

***Psychologically Sound, Academically Round:
Psychological Well-being as a Predictor of Academic Success of College Students***

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Abstract

As the academe transitions back to onsite set-up of teaching and learning, students face not only the challenging nature and amount of course requirements, but also the various educational dynamics including issues on mental health brought upon by the pandemic. Considered as one indicator of an individual's mental health, psychological well-being is associated with relationships, happiness, and academic achievement of students. Adopting a correlational predictive design, the researchers administered the 18-item Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being to third-year college students who are considered academically successful, with semestral general weighted averages ranging from 1.0 to 1.75. To identify the psychological state of well-being amid the modifications of learning delivery, its six dimensions were analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results show that (a) the target respondents have a relatively high level of psychological well-being across six domains, (b) some facets reveal significant correlations with the general weighted averages, and (c) the predictors exhibited relationships, albeit weak, accounting for the 15% of variances in academic success. With the hope to contribute to the holistic development of the students, recommendations to enrich student wellness programs and evaluate academic resources were provided.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Academic Success, Mental Health, Student Wellness

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Introduction

Psychological well-being is one of the most considered factors as the basis of the academic success of every student. In research conducted by York et al. (2015), academic success was defined as inclusive of academic achievement, attainment of learning objectives, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence, and post-college performance. Numerous studies that relate psychological well-being with academic achievement have also been conducted in the past few years. Looking into the study conducted by Cooper (2018), psychological well-being is closely related to other terms for positive mental states, such as happiness or satisfaction which can be achieved through being affected by several factors.

In the study conducted by Udhayakumar et al (2018), it has shown that most of the students were identified as having high levels of positive well-being, anxiety, and depressed mood which means that college students are more prone to psychological well-being problems and are vulnerable to mental health problems. Research conducted by Mustafa et al. (2020) found a significant relationship between psychological well-being and academic achievement, indicating that an increased psychological well-being also increases students' academic achievement. Since studies were limited to only identifying the level of psychological well-being and its relationship with students' academic achievement of students, there is a gap in determining which aspect of psychological well-being significantly affects the student's academic success.

With this, the researchers aim to further explore psychological well-being as a predictor of the student's academic success through posing the following questions:

1. What is the level of psychological well-being of students considered to be academically successful?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the six (6) facets of psychological well-being and academic success?
3. Which facet/s of psychological well-being predict/s academic success?

This study focuses on a population composed of students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), in a private university in Metro Manila for the A.Y. 2022-2023. Examining the curriculum of the various programs in the CAS, it could be observed that the third year has the most major subjects as compared to the lower years and the senior year. Due to the challenging nature and amount of the course subjects at this year level, academic achievement is best measured from the students who received a general weighted average (GWA) of 1.00 to 1.75 during the first semester of the academic year. Other aspects such as emotional, social, economic, and physical well-being of the target respondents were excluded in the context of this study.

Literature Review

The researchers found relations between the current study and the existing published literature. In a study conducted by Alam (2022), results showed that positive psychology is associated with the health, relationships, happiness, and academic achievement of students, which can be interpreted as practicing psychology promotes healthy psychological well-being. Another study conducted by Datu and Lizada (2018) shows that there is a positive association between the state of well-being and students' school engagement. Consequently, Yaghoobi et al. (2019) produced in their study that the positive psychology intervention method had a significant impact on autonomy, environmental mastery, personal development,

positive relationships with others, life purpose, and self-acceptance, which are components of psychological well-being.

A core feature in positive psychology is psychological well-being, which is known to be one of the status indicators of an individual's mental health. The study conducted by Huo (2022), mentioned how psychological well-being is linked to happiness and resilience. Through extensive research, it was discovered that psychological well-being plays a role in the advancement of students in academic performance. In line with this, a study conducted by Cabrera, et.al (2019) shows that college students must have a solid understanding of their psychological well-being and the factors that affect it as this could help them survive in the university setting. It is also highlighted in the paper of McDowall, et. al. (2016), that psychological well-being is a crucial factor for humans to achieve optimal performance. Fully meeting one's life expectations is associated with high levels of overall well-being. Other researchers agree that considering optimal psychological functioning enhances one's quality of life, well-being is seen as a collection of elements that encourage people to work toward achieving their goals (Crous, et al., 2017).

In the study conducted by Charry, et al., (2020), psychological well-being includes a person's subjective, social, and psychological dimensions, as well as health-related actions and routines that give their lives purpose and enable them to reach their full potential. It was also discovered through the study conducted by Mustafa, et al. (2020) which emphasized that the significance of PWB as healthy and prosperous psychological well-being allows students to perform more successfully, which may affect their academic success. Harding, et al. (2019), contributed to this idea when they mentioned that it is important to ensure that students maintain good health and psychological well-being as this helps achieve academic success. This could be understood as healthy psychological well-being, which leads to a more productive performance of students that helps them achieve academic success. In local literature, studies have been conducted addressing the concern of how psychological well-being affects the academic success of learners. According to the study conducted by Tus, et al. (2021), there is a strong connection between psychological health and academic success. This study's findings suggest that most students are self-autonomous, able to uphold strong connections with others, have a distinct sense of purpose and direction in life, and actively pursue ongoing personal growth and development which are the components that make-up psychological well-being.

Throughout the papers mentioned above, psychological well-being has been studied in relation to academic performance. The Ryff Scales of psychological well-being have been used in research to measure the PWB of an individual and relate it to another variable. In a study conducted by Villarosa and Ganotice (2018), the six subscales indicate that the subscales in Ryff Scales are positively correlated with one another. This means that more than one area of psychological well-being could be reflected in an individual. Additionally, the study conducted by Zefi, et al. (2022), discovered through a linear regression analysis that academic success is a powerful indicator of students' psychological health. Results illustrate how academic success is a predictor of pupils' psychological well-being.

Delving into the six subscales included in the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, each facet is observed to be studied in other papers with the purpose of looking into its relationship with the academic performance of students or academically related studies.

According to Patanapu, et al. (2018), students with high Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) levels as measured using the Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II, learn to adapt to challenging circumstances and work hard to succeed academically. The study demonstrated that students with excellent academic percentages also had high levels of PGI. Another study conducted by Shek, et al., (2018) looked at its relationship with personal well-being [growth] and academic success. The results showed that students who reported higher levels of well-being in terms of positive youth development (PYD) abilities reported higher personal progress and higher overall GPAs. These findings revealed the strong ties between personal traits that promote optimal growth and greater academic success.

As cited by Toyota (2015), people who were comfortable with themselves had a positive outlook on other people. This finding indicated that the difference between one's attitude toward oneself and another was influenced by one's internal sense of self-acceptance. Therefore, there is a relationship between self-acceptance and positive relationships with others. Self-esteem is frequently linked to self-acceptance. In the findings of Arshad, et al., (2015), it is determined that self-esteem and academic achievement in university students have a strong positive correlation. In further investigation, a high level of self-esteem is associated with increased chances of academic success.

Looking into how positive relationships with others affect academic success, a study entitled "Relationship between Friends and Academic Performance" (2022) highlights the significance of peer friendships and academic success for adolescents. It was discovered that friendships have a major influence on CGPA; students who consistently study with friends, support one another during academic issues, and work together to advance their education earn higher CGPAs. Thus, friendship as a positive relationship with others has an impact on academic achievement. Since self-acceptance is related to positive relationships, it can be incurred that self-acceptance could also influence academic performance. In a study conducted by Rydell (2019), the students' capacity to build and sustain suitable connections and interactions with peers can have a vital role in predicting academic success. These findings indicated that friends' responses to students' everyday academic challenges and successes contribute to more general perceptions of peer academic support. Therefore, higher academic success was predicted by perceptions of peer academic support.

Similarly, Buka, P. (2015) highlighted the significance of positive teacher-student relationships in promoting academic success. The results show that students who have good relationships with their professors are less likely to skip class, look more cooperative, and appear more interested in what they are studying which leads to academic success. The presence of positive connections with teachers and the experience of a positive school environment can be markers of academic accomplishment.

In the study conducted by Yu, et al. (2023), the findings revealed that the quality of interpersonal relationships was positively and significantly correlated with academic performance. This was observed through the examination of the three relationship types, wherein it was found that the quality of peer relationships between students was most closely related to academic success. Furthermore, a local literature by Sethi, et al., (2020) found that teachers, parents, and peers contribute to the students' academic success. It shows that the student-teacher relationship had the strongest relationship on students' academic performance, motivation, perception on school climate, and GPA.

The goal of a study conducted by Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2022), was to find out if life purpose orientations (purpose in life) directly and indirectly predicted student academic engagement and burnout through their attitudes toward gratitude. Findings indicated that university students who had a strong feeling of appreciation and a work-focused purpose orientation (purpose in life) reported higher academic engagement and less academic burnout. In addition, the study of Guo, Luo, and Tan (2023), revealed that higher purpose in life (specifically goal orientation) was associated with superior academic performance. The results highlight the key role of grit, which is defined by persistence in effort, goal orientation, and belief in beyond the personal self, to college achievement in a long-term oriented culture.

On a different note, a study about women in midlife's environmental mastery and their educational attainment was conducted by Stafford, Deeg, and Kuh, (2016). In their findings, greater environmental mastery skills were discovered in women with lower educational attainment than in those with higher levels. Women with lower educational levels also demonstrated greater environmental mastery achievements than women with higher education levels. Thus, women in their midlife that possess lower educational attainment have developed better environmental mastery compared to women with higher educational attainment.

In the study conducted by Gunes and Alagozlu (2020), their findings showed that neither the academic success of Blended Learning (BL) students nor that of Asynchronous Distance Learning (ADL) students was significantly correlated with either autonomy or motivation. However, if autonomy partnered with motivation, findings show a relationship of positive correlation to academic success. Moreover, Kirsche and Vaiouli (2023) supported this statement as the result of their study also showed that the relationship between academic success and students' autonomy as well as the relationship with motivation was significant and strong. Therefore, it can be inferred that maintaining a good level of autonomy could affect students' academic performance which may lead to obtaining academic success.

Based on Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity, the psychological characteristics of individual students, and their immediate psychological environment influence their educational outcome: cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal (Walberg, 1992). For classroom learning, each of the basic aspects seems to be important but insufficient on its own; hence, all four of these components seem to be at least minimally necessary. Additionally, the necessary elements may compete, compensate, or trade-off for one another with declining rates of return.

According to Walberg (1992), the eleven domains that has influence on the educational outcome of students are mostly socio-emotional influences, which includes classroom management, parental support, student- teacher interactions, social- behavioral attributes, motivational- effective attributes, the peer group, school culture, and classroom climate, of students are within the scope of the facets of psychological well-being. Their Autonomy is to their confidence in their opinions in the classroom climate and peer group, Environmental Mastery is to how they manage their life circumstances is related to their classroom environment and classroom climate, Personal Growth is their ongoing process of development which is through student-teacher interactions and challenges in life, Positive Relations with Others is how they maintain the relationships with their peers, teachers, and family, Purpose in Life is having goals and objective and lastly, the Self-acceptance is how

they perceive themselves in terms of their personality and their view on their academic achievement.

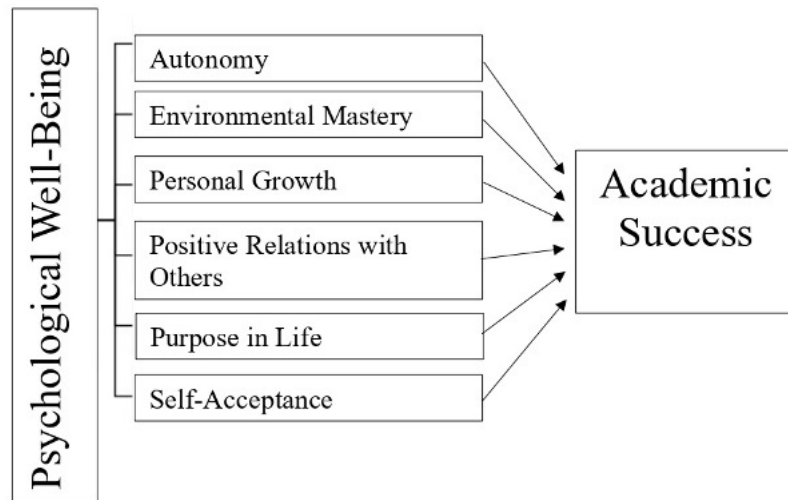


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The figure above illustrates the purpose of investigating whether there is a predictive relationship between psychological well-being and academic success.

The following terms were operationally defined as:

1. *Academic Success* – the general weighted average of students at the end of the term
2. *Autonomy* – pertains to having self-determination and independence; can fend off social influences to think and act in particular ways; controls conduct internally; and assesses oneself in accordance with personal standards
3. *Environmental Mastery* – pertains to having a sense of control and competence in controlling the environment; managing a wide range of external activities and being able to select or create contexts that suit their requirements and values
4. *Personal Growth* – pertains to a feeling that they are still developing, expanding, and growing, and open to new experiences, they see improvement in themselves and their behavior over time, and that they are changing in ways that reflect greater self-awareness and effectiveness
5. *Positive Relation with Others* – pertains to having a relationship with others that are warm, fulfilling, and trusting; cares about others' well-being, and understands the give-and-take nature of interpersonal interactions
6. *Psychological Well-being (PWB)* – the overall result of the six facets characterized by Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance
7. *Purpose in Life* – pertains to having a sense of direction and goals in life, believes that one's present and past experiences have meaning, and has goals and purposes for living
8. *Self-acceptance* – pertains to having a positive outlook on oneself; recognizes and embraces both one's excellent and poor attributes

Methodology

To investigate whether the state of the psychological well-being can contribute to and/or predict the academic success of the student respondents, the researchers made use of a correlational predictive design.

As the first semester of the A.Y. 2022-2023 had transitioned back to a face-to-face set-up of learning, the respondents were selected based on their GWA using a stratified random sampling procedure. The third-year college students were enrolled in the CAS programs including Biology, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration, and Psychology, with a GWA ranging from 1.00 to 1.75. The sample size is 110 students, determined by the statistical analysis software GPower. The statistical test of linear multiple regression was applied, with the effect size $f^2 = 0.1$, the probability of error = 0.05, power = 0.95, and the number of predictors = 6.

The researchers used the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being developed by Carol D. Ryff, an instrument with theoretical underpinnings designed to measure several aspects of psychological well-being. The researchers opted to use the 18-item scale instead of the 42-item scale in which the recorded duration estimate was only three to five minutes. The researchers accomplished a letter of request submitted to the author to obtain necessary permits in administering the paper-and-pen questionnaire in a face-to-face manner. The tool is composed of statements answered by a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). In the study conducted by De-Juanas et al., (2020), they found that PWB and Adulthood Autonomy Scale (EDATVA) scale dimensions correlate significantly and positively. Moderate correlations were found between self-organization of the EDATVA scale, purpose in life ($r = 0.568$; $p = 0.01$), and environmental mastery ($r = 0.447$; $p = 0.01$) of the PWB scale. As well as between autonomy on Ryff Scales and understanding context on the EDATVA scale ($r = 0.382$; $p = 0.01$).

Upon the approval of the college's dean to conduct the research, a copy of informed consent was given to the respondents to brief them about the study's elements. Essential information such as the nature of and purpose of the study, and their right to withdraw from the conduct of the study were discussed. The informed consent form also includes the confidentiality of their personal information, keeping the respondents' anonymity in accordance with the Data Privacy Act. All data gathered from the survey was stored and protected properly in the secured files of the researchers. It was used solely for research purposes, and unauthorized individuals do not have access to it. After it no longer serves its purpose, the accomplished questionnaires and collected information will be disposed of accordingly.

This study employed Jamovi version 2.3.18, to analyze the gathered data from the questionnaire. The scoring of raw scores was based on the five-point Likert scale. Upon transferring the raw data to the Jamovi statistical software, the responses were converted in their numerical equivalent including the reverse-scored items. Descriptive statistics were obtained through computing the mean and standard deviation from the raw scores. The results were organized by each facet of the PWB Scale. The mean from each facet was the basis to determine how high or low was the level of psychological well-being of the respondents. With an alpha level of .05, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to determine whether there was a significant relationship between academic success and psychological well-being. In addition, multiple linear regression was used to analyze the six (6) facets of

PWB to determine whether the subscales are predictors of academic success. The value of each predictor is weighed indicating how it contributes to the academic success of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretations of the data gathered by the researchers.

Subscale	Mean	SD
Autonomy	3.39	0.613
Environmental Mastery	3.26	0.633
Personal Growth	4.29	0.604
Positive Relations with Others	3.6	0.739
Purpose in Life	3.13	0.623
Self-acceptance	3.48	0.537

Verbal Interpretation: 1.00-2.50 = Low; 2.51-5.00 = High

Table 1: Respondents' Level of Psychological Well-being per Subscale

Table 1 shows the mean scores in each subscale and the verbal interpretation based on the arbitrary scaling of the researchers. With the highest possible mean of 5.00, the researchers can infer that all scores fall above the median and are considered 'High.' Looking into the values of standard deviation, the facets have consistent distribution with Personal Growth having the smallest spread among the subscales of PWB.

As seen in the computed data, respondents who are academically successful show that they have a high level of autonomy. They can resist social pressures and personal evaluation of themselves using idealistic standards. From this, it can be interpreted that respondents have a sense of control and competence in managing their environment. They can handle a wide range of external activities, effectively take advantage of opportunities found nearby, and are able to select or create contexts that suit their needs and values. The findings in the study conducted by Gunes and Alagozlu (2020) contradict the interpretation of the current data as it was shown in their study that neither the academic success of blended learning students nor that of asynchronous distance learning students was significantly correlated with their autonomy. Another study conducted by Stafford, Deeg, and Kuh, (2016) showed that women with lower educational levels demonstrated better environmental mastery skills compared to women with higher education levels.

In personal growth, academically successful respondents show a sense of ongoing development, reaching their potential, and a perceived improvement in self and behavior through time. The study conducted by Patanapu, et al. (2018) supports the result as the findings of their study revealed that students with high personal growth have the initiative to learn, to adapt to challenging circumstances, and work hard to achieve academic success. Similarly, the researchers can infer that the respondents have trusting relationships with others and are concerned about the welfare of the people that surround them with their high

level of Positive Relations with Others. They are capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy, as well as understanding the give and take of human relationships. A study about the relationship between friends and academic performance (2022) also supports this statement as the results highlight the significance of peer friendships and academic success for adolescents. It was found that friends support one another during academic issues and work together to advance their education which leads them to achieve academic success.

Respondents' high level of Purpose in Life indicates that they have goals in life and a sense of direction. In line with this statement, a study conducted by Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2022), discovered that University students who reported a keen sense of appreciation and a work-focused purpose orientation or life purpose reported stronger academic engagement and less academic burnout. Having high levels of Self-Acceptance indicates that respondents have a positive attitude towards themselves. They can acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities, and feel positive about past life. A study conducted by Toyota (2015) cited that people who were comfortable with themselves had a positive outlook on other people. Therefore, there is a relationship between self-acceptance and positive relationships with others.

Psychological Well-being Subscale	General Weighted Average
Autonomy	.255*
Environmental Mastery	-.037
Personal Growth	-.148
Positive Relations with Others	.022
Purpose in Life	-.224*
Self-Acceptance	.096

* $p < .05$

Table 2: Summary Correlation Table of the Variables

Table 2 indicates that the p-value of .007 reveals a significant relationship between GWA and Autonomy at the .05 alpha level. The Pearson's r value of .255 indicates a weak positive correlation. The positive direction would constitute that as the autonomy of the respondents increases so will their GWA. This suggests that there are other variables aside from Autonomy that could contribute to academic success.

Looking into the p-value of Environmental Mastery, its p-value of .699 is not statistically significant and seems to be not a good measure of academic success. This is similar to the case of Personal Growth (.123), Positive Relations with Others (.822), and Self-Acceptance (.320). Considering the findings, these facets appear to have no correlation with GWA as the p-values are more than the significance level of .05.

Albeit weak, the facet Purpose in Life with a p-value of .018 emerges to be statistically significant. Due to its negative Pearson's r (-.224), researchers can infer that as the respondents' Purpose in Life increases the GWA decreases. Having no sense of direction or

goals in life has a certain impact on increasing the GWA of the respondents. From a different perspective, taking it one step at a time and not looking too far into the future may be more beneficial in increasing the chances of academic success.

Out of the six facets, there are two subscales with a significant relationship with academic success: Autonomy ($p = .007$, $r = .255$), and Purpose in Life ($p = .018$, $r = .224$). The significant relationship of Autonomy and Purpose in Life to the academic success of the respondents agrees with the study of Tus, et al. (2021), wherein results show a strong connection between psychological health and academic success. Furthermore, Harding, et al. (2019), also mentioned in their study that it is particularly important to ensure that students maintain good health and psychological well-being as this helps to achieve academic success. Healthy psychological well-being leads to a more productive performance of students that helps them achieve academic success.

<i>PWB Subscale</i>	β	t
Autonomy	.286*	3.059
Environmental Mastery	-.050	-0.460
Personal Growth	-.154	-1.450
Positive Relations with Others	.025	0.255
Purpose in Life	-.211*	-2.133
Self-Acceptance	.060	0.603
<i>F</i>		3.03
<i>R Square</i>		.150

* $p < .05$

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression of Psychological Well-being Subscales to General Weighted Average

Table 3 presents that the overall psychological well-being can predict 15% of the variance in the respondents' academic success. This result is similar to the findings of Zefi, et al. (2022), wherein it was discovered through a linear regression analysis that academic success is a powerful indicator of students' psychological health. Results illustrate how academic success is a predictor ($R^2 = 69.9\%$) of pupils' psychological well-being.

Considering the standard coefficients of the predictors, it can be observed that certain facets of PWB contribute to academic success. However, not all subscales are statistically significant at .05 alpha level. While Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, and Self-Acceptance exhibited statistically insignificant results, Autonomy ($p = .003$) and Purpose in Life ($p = .035$) displayed predictive relationships with GWA. In comparison, Autonomy seems to be a more effective indicator of academic success than Purpose in Life. A unit increase in the Autonomy will predict a .286 increase in the GWA whereas a unit increase in Purpose in Life will predict a -.211 decrease in the GWA. In the study of Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2022), Purpose in Life is also correlated with better academic engagement. In addition, it was discovered to alleviate academic burnout. But as the study of Gunes and Alagozlu (2020) indicates that autonomy needs to be partnered with motivation to gain positive correlation results, this study presents that even without the variable of motivation, Autonomy is still statistically significant.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether there is a relationship between psychological well-being and academic success, particularly the predictive value of the six facets of PWB. Results show that the respondents possess a high level of psychological well-being reported through each of the dimensions. Distinctively, Autonomy and Purpose in life exhibited significant correlations to the respondents' GWA. This implies that those who are viewed as academically successful, possess characteristics of Autonomy—having independence, and confidence in their own opinion. This could be observed during school tasks given to them, wherein they require little to no assistance when accomplishing a task, and other people's opinions do not easily influence their way of approaching a certain problem. Also, they are deemed to have a sense of direction and goals in life. They believe that one's present and past experiences have meaning as defined by Purpose in Life. During their academic journey, the students hold a certain goal that they would want to achieve like completing the requirements of their desired program to graduate.

The overall PWB can predict the 15% of variances in academic success. High levels of psychological well-being could reflect good academic performance; however, it is not a direct measure of academic success. Looking into the six domains, it can be inferred that not all the facets have individual predictive abilities except Autonomy with 28.61% and Purpose in Life with 21.12% standardized coefficients.

To support the continuous transition from online, to blended, and back to face-to-face setup of learning, faculty members and administrators are encouraged to sustain a conducive environment for the holistic development of the students. The following recommendations are made to help optimize the psychological state of well-being which is a vital aspect of an individual's health:

- a. Enrich student wellness programs focused on psychological well-being and mental health. In celebration of the Mental Health Awareness Month (October), the institution holds various co-curricular activities promoting wellness in lieu of academic classes.
- b. Evaluate resources and course curriculum to cater to the students' best interests and adapt with the challenging nature and amount of course requirements. Annual articulation between departmental programs reinforces smooth transition across year levels and different learning modalities.

Future researchers may use the current study as a guide to further study psychological well-being and explore other factors that may affect students' academic success. In this light, the findings of the research may differ greatly if conducted with a larger sample and a different version of the Ryff Scales of PWB. To increase the validity and reliability of the study, it is recommended to use the 42-item version of the instrument, employ a probability sampling technique, and conduct pilot testing.

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