

EDITED BY IDA FATIMAWATI ADI BADIOZAMAN,
VOON MUNG LING AND KIRAN DEEP SANDHU

WOMEN PRACTICING RESILIENCE, SELF-CARE AND WELLBEING IN ACADEMIA

International Stories from Lived Experience

Wellbeing and Self-care in Higher Education



Women Practicing Resilience, Self-care and Wellbeing in Academia

Through a lens of self-care and wellbeing, this book shares stories of struggle and success from a diverse range of women in academia.

Each story highlights how these women mitigated and overcame various barriers as part of their academic trajectory and provides practical strategies for maintaining self-care and wellbeing. Taken from lived experience, the autoethnographic narrative approach provides a deeper, personal understanding of the obstacles faced by women throughout an academic career and guidance on how these might be navigated in a way that avoids self-sacrificing.

This collection goes further to illustrate the ways that higher education institutions can be more accommodating of the needs of women.

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Wellbeing and Self-care in Higher Education

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**Edited by Ida Fatimawati Adi
Badiozaman, Voon Mung Ling and
Kiran deep Sandhu**

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A note from the series editor

Immediately after I sat down and began reading this volume, I was thrown into a deep empathetic response. With a rawness and vulnerability that was confronting, the words on the page from each of the authors in this volume resonate, are familiar. And with this vulnerability comes an invitation to “open yourself, contextualise that self in societal constructs and systems, co-learn, admit you do not know and be human” (Brantmeier, 2013, p. 2). As we negotiate ourselves as women within and across various contexts, we begin to interrupt what is and can be. We interrupt the “*uncaring neoliberal, competitive and individualising*” (Gravett et al., 2021, p. 1) notions of the higher education system, and embrace a “responsibility to one another [based on] mutual and spontaneous regard” (Noddings, 2012, p. 232). Noddings reminds us that when we engage with deep listening, care, self-care, kindness, compassion, and appreciation we emphasise a care ethics that illuminates the “difference between assumed needs and expressed needs” and “from this perspective, it is important not to confuse what the cared-for wants with that which we think [they] should want. We must listen, not just ‘tell’, assuming that we know what the other need” (Noddings, 2012, p. 773).

As women we write so powerfully about our lived experiences. We live, tell, retell, and relive our life stories, we continue to learn and understand as we construct narrative accounts (Caine et al., 2019; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). My vision for this book series is that we as authors and readers come together as a community learning with and from one another. By placing academic wellbeing and self-care at the heart of discussions around working in higher education, we are providing a narrative connection point for readers from a variety of backgrounds in academia. In this case the editors of this collection have curated 15 chapters from 21 authors located in nine different countries including Japan, Brunei, Pakistan, Malaysia, Australia, Canada, UK, and South Africa. Highlighted are the lived experiences. Honoured are the voices of our colleagues working in higher education. We are provided with an opportunity to connect deeply with and reflect upon a diverse range of strategies for how to put in place wellbeing and self-care approaches as an academic. By engaging this way, we begin to shift the rhetoric that self-care and wellbeing are selfish. Rather, we refocus, reconsider and

position self-care as worthy of our attention. We are invited to consider new ways of working and being.

Professor Narelle Lemon

Series Editor

Wellbeing and Self-care in Higher Education: Embracing Positive Solutions

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Gender inequalities in academia still persist, despite attempts to mitigate them. The genesis of the book came from wanting to capture the many voices of women in academia and the gendered challenges faced on daily basis. We wanted these voices to be heard and we wanted these voices to be understood.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the detailed and constructive comments from Narelle Lemon, for helping more authors turn their ideas into stories, and for the opportunity to realise our academic dreams. We could not have done this without the support of our family and loved ones. We want to thank these inspirational ladies for sharing their stories. May it inspire others to create a space for self-care and wellbeing.

Part I

**Women and the changing
academia**



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Chapter

Carving your destiny in academia as a “lecturer” and a “mother”

By Rethinasamy Soubakeavathi

ABSTRACT

Hidden within the single-word job title “lecturer” is a long list of multi-layered responsibilities. For a woman who is a lecturer, possibly added to this long list is the undefinable crucial “job” packaged into an oversimplified single word – “Mother.” In this autoethnography, the author provides a comprehensive view of a woman’s life in academia by illustrating how she navigates through the demanding responsibilities of a university lecturer and carves her destiny out of the academic world while endeavouring to be the best possible mother. The author shares the attractive opportunities and the real challenges faced while pursuing a PhD. This is followed by an illustration of the challenges experienced in holding major administrative positions and how a display of commitment increases visibility and bolsters research networking. This chapter also unfolds the secrets to maintaining career-life balance by developing the support system that enables a woman in academia to weave her career trajectory.