

Understanding the Mental Health of Doctoral Students

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Search Methods

Existing published reviews have included samples of doctoral students from international universities or have included UK students within larger samples [25, 55, 65]. Therefore, the decision was made to solely include peer-reviewed, published research that involved doctoral students studying in the UK due to international differences in course structure, funding, and fees [11]. Understanding the risk factors for poor mental health in doctoral students may help to develop preventative interventions that are relevant to the specific context. Therefore, the aim of this narrative review was to explore the range of known factors that affect the mental health and wellbeing of doctoral students attending UK universities.

A narrative review is an effective method in cases where there are diverse methodologies that have examined different constructs [66]. The purpose of a narrative review is to deepen understanding and expand knowledge by judiciously and purposively selecting research relevant to the search question to explore [67], providing the researcher's interpretation and critique. To represent the underpinning evidence, an integrative and critical approach was taken to collate the factors that affect the mental health and wellbeing of doctoral students in the UK. This review aims to highlight the current state of knowledge including qualitative and quantitative data, using appropriate critical appraisal tools for quantitative work and quality indicators for qualitative research. The most up-to-date research was reviewed to identify gaps, uncertainties, or unanswered questions [67, 68].