

Well-being and Academic Persistence among Allied Health Students: A PERMA Model Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of psychological well-being in the academic persistence of allied health students in a highly urbanized city in the Philippines. Anchored on Martin Seligman's PERMA Model of Well-being and Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Retention, the study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design and the participants consisted of 300 third- and fourth-year allied health students. Data were gathered using the PERMA Profiler and the College Persistence Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics revealed that students generally demonstrated high levels of well-being and academic persistence. Among the PERMA dimensions, Engagement obtained the highest mean score, followed by Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Positive Emotions. Relationships emerged as the strongest predictor of persistence, indicating the importance of supportive interpersonal connections in sustaining students' academic commitment. The findings suggest that psychologically healthy students are better able to cope with academic demands and remain committed to degree completion despite challenges encountered in allied health education. The study highlights the importance of integrating positive psychology interventions and PERMA-based wellness programs into higher education guidance and counseling services to strengthen student resilience, engagement, and persistence.

Keywords: psychological well-being, PERMA model, academic persistence, allied health students, positive psychology

INTRODUCTION

Allied health professionals play a vital role in healthcare systems through diagnostics, rehabilitation, disease prevention, and holistic patient care. In the Philippines, shortages in healthcare personnel continue to challenge the delivery of accessible and quality healthcare services, particularly in underserved communities. According to the World Health Organization, healthcare workforce shortages remain a global concern that affects healthcare efficiency and patient outcomes. As a result, higher education institutions are expected to prepare competent and resilient future healthcare professionals. However, despite increased access to tertiary education, student retention and persistence remain pressing concerns among colleges and universities. Reports from the Commission on Higher Education indicate that many students fail to complete their degree programs due to academic, social, financial, and psychological difficulties. Allied health programs are academically rigorous and often expose students to stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout because of demanding coursework, laboratory requirements, and clinical training. A systematic review conducted by Dyrbye, Thomas, and Shanafelt found

that students in healthcare-related programs commonly experience anxiety, depression, and psychological distress associated with academic pressure and clinical responsibilities. Similarly, Puthran et al. reported high levels of depression and emotional exhaustion among healthcare students worldwide. These psychological challenges may negatively influence students' motivation, engagement, and ability to persist in their academic programs.

This study was anchored on Martin Seligman's PERMA Model of Well-being, which posits that Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment contribute to human flourishing and optimal functioning. The PERMA framework explains that psychologically healthy individuals are more capable of coping with stress, adapting to challenges, and sustaining motivation. Existing literature supports the relationship between well-being and academic functioning. A study by Melissa Kovich et al. found that PERMA dimensions significantly contributed to university students' psychological adjustment and academic engagement. Likewise, Arnold Bakker and Karina Mostert explained through the Study Demands–Resources Theory that positive psychological resources improve engagement and reduce burnout among students. Studies have also shown that students with higher levels of well-being demonstrate stronger resilience, academic motivation, and persistence despite academic stressors. Supporting this claim, Wan Hoong Wong and Elaine Chapman found that non-cognitive factors such as emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological wellness significantly predict academic persistence among university students.

The study was further guided by Vincent Tinto's Model of Student Retention, which highlights the importance of academic and social integration in sustaining students' commitment to higher education. Tinto emphasized that students who establish meaningful social relationships and feel connected to their academic environment are more likely to persist and complete their degree programs. Supporting this perspective, Bongani Mtshweni found that perceived social support significantly predicted academic persistence through increased intrinsic motivation and sense of belonging. Although numerous international studies have examined psychological well-being and academic persistence, limited research has explored these relationships among allied health students in the Philippine context. Existing local studies commonly focus on academic stress and mental health concerns without examining how multidimensional well-being contributes to persistence in demanding healthcare programs. Given the challenges experienced by allied health students, understanding the role of psychological well-being in sustaining academic persistence may provide valuable insights for developing institutional interventions, counseling programs, and student support services. Hence, this study investigated the role of psychological well-being in the academic persistence of allied health students.

Research Problem

This study examines the role of students' well-being and familial influence in shaping their academic persistence. Specifically, it aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' well-being in terms of:
 - 1.1 Positive Emotions;
 - 1.2 Engagement;
 - 1.3 Relationships;

- 1.4 Meaning;
- 1.5 Accomplishment; and
- 1.6 Overall Well-being?
2. What is the level of students' familial influence?
3. What is the level of students' academic persistence?
4. Do the PERMA well-being dimensions significantly affect academic persistence?

METHODS

Research Design and Participants

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This design was considered appropriate for examining the relationships between psychological well-being and academic persistence without manipulating the study variables. The respondents were 300 third- and fourth-year allied health students aged 20–25 years enrolled at a private higher education institution in Cebu City. Participants were drawn from various allied health programs, and stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure proportional representation of each degree program included in the study.

Research Instruments

Three standardized research instruments were employed to assess the primary variables of the study. Students' psychological well-being was measured using the PERMA Profiler, which evaluates the dimensions of Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment based on Martin Seligman's PERMA model. The Family Influence Scale was utilized to examine the degree of familial influence on students' academic and career-related choices. Meanwhile, the College Persistence Questionnaire was administered to assess students' academic persistence and their commitment to completing their degree programs. All instruments yielded acceptable reliability coefficients, confirming their suitability and consistency in measuring the constructs investigated in the study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical measures, specifically the Mean and Standard Deviation, were utilized to assess the levels of psychological well-being, familial influence, and academic persistence among the respondents. To examine the relationships among the study variables, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted using the Jamovi and SmartPLS software programs.

RESULTS

Table 1
Level of Students' Well-Being Across PERMA Dimensions

PERMA Dimensions	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Positive Emotions	6.50	High
Engagement	7.22	High
Relationships	7.14	High
Meaning	6.77	High
Accomplishment	6.71	High
Overall Well-Being	6.87	High

The table presents the respondents' well-being based on the PERMA model, which includes Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. All dimensions obtained high mean scores ranging from 6.50 to 7.22, indicating an overall high level of well-being ($M = 6.87$). Among the five dimensions, **Engagement** obtained the highest mean ($M = 7.22$), followed by **Relationships** ($M = 7.14$), suggesting that respondents are highly absorbed in their activities and maintain strong, supportive social connections. **Meaning** ($M = 6.77$) and **Accomplishment** ($M = 6.71$) also reflect strong perceptions of purpose and achievement, while **Positive Emotions** ($M = 6.50$), although the lowest among the dimensions, still indicates a high frequency of positive affective experiences.

Table 2
Level of Familial Influence

Variable	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Familial Influence	3.92	High

Table 2 shows that familial influence obtained a mean score of **3.92**, interpreted as **High**, indicating that respondents perceive their families as highly influential in their lives. This suggests that family plays a strong role in shaping their values, decisions, behavior, and overall development, highlighting the continued importance of the family as a primary source of guidance and support.

Table 3
Level of Academic Persistence

Variable	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Academic Persistence	3.92	High

Table 3 shows the level of academic persistence among allied health students, with an overall mean score of **3.92**, interpreted as **high**. This indicates that the students demonstrate strong persistence in their studies and remain committed to completing their academic programs despite the demands, challenges, and pressures commonly associated with allied health education.

Table 4
Influence of PERMA Dimensions on Academic Persistence

Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Positive Emotions → Academic Persistence	0.150	11.237	.000	Significant
Engagement → Academic Persistence	0.081	9.924	.000	Significant
Relationships → Academic Persistence	0.130	11.588	.000	Significant
Meaning → Academic Persistence	0.147	11.430	.000	Significant
Accomplishment → Academic Persistence	0.111	10.043	.000	Significant

Table 4 presents the effects of the PERMA well-being dimensions on academic persistence using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results revealed that all PERMA components significantly predict academic persistence, as reflected in p-values below .05. Among the dimensions, **Relationships** emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 11.588$, $p = .000$), followed by **Positive Emotions** ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = .000$) and **Meaning** ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = .000$). These findings indicate that higher levels of psychological well-being are associated with greater academic persistence among students.

DISCUSSION

The findings on students' well-being reveal that all PERMA dimensions obtained high mean scores, indicating that respondents are generally flourishing across emotional, psychological, and social domains. The highest mean was observed in Engagement, followed closely by Relationships, suggesting that students are deeply immersed in meaningful academic and personal activities while also maintaining strong social connections. This aligns with Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which emphasizes engagement and relationships as core components of flourishing. Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained that high engagement reflects a state of flow, where individuals experience deep absorption and intrinsic motivation in their tasks, which may be particularly relevant in demanding allied health programs.

The high level of Relationships further highlights the importance of social connectedness in student well-being. Research consistently shows that supportive interpersonal relationships are

among the strongest predictors of psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Diener & Seligman, 2002). In academic settings, positive peer and family relationships contribute to emotional stability, motivation, and resilience, especially in challenging disciplines such as allied health education. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory also supports this finding, suggesting that positive social interactions and emotions help build long-term psychological resources that enhance coping and persistence.

In terms of familial influence, the results indicate a high level of perceived family support and guidance. This supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that the family microsystem plays a critical role in shaping individual development and behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In collectivist cultures such as the Philippines, family involvement is often central to academic decision-making and motivation, reinforcing students' sense of responsibility and direction (King & Ganotice, 2014). The strong familial influence observed in this study suggests that students draw emotional, financial, and motivational support from their families, which may strengthen their academic commitment.

Similarly, the high level of academic persistence reflects students' strong commitment to completing their studies despite academic demands. This is consistent with Duckworth's (2007) concept of grit, which emphasizes perseverance and passion for long-term goals as key predictors of success. The results of the PLS-SEM further support this, showing that all PERMA dimensions significantly influence academic persistence, with Relationships, Positive Emotions, and Meaning emerging as the strongest predictors. This aligns with Seligman (2011), who argued that well-being enhances motivation and resilience, thereby strengthening goal-directed behavior. Overall, the findings suggest that students who experience higher psychological well-being and strong familial support are more likely to persist and succeed in their academic endeavors.

Conclusion

The study reveals that students demonstrate a high level of well-being across all PERMA dimensions, indicating that they are generally flourishing in terms of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Among these, engagement and relationships emerged as the most prominent dimensions, highlighting the importance of meaningful academic involvement and strong social connections in students' overall well-being. In addition, students reported a high level of familial influence, suggesting that family plays a significant role in shaping their values, motivation, and academic experiences. The findings also show a high level of academic persistence, indicating that students remain committed to completing their studies despite academic challenges. Furthermore, the results of the PLS-SEM analysis confirm that all PERMA dimensions significantly influence academic persistence, with relationships, positive emotions, and meaning emerging as the strongest predictors. Overall, the study concludes that psychological well-being and familial support are important factors that enhance students' academic persistence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, higher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen programs that promote students' psychological well-being, particularly by fostering engagement, meaning, and positive relationships within the academic environment. Schools may implement student support systems such as mentoring programs, peer support groups, and well-being interventions that enhance emotional and social development. Faculty members are also encouraged to design learning activities that promote active engagement and meaningful learning experiences to sustain student motivation and persistence. Additionally, guidance counseling services should work closely with families through seminars or communication programs to reinforce positive familial support, which has been shown to significantly influence student outcomes. Future researchers are also recommended to explore other possible variables such as coping strategies, academic resilience, or institutional support to further understand factors that contribute to academic persistence among students.

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