

**Reshaping librarians' roles : a proactive call to support students' mental health at universities in Kenya****DOI: 10.61735/71g98b85**<sup>1</sup>Sophia Mjeni Tsenga<sup>1</sup><https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3853-572X>,<sup>1</sup>Kenya Methodist University**ABSTRACT**

*Student mental health underscores the overall well-being and resilience. It also entails the ability for students to subsist life demands, manage daily stressors while being productive in their learning. Academic libraries are better situated to support student mental well-being, given that they are frequently visited by students both physically and virtually. Library professionals are therefore, expected to prioritise customer experience and present themselves as trusted intermediaries for students. However, librarians' potential to contribute beyond their traditional information roles and actively support student mental well-being remains underexplored. Global and regional research shows a growing interest in this subject, although unclear on the specific roles. A notable gap exists in integrating mental health concerns into their daily services, operations and practices. This paper explored the librarians' proactive role in supporting students' mental health at universities. The paper used a systematic review methodology that evaluated secondary sources as guided by inclusion and exclusion criteria and the sampled documents reported thematically. Findings revealed that while librarians' role is critical in supporting student mental wellness, the absence of structured and proactive interventions limits their transformative impact. The limited involvement perpetuates despite the heightened cases of mental health challenges among university students. The paper recommends the heads of counselling services, to prioritize librarians' capacity building to discover information, collaborations and supportive ways they can contribute towards supporting mental health in universities. Sensitization and awareness programs for librarians organized by the counselling departments should precede the designated mental health library ambassador or champion, to catch a wider participation. Additionally, the university librarians, counsellors and university management should collaborate and partner in developing mental health best-practices and policies. Librarians should acquire information resources on mental health and create awareness on the same, to influence student work-life balance, and foster a healthier lifestyle.*

**(Key words:** librarian's role; library support; mental health; mental health support; depression)

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Mental health is a general state of well-being within a community, enabling them to be resilient, withstand stressors, contribute meaningfully to society, and productively (de Leon, 2025). Student mental health is showcased by the display of positive mood, attitude, self-love, satisfaction with self, cherishing of relationships and a sense of resilience when faced by hardships (Merga, 2020). Student mental well-being revolves around social, emotional, psychosocial and psychological perspectives (Alabi, 2025). Ideally, the overall well-being of individuals shapes their work-life balance, interactions with other people, and perceptions towards life affairs. Overall, when a student is well, there has to be a struck balance between their physical, mental, emotional and social interactions.

Mental health has been declared a global issue in the 21st century, and Lipson et al. (2022) stress that in colleges, half of the student population shows signs of mental illnesses. Worldwide, people aged 12-25 years have been reported to be mostly affected; therefore, university students are implicated (Merga, 2020). While the rates of poor mental health among students are increasing significantly, the most prevalent symptoms present by depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety and stress (Freibott et al., 2022). Additionally, students have shown impulsive disorders such as eating, sleeping, personalities, obsession, aggression, withdrawal and compulsion (Peoples et al., 2023). Chenevey (2023) links increased mental health challenges among university students to financial difficulties, academic pressure, inadequate coping mechanisms, social isolation, relationships and examination stress.

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The growing concerns of mental disorders among students have largely affected their quality of life (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). Poor well-being is also a hindrance to country's economic development, students' career actualization and their academic performance (Johnson, 2023). At a personal level, it is the leading cause of behavioural changes, such as absenteeism, presenteeism, disengagement and withdrawal (Chenevey, 2023). University libraries and librarians when maximally utilized, they can inspire lifestyle changes among the university community. However, many existing library initiatives—though valuable, remain underutilized and less impactful due to limited awareness (Hassan et al., 2023). This reflects a gap: the under-exploitation of library services to improve student mental health in Kenya.

During and after COVID-19 pandemic, libraries have transformed to virtual services (Jibril et al., 2024). Globally, the library vision and services have been redefined; to not only offer information resources but also a safe, inclusive and quiet environment effective for cooling down (Mason, 2024). The existence of the library has always been to ensure the needs of the community are met and when this is exploited, services can be expanded to address mental well-being (Mason, 2024). Libraries have internet connectivity and spaces that attract students' visits on a daily basis (de Leon, 2025). These avenues uniquely position them to render services that not only support teaching, research and learning but also opportunities for relaxation, awareness, socializing and healing. Thus, maximizing these, will contribute towards promoting students' mental health.

Students' mental health in universities is a great concern owing the increased rate of anxiety and depression disorders (WHO, 2024). Libraries, once avenues for information sharing, have broadened their roles to meet emotional needs of its users. Librarians are trusted university community that interact with students on a daily basis –uniquely positioning them to support students' well-being (Kankam et al., 2021). Ideally, the resources, the training and awareness, daily interaction with patrons and unique spaces; is, expected to provide a supportive environment for information, relaxation, meditation, interaction and awareness- contributing to holistic well-being (Rahimi et al., 2022).

In practice, however, it is not clearly known how librarians can largely contribute in supporting mental health (Igbिनovia & Ejiroghene, 2023). Their potential role is, less explored and defined (Alabi, 2025). Universities have traditionally depended on counselling centres to help students manoeuvre relationship, academic, financial, social and emotional stress (Peoples

et al., 2023). Academic librarians have passive understanding of the different initiatives they can undertake; services and resources can offer and partnerships to keep to improve patrons' well-being (Alabi, 2025).

Mental health challenges among university students, if not addressed, will continue to hinder their academic performance. This also affects the nation's quality of life and economic development (WHO, 2024) and can even lead to death if solutions are not found. Global and regional research shows growing interest among librarians in this subject; however, the roles of librarians remain unclear (Alabi, 2025; Chenevey, 2023; Johnson, 2023). Integrating mental health concerns into their daily services, operations, and practices is also unclear. The missed opportunity for librarians to contribute meaningfully to the community underpinned the development of this paper.

This paper explored how librarians' roles could be reshaped to support students' mental health at universities in Kenya and recommended best practices for sustaining student quality of life. The objective was to assess how librarians' roles could be reshaped to proactively support students' mental health at universities in Kenya.

### ***Realigning librarians' responsibilities to support mental health***

The librarianship profession is experiencing rapid advancements and evolving service provision from human-mediated services to peer-driven, collaborative, technology-driven approaches that address patrons' holistic needs and cultural humility (Luvalle, 2025). Reshaping of librarians' roles refers to the strategic realignment or shift of academic librarians' responsibilities from traditional information resources managers to active facilitators and supporters for therapeutic, inclusive environments and social welfare to foster the mental wellness of the student population. This evolving, proactive role includes creating therapeutic landscapes, providing proactive information services or library bibliotherapy, offering collaborative and embedded support, leading digital outreach initiatives, developing and implementing crisis-response policies, and providing professional training in library empathy. (Ibda et al., 2023).

While direct literature on the proactive, supportive roles of academic librarians in student mental wellness is growing, analogous research by Bristi et al. (2025), Grimes (2024), and Dias et al. (2024) clarified that librarians need to embrace professional development to group empathetic service provision for patrons.

Institutional encouragement through supportive policies has also enabled librarians in the United Kingdom to assume proactive roles in mental health advocacy.

However, Hughes et al. (2024) and Tsekea and Chigwada (2020) in Africa show that Zimbabweans report moderate levels of librarians' competence in providing mental health support, including social media use, virtual referrals to counseling services, and specialized information resources. However, the lack of frameworks and policies guiding their integration limits their ethical participation in mental health promotion among the student community.

In Kenya, studies on mental health document high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among university students, requiring multi-sector responses, which creates a clear rationale for non-clinical and non-counselor intervention, keeping librarians responsible (Memiah et al., 2022). The high level of mental health issues is compounded by limited mental health infrastructure, paucity of dedicated mental health policies, and tough economic times (Kwaboah et al., 2023).

This study was underpinned by Whole Person Librarianship theory, also referred to as whole community librarianship theory, propagated by Zettervall and Nienow in 2019. The theory argues that librarians ought to expand their services beyond traditional information service provision to holistic care and social needs for patrons. The model describes a whole-person approach as a commitment to supporting education and encouraging librarians to practice empathy, social service, cultural humility, and support for vulnerable individuals. The whole person librarianship theory informs the critical role of librarians in supporting mental health culture through initiatives like bibliotherapy, certification in mental health first aid, advocating for trauma-informed services, and proactive intermediaries as active wellness allies.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The paper used a systematic review methodology, enabling the researcher to synthesize existing published literature on the topic. The choice of this research methodology was justified by its ability to enable the research to conduct a thorough and comprehensive literature search, delineate clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, conduct systematic data extraction and analysis, quality appraisal, and synthesis of critical findings (Sigh & Sighn, 2022; Wang et al., 2025). Other advantages that guided the preference for this methodology are thoroughness, transparency, research quality, and its ability to inform best practice and policies (Klang et al.,

2023). A documentary analysis of published sources covering the period 2020 to 2026 was carried out. The 2020-2026 range was scientifically justified by the need for timely solutions to the problem investigated, as supported by Burns and Green (2019). Moreover, the evolution and diversification of librarian roles; the recent documentation of trauma-informed librarianship; stigma among academic libraries; and the necessity to capture technology-advanced solutions that show the innovativeness of librarian-led mental health interventions informed the choice of the period under review. The inclusion criteria included published resources covering diverse library practices; librarians' roles; reinventing academic library roles; librarians as contributors of wellness in universities; library care; pedagogy and professional scope in the age of mental health crisis; and how libraries support student well-being. Exclusion criteria excluded secondary sources that assessed the effectiveness of school libraries in mental health management, librarians' roles in children aged 4-17's mental health, library users' perspectives on mental health resources, and support provided by librarians. The researcher obtained reports from AJOL, ProQuest, Springer, SAGE, and Google Scholar databases, where they downloaded theses and dissertations, journal articles, and conference proceedings. The researcher downloaded 119 documents from the initial search of the stated databases. Titles and abstracts of full-text documents, as per the inclusion/exclusion criteria, were screened for full-text analysis and review. Phrase search and Boolean search logic were applied to filter the relevant documents. A total of 39 documents were reviewed to identify patterns, themes, and key insights.

Because the paper relied on secondary data to report the findings, no direct human or animal participation occurred during data collection. This research adhered to ethical standards such as citing the sources using APA 7th edition, fair reporting, transparency, and not misrepresenting the results.

## III. STUDY RESULTS

The researcher conducted a systematic analysis of the sampled documents and reported the findings based on specified themes. These included library programs; information resources; bibliotherapy; space reclamation; virtual library services; redesigning library spaces; collaboration and partnerships; holistic university mental health approach policies; and trauma-informed librarianship and the inclusion of mental health in the library and information science curriculum. Recognizing the scarcity of local secondary sources, the study presented global and African research evidence

separately, based on the identified themes, to enable the researcher to synthesize information on theoretical foundations that informed practical action points for librarians in Kenya.

### ***Global librarians' initiatives in supporting students' mental health***

Literature specifically in the developed nations demonstrates that libraries are increasingly shifting their focus to offering discipline-agnostic services and spaces for students to meet emotional needs (Chenevey, 2023). Informed by the ever-increasing rates of suicidal ideation, stress, and anxiety disorders, a "whole-university" approach to supporting mental health on campus has grown more cognizant since 2021, as students' needs outpace counselling centre capacities (Brewster et al., 2023). Reports on how mental health has affected students' academic lives have broadened librarians' perspectives, views, potential, and leadership; pedagogies of care are slowly being integrated into teaching, literacy, and orientation meetings (Brewster et al., 2023). As mentioned above, academic librarians are becoming increasingly aware of student well-being issues and are programming to be more supportive and proactive (Brewster & Cox, 2023). The forthcoming sections offer deeper insights.

In the United States of America, collection development librarians at Colorado's Auraria Library and education and curriculum librarians from William Paterson University conducted a webinar to discuss the library programs that support mental health. Among them is bibliotherapy, where librarians provide information resources to students and offer guidance to access them on the library website (Clarivate, 2023). Librarians also do this by providing a variety of short genres—poetry, fiction, and nonfiction—that address the psychological, emotional, and social challenges students face (Tukhareli, 2024). Tukhareli (2024) also reported that shared and group reading of bibliotherapy resources helps students cope with anxiety, worry, loneliness, and isolation.

Space reclamation to support student mental well-being is also implemented. This involves reclaiming storage spaces in the libraries and converting them into relaxation rooms (Clarivate, 2023). Such rooms are equipped with play-based resources such as Legos, puzzles, and chess to help patrons decompress (Chenevey, 2023). Some libraries in North Carolina are expanding relaxation spaces through inclusive services (Lenstra & Roberts, 2023). Libraries are incorporating mindfulness sessions, yoga classes, peer support groups, and meditation sessions into their spaces to support community well-being (Tukhareli, 2024). Moreover, the Markham Public

Library has implemented wellness-focused redesigns, including massage chairs, calming rooms and board game corners to encourage leisure, connection and self-care (Wilson et al., 2023).

To some extent, in high-stress academic landscapes, librarians have initiated special programs to support the well-being of the university community (Lenstra & Roberts, 2023). School librarians are introducing de-stressing weeks and therapy pet events to help patrons manage their unique pressures (De Leon, 2024). De Leon (2024) explains that the University of Santo Tomas library implemented a holistic health-care program where patrons access self-help resources, stress-management activities, and social-interaction programs. Librarians also started mental health-related book clubs that bring readers together to discuss literature, helping them develop coping strategies and build resilience. For example, the Penn State Brandywine campus has a running club to support international students' well-being (Brewster, 2023). During exam periods, academic librarians in New Jersey host stress-relief workshops to support students' emotional stability (Kranich, 2021).

Post the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health among the youth in the US and Canada was declared a crisis owing to a third of the university population suffering mental illnesses (Bauman & Rivers, 2023). For this reason, librarians took advantage of e-learning to provide virtual library services (Cao et al., 2023). Digital health initiatives have been started off where: physical mental health resources are digitized and shared through the library websites to facilitate access. In China, Cao et al. (2023) explained that mental health applications, online therapy sessions, and workshops, hosting webinars with healthcare professionals, were integrated with library services to expand their visibility and usability. Users who virtually accessed library e-resources came across these services asynchronously and anonymously hence, getting help. Wang and Zhang (2021) elaborate that librarians have also supported mental health by developing digital resource guides, integrating virtual care into their catalogues, and launching telehealth care partnerships.

It is also worth noting that, some libraries have embedded quick links to redirect patrons to counselling services. Resource investments to install mental health hotlines in the library websites was reported by Jones and Wexler (2023). For students who shy away from seeking help due to fear of identity disclosure, chat services have been integrated with the ask a librarian link (Johnson, 2023). Those that fear to seek help in person, have also found relieve as a result of the infiltration of artificial

intelligence. AI driven mental chatbots provide information seekers with immediate professional advice and linkages to direct them to counsellors when their needs are not adequately met (Johnson, 2023).

Redesigning library spaces has also been utilized as a key strategy to support mental health in libraries. Research by Aykanian et al. (2020) shows that spatial provisions such as access to natural light, quiet reading areas, security sensors, and library systems provide users with psychological safety. User-centred designs of study sections and reading areas, where users can access wellness stations, flexible seating, and napping pods, are among the adjustments that reflect librarians' proactive attention to emotional and mental well-being (Feary et al., 2025). Access to such infrastructure for free has made libraries equalizers in democratizing health, emotional and physical care of patrons (Fleary et al., 2025).

Academic librarians also support student mental health by partnering with mental health service providers (Suresh et al., 2025). Academic libraries, moreover, contribute actively by organizing trainings, webinars, workshops, public lectures, panel discussions, library dialogues, and exhibitions touching mental health-related topics (Lanier et al., 2022). When such programs are organized, student leaders and mental health library champions partner with the counselling department to ensure the programs' authority, impact, and success (Lanier et al., 2022). Many librarians appoint mental health representative champions who receive training in wellness first aid, hence enabling them to easily recognize distressed students and guide them on where to get professional help (Suresh et al., 2025). This proactive approach strengthens the library's role as a supportive space for student well-being.

In Australia, advances in response to mental health crisis among college students are evident. The Lancaster University integrated a whole university approach policy to address mental-health crisis (Brewster & Coz, 2023). The adoption of the policy ensure each department has a shared responsibility and obligation to undertake towards achieving holistic well-being of students within the university. The Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education promotes prevention mechanisms to mental illnesses rather than treating and managing occurrences (Ryan et al., 2023). Other proactive roles noticed among libraries is promoting artwork exhibitions; one which was conducted in Marshall University Libraries to condemn the shame that made student shy off from seeking counselling services (Ryan et al., 2023). Michigan State University supports the student communities through works of charity and compassion —giving them tea and

food for sustainability during the examination week. These cases illustrate the changing roles of librarians, in the 21st century, calling librarians to action in supporting and advancing mental health.

In Asia, mental health of college students has been declared a public health issue. Respective of this, resources and counselling services constraints are evident (Shibuya et al., 2025). The establishment of counselling services although available, is not profound enough (Shibuya et al., 2025). In Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar, suicidality, eating disorders and anxiety among students are among the key issues that have pressed librarians to collaborate with professionals to ensure they fulfil their mandate (Shibuya et al., 2025). Librarians have leveraged plays to support health of their patronage (Dessauvagie et al., 2022). Some of the common plays include video game consoles and kinetic materials like Legos and play-Doh. Moreover, art supplies that enable students to compete in coloring and crafting are available on a monthly basis (Nance, 2022). Research by Merga (2022) highlights how librarians specialized in information literacy are now proactively building students' mental health literacy to prevent them from misinformation and fake news about trends and social issues. These unique approaches underscore how librarians in academic institutions are acting to the call to support student well-being

### ***Librarians' roles in supporting students' mental health in Africa***

In African countries, youth pursuing higher education face demanding curricula, financial pressures, and parents' high expectations; as a result, mental health is often affected (Jibril et al., 2024). The need to de-stress among higher education learners is a pressing concern in Africa, given their contribution to innovation and economic development. Librarians play a pivotal role in fostering mental health and supporting teaching, learning, and research (Jibril et al., 2025). Across the continent, library services, information resources, and tangible infrastructure support mental health (Shatona, 2025). Library spaces offer quiet places for reading and opportunities for socializing, which is therapeutic.

In Namibia, the University of Namibia is shifting from its traditional role of resource management to a haven for mental wellness. While librarians conduct their professional roles, trauma-informed librarianship is taking root informed by the quest for skills and competencies by librarians to conduct mental health first aid (Ashilungu & Shuumbili, 2025). Literature reviewed by Shatona (2025) underscores that librarians are increasingly getting engaged in making referrals and

developing programs such as bibliotherapy. Documented research recommends incorporating mental health first aid into the librarian training curriculum (Ashilungu & Shuumbili, 2025). The Namibia University of Science and Technology and the International University of Management are in the process of instituting support frameworks—counselling, mental health awareness, and crisis intervention initiatives to help students cope with mental issues (Mbongo & Sheyapo, 2024). Existing initiatives also show how librarians' roles are evolving to better meet community and health needs holistically.

In Zambia, academic libraries play leadership, hosting, and participative roles in supporting mental health issues (Daka et al., 2022). Zambian universities, especially the University of Zambia, have invested in mental health literacy, where literacy training, campaigns, talks, seminars, bibliotherapy, and reference and selective dissemination of information services initiatives take place.

In Nigeria, academic libraries aim to support student mental health by providing conducive library spaces, inclusive services and making health information easily accessible (Awala-Ale & Idofemu, 2021). Other initiatives include enhancing virtual health support, encouraging work-life balance, and conducting mental health awareness programs (Awala-Ale & Idofemu, 2021). However, libraries in Nigeria are ineffective in promoting mental health of undergraduate students due to lack of inclusive policies (Adeyeye & Aramide, 2021). Other issues include resource and budgetary constraints, which limit libraries' ability to develop and deliver noteworthy services that support mental health (Adeyeye & Aramide, 2021).

In Uganda, Kankam and Baffour (2021) argued that librarians play a key role in promoting mental health in the university community. Ugandan libraries are investing heavily in mental health information literacy. Building capacity to recognize help-seeking, directing professional help and information retrieval have been emphasized. Access to accurate health information by emphasizing user studies training—to enable library users to access and retrieve quality information on their own is among the librarians leading initiatives.

### ***Librarians' roles in supporting students' mental health in Kenya***

In Kenya, the librarian's role in supporting student mental health among universities is not explored. Existing literature identifies the high prevalence (30.9%) of mental health among students pursuing higher education (Mugotitsa et al., 2025). Otieno et al. (2024) study at the

Technical University of Mombasa reported 57.7% of the university students experiencing anxiety and depression, with the year four students being adversely affected. The main way to manage this is through counseling services (Otieno et al., 2024).

One study related to mental health and libraries focuses on librarians' mental health challenges (Kibandi, 2025). Kibandi (2025) presented that workplace stressors such as dealing with difficult patrons, high workloads, working long hours, limited knowledge to deliver required services, limited resources, and family issues expose librarians to burnout, depression, and stress. Kibandi (2025) noted that work-life balance, seeking professional counseling, and mental health awareness are self-care strategies librarians need to use. Librarians are also encouraged to join library associations and make use of mental health applications such as Calm to track their mental well-being.

The Waithaka Community Library collaborates with Nairobi City County and AMREF Health Africa (Kenya); to not only provide access to information resources but also promote inspiration, learning, empowerment, information exchange and protection (Grace Impact, 2023). The Dagoreti community benefits through workshops, study groups, play games, documentary films and live music events (Grace Impact, 2023). However, the linkage on how these activities support mental health was not established. The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) report presented that libraries offer information to user community to meet important needs such as health and wellness (65%), underscoring libraries contribution.

### ***Key themes and observation challenges from the above experiences***

The support for student mental health at universities is a global outcry requiring the counselling departments within universities to receive support from other divisions—in particular the library (Chenevey, 2023; Hassan et al., 2023). Academic libraries and librarians support student mental health through mental health information literacy and education, advocacy, use of bibliotherapy and redesigning library spaces. They can also give their support by implementing digital mental health initiatives, inclusive programmes, partnering and collaborating with counselling stakeholders, developing and implementing whole university approach to mental health policy and using library mental health champions.

However, gaps persist in African universities due to lack of comprehensive policies for supporting holistic approach to mental health management (Adeyeye & Aramide, 2021). Librarians also struggle with budgetary,

resource and infrastructural constraints, staff competencies and weak institutional frameworks (Daka et al., 2022; Shatona, 2025). In Kenya, the area is very deplorable, there is no formal recognition of this emerging trend of library call to support for mental health despite, being ranked the fifth in Africa for elevated depression cases by WHO in 2017; indicating she faces a significant mental health crisis (Edgerton University, 2025).

Also, at universities in Kenya, librarians' preparedness is a key structural weakness that is not addressed apart from Egerton University (2025) citing limited information resources and other materials constraints. Existing research elaborate that universities in Kenya extensively rely on the counselling departments to manage student mental needs (Chuka University, 2025). A recurring challenge across the literature is awareness, readiness and mental health competencies, limiting staff from taking up mental health calls (Mbongo & Sheyapo, 2024; Jibril et al., 2025). Due to lack of published research findings in Kenya, it is not clearly known how librarians can largely proactively contribute to supporting mental health call (Alabi, 2025). Globally, librarians have adopted training in mental health—, partnerships and collaboration with mental health professionals, are ambassadors,—yet comprehensive integration into mental health policies and framework, is lacking. Extending advocacy in Kenya through creating awareness to librarians on their supporting roles, their partnerships and collaboration with counselling and redesigning library services and resources would further amplify the management of student mental health.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Literature states emphatically that, librarians support for student mental health in universities spans global and regional but scantily underexplored in Kenyan contexts. The roles academic librarians contribute to support mental health of students in universities are: through bibliotherapy; storage space reclamation to accommodate relaxation; offering inclusive services to special groups; programs such as de-stressing weeks; mental health book clubs; collaborative advocacy and embedding quick links to counselling services. Also, access to natural light, quiet reading areas, security sensors and systems in the library provide psychological safety to users. Librarians also partner and collaborate with service providers; integrating a whole university approach policy to address mental-health crisis; trauma-informed librarianship; mental health first aid into the librarian training curriculum and investing heavily in mental health

information literacy. However, lack of an inclusive policy mandating them to proactively support mental health, lack of capacity by librarians to recognize mental needs and budgetary constraints, limit their support. A key gap lies in the scantiness of literature in Kenya on how librarians support student mental health. Consequently, mental health advocacy by academic libraries remains insufficiently embedded.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic librarians have potential beyond their traditional roles to support student mental well-being; therefore, capacity-building to identify how they can contribute to mental health support in universities is recommended. University librarians, counselling departments, and university management should initiate and strengthen collaborative initiatives to ensure impactful mental health programs. Sensitization forums and awareness-raising for librarians should be strengthened to exchange best practices, resources, strategies, and the roles they can play in supporting student mental health. University program leaders should integrate trauma-informed librarianship into the teaching curriculum to enable them to have basic knowledge of current issues such as mental health. Universities in Kenya should adopt a holistic university approach policy to address the mental health crisis rather than relying on counselling departments. The university librarian, with advice from the head of counselling services, should acquire mental health resources for student use, supporting healthier lifestyles. This has implications for policy reforms that formally recognize librarians as strategic partners in mental health support. Policies should mandate frameworks for structured collaboration among libraries, counselling departments, and university management; protocols for joint programs; integration of mental health first aid curricula; standards for librarians' training; and budgetary allocations to ensure adequate infrastructure and information resources. By embracing these recommendations, academic libraries can proactively leverage the potential they have to support student mental health.

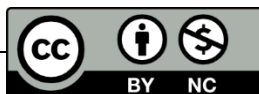
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