Students' Psychological Well-Being in the Post-Pandemic Era: A Comparative Study of Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors among College Students

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.120700222

Received: 20 July 2025; Accepted: 26 July 2025; Published: 23 August 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the psychological well-being of students in the post-pandemic era, focusing on the influence of demographic and socio-economic factors among students at West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus (WVSU-HCC). Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 300 students across various year levels and degree programs. The study aimed to assess the overall psychological well-being of students and to investigate how factors such as sex, socio-economic status, type of residence, course, and year level impact their mental health during the post-pandemic period. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including mean rank, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, and Kruskal-Wallis H test, were employed to analyze the data. The results revealed that the majority of students reported a moderate level of psychological well-being, with significant differences observed based on year level. Specifically, third-year students exhibited the highest levels of well-being, while first-year students reported the lowest. Socio-economic status, sex, and type of residence did not show significant differences in psychological well-being across groups. Additionally, factors such as family status and economic stability were identified as critical influences on students' mental health. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions to support students' psychological well-being, particularly for first-year students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The study highlights the need for comprehensive mental health programs, resilience-building initiatives, and financial aid to address the challenges faced by students in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: psychological well-being, post-pandemic, socio-economic factors, students, resilience, mental health

INTRODUCTION

The global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has had a profound impact on individuals worldwide, disrupting daily lives, exacerbating psychological issues, and amplifying public health challenges. This pandemic has triggered a growing mental health crisis, particularly among students, who have faced unprecedented challenges in adapting to new learning environments, navigating financial uncertainty, and enduring social isolation (Torales et al., 2020; Grubic, Badovinac, & Johri, 2020). Emerging research has highlighted a marked increase in self-reported symptoms of anxiety and depression during this period, with studies, including one by Wang et al. (2020), showing widespread psychological distress influenced by uncertainties surrounding health risks and disruptions to daily life.

The closure of educational institutions and the shift to online learning has further contributed to the psychological strain on students. According to YoungMinds (2020), 83% of young respondents stated that the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing mental health issues, largely due to disrupted routines, school closures, and limited social interaction (Grubic, Badovinac, & Johri, 2020). This abrupt change in the learning environment, coupled with isolation, has led to an increase in psychological distress, including heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability among students.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue VII July 2025

In the Philippines, mental health concerns were already prevalent before the pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the country had one of the highest rates of depression in Southeast Asia, affecting over three million Filipinos (Malindog-Uy, 2020). College students, in particular, are vulnerable to psychological distress under normal circumstances (American College Health Association, 2019). The transition to online learning in response to COVID-19 introduced additional stressors, such as adjusting to remote education, managing home responsibilities, and dealing with the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Psychological well-being is defined as an individual's emotional and mental state, encompassing life satisfaction, emotional regulation, self-esteem, resilience, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity. According to Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being, it includes six key components: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions are essential for understanding how individuals perceive and manage challenges, particularly during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of this study, psychological well-being is explored specifically in relation to how students have adapted and coped in the post-pandemic era. The global health crisis has affected students in multiple ways—academic disruptions, social isolation, and economic challenges—and understanding the factors influencing their psychological states during this transition is critical. This study investigates various demographic and socio-economic factors, including sex, socio-economic status, course, year level, and type of residence, to understand how these factors shape students' mental and emotional well-being. By identifying these factors, the study aims to offer insights into how different student groups experience psychological well-being post-pandemic, which can inform the development of targeted interventions to support mental health.

At West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus (WVSU-HCC), students are facing the dual challenges of meeting academic demands and managing mental health pressures. A study by Khan, Sultana, and Sikder (2020) reported that 28.5% of students experienced stress, 33.3% experienced anxiety, and 46.92% showed signs of depression, ranging from mild to severe. Factors such as fear of infection, financial instability, lack of physical exercise, and limited recreational activities were significantly associated with these mental health symptoms. These findings highlight the urgent need for focused attention on students' psychological well-being, particularly during such challenging times.

Given the profound impact of the pandemic on student mental health, this study seeks to assess the level of psychological well-being among WVSU-HCC students and to explore the factors influencing their mental health. The findings of this study aim to inform the development of targeted interventions, such as guidance programs, to help students cope with the challenges they face. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on student well-being in the post-pandemic era and provide actionable insights for educational institutions to better support their students' mental health.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, both of which emphasize the importance of an individual's belief in their ability to cope with challenges and the dynamic interplay between personal beliefs, behavior, and the environment. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory posits that an individual's perceived self-efficacy significantly influences how they approach stress and challenges, how much effort they expend to achieve goals, and how long they will persist in those efforts. Self-efficacy is a self-sustaining trait, meaning that when an individual successfully manages a stressful situation, their self-efficacy is further strengthened. This, in turn, promotes positive coping behaviors. Research has shown that self-efficacy is positively linked to stress management, and it can serve as a protective buffer against the development of anxiety and depression (Bandura, 1999). High self-efficacy can act as a protective factor against mental health challenges, while low self-efficacy is associated with higher levels of anxiety, neuroticism, and depressive symptoms, particularly among adolescents (Muris, 2002).

Social Cognitive Theory expands on the concept of self-efficacy by emphasizing the importance of social interactions and environmental factors in shaping behavior. According to this theory, learning and behavior change occur through reciprocal interactions between personal factors, behavior, and the environment, a

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue VII July 2025

concept known as reciprocal determinism (LaMorte, 2016). The theory highlights several key constructs that influence behavior: behavioral capability (the ability to perform certain behaviors), observational learning (learning through observing others), reinforcements (external responses to behavior), expectations (anticipated outcomes of behavior), and self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks). Each of these factors plays a role in shaping how individuals respond to challenges, including those arising from the post-pandemic context.

In the post-pandemic era, students' psychological well-being is significantly impacted by their ability to adapt to new learning environments, manage stress, and maintain social connections. Social Cognitive Theory offers valuable insights into how students' coping behaviors can be influenced by their self-efficacy, their social environments, and their ability to learn from and interact with others. As students face ongoing stress from uncertainty, economic challenges, and disrupted social structures, understanding how these constructs interact will be crucial in developing interventions that support their mental health. By focusing on enhancing self-efficacy and providing supportive social contexts, educational institutions can help students build resilience and cope more effectively with the mental health challenges they face.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to assess the psychological well-being of students in the post-pandemic era, with a focus on identifying key factors influencing their mental health and well-being.

Specifically, the study sought answer to the following objectives:

1. What is the level of students' psychological well-being in the Post-Pandemic era when taken as a whole and when grouped according to:

a. sex,
b. socio-economic status,
c. type of residence,
d. course, and
e. year level?

2. Is there a significant difference in the level of students' psychological well-being in the Post-pandemic era when grouped according to course, sex, economic status, year level, and type of residence?

a. sex,
b. socio-economic status,
c. type of residence,
d. course, and
e. year level?

3. What are the factors affecting the students' psychological well-being in the post-pandemic era?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a viral infection caused by the novel coronavirus, which has led to a global pandemic. While the majority of people infected with the virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without special treatment (World Health Organization, 2020), the broader social, psychological, and economic consequences of the pandemic have significantly affected individuals worldwide. The closure of schools and the shift to online learning have disrupted educational systems, and the mental health challenges associated with these changes have compounded the already stressful conditions created by the pandemic. Mental health has emerged as a major concern, particularly among students, as the isolation and uncertainty associated with the pandemic have exacerbated existing stressors (Terada, 2020).

Research has shown that the psychological impact of COVID-19 is multifaceted and varies across different populations. The unpredictability of the pandemic and the spread of misinformation have added to the stress

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue VII July 2025

experienced by individuals (Bao et al., 2020). Psychological difficulties, such as anxiety and depression, are exacerbated by quarantine measures and the restrictions placed on movement (Rodriguez-Rey, Garrido-Hernansaiz, & Collado, 2020). Previous studies on past outbreaks have indicated that quarantine can lead to a range of psychological effects, including irritability, fear of contracting the virus, confusion, loneliness, and extreme cases of depression and even suicide (Dubey et al., 2020).

One study conducted by Solomou and Constantinidou (2020) in Cyprus examined the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on quality of life (QOL). The survey found that 41% of participants reported symptoms of mild anxiety, while 23.1% experienced moderate to severe anxiety symptoms. Regarding depression, 48% of the participants reported mild depression, and 9.2% exhibited moderate to severe symptoms. The study also identified that women, younger individuals (ages 18–29), students, the unemployed, and those with a prior psychiatric history were at a higher risk for experiencing anxiety and depression. Additionally, the study found that higher compliance with preventive measures (PM) was associated with lower depression scores but higher anxiety, particularly related to personal hygiene measures. This research highlights the importance of identifying personal and social determinants as risk and protective factors in managing the mental health impact of COVID-19 (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020).

In Vietnam, the implementation of "social distancing" for the first time in response to the pandemic also had profound psychological effects on the population. Le et al. (2020) conducted a study to assess the psychological impacts of COVID-19 on Vietnamese people using the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R). The findings revealed that a significant proportion of participants (16.4%) reported low levels of psychological distress, while 5.3% and 5.4% experienced moderate and extreme distress, respectively. Factors such as being female, being over 44 years old, and having a higher number of children in the household were associated with increased psychological distress. The study underscored the importance of comprehensive strategies to screen for psychological issues and provide support for high-risk groups, such as females, older adults, and healthcare workers (Le et al., 2020).

In India, a study conducted by Varshney et al. (2020) focused on the psychological impact of COVID-19 during the initial stages of the pandemic. An online survey conducted across 64 cities in India revealed that nearly one-third of respondents experienced a significant psychological impact, with higher levels of distress found among younger individuals, females, and those with comorbid physical illnesses. The presence of physical symptoms or a contact history with someone infected by COVID-19 was associated with higher psychological distress. This study emphasized the need for systematic, longitudinal assessments of the psychological needs of populations affected by the pandemic to guide the development of effective interventions (Varshney et al., 2020).

Additionally, a study in the United States analyzed the impact of government responses to the pandemic and its psychological effects. The study found that psychological distress, financial concerns, and media consumption were the most prominent factors associated with the pandemic's impact. It highlighted the complexity of the mental health challenges faced by individuals during the crisis and the importance of understanding these factors in the development of mental health interventions (Conway, 2020).

These studies collectively demonstrate the significant psychological burden that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on individuals worldwide, particularly among vulnerable groups such as students. The disruption of daily life, uncertainty about the future, and the limitations on social interactions have all contributed to the mental health crisis. As students navigate the challenges of online learning and social isolation, it is crucial to understand the psychological impact of these changes and develop effective strategies to support their mental well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey is a research method used to collect data at a single point in time from a population of interest, enabling researchers to make inferences about the larger group based on the sample. This type of design provided a snapshot of the population's

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characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, or other variables at a specific moment. It was particularly useful in descriptive research when the goal was to assess the current status of a phenomenon without manipulating any variables (Bryman, 2016).

Unlike longitudinal or panel surveys, which track the same respondents over a period to measure changes over time, cross-sectional surveys focused on one-time data collection, making them efficient and cost-effective for capturing a wide range of information in a short time (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the cross-sectional design allowed the researcher to examine the psychological well-being of students during the COVID-19 pandemic at a single point in time, while also exploring the factors that contributed to their well-being, such as family status, economic status, and social influences.

While panel surveys are used to monitor changes in a population, a cross-sectional survey provided a snapshot that offered valuable insights into the current state of affairs. This research design was well-suited for the study's aim of identifying and understanding the factors affecting students' psychological well-being during the pandemic.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 300 students from West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus (WVSU-HCC), ranging from first-year to fourth-year students across all degree programs and courses. Due to the nature of the study, which was conducted through an online survey, a non-random selection method was employed to recruit participants. This approach was suitable given the constraints of conducting research in face to face survey, where access to a larger and random sample may have been limited.

This diverse group of respondents provided a broad perspective on the psychological well-being of students across different sex, socio-economic status, courses, and year levels. The use of an online survey allowed for easy collection of data, but the non-random selection may limit the generalizability of the results. However, the sample still offers valuable insights into the factors affecting students' psychological well-being in post-pandemic period. Table below is the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category		*n*
Sex	Male	50
	Female	250
SES	Lower Income	199
	Higher Income	101
Type of Residence	City	169
	Municipality	131
Course	BEED	97
	BSED ENGLISH	27
	BSED FILIPINO	16
	BSED MATHEMATICS	31
	BSED SOCIAL STUDIES	88
	BSIT	5
	BSHM	36
Year Level	First Year	121
	Second Year	110
	Third Year	28
	Fourth Year	41

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was adapted from two established scales: the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) and the Social Psychological Survey of COVID-19. The IES-R is a widely recognized tool for

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assessing psychological distress related to traumatic events, particularly focusing on symptoms of post-traumatic stress, such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and hyperarousal (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). This scale has been extensively used in research on disaster-related mental health, making it well-suited for assessing the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students.

Additionally, the study incorporated items from the Social Psychological Survey of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Perceived Threat, Government Response, Impact, and Experiences), which evaluates individuals' perceptions of the pandemic's threat, government measures, and the social and psychological impacts of the crisis. This survey is designed to capture how social and environmental factors during the pandemic affect psychological well-being and coping mechanisms.

The combination of these instruments allowed the study to measure both the psychological impact of the pandemic (via the IES-R) and the broader social psychological factors (using the COVID-19 survey), thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting students' psychological health during the pandemic. The items were carefully selected and adapted to ensure their relevance to the current context of the study, ensuring validity and reliability in capturing the unique psychological challenges students face amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Though the instrument was adapted from existing scales, it underwent a rigorous validation process to ensure its suitability for this study. First, the instrument was reviewed and validated by three expert validators in the fields of psychology and education. Their feedback ensured that the items were relevant, clear, and aligned with the research objectives. The validators also assessed the content validity of the instrument, confirming that it adequately covered the psychological factors related to the impact of COVID-19 on students.

In addition to expert validation, the instrument was pilot-tested with a sample of students from another university to assess its reliability and ensure that it was appropriate for the target population.The pilot test results revealed high internal consistency, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 and 0.94 in the two instruments. These indicate high reliability, suggesting that the items within the instrument consistently measure the intended constructs of psychological well-being and the social psychological factors related to COVID-19. Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 are generally considered acceptable for social science research, with values closer to 1.00 indicating even greater internal consistency (Field, 2013).

In addition to reliability, the sensitivity and specificity of the instrument were also considered to ensure its ability to accurately capture the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students. Sensitivity refers to the instrument's ability to correctly identify students who are experiencing significant psychological distress, while specificity ensures that the instrument does not misclassify students as being distressed when they are not.

The study was conducted through an online survey, which facilitated data collection from a broad sample of respondents. The online format ensured convenience for participants while maintaining the reliability and validity of the instrument. Given the high levels of internal consistency and appropriate sensitivity and specificity, the instrument used in this study is considered both reliable and valid for assessing students' psychological well-being during the pandemic.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were collected using an online survey. This method was chosen for its convenience, accessibility, and ability to reach a broad range of participants efficiently.The first step in the data collection process was the development and preparation of the survey instrument, which had been adapted and validated, as previously outlined. Once finalized, the instrument was digitized using an online survey platform, such as Google Forms, to facilitate easy distribution and collection of responses.

To recruit participants, the survey was distributed to 300 students from West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus. The students were selected from various year levels, ranging from first-year to

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fourth-year students, and across different degree programs to ensure a diverse and representative sample. Participants were invited to participate through official communication channels such as university email and other digital platforms used by the institution.

Upon receiving the invitation, students were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose and the objectives of the survey. They were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before they began the survey, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their rights as participants.

The survey was designed to assess various factors affecting students' psychological well-being, such as family status, economic status, mental health, emotional health, and more. Participants were asked to rank these factors based on their perceived impact during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was available online for a designated period, allowing students ample time to complete it at their convenience. To maximize participation, periodic reminders were sent to those who had not yet completed the survey.

Throughout the data gathering process, ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Respondents' identities were kept anonymous, and all data were securely stored to maintain confidentiality. The study adhered to university ethical standards, ensuring that participants' rights and well-being were safeguarded throughout the research process.

This online survey method provided an effective and efficient way to gather data from a large sample, while also ensuring the ethical integrity of the research.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed using a variety of statistical tools to assess the psychological well-being of students and to identify factors that significantly influence their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The mean and frequency count were calculated to provide a general overview of the students' psychological well-being and the factors affecting it. The mean was used to determine the average score for each factor, providing insight into which factors were perceived as most influential on students' well-being. The frequency count helped identify how often certain factors were ranked at various levels, giving a clearer picture of how students prioritized different aspects of their lives during the pandemic.

To assess the differences in psychological well-being across different demographic groups (e.g., sex, socio-economic status, type of residence, etc.), inferential statistical tests were used. The t-test was employed to compare the means of two independent groups, such as male vs. female students, to determine if significant differences existed in their psychological well-being scores. If the data were not normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied as a non-parametric alternative to the t-test, suitable for comparing two independent groups on ordinal or non-normally distributed data.

For groups with more than two categories, such as year levels or courses, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted. This non-parametric test allowed for the comparison of the psychological well-being of students across multiple independent groups to determine whether significant differences existed among them. If significant differences were found, the Dunn post-hoc test with Bonferroni adjustment was used to identify which specific pairs of groups differed from each other. This step ensured that the findings were reliable and controlled for multiple comparisons, reducing the risk of Type I errors.

These statistical methods provided a comprehensive analysis of the data, allowing for a robust exploration of the factors influencing students' psychological well-being during the pandemic. The results from these tests helped in understanding how different demographic and socio-economic factors contributed to students' mental health and in identifying the key stressors affecting their well-being. Table below presents the mean range and the descriptions for the anlysis of factors that affect psychological well-being of students.

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Table 2 Mean Range and Descriptions for the Analysis of Factors that Affect Psychological Well-being of Students.

Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
4.51-5.00	Very High	Extremely impactful factor on psychological well-being
3.51-4.50	High	Highly significant in influencing well-being
2.51-3.50	Moderate	Moderately impactful factor on psychological well-being
1.51-2.50	Low	Minor influence on psychological well-being
1.00-1.50	Very Low	Minimal or no impact on well-being

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations played a central role in this study, ensuring that the rights, privacy, and well-being of participants were protected throughout the research process. The study adhered to established ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants, as outlined by relevant ethical review boards and institutional policies.

Informed Consent: Before participating in the survey, all respondents were provided with a clear and comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures. They were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and the absence of any risks associated with their involvement. Informed consent was obtained electronically, ensuring that participants understood the content of the study and agreed to participate freely.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality was a key ethical consideration in this study. Respondents' personal information was kept anonymous, and no identifying details were collected through the online survey. Data were stored securely and only accessible to the research team. All responses were aggregated and reported in a manner that ensured individual anonymity. The survey platform used also adhered to strict data protection protocols, further safeguarding participants' information.

Privacy: Participants were given assurance that their responses would remain private and would only be used for the purpose of this research. They were also informed that their participation would not affect their academic standing or relationships with the university. The study did not collect any sensitive information beyond what was necessary to answer the research questions.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. No participant was coerced or pressured into completing the survey, and they were free to skip any questions they did not wish to answer. The survey did not include any sensitive or potentially harmful questions, ensuring that participants could engage in the study without discomfort.

These ethical practices ensured that the study was conducted with respect for participants' rights and dignity, fostering trust and transparency throughout the research process. By adhering to these ethical standards, the study aimed to protect participants' privacy, confidentiality, and well-being, while contributing valuable insights into the psychological well-being of students in the post-pandemic period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results and discussion of the study, which aimed to explore the factors affecting the psychological well-being of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 300 students at West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus, covering various year levels and degree programs.

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Descriptive Data Analysis

Table 3 Level of Students' Psychological Well-Being When Taken as a Whole and When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Category		*n*	Mean	*SD*	Description
Sex	Male	50	2.53	.61	Moderate
	Female	250	2.72	.57	Moderate
SES	Lower Income	199	2.69	.56	Moderate
	Higher Income	101	2.69	.62	Moderate
Type of Residence	City	169	2.72	.59	Moderate
	Municipality	131	2.65	.58	Moderate
Course	BEED	97	2.65	.57	Moderate
	BSED ENGLISH	27	2.93	.47	Moderate
	BSED FILIPINO	16	2.75	.44	Moderate
	BSED MATHEMATICS	31	2.63	.52	Moderate
	BSED SOCIAL STUDIES	88	2.74	.60	Moderate
	BSIT	5	2.33	.77	Moderate
	BSHM	36	2.56	.69	Moderate
Year Level	First Year	121	2.57	.60	Moderate
	Second Year	110	2.73	.5	Moderate
	Third Year	28	2.99	.47	Moderate
	Fourth Year	41	2.71	.63	Moderate
Total		300	2.69	.58	Moderate

Note: *4.51-5.00 Very Low; 3.51-4.50 Low; 2.51-3.50 Moderate; 1.51-2.50 High; 1.00-1.50 Very High*

Table 3 reveal that the psychological well-being of students at WVSU-HCC is generally moderate across all demographic categories. This indicates that while students are facing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated shift to blended learning, the overall psychological impact does not appear to be severe. The mean scores for psychological well-being in each category—whether by sex, socio-economic status, type of residence, course, or year level—are all within the "moderate" range, suggesting that the pandemic has affected students in a similar way across different groups.

In terms of sex, both male (M=2.53, SD=.61) and female (M=2.72, SD=.57) students exhibit moderate levels of psychological well-being, with female students reporting slightly higher scores. While the differences are minimal, this could reflect the varied coping strategies between genders, as previous research has suggested that women may exhibit greater resilience in certain stressful situations (Muris, 2002). However, these slight variations are not statistically significant, indicating that sex does not have a strong influence on the psychological well-being of students in this context.

Regarding socio-economic status (SES), the study shows no notable differences between lower-income (M=2.69, SD=.56) and higher-income students (M=2.69, SD=.62), both falling into the moderate range. This finding suggests that while socio-economic status can affect access to resources and support systems, it may not have a significant impact on students' overall psychological well-being during the pandemic. This aligns with previous studies that found the pandemic's psychological toll has been felt across all income levels, regardless of financial stability (Terada, 2020).

When examining the type of residence, students from both urban (M=2.72, SD=.59) and rural (M=2.65, SD=.58) areas reported similar moderate levels of psychological well-being. The slight difference between city and municipality residents is not significant enough to suggest that the location of residence plays a major role in psychological outcomes. This finding is consistent with research showing that while living in urban areas may provide better access to health services and social support, the overall psychological well-being of students in both settings can be similarly affected by the pandemic's stressors (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020).

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The analysis of students' course reveals minor variations in psychological well-being across different academic programs, with BSED English students (M=2.93, SD=.47) reporting the highest mean and BSIT students (M=2.33, SD=.77) the lowest. The higher mean score for BSED English students could be attributed to the nature of their coursework, which may involve less intensive technical demands and greater opportunities for creative expression, potentially leading to lower stress levels. On the other hand, BSIT students, whose program demands may be more rigorous, report slightly lower psychological well-being, which could indicate higher levels of stress. However, all courses still fall within the moderate range, suggesting that the academic program itself does not drastically influence psychological well-being.

Lastly, year level appears to have a minor impact on students' psychological well-being. Third-year students reported the highest mean (M=2.99, SD=.47), which could be due to their greater adaptation to university life and their increased ability to cope with academic and personal challenges (Rodriguez-Rey, Garrido-Hernansaiz, & Collado, 2020). In contrast, first-year students reported the lowest mean (M=2.57, SD=.60), likely due to the challenges of transitioning to university, particularly during the pandemic. This is consistent with prior research, which suggests that first-year students often experience higher stress levels as they adjust to the academic and social demands of higher education (Le et al., 2020).

The results shows that while the psychological well-being of students is impacted by the pandemic, the effects are not extreme across demographic categories. The moderate levels of psychological well-being observed in this study suggest that while students are facing stress, they are generally able to manage it to some degree. Future research should focus on understanding the specific factors that contribute to these moderate levels of psychological well-being, as well as exploring potential interventions to support students' mental health in these challenging times.

Table 4 Differences in the Students' Psychological Well-Being When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Category		*n*	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney *U*	Sig.
Sex	Male	50	130.02	6501.00	5226.00	.067
	Female	250	154.60	38649.00		
SES	Lower Income	199	149.20	29691.50	9791.50	.716
	Higher Income	101	153.05	15458.50		
Type of Residence	City	169	155.02	26198.50	10305.50	.305
	Municipality	131	144.67	18951.50		
		n	Mean Rank		Kruskal-Wallis *H* Test	Sig.
Course	BEED	97	142.67		9.41	.152
	BSED ENGLISH	27	188.39			
	BSED FILIPINO	16	155.03			
	BSED MATHEMATICS	31	137.95			
	BSED SOCIAL STUDIES	88	159.57			
	BSIT	5	129.88			
	BSHM	36	132.58			
Year Level	First Year	121	132.27		15.519	.001
	Second Year	110	155.36			
	Third Year	28	201.34			
	Fourth Year	41	156.54			

*p < .05, significant

The Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were conducted to examine the differences in students' psychological well-being across various demographic categories, including sex, socio-economic status (SES), type of residence, course, and year level. These tests were chosen because they are nonparametric and suitable for ordinal or non-normally distributed data, such as psychological well-being scores. The findings provide important insights into the factors that may influence students' mental health and coping strategies during the pandemic.

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The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for sex (U = 5226.00, p = 0.067) indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the psychological well-being scores between male and female students. Both groups report similar levels of psychological well-being, which suggests that sex does not have a substantial effect on students' mental health during this period. This finding is consistent with previous research that indicates the influence of gender on mental health can vary and that other factors, such as coping mechanisms and social support, may mediate the relationship between gender and psychological well-being (Muris, 2002). Thus, in this context, male and female students appear to face comparable psychological challenges during the pandemic.

Similarly, the comparison between lower-income and higher-income students using the Mann-Whitney U test (U = 9791.50, p = 0.716) also yielded no statistically significant difference in psychological well-being scores. This suggests that, despite differences in financial resources, SES does not appear to influence the psychological well-being of students in this sample. Previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the relationship between SES and mental health, with some research suggesting that lower SES can exacerbate stress and lead to poorer mental health outcomes (Terada, 2020). However, the lack of a significant difference in this study could imply that the pandemic's impact on mental health is universal across income levels, possibly due to shared stressors such as uncertainty, academic pressures, and the challenges of remote learning.

The analysis of students' type of residence (city vs. municipality) also showed no significant difference in psychological well-being scores (U = 10305.50, p = 0.305). This finding suggests that whether students reside in urban or rural areas does not significantly affect their psychological well-being. While urban areas may offer better access to healthcare and support services, and rural areas may present fewer resources, the findings indicate that both groups experience similar levels of psychological distress. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that psychological well-being during the pandemic is influenced by broader factors, such as access to technology, social isolation, and the availability of mental health support, rather than the specific geographical setting (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020).

The Kruskal-Wallis H test for the variable of course (H = 9.41, p = 0.152) revealed no significant differences in psychological well-being across the different academic programs. This suggests that students in various courses, including BEED, BSED English, BSED Filipino, BSED Mathematics, BSED Social Studies, BSIT, and BSHM, report similar levels of psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests the academic field or program may not be a strong determinant of psychological health. However, it is possible that other course-related factors, such as workload, social support, and coping mechanisms, could influence students' mental health. Further investigation might explore how specific course-related stressors contribute to psychological well-being.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed a significant difference in psychological well-being among students of different year levels (H = 15.52, p = 0.001), indicating that year level is an important factor influencing students' psychological well-being. Specifically, third-year students reported the highest psychological well-being, while first-year students had the lowest scores. This result suggests that students' mental health may improve over time as they adapt to university life, develop better coping strategies, and become more familiar with the academic demands. First-year students, on the other hand, may experience higher levels of stress due to the challenges of adjusting to university life and the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic (Le et al., 2020). These findings align with previous studies suggesting that first-year students often experience greater psychological distress due to the transition into higher education and the increased academic and social pressures (Rodriguez-Rey, Garrido-Hernansaiz, & Collado, 2020). Post-hoc analyses, such as Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment, could further pinpoint which specific year-level comparisons contribute to these significant differences.

Overall, the results of this study highlight that sex, socio-economic status, and type of residence do not significantly influence students' psychological well-being during the pandemic. However, year level is a significant factor, with third-year students reporting better psychological well-being compared to first-year students. These findings suggest that while demographic factors like sex and SES may not substantially affect psychological well-being, the challenges of transitioning into university life appear to have a meaningful impact, particularly for first-year students. This underlines the importance of providing targeted support for

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students at different stages of their academic journey to help mitigate the psychological impact of the pandemic.

Table 5 Post Hoc Test for the Psychological Well-being When Students are Grouped as to Year Level

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.[a]
First Year-Second Year	-23.086	11.422	-2.021	.043	.260
First Year-Third Year	-69.067	18.182	-3.799	.000	.001
First Year-Fourth Year	-24.264	15.667	-1.549	.121	.729
Second Year-Third Year	-45.980	18.352	-2.505	.012	.073
Second Year-Fourth Year	-1.177	15.864	-.074	.941	1.000
Third Year-Fourth Year	44.803	21.256	2.108	.035	.210

The Dunn post-hoc test with Bonferroni adjustment was conducted to identify which specific year-level pairs significantly differ in psychological well-being, the analysis revealed important findings. The results, as summarized in the table, indicate that only the comparison between first-year and third-year students showed a statistically significant difference, with an adjusted p-value of 0.001. This suggests that psychological well-being significantly varies between first-year and third-year students, but not between other year-level pairs.

The Bonferroni correction, applied to control the overall Type I error rate, is a conservative method that adjusts p-values by multiplying them by the number of comparisons. While this reduces the risk of making false-positive claims (Type I error), it can increase the likelihood of Type II errors, where true differences may be overlooked (Field, 2013). In this study, however, the Bonferroni adjustment ensures a rigorous control over error rates and confirms that the identified significant difference between first-year and third-year students is reliable. Specifically, first-year students exhibited lower psychological well-being compared to third-year students. This difference was statistically significant (adjusted p-value = 0.001), suggesting that first-year students may be facing higher levels of stress and adjustment difficulties, particularly as they transition into university life during the pandemic (Le et al., 2020).

On the other hand, second-year students did not differ significantly from first-year or third-year students, as indicated by the non-significant p-values in these comparisons (e.g., first-year vs. second-year: $p = 0.043$; second-year vs. third-year: $p = 0.012$). Similarly, the fourth-year students showed no significant differences when compared to other year-level groups, as seen in the high p-values in comparisons such as second-year vs. fourth-year ($p = 0.941$) and third-year vs. fourth-year ($p = 0.210$). These results imply that, despite potential changes in coping mechanisms over time, the psychological well-being of students in the second and fourth years remains relatively stable, with no significant deviations from other year-level groups.

The significant difference between first-year and third-year students in terms of psychological well-being highlights an important developmental phase. First-year students, who are in the early stages of university life, may experience greater psychological distress due to challenges such as academic pressure, social adaptation, and the transition to online learning amid the pandemic. These stressors are well-documented in the literature, which suggests that new students often encounter greater difficulty in adjusting to the demands of university life (Rodriguez-Rey, Garrido-Hernansaiz, & Collado, 2020). In contrast, third-year students are likely to have developed more effective coping strategies, having adjusted to university life and accumulated academic experience, which may contribute to their higher psychological well-being scores.

The findings from this post-hoc analysis suggest that students experience significant psychological changes during their academic journey, particularly in their first few years. This underscores the importance of targeted interventions for first-year students, who may benefit from additional support to navigate the stress of university transitions. It also suggests that third-year students, being more acclimated, might serve as a reference point for developing peer support programs or mentoring initiatives.

In summary, the post-hoc analysis confirms that year level plays a significant role in students' psychological well-being, particularly for first-year and third-year students. The significant difference between these two groups highlights the challenges first-year students face during their transition to university life, particularly

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during a pandemic, while third-year students appear to have better psychological adaptation. These findings emphasize the need for tailored psychological support, particularly for first-year students, to improve their coping mechanisms and overall well-being during these critical years.

Table 6 Factors Affecting the Students' Psychological Well-Being in the Post Pandemic Era

Factor	n	Mean Rank	Description	SD
Family Status	300	1.80	Very High	0.75
Economic Status	300	2.30	High	0.70
Mental Health	300	3.00	Moderate	0.85
Emotional Health	300	3.10	Moderate	0.80
Peers	300	4.20	Low	0.60
Residence	300	4.50	Low	0.50
Physical Health	300	3.40	Moderate	0.78
Environment	300	3.50	Moderate	0.75
Behavior	300	4.00	Low	0.65
Exposure to Social Media	300	4.20	Low	0.70

4.5-5.00-Very High; 3.51-4.50-High; 2.51-3.50-Moderate; 1.51- 2.50-Low; 1.00-1.50-Ver Low

The table presents the factors affecting students' psychological well-being in the post-pandemic period, including family status, economic status, mental health, emotional health, and others. The factors are ranked according to their perceived impact, with the mean rank indicating the average importance assigned to each factor, and the standard deviation (SD) reflecting the variation in the respondents' rankings.

Family status has the highest mean rank of (M=1.80, SD=0.75) falling under the "Very High" category, suggesting that respondents perceive family-related issues, such as support, relationships, and family dynamics, as the most significant factor influencing their psychological well-being. The low SD of 0.75 indicates that there is a relatively low variation in how respondents ranked this factor, suggesting broad consensus on the importance of family in affecting well-being. This finding aligns with previous studies highlighting the pivotal role of family support in coping with stress, particularly during challenging times such as the pandemic (Bao et al., 2020).

Economic status ranks second with a mean of (M=2.30, SD=0.70) placing it in the "High" category. This suggests that financial concerns, such as income stability and access to resources, are also critical to students' well-being during the pandemic. With a standard deviation of 0.70, there is moderate agreement among respondents, although the slightly higher SD than family status suggests that economic challenges may affect some students more than others, particularly those in lower income brackets. These results are consistent with literature that shows economic stress is a significant predictor of mental health issues, especially during times of crisis (Terada, 2020).

Mental health, with a mean rank of (M=3.00,SD=0.85) is categorized as "Moderate" in its impact on psychological well-being. This indicates that while mental health is certainly a contributing factor, it is not perceived as the most influential compared to family or economic status. The standard deviation of 0.85 is the highest among all factors, signifying greater variability in how students view the role of mental health in their well-being. This variability may reflect the diverse experiences of students in coping with mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or stress during the pandemic. Previous studies have shown that mental health issues, particularly related to anxiety and depression, have increased globally during COVID-19 (Grubic et al., 2020), but the broad range of SD here may indicate that the degree of impact varies greatly among individuals.

Emotional health, ranked at (M=3.10,SD=0.80) also falls within the "Moderate" category. This suggests that emotional well-being, which includes factors such as emotional resilience and the ability to manage stress, is important but not as critical as family or economic issues. The standard deviation of 0.80 indicates that there is some variation in how students perceive emotional health, likely influenced by their individual coping

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mechanisms, emotional intelligence, and external support systems. Emotional health has been widely discussed in pandemic-related research, as individuals often experience heightened emotional responses to uncertainty and isolation (Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020).

Peers, with a mean rank of (M=4.20,SD=0.60) are categorized as having a "Low" impact on psychological well-being during the post-pandemic. While peer relationships are important, especially for students who are socially connected, they are ranked lower in comparison to more immediate concerns like family and economic stability. The standard deviation of 0.60 suggests some consensus on this ranking, though some students may still rely heavily on their peer networks for emotional support. Research on social support highlights that peer relationships are beneficial, but during crises like COVID-19, family and personal health may be more immediate concerns (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020).

The factor of residence (urban vs. rural) ranks the lowest with a mean of (M=4.50,SD=0.50) indicating that where students live has a relatively small influence on their psychological well-being compared to other factors. The very low SD of 0.50 suggests strong agreement across respondents that residence is not a significant stressor. This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that factors such as family support and mental health are more influential than geographic location during the pandemic (Solomou & Constantinidou, 2020).

Physical health, with a mean rank of (M=3.40,SD=0.78) is perceived as having a moderate impact on students' psychological well-being. This suggests that maintaining physical health is important, but not as critical as emotional or mental health. The standard deviation of 0.78 indicates moderate variability in students' perceptions of the role physical health plays in their overall well-being. Physical health has been recognized as a key determinant of mental health, with good physical health often correlating with better emotional and psychological functioning (Le et al., 2020).

The environment, which includes living conditions and available resources, also has a moderate impact on psychological well-being with a mean rank of (M=3.50, SD=0.75) The standard deviation of 0.75 reflects that while some students may feel their environment plays a significant role in their mental health, for others, it may be less of a concern compared to family and financial stressors. Environmental factors such as living space, noise, and access to nature can influence well-being, but their impact is generally seen as secondary to more personal and internal factors (Grubic et al., 2020).

Behavioral factors, such as coping strategies, time management, and daily routines, are ranked low in terms of their impact on psychological well-being. With a mean rank of (M=4.00, SD=0.65), it is clear that students view behavior as a less influential factor compared to external stressors like family and economic situation. While behaviors like maintaining a routine are important, they are often seen as secondary to the more pressing concerns related to external circumstances during a pandemic (Le et al., 2020).

Exposure to social media, while a significant aspect of modern life, is ranked as low in terms of its influence on psychological well-being with a mean of (M=4.20,SD=0.70). The SD of 0.70 indicates moderate variability in how students perceive the influence of social media, with some likely feeling the effects of social media exposure on their well-being, while others might not perceive it as a major factor. Research has shown that while social media can offer support and connection, it can also exacerbate anxiety and stress, especially when used excessively or to compare oneself with others (Dubey et al., 2020).

The results reveal that family status and economic status are the most significant factors affecting students' psychological well-being during the post-pandemic period, with both factors ranked as "Very High" and "High" respectively. These findings emphasize the critical role of family support and financial stability in influencing students' mental health during the pandemic. Mental health and emotional health are also important, but they rank moderately, indicating that while mental health challenges are significant, other external factors like family and economic stressors take precedence. On the other hand, peers, residence, physical health, environment, behavior, and exposure to social media are all ranked low, reflecting that students perceive these factors as less critical in shaping their psychological well-being during the pandemic.

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CONCLUSIONS

The study found that the overall psychological well-being of students in the post-pandemic era is moderate, as indicated by the mean scores for the various demographic groups. When grouped according to sex, socio-economic status, type of residence, course, and year level, the psychological well-being of students showed some variation, but the majority of the respondents reported a moderate level of well-being. Female students generally reported slightly higher psychological well-being than male students, though the difference was not statistically significant. In terms of socio-economic status, lower-income students showed similar levels of well-being compared to higher-income students, indicating that economic status did not significantly impact psychological well-being in this context. Type of residence (city vs. municipality) and course did not demonstrate substantial differences, suggesting that these factors were less influential in determining psychological well-being. However, students in the third year reported the highest psychological well-being, likely due to their increased adaptation to university life. First-year students, on the other hand, had the lowest scores, which may be attributed to the challenges of adjusting to the academic and social demands of university life during the post-pandemic period.

The study revealed no significant differences in psychological well-being when comparing sex, socio-economic status, type of residence, and course. However, a significant difference was found when comparing students based on year level. Third-year students exhibited significantly higher levels of psychological well-being compared to first-year students, highlighting the impact of academic experience and adaptation over time. These findings suggest that while demographic factors such as sex, socio-economic status, and type of residence may not significantly affect students' well-being, their academic progression and experience appear to play a more substantial role in shaping their psychological health post-pandemic.

The study identified several key factors influencing students' psychological well-being in the post-pandemic era. Family status and economic status emerged as the most significant factors, with students emphasizing the critical role of family support and financial stability in managing stress and maintaining mental health during the pandemic. Additionally, mental health and emotional health were significant contributors to well-being, with students indicating that their ability to manage emotions and cope with anxiety and stress played a pivotal role in their overall psychological state. Peer relationships, physical health, and exposure to social media were perceived as less influential, though still relevant to students' well-being. These findings suggest that addressing economic and family-related stressors, alongside promoting mental health support and coping mechanisms, is essential for supporting students' psychological well-being in the post-pandemic era.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for theory, practice, and future research. From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces the relevance of frameworks like Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The results suggest that factors such as family dynamics and economic stability continue to play a significant role in shaping students' psychological well-being during the post-pandemic era. Bronfenbrenner's theory, which emphasizes the influence of multiple environmental layers on an individual, aligns with the findings that family support and socio-economic status are crucial determinants of well-being. Similarly, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, with its focus on self-efficacy, further supports the idea that students' ability to cope with stressors like financial insecurity or family-related challenges is integral to their mental health. These theoretical frameworks provide a solid foundation for understanding how external environmental factors and personal agency interact to influence students' psychological well-being.

In terms of practice, the study's findings have several practical implications for universities and policymakers. Given that family status and economic status were identified as the most significant factors affecting students' well-being, universities should prioritize mental health support services that specifically address these stressors. For example, financial aid programs, scholarships, and family support initiatives could alleviate the economic pressures many students face, enabling them to focus more on their academic and mental health. Additionally, the study highlights the need for holistic support systems that combine mental health services with academic advising, career counseling, and social support. Special attention should be given to first-year

students, who reported lower levels of psychological well-being, by offering orientation programs that focus on emotional resilience and coping strategies. Furthermore, resilience-building programs integrated into the curriculum or offered as extracurricular activities could help students manage stress and develop adaptive coping skills. Given the identified impact of social media, universities might also implement digital well-being programs to teach students how to manage their online presence and its psychological effects.

From a research perspective, this study opens several avenues for future investigation. Given that this study used a cross-sectional design, longitudinal studies are needed to explore the long-term effects of the pandemic on students' psychological well-being and coping mechanisms. Longitudinal studies could track how students' mental health evolves over time as they transition through different academic years and as the world continues to recover from the pandemic. Additionally, future research should explore other demographic factors, such as gender identity, ethnicity, and international student status, to better understand how these intersecting factors influence students' well-being. Comparative studies across different universities, regions, or countries could provide insights into how contextual factors like culture, economic resources, and healthcare systems impact students' psychological health. Moreover, further exploration of students' coping mechanisms and social support systems could help identify which strategies are most effective in promoting mental health, especially during times of crisis. Research on the impact of online learning on students' mental health would also be valuable, considering the shift in educational practices during the pandemic, with potential long-term effects on students' psychological well-being.

In conclusion, the study's findings underscore the need for universities to implement comprehensive support systems for students, particularly focusing on family and economic stressors that significantly impact psychological well-being. It also emphasizes the importance of continued research into the long-term effects of the pandemic on mental health, as well as the need to refine interventions that address the evolving needs of students. By focusing on resilience, mental health support, and financial aid, universities can play a pivotal role in fostering students' psychological well-being, both during the post-pandemic era and in future crises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Implement Targeted Mental Health Programs*

   The university may develop and expand mental health support services tailored to students, particularly focusing on first-year students, who reported lower psychological well-being. These programs should include counseling services, stress management workshops, and peer support groups to help students manage emotional and academic challenges, especially in the post-pandemic era.

2. *Strengthen Family Support Initiatives*

   Given the significant role of family status in students' psychological well-being, universities may consider developing initiatives that engage families in supporting students. This could include family counseling services, parent orientation programs, and workshops that educate families on how to support their children's mental health during academic and life transitions. Additionally, providing financial support programs, such as scholarships and emergency funds, can alleviate economic stress for students, enabling them to focus more on their studies and mental health.

3. *Enhance Financial Support Programs*

   Given the significant impact of economic status on students' well-being, universities may improve financial aid programs. This includes increasing access to scholarships, emergency funds, and affordable housing options to alleviate financial stress, enabling students to focus on their academic and mental health.

4. *Promote Digital Well-being and Media Literacy*

   The university may offer digital well-being programs that educate students on the responsible use of social media and its potential effects on mental health. Workshops on media literacy can help students navigate

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue VII July 2025

online spaces in a healthier manner, minimizing anxiety and stress associated with excessive social media use.

5. *Develop Resilience-Building Initiatives*

The university may integrate resilience-building programs into their curriculum or extracurricular activities, focusing on coping skills, self-care, and stress management. These programs can help students build emotional resilience, particularly during their first year and throughout their academic journey, enabling them to handle stress more effectively.

6. *Strengthen Peer Support Networks*

Establishing peer mentorship programs and student-led wellness initiatives can create supportive environments for students, fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation. Peer support is vital in helping students navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and the transition back to normalcy.

7. *Conduct Longitudinal Research*

The university may conduct longitudinal studies to track students' psychological well-being over time, assessing the effectiveness of the support programs and interventions. This research can identify long-term trends and provide valuable data to refine existing services and better meet students' evolving needs.

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