

Student Mental Health and Academic Outcomes: A Study in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: This research investigates the relationship between student mental well-being and academic performance in a higher education setting, specifically focusing on undergraduate students at North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU), Main Campus. Employing a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, the study gathered quantitative data through survey questionnaires and qualitative perspectives from focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 383 students participated, representing a diverse range of demographic backgrounds and fields of study. The research focused on exploring the influence of mental health conditions, encompassing positive mental health, anxiety, and depression, on academic behaviors like study habits, student engagement, and motivation. Furthermore, the study assessed the impact of institutional support structures, including the availability of mental health resources, assistance from faculty/staff, and wellness initiatives. Results indicated that although students typically indicated having positive mental health, a significant number also faced symptoms of anxiety and depression, with anxiety being more prevalent. Students reporting improved mental health showed increased motivation, enhanced study habits, and greater academic involvement. In contrast, depression and anxiety had a negative correlation with these academic behaviors, although to different extents. Demographic factors like age, gender, family income, and GPA exhibited no notable relationship with mental health status. Nonetheless, college affiliation was notably linked to levels of depression and anxiety, indicating that the academic setting and departmental demands could impact students' mental health issues. The research highlights the role of academic mentoring, university support, and readily available mental health services in contributing to positive student experiences. It suggests that higher education institutions are in a position to improve supportive structures, tailor interventions to disciplinary requirements, and help create a mental health-responsive academic environment to promote student success and resilience.

Keywords: Mental well-being, Academic performance, Higher education, Sequential exploratory mixed-methods, Student engagement, Institutional support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background Information about the Research Study

Mental health is a crucial aspect of student well-being that significantly influences academic performance, social engagement, and overall quality of life. The growing significance of mental health in education is receiving increasing attention, with an increasing number of schools recognizing mental health as a foundation for learning and development (Dekker *et al.*, 2020). Recently, concerns regarding the mental health challenges faced by students have been a growing issue, specifically, students in higher education institutions. As students transition to higher education, they often face increased academic pressure, social challenges, and personal responsibilities, where, if not given importance, these issues can lead to emotional

distress, anxiety, and depression, which negatively affect students' well-being and academic performance.

There are a lot of studies that investigate the relationship between mental health and the academic performance of a student. Agnafors *et al.*, (2021), conducted a study to understand the connection between mental health conditions and academic achievement at different stages of childhood and adolescence. In line with their findings, it was stated that early childhood and adolescent mental health issues may contribute to a drop in academic performance. Based on the results found in the article of Rahmatpour *et al.*, (2019), students experiencing academic burnout could not attend their classes regularly. They also exhibited a failure to learn new lessons and insignificance. As a result, their GPA,

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interest in the study field, and study hours for their course have been affected. In addition, Karyotaki *et al.*, (2020); Pascoe *et al.*, (2020), add the idea that people experiencing low income, homelessness, migration, or financial difficulties are more likely to suffer from elevated levels of stress and depression.

Despite various comprehensive research studies conducted concerning student mental health and academic outcomes, a significant gap in the existing literature remains and needs further investigation. This study addresses this gap by determining the connection between the demographic profile and mental health status of the students, and by investigating the significant relationship between mental health and academic outcomes in higher education institutions. By bridging this gap, this study enables the researcher to identify the

primary issues concerning student mental health and the educational challenges faced by the students.

As a result, the findings of this study can assist teachers in enhancing their teaching approaches, especially for students experiencing mental health challenges, considering that teachers are the primary individuals who can closely observe students' performance inside the classroom. This serves as a way to encourage teachers to be emotionally open and supportive toward students who are struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, this study had an impact on policy and resulted in the development and enhancement of the suggested recommendations, which will enhance mental health services at higher education institutions and ultimately boost students' academic success and well-being.

Conceptual Framework

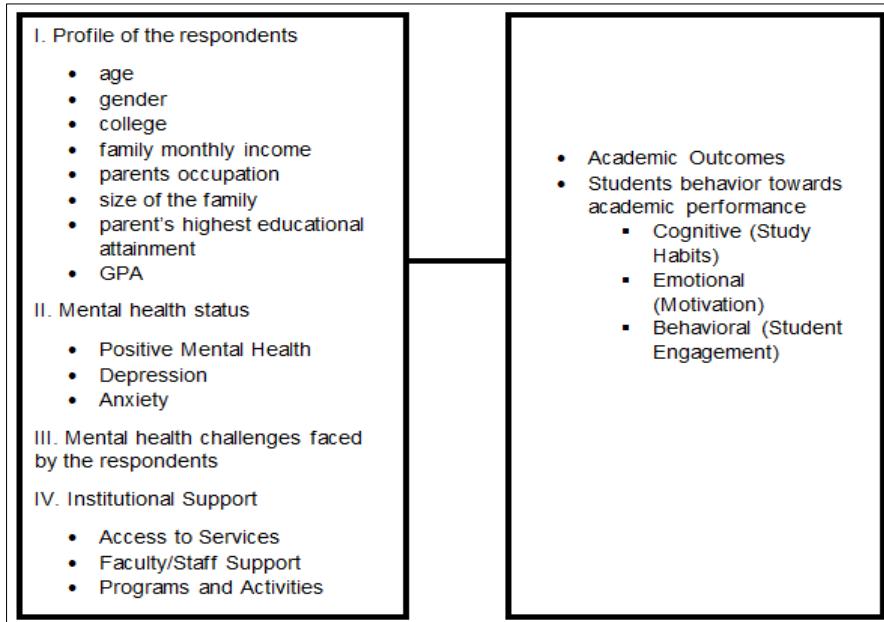


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of independent and dependent variables

Figure 1 shows the schematic diagram of the study about student mental health and academic outcomes.

The first box displays the demographic profile of the respondents which include the age, gender, college, family monthly income, parent's occupation, size of the family, parent's highest educational attainment, and the GPA they obtained during first semester, A.Y. 2024-2025. In the same box, it also contains the current mental health status of the respondents, in terms of: Positive Mental Health, Depression, and Anxiety. The mental health challenges faced by the respondents and the support provided by the institutions, which includes: access to services, faculty/staff support, and the offered programs and activities were also assessed. This information determines the background context of the study and the

conditions or factors that may affect students' academic performance.

The second box illustrates the effects on the students' academic performance or success. It represents how students with mental health problems affect students' behavior, specifically in their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral well-being. It also determines the GPA obtained by the students despite the psychological problems they have faced.

Overall, this framework describes how students' backgrounds, mental health status, challenges they face, and the support provided by the university interact to influence their behavior in school, particularly regarding their academic responsibilities and performance.

Significance of the Study

This paper explores the connection between student mental health and academic performance in higher education institutions, offering insights into the challenges students face and presenting suggestions or recommendations for improving mental health services and support within these settings to foster student well-being and academic success. The outcomes of this research make a valuable contribution to the following areas:

Students:

This study serves as an awareness to the students about the significant impact of the status of their mental health on their academic success. By identifying the psychological challenges experienced by the students and its effects on their learning and performance, the research can encourage students to seek appropriate support services, such as counseling, peer support, or faculty guidance, and adopt strategies such as time management and self-care routines that can mitigate stress and anxiety.

Parents:

This study helps parents understand common psychological issues that their children may experience. With this awareness, parents can offer their children better emotional, financial, and social support, most especially the love and care that their children need.

Teachers and Faculty:

Teachers and faculty, as frontline observers of student behavior and performance, can benefit from understanding how psychological distress affects learning outcomes. In connection with this, teachers may initiate positive teaching and learning strategies that would help support students' mental health and their academic performance.

Community:

This study raises awareness among different stakeholders in the community as it highlights that mental health experienced by the students is not just a school or institutional issue, but also a community concern. By this means, collaborative efforts provide a positive impact in supporting students' mental health and their overall well-being.

Administrators and Policymakers in Higher Education Institutions:

The study's insight can guide the administrators and policymakers, specifically in higher education institutions the need to provide inclusive mental health programs, support services, and campus-wide mental health initiatives.

Future Researchers:

This study contributes to future researchers on student mental and academic outcomes, offering a basis for continued academic investigation. The findings of

this study can also help the researchers build more in-depth, comprehensive, comparative, and time-based research that sheds crucial relationship between student mental health and academic success.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between student mental health and academic outcomes in higher education institutions. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how various mental health statuses and challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, impact students' academic performance, including their grades, attendance, and overall academic success. This aim can be divided into the following sub-objectives according to the main research question of the study:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Gender;
 - 1.3 College;
 - 1.4 Family Income;
 - 1.5 Parents' Occupation;
 - 1.6 Size of the Family;
 - 1.7 Parents' highest Educational Attainment; and
 - 1.8 GPA (A.Y. 2024-2025, 1st Semester)?
2. What is the mental health status of the respondents in terms of:
 - 2.1 Positive Mental Health;
 - 2.2 Depression, and
 - 2.3 Anxiety?
3. What is the behavior of the respondents towards their academic performance in terms of:
 - 3.1 Cognitive (Study Habits);
 - 3.2 Emotional (Motivation); and
 - 3.3 Behavioral (Student Engagement)?
4. What role do institutional support systems play in mitigating the impact of mental health issues on students?
 - 4.1 Access to Services;
 - 4.2 Faculty/Staff Support; and
 - 4.3 Programs and Activities?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and the mental health status of the respondents?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the mental health status and the behavior of the respondents towards their academic performance?
7. What are the mental health challenges faced by the respondents?

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between student mental health and academic outcomes in higher education institutions. Specifically,

the study seeks to understand how various mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, impact students' academic performance, including their grades, attendance, and overall academic success. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional support systems in mitigating these effects and to provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing mental health services and resources within higher education settings to improve student well-being and academic achievement.

This aim can be divided into the following sub-objectives according to the main research question of the study:

1. To assess the prevalence of mental health issues among higher education students.
2. To analyze the impact of mental health on academic performance.
3. To identify the specific academic challenges faced by students with mental health issues.
4. To evaluate the role of the institutional support system in mitigating the impact of mental health issues.
5. To examine the relationship between academic stress and mental health.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Student Mental Health in Higher Education

Mental health is a crucial component of overall well-being that significantly impacts a student's ability to learn, interact, and perform academically. The growing significance of mental health in education is receiving increasing attention, with an increasing number of schools recognizing mental health as a foundation for learning and development (Dekker *et al.*, 2020). As academic demands increase and students explore the complexity of university life, mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress have become increasingly prevalent, which significantly impact students' academic performance and well-being. One of the key factors affecting students' mental health is the adjustment period to higher education. The transition introduces new academic demands, expectations, and social environments that can be stressful, particularly for those at the start of their college experience. As stated in the research study of House *et al.*, (2020), young people are more prone to various challenges, specifically pressures and difficulties, which can harm their mental well-being. Additionally, first-year female students are more likely to suffer from mental health issues than males (Graves, B. *et al.*, 2021).

Although, some students think college life is fun and exciting, others find it difficult and stressful. Thompson *et al.*, (2021) mentioned in their research that students may experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and self-isolation during their transition to higher education. This may be because they have to adjust to the environment, people, and most specifically to the subjects or academic pressure they encounter. Similar to

the study of Kecojevic *et al.*, (2020) undergraduate students in New Jersey, encountered serious mental health problems, primarily due to high academic pressure and worries about the future. This review explores recent literature on the prevalence of mental health issues in higher education, their impact on academic performance, the specific challenges faced by students, the effectiveness of the support of the institutions towards the students, and the relationship between mental health and academic success.

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in Higher Education

Learning in higher education institutions is distinctly different from that at the primary and secondary levels (Alkhawaldeh, 2023). Higher education involves heavy tasks and new responsibilities that students must accomplish, whether with peers or individually. Samoila & Vrabie (2023) say that the transition to higher education can be challenging and stressful as it is the initial adjustment period for the students, which can lead to awaken their mental health issues. Various research highlights the growing concern of mental health issues experienced by students, specifically in higher education institutions.

Hubble and Bolton (2020) mentioned in their study that the number of students discontinuing school increased by 21% because of mental health issues. This implies that if mental health issues are not prioritized, they can harm students' academic success. Barbayannis, G *et al.*, (2022) also mentioned that most of the students who have experienced academic distress are second-year students, which lowers their psychological well-being.

Various studies have also shown that the pandemic is one of the key factors in triggering mental health issues among students, issues that the students still carry and continue to experience up to this day. Based on the findings of the study of Son, C *et al.*, (2020), out of 195 respondents, 138 (71%) of students reported an increased level of stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research from Fegert *et al.*, (2020) adds the idea that it is important to keep in mind that the pandemic negatively impacted the students' academic performance, leading to stress and increased anxiety, depression, and other severe mental health issues. This implies that students who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, brought this with them into college, and are still dealing with its effects, have poorer mental health and worse academic outcomes.

An online survey conducted by Active Minds in mid-April 2020 found that 80% of college students nationwide reported a negative effect of COVID-19 on their mental well-being, with 20% stating their mental health had severely declined. Similarly, a national survey carried out from late May to early June by the Healthy Minds Network (2020) revealed that 85% of college

students experienced heightened stress and anxiety during the pandemic. Consequently, poor mental health has been linked to reduced academic performance. Difficulties concentrating on schoolwork contributed to increased stress, anxiety, and depression (Kecojevic *et al.*, 2020).

Leow, T *et al.*, (2025) concluded in their study that university students have a higher prevalence of mental health issues than the general population, and around one in five students leave the university without finishing their course. The analysis also showed that mental health conditions contribute to an increased risk of university students discontinuing their studies. Understanding students' mental health and its impact on dropout rates can aid in creating effective strategies to enhance retention in higher education.

Impact of Mental Health on Academic Performance

Mental health plays a huge role in students' lives, specifically in their academic performance. That is why understanding the impact of mental health on students' academic success is crucial. There is overwhelming empirical evidence that shows the negative consequences of poor mental health on the academic performance of students. In the study of Bas, G. (2021), mental health issues among students not only create various challenges but also negatively impact their education. Adolescents facing mental health difficulties are at a higher risk of struggling in school, especially when it comes to academic performance. Adolescent mental health issues may therefore have a significant impact on academic performance, which in turn has long-term implications for employment, income, and other outcomes. Academic achievement and education are impacted by mental health in the same way that it affects other significant aspects of life.

Institutional Support Systems and Their Effectiveness

Schools are not just a place where students learn and are able to be academically excellent but also considered as environment where full of support that nurture and mold student holistically (Al-Khani *et al.*, 2019). Several research have mentioned the importance of institution's support to students, specifically those students who are suffering mental health challenges. Students with mental health issues may face several challenges, including higher dropout rates, lower academic performance, and a lack of attention. On the contrary, students who have access to mental health resources and support often demonstrate healthier social connections, greater engagement in school-related activities, and better academic results. Prioritizing activities such as: counseling and mental health services will help students get the assistance they need (Selvaraj & John, 2020). If the programs and other initiatives offered from the institutions is successfully implemented, this will foster a secure and welcoming school atmosphere in which students feel heard, cared, and supported (Monzonis-Carda *et al.*, 2024).

Providing support and empathy to people with mental health problems plays a crucial part in their recovery process and quality of life (Huckins *et al.*, 2020; Zahid Iqbal *et al.*, 2021). That is why, it is important that the institutions must introduce various support mechanism, particularly in schools with a high prevalence of mental health issues among students, as they play a significant role in promoting student well-being. Restrepo *et al.*, (2020) further pointed out that fostering an academic environment that support well-being gives students the skills they need to effectively manage stress and other mental health challenges they have encountered is crucial in ensuring both academic achievement and personal growth.

Relationship between Academic Stress and Mental Health

Student mental health and academic performance are inextricably linked, when mental health is suffering, it can hinder focus, drive, and the ability to learn effectively, while academic pressures can worsen mental health challenges, leading to a recurring cycle. Agnafors *et al.*, (2021) conducted a study to understand the connection between mental health conditions and academic achievement at different stages of childhood and adolescence. In line with their findings, it was stated that early childhood and adolescent mental health issues may contribute to a drop in academic performance. Another study highlights that young people often feel pressured to meet societal expectations related to academic success and career development, which increases their vulnerability to anxiety and depression (Jangmo *et al.*, 2019).

As mentioned in the study by Pascoe *et al.*, (2020), stress related to school can negatively affect student motivation, which can lower and impede their academic performance, leading to a higher percentage of college dropouts. Based on the results found in the article by Rahmatpour *et al.*, (2019), students experiencing academic burnout were unable to attend their classes regularly. They also exhibited a failure to learn new lessons and a sense of insignificance. As a result, their GPA, interest in the study field, and study hours for their course have been affected. A study has also suggested that more burnt-out students were significantly less satisfied with their academic performance and had lower performance outcomes.

Another study conducted by Miyazaki *et al.*, (2024) mental health issues experienced by medical students are linked to the rigorous nature of their coursework. High demands, standards, and pressure to perform are the causes of these difficulties. This imply that academic tasks and requirements, including high expectations on the standards of the course or departments where the students are enrolled in negatively affects their mental well-being leading to symptoms of depression, anxiety, or stress. Increase level

of mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression are primarily caused by strong academic demands and pressure as mentioned in the study (Singh *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, Ji *et al.*, (2021) add the idea that symptoms of depression was found caused by academic demands.

This reviews of academic stress and mental health status of students show that they are closely interrelated. Saleem *et al.*, (2022) states that stress can influence the connection between academic performance and psychological state of the students. The studies showed that high level of stress reduced the relationship between positive mental health and academic success. Additionally, Barbayannies *et al.*, (2022) find a strong negative correlation between academic stress and students' mental health. They draw attention to the fact that academic stress can affect motivation, performance, and even dropout rates.

V. METHODOLOGY / MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach using an exploratory sequential design, wherein qualitative data were collected first, followed by quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was employed to grasp the insights and participants' lived experiences and challenges encountered, and the statistical relationship between the students' mental health and academic performance. Survey questionnaires were administered by the researchers to assess the profile of the respondents, their mental health status, behavior towards academic performance, and the support of the institution employed for the students. Furthermore, the qualitative method explored the mental health challenges faced by the respondents, applying focus group discussion consistent with the approach outlined by Morgan (1997).

Research Locale

This study was conducted in North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU), Main Campus, located at Rosario, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The respondents were selected among different colleges inside the university, namely: College of Arts and Science (CAS), College of Business and Management (CBM), College of Engineering and Technology (CET), College of Information and Technology (CITE), and from the College of Teacher Education (CTE).

Research Respondents/Key Informants

The respondents of this study are undergraduate students who enrolled at North Eastern Mindanao State University, Main Campus in A.Y. 2024-2025, second semester. This study consist of a total of 383 respondents including the 15 key informants who voluntarily presented themselves to be part of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Sampling Technique

In this study the sampling technique employed is stratified random sampling, wherein a probability sampling method is designed to ensure that subgroups within a population are adequately represented and avoid sampling bias. By systematically presenting key subgroups of the population, this technique help this paper secure the validity, reliability and generalizability of the study's findings, according to established research guidelines of O'Leary (2013) and Pandey & Pandey (2015).

Research Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a modified survey questionnaire. The instrument was enhanced and carefully validated to gather relevant inputs and data with regard to the student's mental health status and challenges encountered, and how it affects their academic performance. Additionally, focus group discussions were employed to collect qualitative information from fifteen (15) volunteer key informants.

The modified questionnaire (survey questionnaire) aims to analyze the mental health status of the respondents and investigate its implications for their academic performance. In the quantitative part, the first part consists of the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part employed statements that determine the current mental health status of the respondents, presented in a Likert scale: 4 – Most of the Time, 3 – Often Times, 2 – Some of the Time, and 1 – Did not apply to me at all. In the following third and fourth parts, it explores the behavior of students towards their academic performance and examines the support provided by the institution to students, specifically those suffering from mental health issues. It is presented through the use of a Likert scale: 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 – Neutral, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree.

For qualitative data, it employed open-ended interview questions. These questions were used in the focus group discussion to determine the mental health challenges faced or encountered by the students, specifically, in dealing with their academic responsibilities and success.

Data Collection Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researchers secured a permission letter approved by the campus director. The researchers personally ask permission through writing a letter to the campus director of the NEMSU-Main, to gather data across the 5 colleges, including: CAS, CBM, CET, CITE, and CTE inside the campus. After the approval of the campus director, the researchers immediately handed in another permission letter for the deans in every college of NEMSU- Main, and attached the signed, approved permission letter from the campus directors. Upon obtaining approval from the Campus Director and College Deans, the researchers

began collecting data. The data collection process is administered on separate days. Qualitative data were collected first, wherein 15 key informants voluntarily joined the focus group discussion. The interviews were conducted simultaneously to efficiently gather data from multiple participants. On the other day, the data collection for quantitative was completed within a single day, as the completed questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents immediately after they had finished answering the survey questionnaire.

Data Analysis

This research employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, wherein qualitative data were collected initially through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore the mental health challenges faced by the respondents. This was followed by quantitative data collection through a face-to-face survey.

The first phase of data collection is the qualitative data collection, which involves Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The data collection process included familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. Familiarization involved iterative listening to carefully transcribe responses. After the transcription, the researcher systematically coded the main ideas of responses of the respondents. Codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding, and from these, themes were developed inductively to reflect common patterns, experiences, and insights shared by participants. The researcher then went over each theme's coded data again to evaluate its coherence and internal consistency. This required assessing if the grouped codes conceptually made sense as a whole as well as whether they accurately captured the main ideas of the participants' narratives. The next stage is to define and refine the themes, giving each one a clear and informative name so that it can be further examined. Finding out what each theme captures and how it relates to the total amount of data gathered is part of this process. Finally, the analysis was written up, incorporating the themes found into a coherent narrative.

Quantitative data collection is the second stage of the data analysis process. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the quantitative data that was gathered through structured surveys. The data was summarized using descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages.

For Inferential statistics, correlation analysis was used to test relationships.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collection of the study between student mental health and academic outcomes conducted at North Eastern Mindanao State University-Main Campus, specifically from the five (5) colleges including: College

of Arts and Sciences (CAS), College of Business and Management (CBM), College of Engineering and Technology (CET), College of Information and Technology Education (CITE), and College of Teacher Education (CTE) is presented in this part.

The results are carefully analyzed and structured following the indicators that were investigated, particularly students' demographic profile, their mental health status, behavior of the students towards their academic performance, institutional support in mitigating mental issues were also examined, mental health challenges faced by the students, the significant relationship between the demographic profile and mental health status of the students, and the relationship between mental health status and the behavior of the students towards their academic performance were also determined.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 383 respondents from North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU), Main Campus. Most of the respondents were age range of 18-20 years (50%), followed by 42% who were 21- 23 years of age, and the older age bracket had the small percentage, specifically the 27 years or older. In terms of gender, most of the respondents were identified as female (50%), while 34.46% were identified as male. Additionally, 14.88% preferred not to share their gender, and 0.26% chose to self-describe, which shows gender diversity and inclusivity within the sample.

The respondents of the study varies across the different colleges of NEMSU-Main Campus with the highest representation from the College of Business and Management (46%), followed by the College of Arts and Sciences (33%). Additionally, the colleges which had the lowest percentages were from the College of Teacher Education (9%), College of Information and Technology (7%), and College of Engineering and Technology (5%).

In terms of socioeconomic background of the respondents, the data showed that most of their family income is less than ₱10,957 (58.49%) per month, indicating a predominantly low-income population, established in PIDS bracket. This suggests that a significant number of students face economic challenges. Most parents were self-employed (42%), while others worked as government employees (16%), business owners (14%), or private sector employees (7%). When it comes to family size, most students came from medium-sized families with 5 to 10 members (50%), followed by small families with 2 to 4 members (46%). In terms of the highest educational attainment of parents, the majority had either college-level (24%) or were high school graduates (23%). This revealed that majority of the parents were not able to graduate college education, resulting to have their earning less than ₱10,957 per month. Finally, regarding to the academic performance of the respondents based on GPA, most students (52%)

had a satisfactory grade between 1.6 and 2.0, and only a few students (3%) had an excellent GPA between 1.0 and 1.2.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
AGE	18-20	190	50%
	21-23	159	42%
	24-26	26	7%
	27 or Older	8	2%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	Category	Frequency	Percentage
GENDER	Male	132	34.46%
	Female	193	50.39%
COLLEGE	Prefer not to say	57	14.88%
	Prefer to self-describe	1	0.26%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	College	Frequency	Percentage
	CAS	125	33%
	CBM	175	46%
FAMILY	CET	20	5%
	CITE	27	7%
	CTE	36	9%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	Amount	Frequency	Percentage
	Less than ₦10,957	224	58.49%
INCOME	Between ₦10,957 to ₦21,194	100	26.11%
	Between ₦21,194 to ₦43,828	43	11.23%
	Between ₦43,828 to ₦76,669	11	2.87%
	Between ₦76,669 to ₦131,484	3	0.78%
	Between ₦131,484 to ₦219,140	1	0.26%
	At least ₦219,140 and up	1	0.26%
PARENTS'	TOTAL	383	100%
	Type	Frequency	Percentage
	Government Employee	60	16%
	Private Sector Employee	25	7%
	OCCUPATION		
	Self-employed	160	42%
SIZE	Business Owner	54	14%
	Overseas Worker	16	4%
	Others:	68	18%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	Size	Frequency	Percentage
	2-4 members (Small)	175	46%
FAMILY	5-10 members (Medium)	193	50%
	More than 10 members (Large)	15	4%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	Level	Frequency	Percentage
	No Formal Education	6	2%
	Elementary Level	42	11%
PARENTS	Elementary Graduate	20	5%
	High School Level	60	16%
	High School Graduate	90	23%
	College Level	92	24%
	ATTAINMENT		
	College Graduate	62	16%
EDUCATIONAL	Postgraduate Degree	8	2%
	Vocational/Technical Course	3	1%
	TOTAL	383	100%
	Grade	Frequency	Percentage
	1.0 – 1.2 (Excellent)	12	3%
	1.3 – 1.5 (Very Satisfactory)	80	21%
GPA	1.6 – 2.0 (Satisfactory)	200	52%
	2.1 – 2.5 (Good)	74	19%
	2.6 – 3.0 (Fair)	17	4%
	TOTAL	383	100%

Mental Health Status of the Respondents

Determining the mental health status of the respondents is significant as it paves the way for the researcher to identify whether the respondents experienced positive mental health status, depression, or

anxiety. Through this, it enables researchers to provide appropriate support systems and recommendations, demonstrating ethical responsibility beyond the study itself.

Table 2: Mental Health Status of the Respondents

Indicators	Mean	Adjective Rating
Positive Mental Health	3.023	Often Times
Depression	2.489	Some of the Time
Anxiety	2.575	Often Times
Over-all Mean	2.696	Often Times

Table 2 presented the mental health status of the respondents and indicated that, on average, students reported experiencing positive mental health symptoms "often times," over the last two weeks, during the conduct of the survey with a mean of 3.023. This means that many students generally felt emotionally balanced, tried to look for the positive side when bad things happened, and were able to handle life's challenges relatively well. On the other side, depression had a lower mean of 2.489, suggesting that depressive symptoms like hopelessness, tiredness, and lack of interest in doing things occurred only "some of the time" for many students. Anxiety, on the other hand, had a slightly higher average of 2.575, this means that the students felt anxious or worried more frequently. They feel nervous and easily annoyed or irritable often time in the past two weeks, during the conduct of the study. The overall mental health score across all dimensions was 2.696, indicating that although positive feelings were more common, symptoms of depression and anxiety were also

present in varying degrees among many students. Despite of the positive mental health shown by the students, they still experienced feelings of depression some of the time or even anxiety behind their good mental well-being, similar to the study of Parks, S. Y. *et al.*, (2020) mentioned that many students chose to hide their difficulties and struggles to their parents to maintain their self-image as smart and hardworking student.

Behavior of the Students towards Their Academic Performance

In this part, this serve as a view point to see how students behave towards their performance at school despite of the struggles and difficulties they have experienced. This examine the students' study habits, on what are their way of learning. Also, we can see if the students are motivated to do the task and other school related responsibilities, and their engagement inside the classroom with their classmates, peers, faculties, etc.

Table 3: Behavior of Students towards their Academic Performance

Indicators	Mean	Adjective Rating
Cognitive (Study Habits)	3.412	Agree
Emotional (Motivation)	4.157	Agree
Behavioral (Student Engagement)	3.949	Agree
Over-all Mean	3.839	Agree

In Table 3, the results show how students viewed their academic behavior in three areas: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. For cognitive behavior or study habits, students gave an average score of 3.412, which means they generally agreed that they practiced useful study behaviors like reviewing notes, setting goals, and using tools to manage their study time, specifically, the use of online learning platforms were discovered to be a considerable proportion to effectively manage their study activities and tasks. The use of mnemonics devices like acrostics, rhymes, songs, etc. were considered as well. In line with the findings of Freo (2022), the use of digital tools like calendars, note-taking software, and task management applications is helpful to the students with their time management and organizing abilities. If students use these tools to plan their study sessions, organize their work, and set goals, they will be more productive and achieve better academic results. Khalef *et al.*, (2021) mentioned in the study of Asuncion,

A. J. S *et al.*, (2025) add the idea that students with good study habits positively impact their academic performance which prepares students for tests, enhances comprehension and retention.

The result of emotional behavior, which refers to motivation, had the highest mean of 4.157, suggesting that most students felt highly motivated, especially when receiving praise, good grades, or support from family and teachers. This shows that students have the urge to actively participate and do their tasks and responsibilities at school if they receive support and care from the people around them. As stated in the theory of significant others, the primary source of adolescents' interest in doing things were from parents and teachers up to their peers, which positively impact in handling or managing academic difficulties (Fan & Lu, 2020). Additionally, as evidence in the study of John *et al.*, (2023) revealed that peer support positively impacted in reducing math

anxiety and improved students math achievement in class.

On the other hand, behavioral engagement, such as attending class and participating in activities, had a mean of 3.949, indicating that students actively involved themselves in school-related tasks. The overall mean for this table was 3.839, which shows that students had a generally positive attitude and behavior toward their academic performance.

Institutional Support Systems in Mitigating the Impact of Mental Health Status of the Students

Schools are not just a place where students learn and able to be academically excellent but also considered as environment where support is seen and experienced by students that holds significant role in nurturing and molding student holistically (Al-Khani *et al.*, 2019). Several research have mentioned the importance of institution's support to students, specifically those students who are suffering mental health challenges. In this part, we will see the support from the institution towards the students, specifically, access to services, support from the faculty and staff, and the offered activities and programs.

Table 4: Institutional Support Systems in Mitigating the Impact of Mental Health

Indicators	Mean	Adjective Rating
Access to Services	3.210	Neutral
Faculty/Staff Support	3.547	Agree
Program & Activities	3.641	Agree
Over-all Mean	3.466	Agree

Table 4 focused on how students viewed the support provided by their institution to help manage mental health issues. Based on the result, access to services like counseling or health care received a neutral rating, with a mean of 3.210, suggesting that students were unsure or had mixed feelings about whether such services were available or effective. Another finding revealed that faculty and staff support had a higher mean of 3.547, indicating that students generally agreed that teachers and staff were approachable and supportive during times of mental health struggles. According to Zhang, Z. (2022), students who felt that their teachers were more empathetic had better emotional control, which helped them achieve better mental health results. This means that the faculty and staff in the university show empathy towards students, especially those who have experienced academic and mental health struggles. As mentioned during the FGD, one of the responses of the key informant experienced a positive relationship with their peers and faculty. Key informant 11 mentioned that her peers, family, and even faculty were supportive and kept on encouraging her, which helped her to keep her mind and emotions stable.

This indicate that strong peer support connection serves as a protective barriers against stressors faced by the students. Their findings also imply that children who feel supported and heard by their teachers are more likely to express positive mental well-being (Furlong *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, research highlight as well the importance of the connection between students-family in education. It states that the support that the family gave to their children significantly connected with students' emotional well-being (Losada-Baltar *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, the result in programs and activities, like mental health awareness campaigns or recreational

events, had the highest mean of 3.641, which shows that students saw these efforts as helpful. Overall, the mean rating was 3.466, indicating that institutional support was seen as moderately effective, with room for improvement, especially in the accessibility of services.

Significant Relationship between the Demographic Profile and the Mental Health Status of the Respondents

In this section, table 5 present the data on the significant relationship between the demographic profile (age, gender, college, family monthly income, parents' occupation, size of the family, education, and GPA of the respondents) and the mental health status of the respondents.

The results showed that most demographic factors had no significant impact on mental health status. It is clear from the result that age, gender, family income, occupation, family size, parental education, and GPA were not significantly related to positive mental health, depression, or anxiety. However, there was one important exception. The student's college affiliation showed a significant relationship with both depression ($p = 0.040$) and anxiety ($p = 0.017$). This revealed that the college, specifically the department or course where the students enrolled in may influence their mental health, such as anxiety and depression, possibly due to differences in academic pressure or course standard. The result is evident from the responses of the key informants collected during the focus group discussion. As mentioned by the key informant 1, she is affected emotionally and mentally because of the pressure that she experienced that which might get rerouted. Additionally, key informant 9 also shared that some of their classmates transferred to another course because they can't handle the pressure in their college where they are currently enrolled in. Similar to the study of Wilks *et*

al., (2020) university students experienced lots of struggles, which cause them emotionally disturbed. The

primary source of stress experienced includes: workload, high expectations, and academic competition.

Table 5: Significant Relationship between Profile and Mental Health Status

Variables Tested	Computed r	P-value	Decision	Conclusion	
Age	0.000	0.995	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
Gender	0.032	0.538	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
Positive Mental Health	College	0.025	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Income	0.016	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Occupation	0.074	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Size	0.057	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Education	0.044	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	GPA	0.031	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Age	0.067	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	Gender	0.018	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant	
	College	0.105	0.040	Reject Ho	Significant
Depression	Income	0.017	0.738	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Occupation	0.058	0.261	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Size	0.076	0.139	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Education	0.030	0.555	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	GPA	0.055	0.287	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Age	0.081	0.116	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Gender	0.040	0.429	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	College	0.122	0.017	Reject Ho	Significant
Anxiety	Income	0.024	0.641	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Occupation	0.004	0.945	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Size	0.080	0.116	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Education	0.090	0.079	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	GPA	0.056	0.275	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

Students really had a different struggles and experiences on their college journey depending on the college, specifically, department or course where they are enrolled in. Because of too much standards or expectation employed in the different colleges, students felt pressured, emotionally exhausted, etc. leading to depression or anxiety. Based on the finding on the study of Zuhriyah, N. F., (2025) it has been demonstrated that burnout affects learning motivation and focus and can lead to mental health issues like anxiety as well as mild depression. Similar to the study of Avila, C. L. *et al.*, (2023) high level of stress experienced by the medical

students at King Khalid University was primarily influenced by the competitive environment, which causes psychological distress and emotional exhaustion.

A Significant Relationship between the Mental Health Status and the Behavior of the Respondents towards Their Academic Performance

Table 6 presented the relationship between students' mental health status and academic behavior. In this part, we can determine how students face or carry themselves, specifically in dealing with their schoolwork and tasks in relation to their current mental health status.

Table 6: Significant Relationship between Mental Health Status and Behavior of Students

Variables Tested	Computed r	P-value	Decision	Conclusion	
Positive Mental Health	Cognitive	0.340	0.000	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
	Emotional	0.390	0.000	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
	Behavioral	0.380	0.000	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
	Cognitive	0.107	0.036	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
Depression	Emotional	0.010	0.839	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
	Behavioral	0.055	0.279	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
	Cognitive	0.119	0.020	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
Anxiety	Emotional	0.129	0.011	Reject Null Hypothesis	Significant
	Behavioral	0.035	0.490	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant

Based on the table presented above, the findings showed that positive mental health was significantly related to all three behavioral areas: study habits ($r = 0.340$), motivation ($r = 0.390$), and student engagement ($r = 0.380$). This means that students who feel emotionally and mentally healthy have the drive to participate and perform well in class. Result is reflected as well on the responses of the key informant during the

focus group discussion (FGD), as mentioned by the key informant 4, she felt motivated and lean more towards positive side of life every time she received love and support from the faculty, family, and with her peers. The result and responses showed the important relationship of positive mental and academic performance, especially if students received the love and care they needed. They have the motivation to study, work the tasks, and actively

participate in academic life, even though they went through a bit of depression and anxiety.

Additionally, the result showed depression had a weak but significant relationship with study habits ($r = 0.107$), meaning that students who experienced more depressive symptoms tended to struggle slightly with their studies. However, depression was not significantly related to motivation or engagement. Moreover, anxiety was found to significantly affect both study habits ($r = 0.119$) and motivation ($r = 0.129$), but not behavioral engagement. This implies that while anxious students might still attend and participate in class, they may have internal struggles with focusing and staying motivated. These findings align with earlier research of Otieno, R. A. (2025) states that depression and anxiety are two major parts of predictors of students' academic struggles. Students who are experiencing these mental health issues are likely to lose interest in participating in class, leading to have poor academic performance. The findings has been reflected as well based on the responses of the respondents. Key informant 6 shared that he can't focus, specifically during exams even his participation inside the classroom was affected because of the emotional difficulties he have experienced such as anxiety and depression. Due to this, his relationships from his family and friends were affected as he can't spend more time with them.

The result of the study as well as the responses of the respondents match or support each other, which

proved that depressed or anxious students experienced cognitive and emotional struggle, leading to a negative effect on their studies. Similar to the study of Zeng *et al.*, (2021) stated that anxiety and depression impede the students' focus, motivation, and cognitive function which have contributed to poor academic outcomes.

Mental Health Challenges Faced By the Respondents

This study analyzes focus group discussion (FGD) data to identify key mental health challenges faced by students at NEMSU-Main Campus and to implement a support strategy and intervention adapted to the typical struggles faced by the students in their academic environment.

The data being gathered in this part was systematically analyzed to understand deeply the shared experiences of the students. Data were coded inductively, and five overarching themes were developed through iterative review and pattern recognition. The codes were derived from open-ended questions centered around the shared mental health concerns and experiences of students. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was utilized to identify, analyze, and report the themes.

This thematic analysis brings us to understand deeply into students' lived experiences, exploring emotional turbulence, academic stressors, social and environmental influences, and financial instability that reflect deeper psychological states.

Table 7: Mental Health Challenges Faced by the Respondents

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CODES
Psychological Strain and Mental Well-being Challenges	Emotional Instability and Mood Swings Clinical and Psychosomatic Symptoms Emotional Withdrawal and Disconnection	Numb Stress Anxiety Draining Irritated Insomnia Depression Self-Isolation Skin Condition Difficulty Breathing
Academic-Induced Mental Stress	Performance Pressure Time and Task Overload	Grades Workload Deadlines Procrastination Fear of Failure Scholar Pressure Irregular Student Time management
Environmental and Social Stressors	Faculty Relationships Peer and Social Pressure Family Influence	Peer Pressure High Standards Stress in the Family Social/Self Comparison Social Media Deactivation Unapproachable Instructors
Financial Instability	Financial Strain	Financial Burden Working Students

Theme 1: Psychological Strain and Mental Well-being Challenges

Students face many challenges on their way to achieving academic success. Although others find happiness and growth in their university life, most of the respondents shared some psychological symptoms they have experienced, such as stress, pressure, depression, etc., which negatively affect their mental well-being and academic performance. Agnafors *et al.*, (2021) conducted a study to understand the connection between mental health conditions and academic achievement at different stages of childhood and adolescence. In line with their findings, it was stated that early childhood and adolescent mental health issues may contribute to a drop in academic performance.

This theme reveals a high prevalence of emotional dysregulation among students. The respondents repeatedly mentioned the words draining, stressful, and pressured, which suggests emotional exhaustion, which could be symptomatic of burnout or chronic stress. This issue is consistently echoed in their responses:

(K11) “[clears throat] Um, [clears throat] Um, siguro, um, ano siya, ma'am, like it's like pressuring because, um, not that I am like comparing CTE among to other colleges. It's just like- Mm-hmm. Morag from the shift- from the shift man gud to- and from- from yadton old, um, grading system to zero-based- Mm-hmm ... it was very hard for us to adjust. And, um, honestly, maka-a-affect gyud siya emotionally and mentally because it's pressuring having this kuan na gina had- gi- like mahadlok pud me na ma-re-route or whatsoever. (Ma'am, it's like pressuring because, not that I'm comparing CTE to other colleges. It's just that, from the previous grading system to the zero-based grading system, it was really hard for us to adjust. And honestly, it really affects us emotionally and mentally because it's very pressuring, especially with this fear that we might get re-routed.)”

(K12) “[clacking sound] So, I would definitely say that I encountered these kind, mga negative, ana, feelings. Perhaps 101%. You know, recently... [laughs] I'm only a third year student, right? And expectations are really high and most especially, is sako state personally. And then, naa pay mga group mates nimo, like naa pay family nimo, naa pay environment nimo. And, you know, it's really hard to juggle everything. Most especially na... Ma- Makalaong gayod ako na... I came from a family na, kanang wala giyud naho na-experience and peace. Like ing ana bitaw. Kanang lisuri siya, ang imong mga manghud pag mo uli kaw mag-away. Like, huh? Unsaon mani? (So, I would definitely say that I encountered these kinds of negative feelings, maybe even 101%. I'm only a third-year student, right? And the expectations are really high, especially considering my personal situation. Then you also have your groupmates, your family, your environment, and you know, it's really hard to

juggle everything. Most especially, because I can honestly say that I came from a family where I never really experienced peace. It's hard when you go home, and your younger siblings are fighting. And you're just like, 'Huh? What am I supposed to do with this?")

(K14) “So para sa ako no itong mga emotional difficulties, sa akong na experience is labi na mag tibobibo na among mga himo-unon, mga resulta sa exam yun, stress tapos depression. So maka-affect yan siya labi na sa 'ako daily life. Yan, usahay may time na lutaw na ako yaon wala sa hunahuna na sugoon. Kasakitan noon samot tapos makoan pa gayod. (For me, these emotional difficulties, based on my experience, really come out when there are a lot of things to do, like exam results and school tasks, which lead to stress and even depression. It really affects my daily life. Sometimes, I feel like I'm just floating around, not in the right state of mind to follow instructions. That makes things even more painful, and it gets even worse.)”

(K15) “... Yaka apekto siya sa ako emotional kay ngadi sa school usahay mahimo na ako yaon, manhid, ing ana. Yaon morag permi na ako lagot usahay ma dala ko an ako kuan university life sa bahay. Usahay perme dakan sab ako ngadto mag kuan ma-mairita, mairita sa bahay amo yaon yaka kuan sa ako. Yaka... yaka affect. (It affects me emotionally because here at school, sometimes I feel numb or indifferent. Sometimes I'm always angry, and I bring those emotions home with me, affecting my university life. Sometimes I'm very irritable at home, and it affects me. It really affects me.)”

(K17) “Para sa ako ma'am kay numbed, numbed [clicks tongue] or sharp. Numbed the way nga di nako, di nako ma... [air conditioning] Uh, kuan bitaw, kanang ma-feel or 'di na ko ma-feel ang appreciation sa akong self ba kay tungod sa competency, tungod sa innovation nga nahitabo karun. (For me, ma'am, it's like I feel numbed—numbed [clicks tongue] or sharp. Numbed in a way that I can no longer... I can no longer feel—or I can't feel the appreciation for myself anymore because of the pressure of competency, because of the innovation that's happening now.)”

Students also shared that having experienced strong psychological strain caused them physical conditions, like skin conditions, difficulty breathing, and insomnia, which add to their struggles in their studies.

(K18) “So I experienced all of these so sa kuan siguro nakabelong ko siguro sa anxiety because ko an, ah, diagnose ko kanang insomnia na di ko katulog kanang maglisud kog tulog ba. Tapos how these emotions affected my daily life sa ako daily life ma utro gyud angaku pag ko an sa ako mga buhatonan. Kay lisod gani ilihok kay kapoy akong lawas. Kay wa koy tulog intiro gacie. Tas angaku kuan mabaliktad na gane ako body clock kay ako angako ting kayulog kay morning na. (So I experienced all of these, and I think I fall under

anxiety because I was diagnosed with insomnia, and I really have a hard time sleeping. These emotions affected my daily life a lot. It changed how I do my tasks because it's hard to move when my body feels so tired. I didn't get any sleep the whole night. My body clock has even flipped, now I sleep in the morning instead.)"

(K15) "*Um, ako kay e-experience ko an life-anxiety, depression, stress, sadness and any other kuan-[laughing] ... emotional difficulties. Para tanan-tanan. Um, ya ka apekto ini sa ako daily life nuh, kay perme na ako grumpy, perme na ako lagot, perme na aku usahay ma irita da lamang ako sa gamay na butang. Um, in terms sa relationship, usahay kay murag ya pa-- murag ya min- ya minimize an aku mga relationship in terms sa ako parents, sa friends, ug sa mga cousins ko.* (For me, I've experienced anxiety, depression, stress, sadness, and other emotional difficulties. These really affected my daily life. I was always grumpy, always angry, and sometimes I would get irritated even by small things. When it comes to my relationships, sometimes it felt like they became weaker, like I became distant from my parents, friends, and even my cousins.)"

(K12) "*So, naglisud gyud ko miabot na gyud sa time nga na burn out nako. Unya, ahong health, taga gabi e morag feel nahu nga kahilantanon nako. Unya nag-- nagluya na gyud ko permanente then, ako dili ko open sa ahong parents. Dili nila makita sa ahoa nga naku'y problema kay di gyud naho e-open sa ilaha. Pero deep inside, grabi na gyud ang ahoa na agi-an.* (I really had a hard time; it reached the point where I felt completely burned out. At night, I often felt like I had a fever. I was always tired and weak. I also wasn't open with my parents. They couldn't see that I was going through something because I never told them. But deep inside, I was really going through a lot.)"

(K13) "*so, no, for the-- especially kuman third year kay yaon nay research. So, I have really experienced these, uh, negative emotions, especially stress. Because imagine being stressed then one day maka-get dakan kaw lamang ng condition because of a stress. So, yung ana ang toll ng stress sa ako that I develop a skin condition because of it, which, which is really saddening.* (Since we already have research, I've really experienced these negative emotions, especially stress. Just imagine being so stressed, and then one day, you suddenly develop a health condition because of it. That's how serious the toll of stress has been on me. I even developed a skin condition because of it, which is really sad.)"

The collective voices of the key informants reveal a profound and concerning reality among the key informants, they are experiencing intensified emotional, mental, and psychological distress as a result of systemic pressures, academic demands, and personal challenges. Many students feel emotionally unstable, but they don't always talk about it or get help. The narratives of these

informants serve as a critical wake-up call for educators, administrators, and policymakers. The current academic culture, if left unchecked, may produce graduates who are technically trained but emotionally unwell.

In the study of Gokhan B. (2021), it also indicates that mental health issues among students not only create various challenges but also negatively impact their education. This matches what other studies say about student mental health. McCormick et al., (2024) found one-third of first-year students had needs, but only a few accessed therapy. These insights have significant implications for higher education institutions, particularly colleges of teacher education (CTEs), that aim to produce competent but also mentally healthy and resilient future educators.

Theme 2: Academic-Induced Mental Stress

Students emphasized that college life is fun, but with a mix of experiences of challenges and stress. Psychological pressure and emotional strain experienced by students are a direct result of academic demands. Academic demands mentioned by the students include exams, heavy workloads, deadlines, competitions, requirements, time management, and others. Due to this, academic life, as described, is not a single source of pressure but a converging point for multiple challenges, causing the students to experience mental stress, as reflected in their responses:

(K11) "*Siguro ang ano mam ang the first... the the the the most stressful gayod is ang like ang ang grades that need that we need to meet for us to stay in CTE because it's really hard to murag I maintain siya at the same time um kinahanglan mo kinahanglan pa gayud nimo mag like other responsibilities personal matters and organizational matters mga ing-ana so um most stressful pud ang like ang ang deadlines kay murag pag mag sabay sabay especially kuman bitaw mag sabay sabay na sila murag murag maglibog na kaw unay imo unahon and then pressure. Pressure most mostly mag gikan gayud siya sa mga like, sa sa mga ta mostly sa mga instructors and also sa sa mga tao na yakapalibot sa imo cause sometimes they expect more of you or they expect too much from you which is kapoy baya sab siya e aim.* (I think the first and most stressful thing is the grades we need to meet to stay in CTE. It's really hard to maintain, especially when we also have to handle other responsibilities like personal matters and organizational tasks. Another stressful part is the deadlines. When many deadlines happen at the same time, it gets confusing, you don't know which one to do first. And then there is pressure. The pressure mostly comes from instructors and also from the people around you, because sometimes they expect a lot from you—or even too much. And honestly, it gets really tiring trying to meet those expectations.)"

(K12) "*So para sa ako, the primary sources of stress sa aking academic life are the people around me*

[person sneezes], most especially my classmates, because I am in a classroom where kanang competitiveness really reigns. And you know, I don't foresee that in college, kuan, life, because I expect it to be friendly, to be kanang, to be kanang murag... kanang nindotay bitaw siya, but kanang my expectation is not true sa akong na-experience karun. And then the aspects of my academic responsibilities na most stressful kay ang requirements, most especially during the end of the... of every semesters, wherein every instructors will be giving their respective requirements, wherein every... Each of those requirements requires heavy effort and then you have to meet kanang deadlines with a kanang same deadlines. Nganha gayod ang pinaka s-stressful. (For me, the main source of stress in my academic life is the people around me, especially my classmates. I'm in a classroom where everyone is very competitive. I didn't expect college life to be like this. I thought it would be friendly and nice, but what I'm experiencing now is not what I expected. Aside from that, the most stressful part of my academic responsibilities is meeting the requirements, especially at the end of every semester. That's the time when all the instructors give their requirements, and each task needs a lot of effort. Additionally, it is stressful when all the deadlines are on the same date.)"

(KI11) "So, one of the primary sources of stress in my academic life kay tanan gayud. Like, from thesis to exams to quizzes to being a leader in your group, being a facilitator in your group, um, very stressful gayud since everything is...Nag... Especially right now, kay nag tipo na sila at the same time next week na an mga deadlines. And inin- nag problem ko on how to, to, um, to, to manage my time. (One of the main sources of stress in my academic life is really everything. From thesis, exams, quizzes, to being a group leader or a facilitator—it's all very stressful. Especially now, because all of them are happening at the same time, and the deadlines are already next week. I'm also having a hard time figuring out how to manage my time.)"

(KI13) So it's, uh, financial and the grades that I need to maintain in my college. That is one of the sources of my stress. And then the aspect of your academic responsibility. So this one I can say that it's the dates, the deadlines and the grades. Kasi, as a working student, it's, uh, very hard [speaks foreign language] for me to, to manage my time, especially, kasi kinahanglan mo kasi maging under sa amo mo, so murag lisod gyud kaayo siya apason. (So it's the financial burden and the grades I need to maintain in college, that's one of the main sources of my stress. Then there's also the responsibility that comes with academics. I'd say it's the schedules, the deadlines, and the pressure to get good grades. As a working student, it's really very hard for me to manage my time, especially since I have to follow my boss's schedule. It's really very difficult to keep up.)"

(KI15) "Uh, sa workload siguro mam. Kay an amo sagud usahay sab gud pag-an workload siyam magdungan tanan. So, it's co- it's a ve- very common thing sa as a student, nag workload kay mo dasok. Even though agaw pagahatagan nan- nan- nan project i tag, trabaho mo, but isa dasab, isa da ka subject ta. So, usahay sa isa ka adlaw puno ka subjects so damo gayod. Amoy maka stress isab usahay. (Maybe it's the workload, ma'am. Sometimes, all our tasks come at the same time. So, it's a very common thing for us students to experience a heavy workload. Even if the teacher gives us the project early, we still have to do it with other subjects. That's what makes it stressful sometimes.)"

The collected narratives from key informants highlight a shared reality of academic overload, emotional fatigue, and systemic pressure specifically within the College of Teacher Education (CTE) department. The responses reflect a consistent experience of overwhelming academic demands, competitive learning environments, and challenges in managing multiple responsibilities, all of which significantly impact the mental health and academic performance of pre-service teachers. Similar to the study of Jensen, K. J. et al., (2023), mentioned that cadet students experienced demands of work with a heavy academic workload, leading to a high level of stress and burnout. The pressure to perform well in both work and school matters can be unbearable for students who must balance these responsibilities with personal commitments. Aside from the concerns mentioned above, one of the factors that would cause stress to the mental health of the students is being an irregular student, as reflected in the insights of the student:

(KI12) "[sniffles] Ang primary source sa mga stress is kaning pag ka-irregular naho nga student. Kay lisod i-balance ang tanan nga mao-aapas pa ko ani nga kuan tapos mo adto pako sa isa ka subject nga dili naho kanang ka-classmates. So labi na nga di sila mo-kuan sa ahoa nga: "Uy, mao ni himuunon ako gyud mismo ang mo kuan sa ilaha. (The main source of my stress is being an irregular student. It's hard to balance everything because I have to catch up with certain subjects, and then I also have to attend a class where I don't have the same classmates. What's harder is that they don't usually reach out to me—I'm the one who has to approach them.)"

Additionally, being a scholar student serves as one reason for the student to cause mental health stress as they feel pressure in achieving and maintaining high good grades. This financial-academic tension adds another layer of anxiety as shared by the student:

(KI8) "Oh yes, I feel yeah pressure my pressure gyud ako as in super duper pressure specially, kay I am a scholar student so there is a general general weight average nga ako na maintain para dili ko tan-ngalan og scholarship. (Oh yes, I really feel the pressure, like super intense pressure, especially because I'm a scholar. I have

to maintain a certain general weighted average so I won't lose my scholarship.)"

Overall, these responses paint a vivid picture of the key informants struggling under a system that demands performance but often fails to provide adequate emotional, structural, or logistical support. Adolescents facing mental health difficulties are at a higher risk of struggling in school, especially when it comes to academic performance. Moreover, academic achievement and performance are impacted by mental health in the same way that it affects other significant aspects of life. In the study of Gokhan B. (2021), mental health issues among students not only create various challenges but also negatively impact their education. That is why examining the connection between students' academic success and mental health is essential (Baker et al., 2021). To address this, institutions should improve coordination among instructors to manage student workload, provide mental health and time-management resource, foster a culture of empathy and collaboration and design academic policies that accommodate students' diverse circumstances.

Theme 3: Environmental and Social Stressors

The environment and social setting play a role in shaping students' learning progress and motivation. Students do not exist in isolation; they are deeply embedded within a social network that includes peers, family members, teachers, and the wider school or academic environment. These relationships and surroundings can either support student well-being or act as major sources of psychological distress.

Students shared that they both found positive and negative impacts in their environmental and social factors. They experience happiness and growth, especially when they are together with their peers. However, students emphasized the struggles and challenges they have experienced, which negatively affect their mental health and academic learning and performance.

In this theme, both key informants highlighted that the social and digital environment has a negative impact on their confidence as it paves the way in comparing their selves to others which directly affects their self-esteem and perceived academic competence. These comparisons are often upward, focusing on people who are more successful, intelligent, or accomplished, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, as reflected in their responses:

(K16) "Um, sa ang social media og ang digital world maka-e-affect sia sa ako how I feel about my success, academic success kay um, ako ang type na person na i-compare ko ang myself sa others so pag mang-open ako social media and the other people achieve a lot of things tas ako nastuck ra diri so maka-affect ged siya sa aku-a. Ug um, ah, ini ang usahay

reason na morag mawalan ako motivation para mapadayon kay kuan tungod sa ako mga nakita sa social media um, ug sa digital world. (Social media and the digital world affect how I feel about my academic success because I'm the type of person who compares myself to others. So when I open social media and see other people achieving a lot of things while I feel like I'm stuck, it really affects me. Sometimes, this becomes the reason why I lose motivation to continue, because of the things I see on social media and in the digital world.)"

(K11) "Actually, ya reflect nako akoang answer diri si KI 6, same sa iyaha na everytime nga mag open ko og social media and I saw some people who are very good. kanang very good, then, grabe sila ka achiever na unsa na, na compare nako sa akoa self na tana ing ana pud ko, at the same time tana na, ing ana jud ko ka bright, ing ana ba. (Actually, I can relate my answer to KI 6. It's the same with me; every time I open social media and see people who are really good and very accomplished, I end up comparing myself to them. I start thinking, "I wish I were like that too," or "I wish I were that smart," something like that.)"

The responses reveal how emotionally vulnerable students can be to curated digital content, especially in academic settings where performance pressure is already high. As supported in the study of Chen et al., (2021), emphasized that spending too much time on online platforms per day, alongside a lack of outdoor activities, can trigger depression and anxiety symptoms.

Similarly, students state they have lower motivation and confidence in handling both their academic challenges and achievements every time they feel less support from their family, peers, faculty, and others, as reflected in their responses:

(K11) "O, pero pero yaoy gayod sab iban na faculty ma'am na, like, mm-mm, ingana usahay. [laughs] Dili makasabot, like... Ano ma'am, like, Mm-hmm. Taas iya standard o uno ba? Tas usahay pag- pagmangutana ka o ibalik dasab sa imo ang pangutana, like, gi-pangutana gani kami ma'am, kay libugi. Tas ibalik dasab sa imo ang pangutana. Morag, somehow, dili siya like emotionally, ano, morag emotionally ano sa amo-a. "Oh, but there are some faculty members, ma'am, who are like that sometimes. Their standards are high, and sometimes, when you ask them a question, they throw the question back at you. Like, we asked because we were confused, ma'am, and then they just threw the question back. It's like, somehow, they're not emotionally, you know, emotionally supportive toward us.)"

(K12) "Kanang the pressure na nag constantly kuan sa 'ko push na kanang to achieve something, to perform something, kanang includes the ano, social, social pressures from the people around me, still my family, my friends. (It's the pressure that constantly

pushes me to achieve something, to perform something, that includes the social pressures from the people around me, like my family and my friends.)"

Additionally, students also shared thoughts from their experiences, that high expectations coming from people around them also caused them stress and pressure. In the study of (Jangmo et al., 2019), it highlights that young people often feel pressured to meet societal expectations related to academic success and career development, which increases their vulnerability to anxiety and depression, which also reflected in the responses of the respondents:

(K13) "... also on the long run, it also makes me sad how the people around you expect so much of you just because you were, you were able to do one thing after another and etc.. Like it is really, uh, it is, it makes me unstable in my emotional and mental well-being because as human as we are, we have different kinds of emotions and that we cannot really be as always as, uh, stable. (Also, in the long run, it makes me sad how the people around you start to expect so much from you just because you were able to accomplish one thing after another. It really makes me emotionally and mentally unstable, because as human beings, we have different kinds of emotions, and we cannot always remain stable all the time.)"

(K112) "... too much expectation sa gawas gayud gabi ang mga sulti kay ang mga silingan, Kay kanang ginabantayan ra gyud ang among mga, ko-an, panghitabo. (There are too many expectations from outside, especially the things people say. Our neighbors are always watching what's happening with us.)"

The insights from the key informants highlight how external expectations can become emotionally damaging, especially when tied to a student's past success. These expectations disregard the natural fluctuations in human emotions and capacity, leading to guilt, anxiety, or self-blame when one cannot always meet them. One factor influencing emerging adults' mental health is the transition to college, which lots of stressors can be experience like academic demands, social pressures, unmeet expectations, and even social isolation (Cleary, Walter, and Jackson 2011; Ketchen Lipson et al., 2015; Worsley, Harrison, and Corcoran 2021). This reveals the urgent need for emotional support systems, community education, and a culture shift that values mental health as much as academic accomplishment. Strong social connections with peers, family, among others are essential because they offer not only emotional support but also mentorship and practical advices (De Beer et al., 2022).

Theme 4: Financial Instability

In this theme, students voiced out the struggles they have experienced due to lack of financial support, which cause them stress, especially in managing and

supporting their academic needs. This is evident in the participants' response:

(K18) "So primary sources gayod ng stress sa academic life nato kay kuwarta, financially, kay Maglisod bayan gayod kita pag skwela pag walay kuwarta. Tapos kami layo kami sa amo gi skwelaan from Lingig tapos to Tandag. Tapos mag boarding house pa kami. Kuwerta gyud ang problema sa amo. (The main source of stress in our academic life is really money, financial issues, because it's really hard to study when you don't have money. We're also far from where we study, we're from Lingig and we go to school here in Tandag. On top of that, we have to stay in a boarding house. So for us, money is really the problem.)"

(K113) "Yeah. So do the financial matters, yes. So, nag matter talaga siya sa akin lalo na kapag college kana kasi I'm from Siargao. So pag kadi nako diria, lisod kaayo baydan ang boarding house. So, I ask help sa akoang parents, nag take ako na mag working student nalang ko para at least, at the same time, ma lessen kibali ba ang burden sa financial. (Yeah, financial matters really affect me, especially now that I'm in college because I'm from Siargao. So when I came here, it was really hard to pay for the boarding house. I had to ask for help from my parents, and I decided to become a working student so that, at the same time, I could somehow lessen the financial burden.)"

(K114) "Yes, ma'am. Uh, dili man gayod kami s- uh financially stable nga family so medyo kuan gayod siya, struggling. But at the same time, nag-find ways ko personally to manage labi na kuman sa amo, dakoin gasto kay it's graduating na lagi sa 'no. (Yes, ma'am. Uh, our family is not really financially stable, so honestly, it's a struggle. But at the same time, I've personally been trying to find ways to manage, especially now that expenses are bigger since we're already graduating.)"

*(K115) Uh, yes, mom, definitely. Kay kami isab same sa kan ***** na dili sa kami financially stable... So, somehow gayod maghanap gayod, mag problema sab gayod. Especially ma'am deadline is duoli na, ura-urada, tapos pag-abot sa skwelahan amotan dayon, (laugh) di na kauli. So maka affect to siya ma'am. (Uh, yes, ma'am, definitely. We're also the same as others who are not financially stable... So somehow, we really have to find ways, and it becomes a problem too. Especially when the deadline is near and everything happens all of a sudden. Then when we get to school, we have to contribute right away, and we can't go home anymore. So yes, ma'am, it really affects us.)"*

The participants echoed clearly the burden that financial instability put on their academic journey. Limited access to financial resources not only constrain their ability to meet educational demands such as foods, accommodation, materials, etc., but also generates significant psychological stress. Karyotaki et al., (2020);

Pascoe *et al.*, (2020), add the idea that people experiencing low income, homelessness, migration, or financial difficulties are more likely to suffer from elevated levels of stress and depression. Addressing these financial challenges is thus critical to fostering a more equitable and supportive learning environment.

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, it showed that students in NEMSU-Main Campus experienced different level of mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. Conversely, it was found that most of the students have positive mental health, however, there are also time when they feel down, tired or worried. Students experienced depression some of the time and anxiety often times. Despite this, many students look the brighter side of the situation and had the drive to still worked on their academic tasks, so that they wouldn't fail and could still achieve high grades, as reflected on the Table 1 findings.

The study also revealed that the support from teachers and school programs plays an important role in showing their care and empathy towards students, especially those who had experienced mental health struggles and difficulties. It helps students deal with their mental health issues. However, it is also indicated in the result that the access to professional services like counseling needs to be improved. The result implied neutral, this means that students were unsure or had mixed feelings about whether such services were available or effective. With this, there is a need to improve more the services offered by the school to the students.

It is also indicated in the result that students with better mental health perform better in school. They are more likely to study, feel motivated, and engage in class. On the other hand, students with more mental health issues like depression and anxiety find it harder to study or stay motivated. Additionally, most of the students who had experienced depression and anxiety were primarily because of the college, specifically the department or course where they are enrolled in. This is because each colleges had different expectations or standards that the students experienced, which becomes a source of their depression or anxiety.

With this implications, it is important that the institutions, specifically the teachers, staffs, etc., in a certain department or college must be supportive, understanding, and shows empathy to students, especially if they know that students are struggling so much because of their chosen courses. Therefore, we suggest that the academic institutions, particularly administrators, policy makers, teachers, staffs, etc., review the findings of this study and take into consideration on the recommendations provided by the researchers.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's analysis, here are the recommendations offered by the researchers to help mitigate mental health difficulties experienced by the students and to foster environment that is supportive, safe, inclusive, and nurturing. A place where students feel valued and understood holistically. Through this, it would promote well-being, builds resilience, and empowers students to perform at their best despite the difficulties, specifically mental health challenges they faced.

1. Improve Access to Mental Health Services:

It was found in the result that students remains neutral or unsure with regards to the access of services in the institution. With that, there is a need to improve more the mental health services offered that is easily accessible by all. School should ensure that students are aware of where and how to get assistance and support when they feel anxiety, depression, or even stress. Moreover, counselors or psychologist should be made available on campus and online.

2. Strengthen Support from Teachers and Staff:

Teachers, staffs, and other school personnel are the people students primarily interact with every day. They are the first to observe signs of behavioral changes or mental difficulties that the students may be experiencing. Therefore, they should not disregard what the students feel. They must show that they understand what the students are going through, especially those experiencing mental health struggles and help and guide them to the right support services inside the institution.

3. Expand Mental Health Programs:

Educational institutions ought to maintain and enhance initiatives that support students' struggles and problems. Creating more programs like stress relieving activities, support groups, and mental health week can help students cope better.

4. Pay Attention to College-Specific Needs:

Since it is showed in the result that some colleges contribute to higher levels of depression and anxiety among students, we recommend to each colleges to give more support and special attention in order to lessen academic pressure and improve the learning and teaching environment.

5. Collaborate with Families and Communities:

In order to support students' mental health, families should also be informed and involved. Schools can provide parents with information or presentations to help them better understand their child's needs.

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