

Qualitative Inquiry on Existential Concerns and Well-Being among the Youth of Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia: Case Study of Addis Ababa University

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Abstract : Higher education is important for college students to develop their authentic identity by means of getting exposure to diverse ideas and experiences. However, current college students are not successfully achieving a satisfying sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, which often places them in a state of existential vacuum. Thus, this study uncovers the existential concerns of youth in higher education by means of assessing their view on meaningful life and integration of it as a guide into their lives and challenges faced in doing so. Data were procured from thirty undergraduate students of Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia via interview, naïve sketch method, and content analysis of selected magazines and newspapers. Data were analyzed using organization, immersion, generating themes, coding, offering interpretation as well as checking the data. Relationship, education, and belief were found to be main sources of meaning. But, many of the study participants failed to articulate their meaning in life explicitly and identified to be in a state of drifting. Moreover, hopelessness, economic problems and quality of training impinge their sense of meaning in life negatively. The content analysis principally embodied the youth in higher education as a group of people confronted with rafts of challenges such as debauchery, moral crisis, self-destructive behaviors and hankering for support and direction. Thus, crafting the asset-based approach and counseling services that will prepare the youth for the future and develop holistically in terms of body and mind are tremendously vital.

Keywords : higher education institutions; meaning in life; youth

Conference Title : ICMHW 2019 : International Conference on Mental Health and Wellness

Conference Location : Toronto, Canada

Conference Dates : July 18-19, 2019