

# Factors Causing Psychological Distress among College Students: Basis for Wellness and Resilience Initiatives

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**Abstract:** This study explores the psychological distress experienced by college students in the Philippine context and the coping mechanisms they use. It aims to inform future mental health and wellness initiatives in higher education. Using a qualitative case study design, the research involved 15 purposively selected students from General de Jesus College who scored moderate to high on the Kessler-10 Psychological Distress Scale. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that academic pressure, financial difficulties, family conflict, and social isolation were key sources of distress. These often led to anxiety, fatigue, and reduced academic engagement. Despite these challenges, students employed various coping strategies such as time management, prayer, journaling, peer support, compartmentalization, and seeking professional help. The results highlight that while students show resilience and a sense of competence, their well-being is compromised without adequate institutional support. The study recommends school-based mental health programs, mentoring opportunities, and improved access to counseling services. A limitation of the study is its focus on a single institution, suggesting the need for broader research across diverse student populations and educational settings.

**Keywords:** psychological distress, college, mental health, youth, coping, initiatives, wellness, resilience.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

From school hallways to social adjustments, the pressure to perform, adapt, and cope is ever present. College is a point in an individual's life that leads them closer to reaching their goals and even their full potential, however, while it contributes to advancements in life, it has also materialized to become a source of continuously increasing psychological distress among students. It has transpired as a pressing concern, with increasing numbers reporting symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. It is a significant issue among college students which impacts academic performance, well-being, and overall quality of life.

The academic environment, while intended to foster intellectual growth, can often become a source of intense pressure due to academic overload, social adjustments, financial concerns, and family expectations. Despite numerous studies quantifying the prevalence of mental health issues in student populations, there remains a lack of in-depth understanding of how students personally experience and cope with these challenges. This research seeks to address that gap by exploring the lived experiences of psychological distress and the coping mechanisms employed by college students. The insights gathered will serve as a foundation for developing contextually appropriate resilience and wellness initiatives tailored to student needs, something that many current institutional programs lack. By grounding wellness strategies in actual student experiences, this study aims to promote a more proactive, student-centered approach to mental health support in higher education.

The years an individual spends in higher education is a part of budding adulthood. This phase implies further tasks, performance demands, changes in living conditions, dealing with a new social and educational context. College students enter a crucial transition in many aspects of their lives and these are most of the factors that contribute to their psychological distress. According to studies, the leading source of psychological distress among college or university students is academic pressure. In the same way, it is also influenced by peer context—both pressure and support, which affects their academics, relationships, and daily functioning.

Numerous studies have quantified the prevalence of psychological distress in university populations (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Beiter et al., 2015), yet much of this research relies heavily on quantitative data, often failing to capture the lived realities of students. There is a noticeable gap in qualitative and narrative-based research that explores how students experience distress, how it manifests in their daily lives, and what coping mechanisms they utilize to manage it. Understanding these dimensions is essential for building effective, culturally relevant resilience and wellness initiatives that are grounded in real student experiences.

Considering the aforementioned contexts, the researcher, serving in the capacity of a Guidance Coordinator have decided to conduct this study with the primary objective of coming up with knowledge and understanding of the psychological distress of college students by looking through their lived experiences and understanding how they cope with it. By conducting this study, the guidance coordinator can use research to inform targeted interventions, incorporate globalized content into guidance work, collaborate with stakeholders by presenting the findings to school administrators, parents, and policymakers. The guidance coordinator can also monitor and evaluate resilience and wellness initiatives based on the data that were gathered and continuously refine them to better serve the evolving needs of college students when it comes to dealing with their psychological distress.

## **Related Literature**

### ***Psychological Distress Among College Students***

Psychological distress is defined as a state of emotional suffering typically characterized by symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and stress. College students are particularly susceptible due to the transitional nature of university life, which often includes increased responsibilities, academic competition, and identity formation (Mulaudzi, 2023). Recent studies continue to affirm these findings. For example, Levecque et al. (2022) identified increased mental health concerns post-pandemic among students due to academic disruption and social isolation. Similarly, Lee et al. (2023) emphasize that the surge in digital learning and reduced physical socialization have led to heightened levels of distress among university populations.

A national survey conducted by the Healthy Minds Network (2022) revealed that over 60% of college students in the U.S. met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, highlighting a dramatic rise in distress levels over the last decade. In the Southeast Asian context, Reyes et al. (2021) found that Filipino college students experienced elevated anxiety and depressive symptoms during online learning, with major stressors including poor internet access, lack of interaction, and financial insecurity.

Several studies also highlight the role of social and institutional support. According to Chen et al. (2023), students who felt connected to their campus communities and had access to counseling services reported significantly lower levels of distress. Likewise, Bautista and Lorenzo (2022) observed that positive faculty-student relationships and peer networks can buffer the psychological impact of academic stress.

Despite the growing body of recent research, there remains a limited number of studies focusing on qualitative narratives—especially in Filipino and Southeast Asian contexts. Most findings are derived from structured surveys, which may not capture the complex emotional and sociocultural realities students face. As such, there is a pressing need for in-depth exploration of students' own perspectives to inform more tailored and effective wellness programs.

### ***Factors that Contribute to Psychological Distress***

Studies have consistently identified academic overload, financial pressure, and personal issues as major contributors to student psychological distress. According to Salzer (2018), academic stress is one of the strongest predictors of mental health problems among students, particularly during examination periods or when students feel uncertain about their academic future. Park et al. (2021) emphasize that excessive workload and lack of sleep can trigger symptoms of depression and anxiety, especially in students who lack effective time management skills.

Personal stressors, including romantic relationship issues, low self-esteem, and family conflict, have also been cited as key stress-inducing factors (Gibbons et al., 2022). Moreover, students navigating identity crises or gender-related stress often report greater mental strain, particularly in unsupportive environments (Tan et al., 2023).

From an environmental standpoint, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience distress due to financial instability and limited access to wellness resources. According to a longitudinal study by Smith and Ellis (2023), students who struggle with housing insecurity or food scarcity reported higher levels of chronic stress and burnout.

Additionally, the institutional climate significantly impacts student well-being. Competitive academic cultures, insufficient mental health services, and inadequate student engagement opportunities can compound stress. A study by Johnson et al. (2022) revealed that students in universities with strong mental health support systems and inclusive environments reported lower psychological distress than their peers in less supportive institutions.

### ***College Students as Adolescents***

This developmental stage is marked by significant biological, emotional, and social changes, making adolescents particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges (WHO, 2021).

Recent global data highlights an alarming rise in adolescent mental health concerns. According to the UNICEF State of the World's Children report (2021), nearly 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10–19 is estimated to live with a diagnosed mental disorder. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified this trend, with school closures, isolation, and uncertainty contributing to increased levels of distress (Racine et al., 2021). A meta-analysis by Loades et al. (2021) found that social isolation and loneliness were significantly associated with later mental health problems among adolescents, especially depression.

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to examine the Psychological Distress among college students as basis for resilience and wellness initiatives, the psychological distress levels of Gen Z individuals using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler-10 or K10). Specifically, the study seeks to address the following questions:

1. How may the socio-demographic profile of the respondents be described in terms of:
  - 1.1. Age;
  - 1.2. Sex;
  - 1.3. Year level;
  - 1.4. Monthly family income; and
  - 1.5. Type of family
2. What are the lived experiences of the respondents in relation to the psychological distress they encounter as college students?
3. What are the coping mechanisms employed by the respondents?
4. What initiatives on wellness and resilience could be drawn from the findings of the study?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design and Sample***

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which was chosen to provide an in-depth exploration of the psychological distress experienced by college students and the coping mechanisms they employ. This approach allowed the researcher to understand the nuanced, personal, and context-bound experiences of students in their natural setting, capturing emotions, behaviors, and meaning-making that quantitative methods may overlook. The qualitative case study method was particularly effective in exploring lived experiences—making it suitable for addressing complex mental health phenomena that require detailed and personal narratives.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The research was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. Bronfenbrenner's theory provided a systemic perspective by situating the student within multiple environmental layers—microsystem (family, peers), mesosystem (school-home interaction), exosystem (indirect influencers like institutional policies), macrosystem (cultural beliefs), and chronosystem (life transitions, such as entering college). These levels shaped how students experience and respond to stressors. Lazarus and Folkman's model complemented this by focusing on the students' cognitive appraisal of stress and their coping responses, distinguishing between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies.

### ***Participants and Sampling***

The participants of this study were 15 college students enrolled at General de Jesus College. They were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who scored within the moderate to high psychological distress range based on the Kessler-10 (K10) Psychological Distress Scale. This non-probability sampling technique was used to ensure that only students with relevant and significant experiences of psychological distress were included. These participants were chosen because they could provide rich, firsthand insights into the emotional, academic, social, and environmental pressures affecting their mental health. After the initial screening of 250 students, those who met the inclusion criteria and consented to participate underwent semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility for deeper probing while ensuring consistency across participants.

This design and participant selection process enabled the researcher to analyze how students interpret their challenges and apply coping mechanisms, all within the broader ecological and psychological contexts outlined in the study's theoretical framework.

### ***Data Collection and Instruments***

To effectively explore the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of college students experiencing psychological distress, the data collection process was conducted in two distinct phases: screening and in-depth interviews. The entire data-gathering process spanned approximately one month, from May to June 2025, and was carried out both in person and through secure online platforms to accommodate students' availability and privacy preferences.

The first phase involved administering the Kessler-10 (K10) Psychological Distress Scale, a standardized screening tool used to measure an individual's level of psychological distress. The K10 consists of 10 questions that assess the frequency of anxiety and depressive symptoms over the past 30 days, using a 5-point Likert scale (from "none of the time" to "all of the time"). The purpose of the tool was to identify students who are experiencing moderate to high levels of psychological distress—specifically those scoring 20 or above, as established by prior clinical research guidelines.

The K10 was chosen because of its wide use in mental health studies and its proven reliability and validity across diverse populations. According to studies, the K10 has demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.93) and is effective in identifying individuals who may need further mental health evaluation. Since the tool is publicly available for non-commercial research purposes, it was used without modification but with appropriate citation, and a copy of the instrument is attached as Appendix A.

Students who scored within the target distress range and met other inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the second phase: semi-structured interviews. These interviews were designed to capture the lived experiences, emotional responses, and coping strategies of participants in relation to their psychological distress. The interview guide used was researcher-developed and reviewed by a panel of experts—including a licensed Guidance Counselor and a Registered Psychometrician—to ensure the validity, clarity, and relevance of each question. Pilot testing with one student was also conducted to refine the flow and structure of the questions.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions exploring themes such as sources and triggers of psychological distress, emotional, physical, and social impacts, coping behaviors and support systems, and perceived changes in academic performance and self-concept.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, was conducted in a confidential setting, and was audio-recorded with the informed consent of the participants. Recordings were later transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of student narratives.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was secured. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures in place to protect their confidentiality. Informed consent forms were distributed and collected before proceeding with any data collection activities. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing patterns and key themes to emerge from the participants' shared experiences.

This structured yet flexible data-gathering approach ensured the richness and reliability of the insights drawn from participants, while also respecting their emotional vulnerability and ethical rights throughout the process.

#### ***Data Analysis***

The analysis of the case study followed a structured qualitative approach. First, all interview data were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the participants' voices were captured accurately and without bias. These transcripts were then read repeatedly to allow for deep familiarization with the content and context of each participant's narrative.

Following familiarization, each transcript was summarized using a case study format, highlighting the key events, emotions, and responses described by the participant. This format helped in identifying individual patterns of experience while maintaining the uniqueness of each case.

Lastly, a thematic analysis was conducted. Through a systematic examination of the summarized cases, emerging themes were identified across participants. These themes reflected commonalities in the psychological distress experienced, coping mechanisms employed, and the broader influence of family, academic, and social contexts.

This process ensured that the data remained grounded in participants' lived experiences while allowing for meaningful interpretation and thematic organization.

#### ***Ethical Consideration***

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the conduct of this study to ensure the protection, dignity, and psychological safety of all participants, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic involving psychological distress. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought and obtained ethical clearance. All participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and their rights through a clear and detailed informed consent process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were assured that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Signed consent forms were secured before the administration of the Kessler-10 (K10) Psychological Distress Scale and again before the semi-structured interviews.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used in all transcripts, case reports, and final documentation. No identifying information was disclosed, and all digital files, including audio recordings and transcripts, were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher. Emotional well-being was also a primary concern; interviews were conducted in safe and supportive settings where participants felt free to express themselves. Those who exhibited signs of severe distress were gently encouraged to seek professional help, with referrals available if needed. As a Guidance Coordinator, the researcher ensured an environment of empathy and care during interactions.

Lastly, the integrity of the research process was upheld by maintaining accurate, honest, and transparent reporting of data. These ethical safeguards were integral to the study, reinforcing the commitment to uphold the rights and welfare of the participants at every stage.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Profile of the Respondents***

The majority of the psychologically distressed college students in this study were aged 19 to 24, female, and in their second year. Most came from extended family households and belonged to the lower-middle-income class, with a monthly family income ranging from PHP 21,194 to PHP 43,828. All reported experiencing relatively high or very high levels of psychological distress.

This demographic distribution aligns with existing literature on developmental vulnerability during late adolescence and early adulthood, where heightened emotional and psychological challenges are common (ACHA, 2021). Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood further supports the notion that identity exploration during this period can intensify emotional instability.

The female majority reflects both the gender composition of the academic programs sampled and global patterns indicating that women are more likely to report internalizing symptoms and engage in emotion-focused coping (Zhang et al., 2024; Jose del Pino & Matud, 2024). Financial strain also emerged as a critical factor, consistent with findings that students from lower-income families experience more stress due to academic expenses, caregiving roles, and limited access to support services (Patel et al., 2018; Fernandez et al., 2022).

Additionally, most participants lived in extended family households, which—while potentially supportive—can also introduce role conflicts, lack of privacy, and increased emotional burden (Reyes et al., 2023; Alampay et al., 2024). These intersecting age, gender, socioeconomic, and family factors provide vital context for understanding the psychological distress reported by students and point to the need for holistic, contextualized mental health interventions.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents**

<b>Socio-demographic Profile</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
17 – 20 years old	10	66.67%
21 – 24 years old	5	33.33%
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	12	80%
Male	3	20%
<b>Year level</b>		
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	10	66.67%
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	5	33.33%
<b>Monthly family income</b>		
Lower than 21, 194	1	6.67%
PHP 21, 194 to 43, 828	13	86.67%
PHP 43, 829 to 76, 669	1	6.67%
<b>Type of family</b>		
Nuclear family	5	33.33%
Extended family	10	66.67%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Legend:* f = frequency, % = percentage, Rank = ranking of response

***Lived Experiences in relation to the Psychological Distress they Encountered***

This study explored the lived experiences of college students undergoing psychological distress, revealing interconnected academic, emotional, social, and familial stressors.

A dominant theme was **academic pressure**, frequently described as overwhelming and emotionally draining. Students reported high expectations, tight deadlines, and the fear of failure—factors that triggered anxiety, insomnia, and diminished motivation. Xie et al. (2024) identified academic stress as a top predictor of depression among Asian students, especially when tied to institutional and parental expectations. Pascoe et al. (2020) similarly emphasized academic overload as a primary cause of psychological distress in university contexts.

Another significant theme was **emotional overload**, marked by frequent breakdowns, sleep disturbances, and fatigue. These symptoms reflected poor emotional regulation, a finding supported by Beiter et al. (2015), who found that college students experiencing emotional dysregulation face reduced concentration and academic performance. Emotional suppression, particularly following emotional invalidation from peers or family, emerged as a key aggravator. According to the APA (2024), such invalidation often leads to withdrawal and deeper emotional suffering.

**Social exclusion and loss of belonging** also contributed to distress. Students who lacked meaningful peer connections reported anxiety and demotivation, particularly in academic settings. Dost (2025) noted that a strong sense of belonging significantly predicts student motivation, mental health, and engagement. Dong et al. (2024) further found that students with stronger social support systems demonstrated more adaptive coping strategies when facing academic and personal stressors.

**Internalized academic pressure** was evident among high-achieving students who imposed strict standards on themselves, resulting in perfectionism and fear of failure. Zoloth (2023) found that fear of failure leads to disengagement or academic avoidance, while Cowie et al. (2018) linked perfectionistic self-presentation to chronic stress, anxiety, and imposter syndrome. Though some students maintained strong academic identities, many expressed a loss of motivation and joy in learning—despite continuing to perform.

**Family expectations and economic strain** also surfaced as key contributors to distress. Students from extended or low-income households described balancing caregiving roles, financial responsibilities, and household demands. In the Philippine context, Reyes et al. (2023) and Dela Rosa & Panganiban (2022) observed that students in multigenerational homes often struggle with privacy, space for studying, and conflicting responsibilities. This aligns with the cultural pressure of *utang na loob* and the expectation to contribute to family welfare. Fernandez et al. (2022) also emphasized that financial insecurity compounds psychological distress by limiting access to resources and increasing emotional burdens.

**College transition difficulties** added another layer of stress. Respondents struggled with adjusting to increased academic load, summer classes, and social disconnection. Dangi & Mittal (2023) highlighted that students often face simultaneous academic, social, and emotional changes during the transition to college, leading to heightened distress.

Most concerning were the reports of **suicidal ideation and self-harm behaviors**, which, while not acted upon, indicate deep emotional conflict. Cohen et al. (2024) found that nearly 40% of distressed students reported self-harm, with a significant portion citing personal and academic problems as root causes. The World Health Organization (2023) also identified problem-solving deficits and interpersonal tensions as key predictors of youth suicide.

In conclusion, the findings illustrate how psychological distress among college students is shaped by a confluence of academic overload, emotional invalidation, family obligations, and social disconnection. While many respondents demonstrated resilience and continued engagement with their studies, their narratives reflect an urgent need for institutional interventions that prioritize emotional regulation, mental health literacy, and accessible support systems. These insights emphasize that addressing psychological distress in higher education requires both structural change and culturally attuned psychosocial support.

#### ***Coping Mechanisms Employed by the Respondents***

The respondents employed a range of coping mechanisms to manage psychological distress resulting from academic pressure, social exclusion, anxiety, and personal loss. These strategies reflected both adaptive and maladaptive responses, shaped by personal resilience, environmental factors, and access to support systems.

Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the findings show that students did not merely react to stressors but actively appraised and responded to them based on perceived control and available resources. Adaptive strategies included seeking social support, engaging in religious or spiritual practices, participating in hobbies, and using time management or problem-solving techniques. These reflect both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, where students directly addressed stressors or regulated their emotional responses.

Spiritual coping and creative engagement, in particular, were prominent. These findings align with Pascual et al. (2023), who noted that students under academic stress often use a combination of behavioral and cognitive strategies, including faith-based and task-oriented methods, to maintain well-being. Similarly, respondents in this study described activities like journaling, prayer, or immersion in schoolwork as outlets for emotional processing.

However, the study also found evidence of maladaptive coping, such as emotional suppression, avoidance, and social withdrawal. While these responses may offer temporary relief, they risk exacerbating long-term psychological distress. This aligns with Orines et al. (2023) and Ravindran et al. (2019), who found that maladaptive coping correlates with diminished psychological well-being and lower life satisfaction.

Despite these challenges, many students exhibited signs of resilience and meaning-making—reflecting higher-order coping processes such as cognitive reframing, self-reflection, and spiritual grounding. These internal strategies enabled some to reinterpret adversity, reaffirm goals, and maintain hope amid chronic stressors.

In summary, the coping behaviors observed in this study support the view that student well-being depends not only on the presence of stressors but also on the quality of coping strategies employed. The diversity of responses underscores the need for institutions to foster adaptive coping through wellness programs, mental health literacy, and accessible support systems. Promoting effective coping and resilience is essential to sustaining students' emotional health and academic functioning.

### *Wellness and Resilience Initiatives*

The Wellness and Resilience Initiatives that will be proposed reflect a comprehensive and holistic approach to nurturing the psychological well-being of students within an academic institution. Central to these initiatives is the **Listening with Compassion Program**, which aims to empower faculty, staff, and student leaders to respond empathetically to students in distress through training in active listening and trauma-informed care. The implementation of peer support units and the establishment of safe “listening booths” on campus are expected to foster a culture of openness, early intervention, and strengthened peer networks.

Meanwhile, **Wellness Days** provide regular mental health breaks and self-care opportunities through non-academic days filled with wellness activities and expert-led sessions. Held every last Friday of the month, these days are intended to reduce burnout, promote emotional recharge, and improve academic focus.

The initiative for **Strengthened Counseling Services** enhances mental health support by increasing the number of licensed counselors, offering flexible booking options, and conducting regular check-ins for at-risk students. Through year-round access and anti-stigma campaigns, this component seeks to normalize counseling, encourage help-seeking, and ensure timely crisis response.

**Non-Curricular Wellness Activities**, such as hobby clubs and volunteer work, promote creativity, social engagement, and holistic development. Scheduled quarterly, these activities help students find meaning and connection beyond academics, which is crucial in reducing emotional fatigue and social isolation.

Lastly, the **Open Conversations on Mental Health** initiative brings mental health into public discourse through monthly forums, awareness campaigns, and a focused celebration during Mental Health Awareness Month in October. This initiative works toward breaking stigma, enhancing mental health literacy, and empowering students to speak up and seek help.

Collectively, these initiatives offer a proactive framework for fostering resilience, emotional expression, and psychological safety within the student body. Their success lies in the coordinated involvement of various stakeholders—including guidance personnel, mental health professionals, faculty, and students—and the intentional integration of mental health into everyday campus life.

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the wellness and resilience initiatives, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will be integrated into each program. This will begin with regular feedback mechanisms such as surveys, reflection forms, and small focus group discussions to gather participants’ experiences and suggestions. Utilization data—including the number of students attending workshops, accessing counseling services, and joining wellness events—will be systematically tracked to assess engagement levels. Pre- and post-assessments may be employed to measure changes in students’ stress levels, coping skills, or emotional well-being over time. For students identified as at-risk, structured follow-ups will be scheduled by the guidance office to monitor progress and provide continuous support. In addition, all initiatives will undergo an annual program review, wherein qualitative and quantitative data will be compiled into a report by the wellness committee and guidance personnel. This review will serve as a basis for revising strategies, addressing gaps, and aligning future programs with the evolving needs of the student body.

## **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study revealed that lower-middle-income college students, mostly female and aged 19 to 23, experienced high levels of psychological distress due to academic pressure, family expectations, unresolved trauma, and social isolation. Despite diverse family backgrounds and roles such as being eldest siblings or student leaders, they commonly felt misunderstood and emotionally burdened. Their coping strategies ranged from adaptive practices like journaling, prayer, and peer support to internalized methods such as suppression and avoidance, reflecting both resilience and vulnerability. The findings underscore the need for inclusive mental health initiatives that create emotionally safe spaces, promote peer and professional support, and foster culturally sensitive approaches to resilience, allowing students to navigate challenges without fear of stigma.

Educational institutions must adopt a data-informed, trauma-sensitive, and holistic approach to student well-being, recognizing the diverse socioeconomic and familial backgrounds that shape learners’ mental health. This includes establishing student profiling systems to identify risk factors and guide targeted interventions, fostering trauma-informed environments through confidential feedback mechanisms and empathetic teacher training, and embedding coping skills education into the curriculum. Equally essential are accessible counseling services, flexible policies for emotionally distressed students, and strong school-family partnerships. To ensure lasting impact, schools must institutionalize comprehensive wellness and peer support programs, backed by policy, funding, and continuous monitoring rooted in students’ lived experiences.

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