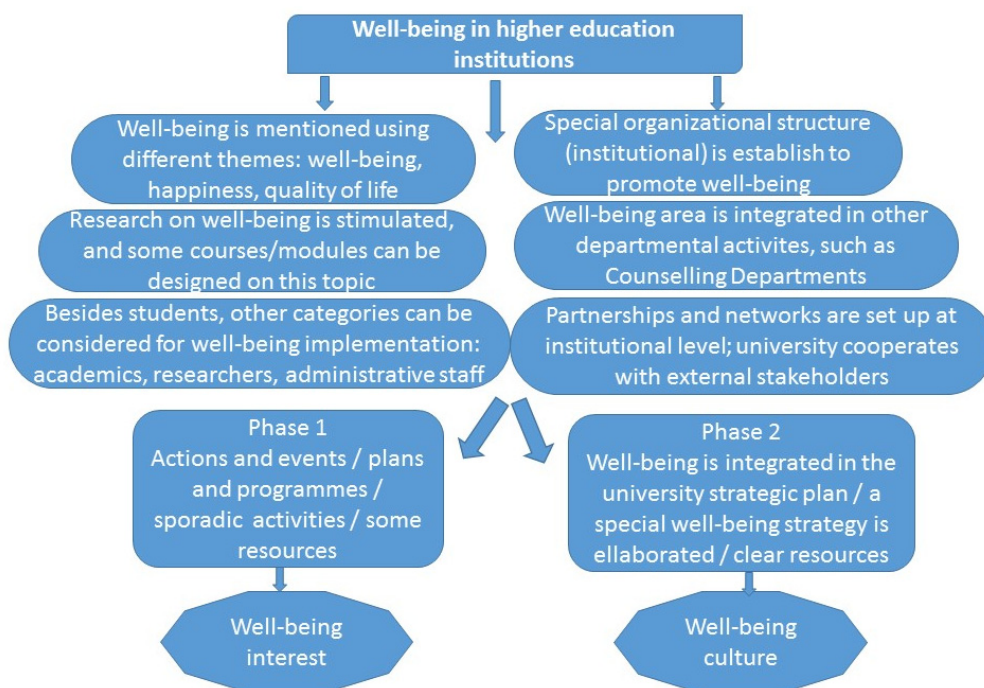


Figure 1. Phases of well-being university processes: from interest to culture.

Consequently, two phases can be observed across different university practices: the first in which well-being issues translate into diversity in actions and sporadic activities, and the second one where universities have a clear strategic vision on well-being processes which will eventually lead to a well-being culture within the university.

2.3. Building a Strategy in Higher Education

In general, a strategy is a work plan, developed from vision to the effects of its implementation. According to Henderson, the concept of strategy is very much related to competition and context, which means that a strategy needs proper alternatives and consequences evaluation in order to be fully viable; he stated that the development process of a strategy, apart from knowledge, includes a systematic analysis of the entire system, as well as skills to decide on the available options, which might also mean some of the current benefits to be forgotten for future success [38]. In order to write a strategic plan, the process must be thought of as even more important than the final result and strategic priorities have to be identified with the contribution of the stakeholders; simply put, from analysis, development, implementation, and refinement if necessary, a strategy adds value to the institution in a contextual situation by integrating economic, social, environmental, and ethical dimensions. Moreover, a good strategy, such as the resource-based strategy, can help support the sustainability priorities of the business, but only through an adequate risk management [39,40]. To develop a strategy, planning is required, as plans can turn into concrete targets and actions; other important aspects to succeed in the strategy development in a volatile environment are: feasible measurements, cooperation, and partnership [41].

The abovementioned strategy issues are also applicable for higher education. The European University Association (EUA) published a report in 2018 on efficiency, leadership, and governance with the intention of debating how to end the discrepancy between a strategy and its implementation. Therefore, Estermann and Kupriyanova insist on connecting a proper strategy development with the management of change by understanding the drivers and limits of change in universities, as well as the pertinent solutions for the strategy elaboration and implementation; with this in mind, strategy implementation is directly associated with the process of change [42]. Applied to a well-being strategy, change can follow the steps considered in Table 4.

Table 4. Steps for a successful well-being strategy.

University Actions (According to EUA Report)	Description
Define	Well-being institutional case must be understood, analyzed and divided into different components in order to identify the type of change needed, its effects and resources for the change
Create	Different well-being conditions can be in favor for change and must be present: proper consultations, joint decisions, joint projects, unbiased perceptions; positive aspects of the change must be revealed
Respond	Academic leadership needs to be aware that dialog will attract more and more people towards change; therefore, involving the entire community in the well-being change is important
Empower	University management should identify well-being drivers responsible for change at different institutional levels; this also includes resource allocation including training
Embed	Academic community adopts new well-being focused behaviors: more research, more actions, more recourses, more partnerships; well-being change becomes sustained

Source: author's own research [42].

Well-being is not something universities treat lightly, but the way it is effectively implemented is dependent on the institutional priorities and constraints. Although quality assurance standards measure students' satisfaction and determine the minimum level of services provided to students, well-being is still an area in which improvements could be made. The following section will describe an institutional case for developing a university well-being strategy.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Methodology—Objectives, Questions and Methods

The current study is designed to identify the gap between the current and the desired state on a well-being institutional situation in order to reveal possibilities to develop a well-being strategy in a Romanian university. The research objectives, questions, and methods are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Research design.

Research Components	Description
Objectives	To identify the current leadership interest in well-being issues To understand the students' opinion on well-being development To propose a well-being strategy model (introductory model)
Questions	What is the leadership declarative interest in well-being development within universities? What is the students' perception on well-being matters in general? What aspects should be integrated in a well-being strategy model?
Methods	Institutional documents analysis Student survey Gap analysis

Source: author's own research.

At a national level, in Romania there are 99 universities, both public and private, divided into four categories: civil, military, private accredited, and private authorized. The largest group is the first one, consisting of 47 civil state higher education institutions, large and small, according to the lists published by the Minister of Education and Research [43]. Among these, in the THE Impact Ranking based on SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being, three Romanian universities were included

in the ranking (out of seven included in the overall ranking) in 2020, compared to 2019 when only one Romanian university was considered for SDG 3 (although in the overall ranking, there were five universities ranked, but based on other sustainable goals). Table 6 reflects this year-over-year change, proving an institutional interest to provide evidence on how universities implement actions related to well-being [9,44].

Table 6. Romanian universities in the THE Impact Ranking in 2020 and 2019.

Crt. No.	University	University Position (Ranking at National Level)—Overall/SDG 3			
		2020 Overall	2020 SDG 3	2019 Overall	2019 SDG 3
1.	University of Bucharest	1	3	3	-
2.	Bucharest University of Economic Studies	1	-	1	-
3.	Transilvania University of Braşov	2	-	-	-
4.	Babeş-Bolyai University	3	-	2	-
5.	George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Targu Mures	3	2	-	-
6.	Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy	3	1	2	1
7.	Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism	4	-	3	-

Source: author's own research. SDG: Sustainable Development Goal.

Romanian universities ranked in 2020 are different in their study profiles as follows:

- The first-ranked university is a medical university (founded in 1879) which runs programs directly integrated in the field of health and well-being; therefore, the research is much more aligned with this domain [45]; this will be Univ 1;
- The second-ranked university (founded in 1945) in 2020 is in the same medical area, and thus, the interest in the health and well-being is also direct [46]; this will be Univ 2;
- The third-ranked university (founded in 1864) is not a medical institution, but rather an all-rounder one with study programs in the socioeconomic field, philology, exact science, and earth sciences; thus, its presence in the ranking demonstrates the leadership interest in well-being, ranking class, and place being a consequence of regular activities institutionally run [47]; this will be Univ 3.

The 3 universities were considered for analysis to understand the institutional leadership commitment towards health and well-being. The data are based on publicly available information, such as Strategic Plan, Rector's Managerial Plan, Organizational Charts.

Figure 2 is a structural image of how research drew from appropriate literature review and institutional practices and led towards the gap analysis and the survey addressed to students at one university in Romania—the all-rounder university ranked in THE for SDG 3: University of Bucharest. In the end, the results allow to connect the leadership commitment to well-being with the students' expectations in the same area. This connection is formalized in a well-being strategy model below, considering the EUA approach, as previously discussed.

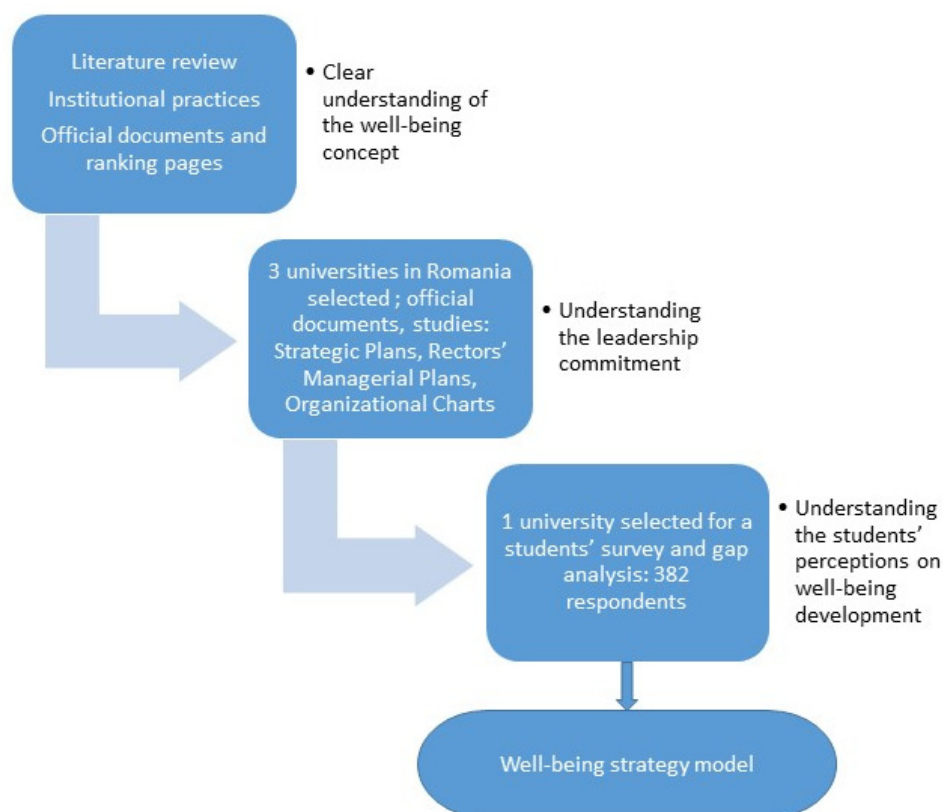


Figure 2. Research design. Source: author's own research.

Strategic models as well as strategic planning in universities are significantly important when they have well-defined strategic goals; there are studies that show different levels of leadership knowledge on this matter. Some higher education institutions (both private and public) can be characterized by a lack of knowledge on strategic models and planning, in spite of the development of strategic thinking being at the forefront of academics and researchers. The study conducted by Sart considered students as the main group of interest, as they were the first invited to participate in strategic planning and modelling at their university [48]; the study shows also the role of strategic plans and models in considering strategic goals. Therefore, an institutional development is generated from the institutional clearly defined strategic goals.

The institutional efforts towards sustainability are a lingering priority for the entire world, including universities. According to Levi and Rothstein, universities must lead on SDGs, in the context of recent changes in the political European environment; the author connected the development towards these goals with ethical leadership behavior, with the responsibility of acting as drivers of change, to then be able to better our society [49].

The questionnaire design was based on previous studies revealing the importance of students' well-being alongside their academic achievement. One component of students' well-being is heavily reliant on the surrounding environment and on cultural activities, infrastructure, students' orientation and participation, colleagues' support, etc. [50,51]; these studies showed that student happiness is equally as important to them as their academic achievements, with their general well-being positively influencing the learning process and the knowledge retained.

Consequently, students are considered direct beneficiaries of educational services, and their opinion is valuable in the context of society and a knowledge-based economy, in the process of defining the role of higher education institutions [52]. These all, in a higher education context, mean student services and both curricular and extracurricular activities.

3.2. Institutional Documents Analysis

In order to analyze the leadership commitment, 3 documents were studied of the three universities ranked in 2020 in SDG 3. The author tried to use the Keyword Density Checker tool, which works like a search engine and reveals (based on text or URL page) top keywords with frequency and density [53]. However, this tool was quickly discarded as documents were in Romanian and in different formats that could not make the check possible. Therefore, the content analysis was done directly through manual qualitative review, through reading and notes taking, as a simple technique that checks messages and their characteristics: different expressions that prove the institutional interest in well-being. The documents checked at every university are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Documents checked [54–56].

University	Documents	Words Checked: Student, Satisfaction, Service/No. of Pages
Univ. 1.	University Strategic Plan for 2016–2020	206/81
Univ. 2.	University Strategic Plan for 2020–2024	75/23
Univ. 3.	Rector’s Managerial Plan for 2019	52/22

Source: author’s own research.

Characteristics of the messages will be revealed in the Results Section.

In addition, a previous institutional study of Univ 3 was considered in order to understand the context and current well-being state; this study was published in 2019 and included the experiences of different students such as: educational services, scholarships provided, accommodation services, mobility experiences, entrepreneurial support, as well as the satisfaction and thoughts of doctoral students on developing transversal skills within course delivery, the doctoral students’ opinion on the general support they get [57]. The study included 1901 respondents from 19 faculties from all degree classifications. The study revealed the different levels of student satisfaction for different services: students were most satisfied with the educational services such as the curriculum, teaching methods, and use of the library. Students were less satisfied with the on-campus medical services offered and the availability of clubs and societies as alternatives of spending their free time. Based on this study, the questionnaire and the gap analysis were developed.

3.3. Questionnaire Design and Gap Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to address some questions from the students at the Faculty of Business and Administration within Univ 3. The faculty was chosen as the faculty management reacted positively at the author’s suggestion to start a well-being initiative; in addition, as the theoretical part shows, a well-being strategy must be treated as an institutional change. In change management, it is important to deal with impact and change and get people involved; the benefits of this would be twofold: acceptance and commitment to change and ownership, as change management is in fact about people management [58]. The vice-rector of the institution in charge of the quality management issues also suggested to start from the analysis from one faculty and to follow a step-by-step process. The interest for quality assurance is to increase the compliance with the quality standards as much as possible. Therefore, the students at the faculty were all invited to answer the questionnaire. There were 382 valid responses: 105 from the Public Administration course, 127 from the Marketing course, and 150 from the Business Administration course; in addition, 278 students were studying at the undergraduate level, and 104 at the postgraduate level. The questionnaire consisted of closed questions, such as: “How happy are you in general with your life?” “How happy do you feel in general with the campus services offered to students?”, and some open questions, such as: “What do you think the university can do to make you happier as a student?”. In addition, a Likert scale of 5 levels was an invitation to respondents to express their level of agreement on some well-being-related statements: “Well-being in university needs a strategy”; “Well-being in university needs a lot of resources”, “Well-being is a

personal state and university has nothing to do about it”; “Well-being in the university is very much related to intertwined activities”; “Well-being in university means togetherness”. Hard copies of the questionnaire were collected from students in January 2020.

The gap analysis (as part of the questionnaire) was applied in relation to different services, inviting students to: (1) Complete a list of services that exist or that they will likely benefit from and (2) to evaluate their level of satisfaction with their (students) availability and performance. The current state was scored with a value from 1 to 10 (10 being the maximum, or the desired future level of service performance). Gap analysis is used to identify areas where desired performance levels are not met by current operations or processes; it is used in different areas, such as satisfaction measuring and quality assurance studies, to compare the current state to either a vision of the respondents, or a theoretical gap, or different benchmarks [59,60]. The current gap analysis was implemented using a theoretical gap, in which the maximum of 10 was allocated for each type of service. In order to reveal the current state level, the starting point was a set of services already existing at the university and connected to well-being as the GUILDHE RESEARCH REPORT (mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper) described in their own survey [13]. Table 8 refers to several aspects related to student well-being: the first 5 aspects were generated from services already existing at the university, the following 5 were included from the abovementioned report and the last 3 were added in by students. The question for the Gap analysis was the following: “Please rate the following well-being related aspects according to your level of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 10” (10 being the theoretical/maximum level of satisfaction). The last column represents the gap calculation as a difference between the theoretical status and the average score of the respondents.

Table 8. Current and desired state/gap analysis—based on students’ opinions (average scores).

Crt. No.	Aspects Related to Students’ Well-Being	Current State	Gaps
1.	Career counselling and orientation	6.72	3.28
2.	Psychological counselling	6.4	3.6
3.	Educational services	8.2	1.8
4.	Extracurricular activities	8.1	1.9
5.	Accommodation services	5.85	4.15
6.	Medical services on campus	5.77	4.23
7.	Well-being awareness activities/events	2.79	7.21
8.	Support on financial issues	2.73	7.27
9.	Volunteering activities/opportunities	6.95	3.05
10.	Students’ participation in decision-making	6.8	3.2
11.	Students’ meeting facilities	2.54	7.46
12.	Sport activities	6.29	3.71
13.	Opportunities of spending free time (Clubs & Societies)	2.13	7.87

Source: author’s own research.

The solutions proposed by students and revealed as answers will be presented later on. This way, a final version of fewer ideas of how to improve the transition of the current state towards a state closer to the desired one will be the baseline for a strategy model.

4. Results

The results of the study provide evidence on the academic leadership commitment based on the content analysis of strategic documents and student perceptions regarding the development of well-being actions within a university. The main issues highlighted from the strategic document are as follows:

- There is no declarative direct interest in well-being, but for providing complex, diverse, and quality services to students;
- Universities are willing to find resources for strategies and define priorities for the entire term of the rector;
- There is a general consent on the fact that students are the most valuable stakeholders, and the relationship with students is seen as a valuable partnership.

Therefore, if students are by far the most important stakeholders, their perception on the university capacity of providing better services and actions towards student well-being is of utmost relevance.

Table 9 contains the responses to the closed main questions:

Table 9. Students' responses – closed question.

Questions	Percentage of Respondents: Very Happy + Happy/Moderate/Very Unhappy + Unhappy
How happy are you in general with your life?	67%/9%/24%
How happy do you feel in general with the on-campus services offered to students?	21%/31%/48%

Source: author's own research.

Therefore, students expressed their happiness level higher regarding their life in general and a differentiated happiness level when judging the student services on campus. The responses based on the Likert scale are shown in Figure 3.

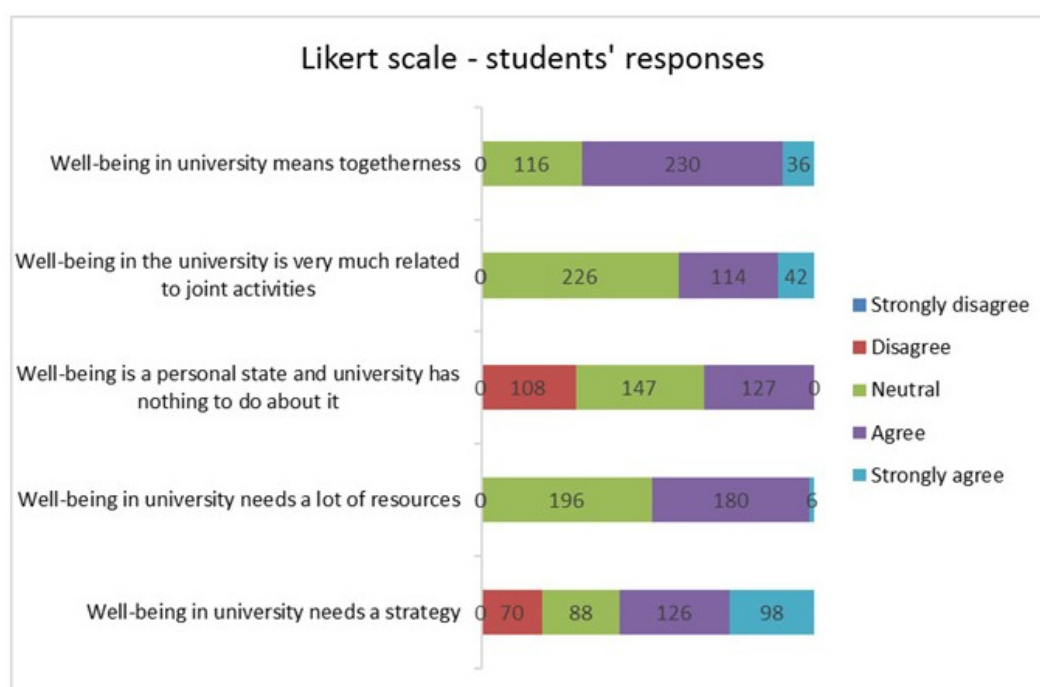
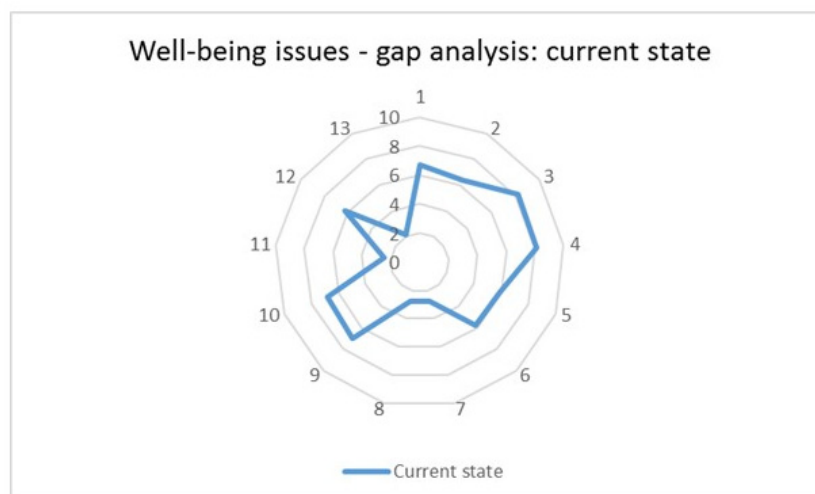


Figure 3. Students' perception on well-being. Source: author's own research.

Therefore, it is a common agreement on the issues considered in the Likert analysis, as for all the statements the level of agreement and strongly agreement was distributed between 33% and 70% of the respondents. Almost half of the students recognized that a well-being strategy is needed, and that can be easily defined by more activities developed collaboratively.

The gap analysis is described in Figure 4 below, alongside the results to the 13 issues considered relevant by students with regards to a proper well-being analysis within the university.



1. Career counselling and orientation; 2. Psychological counselling; 3. Educational services; 4. Extracurricular activities; 5. Accommodation services; 6. Medical services on campus; 7. Well-being awareness activities/events; 8. Support on financial issues; 9. Volunteering activities/opportunities; 10. Students' participation in decision-making; 11. Students' meeting facilities; 12. Sport activities; 13. Opportunities of spending free time.

Figure 4. Gap analysis results. Source: author's own research.

Therefore, students are relatively satisfied with the services provided within the university, especially those related to education and extracurricular activities, including volunteering opportunities. However, students are less satisfied with the facilities provided for meetings, exercise and leisure time. These three services/categories were added to this list by the students themselves, which shows that they are very much aware and cognizant of what they really need. Another observation is that there is a lot of room for student services improvement, no matter which type of services is considered. As for the open question related to what will make them happier or more satisfied in terms of student services, the following list reflects the students' proposals; the number of respondents is added for every idea as an absolute figure out of a total of 382 respondents:

- More rooms and facilities for student clubs and societies—168/382;
- More free time/less time spent in class—156/382;
- Better quality for accommodation—135/382;
- Part-time jobs for students on campus—102/382
- Sport/exercise facilities—89/382;
- Trips organized in collaboration and with the other faculties—88/382;
- Financial support services—75/382;
- Training/workshops for leisure (cooking classes, foreign language classes, dancing classes, etc.)—68/382;
- Debates on issues raised by students—54/382;
- More responsibilities for students—they should have some activities to manage fully where they could represent their colleagues—56/382;
- Free resources available for students to access (i.e., emotional health support services)—54/382.

During strategy formulation, strategy creators must first consider an internal and external analysis/diagnostic, followed by a comparative study, as well as an analysis of interest groups; the classical approach of a strategy elaboration includes planning, allocation of resources and profitability measurement/forecast [61]. In addition, according to Porter, a strategy is related to a set of activities in which the organization can make a difference in the market [62]. Therefore,

a strategy as an introductory model on well-being within universities is based on the existing services already provided to students, their perception, and on a comparison with other universities in the same environment.

Consequently, results are briefly shown in Figure 5, which represents a well-being strategy model applicable within universities. This is a starting point for internal decisions which requires further testing.



Figure 5. Well-being strategy model (introductory model). Source: author's own research.

A strategy can be either a document or a process. The strategy described above is in the form of a process, starting with the strategy formulation, leading to its implementation and concluding with re-evaluation, all of these stages happening concurrently. As a matter of fact, some of the already-existing services can be easily improved through improved communication; others, however, can be easily added. Apart from being a bureaucratic process, a strategy model for well-being is only a message to the community that things can change and improve upon what the university already has.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The current study demonstrates the importance of a well-being strategy which takes into account the perspectives and feedback provided by students. The practical implications consist of changes that can be adopted at both the institutional level (strategic goals) and the operational level (administrative departments), providing more action for well-being tasks. Students were considered the main interest group in many cases, and their opinion was taken into account; for example, their contribution to the higher education curriculum design is recognized as particularly valuable [63]. Therefore, as an introductory model, the study shows the need to consider the students' perceptions and opinions when developing strategic documents, otherwise created independently by the leadership team. In addition, moving from a declarative (just a document) institutional behavior to concrete practical changes towards well-being is highly important in order to get the leadership commitment, and for this, a proper conceptual understanding is a must.

Main aspects of the theoretical approach refer to:

- Conceptual clarifications on well-being, especially considering the similar concepts to happiness and quality of life;
- Understanding of the two phases at an institutional level in delivering student services—different events or strategic approach;
- Well-being strategy can be considered as a change process developed internally;

- Student services must be developed considering their characteristics of being an academic or non-academic individual based on or off campus;
- A huge interest in reporting data and providing evidence for the SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being for higher education institutions, as revealed in the THE Impact ranking;
- Romanian universities becoming committed to SDG 3 Health objectives, as the number of universities evaluated on this matter increased over years;
- Universities' good practices which can be an excellent source of information for other similar entities when developing a well-being strategy.

Main practical/research-based conclusions include the following:

- The academic commitment for specific objectives can be analyzed from strategic university documents and website pages;
- The academic community must be involved in the change process;
- Students are important partners in developing strategies and actions, especially when these have a direct impact on their life;
- Students are aware of what they need in order to be happier whilst in university;
- Students are correctly evaluating their level of satisfaction, but they are also well suited to provide solutions;
- A well-being strategy has to start from a pilot analysis to encourage community openness to change in order to have the fundamentals for strategy elaboration;
- The strategy model as an introductory model provides a clear framework for future development towards well-being;
- Many of the Romanian universities submit data on sustainability issues (for instance for specific rankings) as people/departments are already in charge of providing evidence and indicators specific to sustainability issues, including well-being efforts; sustainability efforts do not translate to financial efforts, but also human resource efforts and ethical commitment from the entire academic community;
- Universities must redefine their role in promoting change towards student well-being; this change is possible by defining strategic goals and integrating them in the general university strategy;
- The studied university demonstrated resilience and acceptance towards developing well-being services for their students, as the questionnaire results had shown.

Additionally, final results of the study prove the institutional capacity of higher education to promote the change towards student well-being, as the research was taken into account by the faculty management at least for quality assurance reasons. In fact, a strategy model suggests the framework for development. The next steps are the decision-making process and taking concrete actions towards the set goals. The study has one main limitation: the respondents were only students coming from one university; the perceptions of academics and administration staff should be considered for future strategy development, most likely in the process of creation before empowering and embedding it into main university strategy. Therefore, the proposed strategy model must be considered as an introductory model that lays the foundation for future work. Future research directions include: an integration of other stakeholders in the survey such as academic and administrative staff, but also potential partners; the concrete creation of the strategy from vision to its effects on the community and on students' life. Other future direction should consider the extension to other universities in order to measure the impact of the university profile on the student well-being state in a comparative approach.

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