

Personality Traits and Stress Levels Among Filipino College Students: The Mediating Role of Peer Support

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Abstract. Students in Philippine higher education experience multiple stressors shaped by academic demands, family expectations, and sociocultural values rooted in collectivism. Within this context, personality traits and peer support play important roles in influencing stress experiences. This study examined the relationship between personality traits and stress levels, with peer support as a mediating variable among Generation Z students. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 100 student.. Standardized instruments, including the Big Five Inventory (BFI-10), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), were utilized to measure the key variables. Results indicated that students exhibited moderate levels of personality traits and stress, and high levels of peer support. Significant positive relationships were found between personality traits and stress levels, as well as between personality traits and peer support. However, no significant relationship was observed between peer support and stress levels. Mediation analysis further revealed that peer support did not significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and stress. These findings suggest that personality traits have a direct influence on students' stress experiences, while peer support, although present and strong, may not be sufficient to buffer stress effectively in this context. Implications support the development of targeted mental health interventions aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), emphasizing resilience, coping strategies, and holistic student support.

Keywords: Collectivist Culture; Mediation; Peer Support; Personality Traits; Stress Levels

Introduction

In the Philippine higher education context, students navigate a complex set of demands that extend beyond academic requirements, including family expectations, financial constraints, and strong social obligations. These pressures are particularly evident in institutions such as PHINMA Union College of Laguna, where students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds must continuously balance personal and academic responsibilities. Filipino cultural values such as *pakikisama* (maintaining harmonious relationships), *bayanihan* (collective support), and *utang na loob* (sense of indebtedness) shape how students respond to these challenges, often encouraging reliance on others rather than purely individual coping. This relational orientation is especially relevant among Generation Z students, who increasingly maintain peer connections through both face-to-face and digital interactions, further influencing how support systems are formed and utilized. Thus, understanding students' stress experiences requires a culturally and socially grounded perspective.

Two key psychological factors that shape these experiences are personality traits and stress levels. Personality traits influence how individuals perceive challenges, regulate emotions, and interact with others. According to Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa Jr. (2010), traits such as conscientiousness are associated with self-discipline and persistence, while other traits, such as neuroticism, are linked to emotional instability. In the Filipino context, however, personality is often expressed within social expectations, where behaviors are guided by cooperation, sensitivity to others, and the maintenance of interpersonal harmony. This suggests that personality does not operate in isolation but within a broader social environment.

Stress, on the other hand, is shaped by both individual perception and contextual realities. Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) described stress as a process that depends on how individuals appraise and respond to situations. Among Filipino students, stress is often associated not only with academic workload but also with family responsibilities and financial pressures (Dy & Andres, 2018). The expectation to meet

familial obligations can intensify emotional strain, making stress a multidimensional experience influenced by both personal and socio-cultural factors.

Despite these challenges, students do not experience stress in isolation. Peer support plays a crucial role in shaping how stress is managed. In a collectivist culture like the Philippines, social connectedness is highly valued, and students frequently rely on peers for emotional reassurance, advice, and shared coping. Research by Kathryn R. Wentzel and David Watkins (2002) and Bernardo (2008) highlights that peer relationships are central to students' adjustment and well-being. With the rise of digital communication among Generation Z, peer support is no longer confined to physical spaces but is continuously maintained through online platforms, further strengthening its role in students' daily lives.

The buffering effect of social support is explained by Sheldon Cohen and Thomas A. Wills (1985), who proposed that strong support systems reduce the negative effects of stress. Empirical studies support this claim, showing that students with higher perceived peer support experience lower stress levels and more adaptive coping strategies (Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Punzalan, 2019). At the same time, personality traits influence how individuals experience stress and utilize peer support. Connor-Smith and Flachsbart (2007) found that individuals high in neuroticism tend to experience higher stress, whereas those high in conscientiousness demonstrate more effective coping. This indicates that peer support may function as a mediating mechanism through which personality traits influence stress levels.

While existing studies have established the importance of personality traits, stress, and peer support, they are often examined separately. There remains limited research in the Philippine higher education context that investigates how peer support mediates the relationship between personality traits and stress levels. This gap is particularly important in a collectivist society, where social relationships play a central role in coping processes. Addressing this gap allows for a more integrated understanding of students' psychological experiences within their cultural context.

In response, this study examines how personality traits influence stress levels, with peer support serving as a mediating variable among students at PHINMA Union College of Laguna. This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which emphasizes the promotion of mental health and emotional resilience. By identifying the role of peer support in managing stress, the study contributes to the development of interventions that strengthen social support systems, promote psychological well-being, and create more supportive educational environments for students.

Research Questions

This study aims to examine the relationship between personality traits and stress levels, with peer support as a mediating variable among students.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Personality traits;
 - 1.2 Perceived level of peer support; and
 - 1.3 Level of stress?
2. Is there a significant relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between personality traits and peer support among students?
4. Is there a significant relationship between peer support and stress levels among students?
5. Does peer support significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on examining the relationship between personality traits and stress levels, with peer support as a mediating variable among students. Specifically, the research investigates how the Big Five personality traits influence perceived stress and whether peer support explains (mediates) this relationship. The study is limited to 100 Generation Z students aged 15–22 years old enrolled at PHINMA Union College of Laguna during the second semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design is employed, utilizing standardized instruments such as the Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) to measure personality traits, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) for stress levels, and selected items from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) to assess peer support. The scope of the study is confined to the measurement of three variables: personality traits (independent variable), stress levels (dependent variable), and peer support (mediating variable). It specifically examines the statistical relationships among these variables using correlation and mediation analysis. Furthermore, the study is grounded within the Philippine higher education context, particularly reflecting the socio-cultural characteristics of Filipino students. However, several delimitations are recognized. First, the study only

includes students from a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other universities or cultural contexts. Second, the sample size is relatively small and restricted to selected respondents using stratified random sampling. Third, the study relies solely on self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias such as social desirability or inaccurate self-perception. Fourth, only peer support is examined as a mediating variable, excluding other possible influencing factors such as family support, emotional intelligence, coping strategies, or socioeconomic status. Finally, the study adopts a cross-sectional design, meaning it captures data at a single point in time and does not establish causal relationships. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the interaction between personality, stress, and peer relationships among Filipino college students.

Literature Review

Personality Traits and Stress Levels

Personality traits play a crucial role in shaping how students perceive and respond to stress. Under the Five-Factor Model, traits such as neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness influence emotional regulation and coping behaviors. Recent studies have shown that neuroticism is positively associated with higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, whereas conscientiousness and extraversion are linked to lower stress levels and better psychological adjustment (Wang et al., 2022). These findings indicate that personality traits significantly determine how individuals manage stressful situations.

Similarly, studies conducted in the Philippine context reveal that personality traits influence students' coping behaviors and stress experiences. Datu et al. (2021) found that Filipino students' personality traits, particularly conscientiousness and emotional stability, are associated with better coping mechanisms and lower stress levels. Alampay et al. (2020) further emphasized that Filipino adolescents' emotional regulation and personality development are shaped not only by individual traits but also by social relationships and cultural expectations. Within the collectivist culture of the Philippines, personality traits are often expressed through behaviors that prioritize interpersonal harmony and social connectedness. These findings suggest that personality traits, when examined within a cultural framework, provide a deeper understanding of students' stress experiences.

Stress Among Students in Higher Education

Stress remains a significant concern among students in higher education institutions. It is influenced by academic demands, financial pressures, social expectations, and personal responsibilities. Fang et al. (2025) described student stress as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by both environmental and psychological factors. This supports the idea that stress depends not only on external pressures but also on how individuals perceive and cope with stressful situations. In the Philippine setting, stress among students is further intensified by socio-economic challenges and strong family expectations. Dy and Andres (2020) revealed that Filipino college students commonly experience stress due to financial difficulties and family obligations. Similarly, Bernardo et al. (2021) found that academic-related stress among Filipino students is closely associated with pressure to fulfill familial expectations, reflecting the collectivist orientation of Filipino culture. These findings demonstrate that stress among Filipino students is influenced by both academic and socio-cultural factors, making stress management an important concern within higher education institutions.

Peer Support and Student Well-being

Peer support has been recognized as an important factor in reducing stress and promoting student well-being. Social support from peers provides emotional comfort, guidance, encouragement, and practical assistance that help students cope with stress. Wang et al. (2022) found that higher levels of perceived peer support are associated with lower levels of stress and burnout among students. This suggests that supportive peer relationships contribute positively to emotional adjustment and psychological well-being. In the Philippine context, peer support plays an even more significant role because of the strong emphasis placed on interpersonal relationships and social connectedness. Punzalan (2021) reported that Filipino students heavily rely on peer support as a primary coping mechanism for stress. Similarly, Cruz and Torres (2022) found that positive peer relationships significantly contribute to students' emotional well-being and resilience. Reyes et al. (2023) further highlighted that digital peer interaction among Filipino students strengthens social support systems by making emotional support more accessible through online communication platforms. These findings underscore the cultural relevance of peer support in the Philippines and highlight its importance in helping students manage stress and maintain psychological well-being.

Interrelationship of Personality Traits, Stress, and Peer Support

Recent literature highlights the interconnected relationship among personality traits, stress, and peer support. These variables interact in complex ways that influence students' psychological experiences and coping behaviors. Wang et al. (2022) found that personality traits, stress, and social support collectively influence student well-being, with social support functioning as a protective factor against stress. Studies conducted in the Philippine context further support this relationship. Datu and Mateo (2022) found that Filipino students' personality traits influence how they seek, perceive, and utilize social support, which in turn affects their stress experiences. Likewise, Reyes et al. (2023) reported that peer support helps buffer the negative effects of stress among Filipino students, particularly when strong interpersonal relationships are present. Garcia and Estanislao (2022) also found that strong peer relationships are associated with lower stress levels among Filipino college students. Furthermore, Santos et al. (2021) emphasized that culturally responsive support systems are essential in addressing students' mental health needs within Philippine higher education institutions. The reviewed studies suggest that personality traits influence students' stress experiences both directly and indirectly through social relationships and peer support systems. However, despite the growing body of literature examining these variables separately, limited studies in the Philippine context have explored peer support as a mediating variable in the relationship between personality traits and stress levels. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how peer support explains the relationship between personality traits and stress among Filipino students.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between personality traits and stress levels, and to determine the mediating role of peer support among students. This approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to measure variables numerically and analyze the degree and direction of relationships among them as they naturally occurred, without manipulation. Specifically, the design enabled the identification of associations between personality traits and stress levels, as well as the examination of whether peer support significantly mediated this relationship. A descriptive-correlational design was particularly suitable for this study because it not only described the levels of the key variables—personality traits, peer support, and stress levels—but also determined the relationships among them. This aligned directly with the objectives of the study, which included assessing variable levels, testing relationships, and examining mediation effects. Furthermore, the use of quantitative methods allowed for statistical analysis, such as correlation and mediation analysis, which were essential in testing the proposed conceptual framework. Moreover, unlike purely descriptive research, which only provided information about the characteristics of variables, the correlational approach allowed for the examination of relationships and predictive patterns among variables. This was particularly important in this study, as it sought to understand not only whether personality traits and stress levels were related, but also how peer support explained or influenced this relationship. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), correlational research was appropriate when the goal was to measure the degree of association among variables and to explore potential predictive relationships without manipulation.

Sampling Design

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of students across different year levels. The population was first grouped according to year level, and respondents were proportionally selected from each group. Within each stratum, participants were chosen through a random selection process to minimize selection bias and ensure that each student had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. This sampling method enhanced the representativeness of the sample and strengthened the validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Despite these strengths, certain limitations were acknowledged. Although stratified random sampling improved representation within the institution, the findings of the study may not be generalized beyond PHINMA Union College of Laguna because the respondents were limited to a specific population and setting. Additionally, possible sampling bias may still occur due to voluntary participation and non-response, as students who participated may differ from those who did not, particularly in terms of stress experiences and social engagement. These limitations were considered in interpreting the results of the study.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at PHINMA Union College of Laguna (UCL), a private higher education institution located in the province of Laguna, Philippines. The institution offers various academic programs and caters to a diverse population of students coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. PHINMA Union College of Laguna was chosen as the research locale because it provides an appropriate setting for examining students' personality traits, stress levels, and peer support within a real academic environment. The students in this institution experience various academic, social, and personal challenges, making them suitable respondents for the study. Additionally, the college reflects the characteristics of Filipino higher education, where cultural values such as *pakikisama*, *bayanihan*, and *utang na loob* influence students' interpersonal relationships and coping mechanisms.

Research Participants

The population of this study consisted of students aged 15–22 years old, belonging to Generation Z, who were currently enrolled at PHINMA Union College of Laguna during the second semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. This group was considered appropriate for the study because students within this developmental stage commonly experience academic stress, personality development, and strong peer interaction, which are relevant to the variables being examined. A total of 100 students were selected as respondents of the study. According to Hair et al. (2019), a sample size of at least 100 respondents is considered acceptable for correlational and regression-based quantitative analyses. Similarly, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) suggested that a sample size of 100 or more is adequate for identifying relationships among variables in correlational research. Thus, the selected sample size was considered sufficient for conducting correlational and mediation analyses in the present study.

Research Instrument

The data for this study were collected using standardized questionnaires to ensure accuracy, consistency, and reliability in measuring the variables of interest, namely personality traits, stress levels, and peer support. The use of established instruments was appropriate for this study as it allowed for valid comparisons and ensured that the constructs were measured using tools with proven psychometric properties. Personality traits were measured using the Ten-Item Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) developed by Beatrice Rammstedt and Oliver P. John. This instrument assessed the five major dimensions of personality: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The BFI-10 demonstrated acceptable reliability, with reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.45 to 0.75 due to its brevity, and showed good construct validity across different cultural contexts (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Stress levels were assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Sheldon Cohen, Tom Kamarck, and Robin Mermelstein. This instrument measured the degree to which individuals perceived situations in their lives as stressful. The PSS-10 demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.78 to 0.91, and was widely validated in various populations, including students (Cohen et al., 1983). Peer support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Gregory D. Zimet and colleagues. This instrument evaluated perceived social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. For the purpose of this study, items specifically related to peer or friend support were utilized. The MSPSS demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.92, and strong construct validity across different cultural groups (Zimet et al., 1988). To ensure contextual relevance, minor adaptations were made to the instruments, such as simplifying language and aligning items with the local educational setting of PHINMA Union College of Laguna. The adaptation process followed standard procedures, including content validation by experts in psychology or education and pilot testing among a small group of students to assess clarity and comprehension. Any modifications were carefully implemented to preserve the original meaning and structure of the instruments. In terms of local validation, previous studies conducted in the Philippine context utilized similar instruments and reported acceptable levels of reliability and validity. However, to ensure the suitability of the instruments for the current sample, a pilot test was conducted, and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was computed for each scale. This step ensured that the instruments remained reliable and valid within the specific cultural and institutional context of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process for this study was conducted systematically to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and ethical integrity of the data collected. During the preparation phase (Week 1–2), a formal request letter was submitted to the administration of PHINMA Union College of Laguna to secure permission to conduct the study. Upon approval, coordination with relevant offices, such as the registrar or program heads,

was carried out to identify the target respondents based on the study's sampling design. Standardized questionnaires, including the BFI-10, PSS-10, and MSPSS, were prepared and adapted to ensure clarity and suitability within the local context, followed by a pilot test among a small group of students to assess reliability and clarity. In the data collection phase (Week 3–4), the finalized questionnaire was distributed to selected respondents through an online platform such as Google Forms, with an informed consent form included at the beginning to explain the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data privacy. Respondents were given clear instructions and an appropriate time frame of three to five days to complete the survey, and follow-up reminders were sent to improve response rates and ensure adequate sample representation. During the data processing phase (Week 5), collected responses were reviewed for completeness and consistency, with incomplete or invalid responses excluded based on predefined criteria. The cleaned data were then encoded and organized using statistical software such as Excel or SPSS in preparation for analysis. Overall, the structured data gathering procedure ensured that the collection of information on personality traits, stress levels, and peer support was conducted in an organized, ethical, and systematic manner, enhancing the reliability and validity of the results while ensuring the efficient completion of the research process.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the profile of the respondents in terms of Personality traits, Perceived level of peer support, and Level of stress?

Table 1. Level of Personality Traits, Stress Levels, and Peer Support Among Students

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Personality Traits	3.26	0.33	Moderate
Stress Levels	2.18	0.48	Moderate
Peer Support	5.29	1.39	High

Table 1 presents the level of personality traits, stress levels, and peer support among students. The findings revealed that personality traits obtained a mean score of 3.26 with a standard deviation of 0.33, interpreted as moderate. This indicates that the respondents generally exhibit balanced personality characteristics across the dimensions measured in the Big Five Personality Model. Stress levels obtained a mean score of 2.18 with a standard deviation of 0.48, which is also interpreted as moderate. This suggests that students experience a manageable level of stress in their academic and personal lives. The result may reflect the common pressures experienced by students, including academic demands, family expectations, and social responsibilities. Meanwhile, peer support obtained the highest mean score of 5.29 with a standard deviation of 1.39, interpreted as high. This indicates that students generally perceive strong emotional and social support from their peers. The finding highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships among students, particularly within the Filipino collectivist culture where social connectedness and peer interaction are highly valued. The results imply that although students experience moderate stress, they tend to receive strong support from peers, which may contribute positively to their coping mechanisms and emotional well-being. This finding is consistent with Garcia and Estanislao (2022), who found that Filipino students generally report strong peer support despite experiencing moderate levels of academic stress.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students?

Table 2. Relationship Between Personality Traits and Stress Levels

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Personality Traits and Stress Levels	0.218	0.007	Significant Positive Relationship	Reject Ho

Table 2 presents the relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient revealed an *r-value* of 0.218 with a *p-value* of 0.007, which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings indicate that personality traits are significantly associated with students' stress levels. This means that students' personality characteristics are significantly associated with their stress experiences. Certain personality traits may influence how students perceive, interpret, and respond to stressful situations. The result supports the Five-

Factor Theory of Personality proposed by Robert R. McCrae and Paul Costa, which explains that personality traits influence emotional responses and behavioral patterns. Students with certain personality traits may be more vulnerable or resilient to stress-related experiences. The findings are also consistent with the study of Wang et al. (2022), which reported that personality traits significantly affect students' stress and emotional adjustment.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between personality traits and peer support among students?

Table 3. Relationship Between Personality Traits and Peer Support

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Personality Traits and Peer Support	0.406	0.000	Significant Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject Ho

Table 3 shows the relationship between personality traits and peer support among students. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient yielded an *r-value* of 0.406 and a *p-value* of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The results indicate a significant moderate positive relationship between personality traits and peer support. This suggests that students' personality characteristics influence how they establish, maintain, and perceive peer relationships and social support systems. Students who are more extroverted, agreeable, and emotionally stable may be more likely to seek and receive social support from peers. In contrast, students with less socially adaptive personality traits may experience difficulty establishing supportive peer connections. The findings support the Social Support Buffering Theory of Sheldon Cohen and Thomas Wills, which emphasizes the importance of social relationships in coping with stress and promoting well-being. Similarly, Datu and Mateo (2022) reported that personality traits influence how Filipino students seek and maintain social support systems.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between peer support and stress levels among students?

Table 4. Relationship Between Peer Support and Stress Levels

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Peer Support and Stress Levels	-0.040	0.623	No Significant Relationship	Fail to Reject Ho

Table 4 presents the relationship between peer support and stress levels among students. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient produced an *r-value* of -0.040 and a *p-value* of 0.623, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The findings indicate that peer support does not have a significant relationship with stress levels among students. Although peer support was perceived to be high among respondents, it did not significantly affect students' stress levels in this study. This result may suggest that students' stress experiences are influenced more strongly by internal factors such as personality traits or external academic and family pressures rather than peer relationships alone. It is also possible that while students receive peer support, such support may not always be sufficient to buffer the effects of stress. The finding contradicts the study of Malecki and Demaray (2006), which identified peer support as a significant protective factor against stress among students. However, it highlights the possibility that other contextual or personal variables may influence stress more significantly among the respondents.

Research Question 5: Does peer support significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students?

Table 5. Mediation Analysis of Peer Support on the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Stress Levels

Path	Beta Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Personality Traits → Peer Support	1.698	0.000	Significant
Peer Support → Stress Levels	-0.053	0.077	Not Significant
Personality Traits → Stress Levels	0.405	0.001	Significant

Table 5 presents the mediation analysis examining the role of peer support in the relationship between personality traits and stress levels. The results revealed that personality traits significantly predict peer support ($\beta = 1.698$, $p = 0.000$), and personality traits also significantly predict stress levels ($\beta = 0.405$, $p = 0.001$). However, peer support did not significantly predict stress levels ($\beta = -0.053$, $p = 0.077$). These findings indicate that peer support does not significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students. Although personality traits significantly influence both peer support and stress levels, peer support itself was not a strong enough factor to explain the relationship between the two variables. The findings imply that students' stress levels may be more directly influenced by inherent personality characteristics rather than by the support they receive from peers. This may also suggest that other mediating variables, such as coping strategies, family support, or emotional regulation, could play a stronger role in explaining stress experiences among students. Overall, the results partially support the conceptual framework of the study. Similar findings were reported by Suldo et al. (2008), who suggested that social support may not always significantly mediate stress outcomes when stronger internal psychological factors are present. While personality traits significantly relate to stress levels and peer support, the hypothesized mediating effect of peer support was not established.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to established ethical standards in research to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants. Ethical considerations were particularly important in this study as it involved assessing students' personality traits, stress levels, and peer support, which might have included sensitive psychological information. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. All respondents were provided with a clear explanation of the purpose, nature, and procedures of the study before participation. An informed consent form was included at the beginning of the questionnaire, which outlined the objectives of the study, the expected duration of participation, and the rights of the participants. Respondents had the right to decline participation or withdraw at any point without any penalty or negative consequences. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information (such as names, student numbers, or contact details) was collected. Responses were recorded in a way that prevented the identification of individual participants. All data were reported in aggregate form only, ensuring that no single respondent could be traced in the results. This study complied with the provisions of the Republic Act No. 11073, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which governed the protection of personal data in the Philippines. In accordance with this law, the researcher ensured that all collected data were processed fairly, used solely for legitimate academic purposes, and stored securely. Access to the data was limited only to the researcher, and all electronic files were password-protected. Data were retained only for the duration necessary to complete the study and were properly disposed of afterward to prevent unauthorized access. Furthermore, the study ensured that no harm—psychological, emotional, or social—was inflicted on participants. The questionnaire items were carefully reviewed to avoid sensitive or intrusive content. In cases where questions might have triggered discomfort (e.g., related to stress), respondents were informed that they could skip any item they did not wish to answer. The researcher also observed the principle of beneficence, ensuring that the study contributed positively to understanding student well-being, and non-maleficence, by avoiding any potential harm. Additionally, respect for persons was upheld by recognizing participants' autonomy, while justice was ensured by selecting respondents fairly through the sampling procedure. These ethical safeguards ensured that the study was conducted responsibly, protecting the rights and welfare of participants while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research process.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that students generally demonstrated moderate levels of personality traits and stress levels, while exhibiting a high level of perceived peer support. These findings indicate that although students experience stress related to academic demands, personal concerns, and social responsibilities, they continue to maintain strong peer relationships and support systems. The results highlight

the importance of social connectedness among students, particularly within the Filipino context where interpersonal relationships are highly valued. The study further revealed a significant relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students. This demonstrates that students' personality characteristics influence how they perceive, interpret, and respond to stressful situations. Certain personality traits may increase vulnerability to stress, while others may contribute to more effective coping and emotional regulation. These findings support the assumption that personality plays an important role in shaping students' psychological experiences and stress responses. Moreover, the results showed a significant relationship between personality traits and peer support. This suggests that students' personality characteristics influence how they establish, maintain, and perceive social relationships with peers. Students with more socially adaptive personality traits may find it easier to develop supportive peer connections, which may positively contribute to their emotional well-being and social adjustment. However, the findings revealed no significant relationship between peer support and stress levels. Although respondents generally reported high levels of peer support, such support did not significantly affect their stress levels. This suggests that students' stress experiences may be more strongly influenced by internal psychological factors and external pressures beyond peer relationships alone. While peer support may provide emotional comfort, it may not always be sufficient to reduce the effects of academic and personal stressors. Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that peer support does not significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and stress levels. Although personality traits significantly predicted both peer support and stress levels, peer support itself did not significantly explain the relationship between the two variables. These findings suggest that personality traits may exert a more direct influence on students' stress experiences. Other variables, such as coping mechanisms, emotional resilience, family support, and emotional intelligence, may better explain how personality traits affect stress levels among students. Overall, the study concludes that personality traits are significant factors influencing students' stress levels and peer relationships. However, peer support does not significantly function as a mediating variable in the relationship between personality traits and stress levels among students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address students' stress experiences and promote psychological well-being within educational settings. Students are encouraged to develop greater self-awareness regarding their personality traits and stress responses. Understanding how personality influences coping behaviors and emotional reactions may help students manage stress more effectively. Participation in activities and programs that promote emotional regulation, resilience, and healthy coping strategies is likewise encouraged. Teachers and academic personnel are encouraged to create supportive and psychologically responsive classroom environments. Recognizing that students possess different personality traits and stress responses may help educators design inclusive learning experiences that encourage collaboration, open communication, and positive peer interaction. These practices may contribute to students' emotional well-being and academic adjustment. Guidance counselors and mental health practitioners may utilize the findings of the study in developing intervention programs focused on stress management, emotional wellness, and personality development. Since peer support was not found to significantly mediate stress levels, counseling programs may also explore other relevant factors such as coping strategies, emotional resilience, family support systems, and emotional intelligence that may better address students' stress experiences. Educational institutions are likewise encouraged to strengthen mental health and student support services through the implementation of wellness programs, stress management seminars, peer mentoring initiatives, and accessible counseling services. Schools may further promote a supportive campus environment that prioritizes students' mental and emotional well-being alongside academic development. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies using larger and more diverse populations to improve the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also examine other possible mediating or moderating variables, such as emotional intelligence, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, and family support, to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between personality traits and stress levels. Additionally, qualitative or mixed-method approaches may be utilized to provide richer insights into students' lived experiences and psychological challenges. Lastly, educational stakeholders are encouraged to continue supporting initiatives aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by prioritizing mental health awareness, psychological support systems, and student well-being programs within higher education institutions. Through these initiatives, schools may contribute to developing healthier, more resilient, and emotionally supported students.

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