

Self-Compassion, Psychological Well-Being and Academic Stress of College Students

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ABSTRACT: *This descriptive-correlational study was conducted to investigate the relationship of self-compassion to the psychological well-being and academic stress of college students at Cagayan State University, Carig Campus amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sought to determine the differences in these components when the students were grouped according to sex, college of origin, and socioeconomic status. Data were obtained from 1,943 students who were selected through stratified random sampling. The instruments included the Perceptions of Academic Stress Scale (PASS), Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), and Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). The data gathered were analyzed using Frequency Count, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, T-test, and ANOVA. Findings showed that there is a moderately strong positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being ($r=0.577$, $P<.01$), and a weak positive relationship between self-compassion and academic stress ($r=.336$, $P<.01$). Additionally, a significant difference in the students' academic stress and psychological well-being was found when grouped according to the college of origin. Lastly, a significant difference in the respondents' academic stress, psychological well-being, and self-compassion was found when grouped according to household monthly income. Overall, the findings suggest that self-compassion may be a useful addition to interventions aimed at improving students' psychological well-being.*

KEYWORDS –*Academic Stress, College Students, COVID-19 Pandemic, Psychological Well-being, Self-compassion*

I. Introduction

One of the latest general well-being crises of global concern is the new COVID-19 pandemic, which began in China and nearly infected every country in the world. This illness is brought about by a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The worldwide spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the large number of deaths brought about by Covid infection (COVID-19) drove the World Health Organization to proclaim a pandemic in March 2020. The battle against the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic endured significant impacts on practically all areas of human lives. These have resulted in widespread disruptions and struggles such as increasing poverty, loss of livelihoods, economic recession, and political problems.

To control the spread of the virus, travel bans, and restrictions were laid out, business and different activities were suspended endlessly, and individuals were compelled to remain in their homes. In the Philippines, one of the most impacted by these restrictions is the education sector. In higher education institutions (HEIs), teachers were required to modify and adjust course syllabi and requirements from their homes as they switched to

alternative or remote teaching modalities. These adjustments to the learning environment, the quality of education, the influence of socioeconomic status on access to different modes of learning especially for those living in rural areas, and other factors caused the students to experience problems that had a negative impact on their psychological well-being.

It is important to keep an eye on the students' psychological well-being as the pandemic continues. Studies revealed that college students around the world including in the Philippines over the course of the pandemic have displayed increased anxiety, tension, acute stress, and depressive symptoms (Son et al., 2020; Galanza et al., 2021; Cordero Jr., 2022; Ma et al., 2020). Aside from multiple stressors such as fear and worry about their health and their loved ones, difficulty in focusing, sleep disturbances, and decreased social interactions due to physical distancing, academic stress was also one of the contributing factors to these psychological well-being concerns (Son et al., 2020). In fact, it may be one of the dominant stress factors that affect the psychological well-being of college students. For instance, many students were dissatisfied with the quality of their online education while the COVID-19 pandemic was in effect, and they feel it had a detrimental impact on their academic achievement, learning capacity, academic performance, educational and employment attainment, sleep quality and quantity, physical and mental health, and substance use outcomes (Baltà-Salvador et. al., 2020; Pascoe et al., 2020). College students are particularly at risk since typical psychological issues are more likely to develop during adolescence and reach their peak in early adulthood (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020) and the pandemic could further complicate it. Unfortunately, despite experiencing moderate to severe mental health symptoms throughout the pandemic, many students never sought out mental health treatments (Lee et al., 2021).

As the pandemic persists in the Philippines and other parts of the world, studies predict its long-term impact on people's well-being, and in the wake of the pandemic, a greater wave of mental health crises can be anticipated. The psychological effects of the pandemic on the public and students have been the subject of different studies, but there are few that investigate ways how to deal and cope with a potentially stressful event such as pandemic scenarios. In this regard, the researcher is interested in exploring an aspect that, when practiced voluntarily, can significantly enhance mental health-related concerns and other elements of well-being. The researcher encountered this aspect in one of her general education subjects while working as a part-time lecturer, and this aspect is self-compassion.

Studies have shown that self-compassion is a significant indicator of well-being and versatility when confronted with life stressors and abrupt changes (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Bluth & Neff, 2018). One of the most consistent findings in the research literature is that greater self-compassion is linked to less anxiety, depression, self-criticism, negative emotions, academic stress, and academic burn-out (Neff, 2003a; Ying & Han, 2009; Zhang et al., 2016; Woo Kyeong, 2013). Self-compassion is more than just choosing to ignore unpleasant emotions or see the good in everything. Self-compassionate people are aware of their own suffering, but when they do, they are kind to themselves and acknowledge their shared humanity. Studies on self-compassion and college students are somewhat new and still scarce. Given that college life can be highly challenging and stressful, college students in rural areas of Cagayan Valley experience psychological well-being problems, academic stress, and other mental health concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the demands of online and alternative learning modalities that comes with it. With these observations, the researcher believes that self-compassion is vital human strength, and harnessing it is a good approach to developing resilience, strength, and healthier stress response among college students. With this in mind, the researcher first wanted to study the relationship of self-compassion to the psychological well-being and academic stress of college students in Cagayan State University (Carig Campus) amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Conceptual Framework

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related issues, students have faced a number of challenges, including increased academic stress, anxiety, and depression which have led to the degradation of their mental health and

psychological well-being (Rao & Rao, 2021). Aside from high levels of anxiety and depression, a relatively low level of resilience is also seen among students early in the COVID-19 pandemic which is likely to reflect the impact of restrictions and isolations. These high levels of psychological distress are most likely the result of a combination of pandemic-related stresses and a lack of healthy coping behaviors (Chen & Lucock, 2022).

One of the constructs that may play an important role in how people deal with a potentially stressful event is self-compassion. Instead of being critical and unkind when faced with negative events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, self-compassion allows one to relate to oneself with the same care, tolerance, and concern with which one treats significant others who are experiencing difficulties (Neff, 2011). Although there are very few studies that associate this construct to pandemic scenarios, there is much evidence that supports self-compassion in relation to academic stress and psychological well-being. Self-compassion, for example, was found to be negatively associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress and positively associated with better mental health; this means they are less likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress during stressful life events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Beato et. al., 2021). Furthermore, self-compassion appears to be a possible buffer that reduces the harmful impact of unproductive repetitive thinking by moderating emotional reactions to negative events (Raes, 2010). Self-compassion also reduces the impact of academic stress on students' negative emotions and depression (Woo Kyoeng, 2013).

To understand the relationship between self-compassion, academic stress, and psychological well-being, it is important to look at theories on where these constructs are anchored on. The experience of positive emotions, sentiments, and affect are essential components of cultivating resilience, flourishing, vitality, happiness, and life satisfaction, all of which contribute to well-being. (Alexander et al., 2021). This argument is supported by a theory from the field of positive psychology known as the broaden and build theory. This theory contends that while negative emotions narrow thought-action repertoires, positive emotions broaden these repertoires, allowing one to draw on a wide range of possible cognitions and behaviors in response to events, which helps build resources that can later be used to improve resiliency, coping skills, mental health and well-being. (Fredrickson, 2004). Self-compassion has been shown to promote positive emotions, particularly a sense of safety and security (Neff, 2011). It also softens and calms negative emotions, such as those caused by academic stress (Zhang et al., 2016), letting them disperse more quickly and helping people to recover more quickly (Ivtzan & Lomas, 2016). Another theory that can be used to understand the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being is the self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (2006). This theory states that when the three intrinsic psychological demands of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met, individuals are driven to grow, have optimal mental health, well-being, and better performance (Kendra, 2021). During unfavorable and stressful events like the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, satisfaction of these psychological needs may be difficult to maintain (Šakan et al., 2020) but with the aid of self-compassion, the satisfaction of these psychological needs can be met. According to Neff (2012), self-compassion appears to bolster positive sentiments of well-being and is linked to experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

From the pieces of literature and theoretical evidence mentioned above, the researcher believes that exploring the relationship of self-compassion to the psychological well-being and academic stress of college students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. Fig. 1 presents the suggested model.

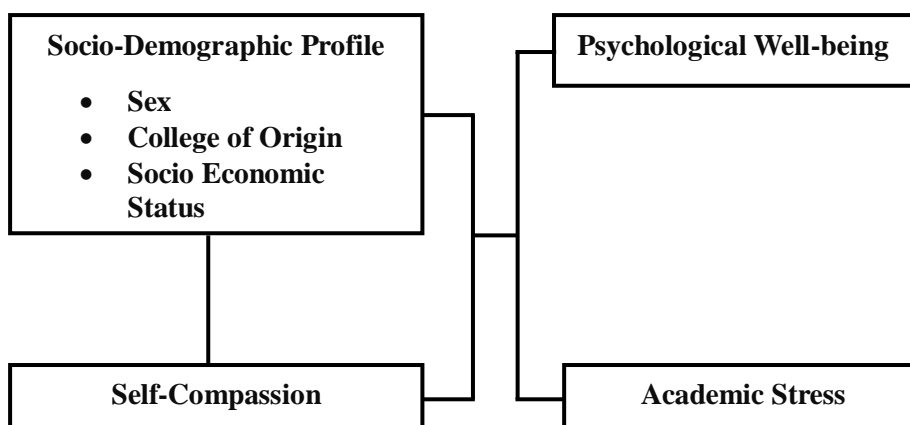


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

Statement of the Problem

The study sought to determine the relationship of self-compassion to the psychological well-being and academic stress of Cagayan State University's - Carig Campus college students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Sex
 - 1.2 College of Origin
 - 1.3 Socio-Economic Status
2. What is the level of college students' academic stress?
3. What is the level of college students' psychological well-being?
4. What is the level of college students' self-compassion?
5. Is there a significant relationship between college students' self-compassion and academic stress?
6. Is there a significant relationship between college students' self-compassion and psychological well-being?
7. Is there a significant difference in the academic stress of the college students when grouped according to their profile variables?
8. Is there a significant difference in the psychological well-being of the college students when grouped according to their profile variables?
9. Is there a significant difference in the self-compassion of the college students when grouped according to their profile variables?

III. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research method. The descriptive method was used to identify the respondents' profiles along with their levels of academic stress, psychological well-being, and self-compassion. The correlational method was utilized to investigate the relationship of self-compassion to the psychological well-being and academic stress of the respondents.

The study is comprised of one thousand nine hundred forty-three (1,943) undergraduate students who were chosen from Cagayan State University- Carig Campus using a stratified random sampling procedure. The undergraduate population of Cagayan State University- Carig Campus was divided into subgroups based on the

seven (7) colleges namely the College of Engineering and Architecture, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Information and Computing Sciences, College of Industrial Technology, College of Public Administration, College of Human Kinetics, and College of Veterinary Medicine. From there, random sampling was utilized. Table 1 presents the respondents' population and sample.

Table 1. Respondents' Population and Sample

Respondents	Population	Sample
College of Engineering and Architecture	2,596	497
College of Arts and Sciences	1,957	374
College of Information and Computing Sciences	1,897	363
College of Industrial Technology	1,725	330
College of Public Administration	832	159
College of Human Kinetics	822	157
College of Veterinary Medicine	330	63
Total	10,159	1,943

To generate data, the study employed the following previously designed instruments, whose psychometric properties have been found to have high reliability and validity: First is the Perceptions of Academic Stress Scale (PASS) by Dr. Dalia Bedewy and Dr. Adel Gabriel (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015) to measure Academic stress. This is an 18-item scale (13 negative items and 5 positive items) that measures students' perceptions of their personal academic stress and examines the source of such stress. It has an internal consistency of .70 (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015) and previous research that used the scale also showed internal consistency reliability of .81 & .83 (Franca & Dias, 2021; Aihie & Ohanaka, 2022). Second, Psychological well-being was measured using the theory-based Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) developed by Dr. Carol D. Ryff (Ryff, 1989). This scale is consisting of 42 items divided into 6 subscales with each of the subscales having high levels of internal consistency with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.93 and a correlation with the 20-item parent scale ranging from 0.97 to 0.99. Further, PWBS demonstrates convergent validity (e.g., significantly correlated with existing positive and negative functioning measures.) and test-retest reliability (e.g., coefficients ranging from .81 to .88. over a six-week interval). The PWBS has also been validated in the Philippines among Filipino teachers and it showed an internal consistency ranging from 0.62 to 0.85 (Villarosa & Ganotice, 2018). Lastly, Self-compassion was measured using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Dr. Kristin Neff (Neff, 2003a). This scale is consisting of 26 items measuring 6 subscales with internal consistency reliability estimates for the six subscales range from .75 to .81, and .92 for the whole scale (Neff, 2003a). Further, SCS is indicated to have an appropriate factor structure and demonstrates convergent validity (e.g., therapists' ratings of how self-compassionate individuals were after a brief interaction were significantly correlated with self-reported SCS scores), discriminant validity (e.g., no correlation with social desirability or narcissism), and test-retest reliability over a three-week interval of .93 (Neff, 2003a; Neff et al., 2007). Previous research also showed internal consistency reliability of .94 (Neff et al., 2005; Neff et al., 2007). Studies with Filipino samples also found the scale to possess high reliability, ranging from .82 to .93 (Aruta et al., 2020; Roxas et al., 2014; Umandap & Teh, 2020).

Prior to the administration of the research instruments, permission to conduct the study and involve the students as respondents were obtained from the Campus Executive Officer of Cagayan State University- Carig Campus and the Deans of each college. After receiving approval, the researcher created the questionnaires using Google Forms, along with a consent form that contains the details of the study, the risk involved, the confidentiality of their responses, and the contact information of the researcher. Data were gathered online by providing the respondents with a link to the Google form that contained the questionnaires and the consent

form. After retrieving all the accomplished questionnaires, the researcher proceeded in encoding, summarizing, and tabulating the data for statistical analysis and interpretation.

In interpreting the data, frequency count and percentage was used in presenting the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, college of origin, and socioeconomic status. Mean and standard deviation was used in examining the levels of academic stress, psychological well-being, and self-compassion of the respondents. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being, and self-compassion and academic stress. Lastly, T-test and ANOVA was used in determining the significant difference in the academic stress, psychological well-being, and self-compassion of the respondents when grouped according to their profile variables.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 College Students' Profile

Table 3 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, college of origin, and their socioeconomic status as determined by household monthly income. In terms of sex, it shows that out of 1943 respondents, 38% are male and 62% are female.

As to the college of origin, 25.6% of the respondents were from the College of Engineering and Architecture, 19.2% were from the College of Arts and Sciences, 18.7% were from the College of Information and Computing Sciences, 17% were from the College of Industrial Technology, 8.2% were from the College of Public Administration, 8.1% were from the College of Human Kinetics, and 3.2% were from College of Veterinary Medicine.

Concerning socioeconomic status as determined by the respondents' household monthly income bracket identified by the Philippine Institute of Developmental Studies (PIDS), the majority of the respondents (72.5%) reported a household monthly income of less than ₱10,957. Some (17.5%) reported ranging between ₱10,957 and ₱21,914. The 6.7% indicated a range between ₱21,914 and ₱43,828 while 1.4% out of the total reported a range between ₱43,828 and ₱76,669. Few, (.8%) stated a range between ₱76,669 and ₱131,484 as well as another .8% of the total with a range of ₱219,140 and above. Lastly, the smallest percentage (.3%) reported having a household monthly income ranging between ₱131,484 and ₱219,140.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to sex, college of origin, and household monthly income.

Profile Variables	Frequency n=1943	Percentage
Sex		
Male	739	38
Female	1204	62
College of Origin		
COEA	497	25.6
CAS	374	19.2
CICS	363	18.7
CIT	330	17.0
CPAD	159	8.2
CHK	157	8.1
CVM	63	3.2

Household Monthly Income		
Less than ₱10,957	1409	72.5
₱10,957 - ₱21,914	340	17.5
₱21,914 - ₱43,828	131	6.7
₱43,828 - ₱76,669	28	1.4
₱76,669 - ₱131,484	15	.8
₱131,484 - ₱219,140	5	.3
₱219,140 and above	15	.8

4.2 College Students' Perceived Academic Stress

Table 3 presents the academic stress level of the respondents. The respondents' level of academic stress is not acute or acceptable with a mean score of 2.7628. According to Smith et. al. (2019), it is normal for students to experience typical levels of stress, which motivate them to complete their schoolwork and other responsibilities. He further claims that stress motivates people to act, causes them to get up from their chairs, consider situations differently, and search for solutions to a problem. However, this degree of academic stress should not be disregarded, as it can lead to higher levels which can result in an increased prevalence of psychological and physical issues like depression, anxiety, nervousness, and stress-related disorders which in turn can also affect the students' academic performance (Thakkar, 2018). Findings from Yousif et. al. (2022) provided support to this result stating that the majority of students in their study reported a moderate level of academic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the majority of the scales' items, the respondents' stated levels of academic sources of stress were considerable. Overall, the students stated that there is adequate time set aside for their classes and academic work, and they are confident in their ability to do well in both their academic endeavors and their future careers. According to a study by Talsma et. al. (2021), although students claimed to believe that COVID-19-related changes would have a negative impact on their ability to perform, there is little evidence that these beliefs had an impact on their academic self-efficacy or academic performance. Moreover, they stated that one potential interpretation of this is that self-efficacy beliefs took considerably larger significance in terms of mobilizing the resources necessary to perform effectively in the uncertain conditions linked with the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, respondents reported their examinations to be the source of their excessive academic stress. Specifically, they are concerned about failing their courses and not being able to find employment even if they pass their exams, as well as by how difficult the test questions are and how limited time they have to finish them. Sreeram (2021) and Moawad (2020) provide evidence to support this finding, showing that exam periods are the primary causes of academic stress for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. For students, examinations need additional time demands and that exam stress must be balanced with other collegiate pressures. According to Moawad (2020), students were anxious about final examinations, including when they would be held, whether they would be online or in person, and how they would be generally graded. He also mentioned that students opposed online exams and urged their professors to employ other assessment measures.

Table 3. Mean and descriptive interpretation of the respondents' level of academic stress

Perceived Academic Stress Subscales and Items	Mean	Description
Stresses related to academic expectations:	2.6584	Moderate Level
My teachers are critical of my academic performance.	2.3685	Moderate Level
Teachers have unrealistic expectations of me.	2.8497	Moderate Level
The unrealistic expectations of my parents stress me out.	2.6094	Moderate Level

Competition with my peers for grades is quite intense.	2.8060	Moderate Level
Stresses related to faculty work and examinations:	2.6132	Moderate Level
The time allocated to classes and academic work is enough.	3.6655	Low Level
I have enough time to relax after work.	3.3541	Moderate Level
The size of the curriculum (workload) is excessive.	2.4910	Moderate Level
I believe that the amount of work assignment is too much.	2.5641	Moderate Level
Am unable to catch up if getting behind the work.	2.6191	Moderate Level
The examination questions are usually difficult.	1.9846	High Level
Examination time is short to complete the answers.	2.1400	High Level
Examination times are very stressful to me.	2.0875	High Level
Stresses related to students' academic self-perceptions:	3.0317	Moderate Level
Am confident that I will be a successful student.	4.4215	Low Level
Am confident that I will be successful in my future career.	4.3942	Low Level
I can make academic decisions easily.	3.6336	Moderate Level
I fear failing courses this year.	1.7540	High Level
I think that my worry about examinations is weakness of character.	2.1287	High Level
Even if I pass my exams, am worried about getting a job.	1.8585	High Level
Overall PASS Score:	2.7628	Moderate Level

4.3 College Students' Psychological Well-Being

Table 4 shows the respondents' level of psychological well-being. It is evident that the students are functioning well and maintaining an adequate level of psychological well-being with a mean score of 3.7667. With regards to its dimensions, students have a sufficient degree of personal growth which scored as the highest (4.0551), followed by purpose in life (3.9206), positive relations with others (3.8955), self-acceptance (3.6117), environmental mastery (3.6104), and autonomy as the lowest (3.5071).

In this study, as college requires students to constantly deal with challenges, students are able to experience a higher level of personal growth because they see these challenges as an integral part of their continuous development. In support of this assertion, Terenzini et. al. (1984) stated that students' personal growth increased throughout the initial years of their academic endeavors. Furthermore, Schaefer et. al. (1992) and Tedeschi et. al. (1996) as cited in Roslan et. al. (2017) said that growth is obtained by maintaining continual adaptability while facing life crises or traumatic events since people who have experienced trauma can also function independently in challenging circumstances. Autonomy had the lowest score among the psychological well-being dimensions despite being under a sufficient level. This demonstrated that the respondents were self-determining and independent in their judgments and decision-making, however, they also tend to be concerned about the evaluation of others. This may be because, despite the fact that college students are mostly on their own in their academic pursuits during the pandemic, they felt that their independence had been diminished by the sudden necessity to switch to online learning, the tendency of some professors to be more controlling, and their dependence on their professors' role, which they were accustomed to in offline learning prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the psychological well-being of the respondents showed higher levels of personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relations with others and lower levels of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and autonomy. This finding is consistent with that of Roslan et. al. (2017) and Ryff et. al. (1995), who found

that individuals from the western culture had higher levels of self-acceptance and autonomy and individuals from the eastern culture had higher levels of positive relations with others.

Table 4. Mean and descriptive interpretation of the respondents' level of psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-being Dimensions	Mean	Description
Autonomy	3.5071	Moderate Level
Environmental Mastery	3.6104	Moderate Level
Personal Growth	4.0551	Moderate Level
Positive Relations with Others	3.8955	Moderate Level
Purpose in Life	3.9206	Moderate Level
Self-Acceptance	3.6117	Moderate Level
Overall PWBS Score:	3.7667	Moderate Level

4.4. College Students' Self-Compassion

Table 5 presents the respondents' level of self-compassion. Results showed that the respondents are sufficiently self-compassionate with a mean score of 3.1384. Studies show that people with moderate and higher self-compassion are better able to cope with challenging and distressing circumstances than those with low self-compassion. Students who are self-compassionate are more likely to be open to difficult emotions instead of striving to avoid or combat painful experiences. They also treat themselves with kindness and accept that these experiences are natural for every student to experience, letting them know they are not alone in their suffering or pain. They are aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and can see their experience of failure as an opportunity to learn and develop making them better able to bounce back from academic difficulties (Terry et al., 2013; Neff, 2003b; Yustika, 2021). Moreover, recent studies provide evidence that having self-compassion is helpful in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic's turbulent conditions. For instance, self-compassion serves as a protective buffer that lessens the impact of the pandemic's danger on one's state of mind. Additionally, those who are self-compassionate are more likely to see the positive aspects of the pandemic's circumstances. As a result, self-compassionate individuals saw greater chances for personal growth, rest, and connection. Self-compassion may also have aided individuals in seeing the possibilities still present despite the pandemic's restrictions and uncertainty (Lau et al., 2020). Finally, as Knox (2021) stated, in the pandemic's circumstances, self-compassion is a resource that is abundant. It is something that is always there, even when one is unable to go anywhere. Weaved within the fabric of one's being are all the components of self-compassion. Its simplicity and practicality make it accessible at any moment. To accept its rewards, all it requires is one's self and this is profoundly reassuring during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5. Mean and descriptive interpretation of the respondents' level of self-compassion.

	Mean	Description
Overall SCS Score:	3.1384	Moderate Level

4.5 College Students' Self-Compassion (SCS) and Academic Stress (PASS)

Table 6 presents the conducted correlation test to determine if there is a relationship between the respondents' self-compassion and academic stress. The value of Pearson Correlation ($r = 0.336$) shows that there is a weak positive correlation between self-compassion and academic stress. This means that although the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant relationship between self-compassion and academic stress where higher self-compassion is associated with higher academic stress, the relationship is very minimal. This is somewhat similar to the study of Salam and Farhan (2021). In the study, it was hypothesized that self-compassion would predict

undergraduate students' perceived stress levels and that there would be a negative relationship between self-compassion and perceived stress level. However, when the level of self-compassion was correlated with students' perceived level of stress, their statistical findings revealed that there was no significant difference. Like that of Salam and Farhan (2021), this might be due to the fact that the study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected every aspect of the students' lives, including their health, level of activity, manner of education, and perceptions of academic stress. Students did not perceive academic stress as much as they might have in a typical face-to-face routine because the present study was conducted during the pandemic and online learning, which meant that they were at home almost the entire day dealing with their academic lives in a completely new and different manner. Furthermore, it should be noted that the study was carried out a few weeks after their final exams, which may have had an impact on their level of academic stress.

Table 6. Relationship between the respondents' level of self-compassion and academic stress

Correlated Variables		SCS Score	PASS Score
SCS Score	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1	.336**
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.000
	<i>N</i>	1943	1943
PASS Score	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.336**	1
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000	
	<i>N</i>	1943	1943

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.6 College Students' Self-Compassion (SCS) and Psychological Well-Being (PWBS)

Table 7 presents the conducted correlation test to determine whether there is a relationship between the respondents' self-compassion and psychological well-being. Pearson Correlation result ($r=0.577$) showed that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being with higher self-compassion being associated with higher psychological well-being, therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis. This suggests that one who is more self-compassionate is more likely to be autonomous, has a positive attitude and relation toward oneself and others, feels competent and in control of one's environment, has goals in life and a sense of direction, and is constantly growing and developing as a total person. This finding is consistent with reviews of the self-compassion literature (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2011; Neff & Germer, 2017). Bluth and Blanton (2014, 2015) stated that people who are more self-compassionate tend to recognize, accept and embrace their own flaws. This attitude can have an impact on their cognitive and emotional state, as well as increase their positive experiences and reduce negative emotional experiences. This can then enhance their psychological well-being. Additionally, according to Neff, (2003a), positive psychological traits like wisdom, happiness, optimism, extroversion, and responsibility are positively associated with self-compassion. This assertion implies that self-compassion can influence people's outlooks on life and improve their psychological well-being. Lastly, self-compassionate individuals likely practice self-compassion frequently, which lessens the emotional effect of both small and large situations as they occur. As a result, they go through life feeling more satisfied, resilient, with less depression, self-criticism, and anxiety thereby improving their psychological well-being (Leary et al., 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Table 7. Relationship between the respondents' level of self-compassion and psychological well-being.

Correlated Variables		SCS Score	PWBS Score
SCS Score	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1	.577**
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.000
	<i>N</i>	1943	1943
PWBS Score	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.577**	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1943	1943

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.7 College Students' Academic Stress by Sex, College of Origin, and Household Monthly Income (HMI)

Table 8 displays the significant differences in the respondents' academic stress when grouped according to their profile. In terms of sex, an independent T-test was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that there is no significant difference in the respondents' academic stress when grouped according to sex ($T = -.170$, $P > .05$), therefore, not rejecting the null hypothesis. This was supported by Licayan et al. (2021), who assessed the amount of academic stress experienced by students as a result of personal inadequacy, failure-related anxiety, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, and a lack of suitable learning resources during the Covid-19 pandemic. When students were classified by sex, it was discovered that there was no significant difference in their levels of academic stress.

With regards to college, ANOVA was conducted since the respondents' college of origin was classified into four groups. The findings suggest that there is a significant difference in the respondents' academic stress when grouped according to college ($F = 7.051$, $P < .01$), therefore rejecting the null hypothesis. Specifically, Post Hoc Test revealed that the academic stress of the College of Engineering and Architecture students differs significantly from the College of Arts and Science ($MD = -.12939$, $P < .01$), College of Information and Computing Sciences ($MD = -.09240$, $P < .05$), College of Industrial Technology ($MD = -.15368$, $P < .01$), and College of Public Administration, College of Human Kinetics, and College of Veterinary Medicine ($MD = -.09855$, $P < .05$). The negative mean differences show that students in the College of Engineering and Architecture are experiencing higher academic stress than students of other colleges. There may be more expectations for oneself and others in this academic field because it is often seen as being more competitive and rigorous (Calaguas, 2011). They also have more math-intensive subjects, which can make the academic field seem more challenging (May & Casazza, 2012). Due to the intense atmosphere and difficulties encountered in this program, students may start to doubt their skills, the people around them, or their circumstances, which may increase academic stress.

In terms of socioeconomic status, as measured by the respondents' household monthly income, T-test was used to analyze the data. Results showed that there is a significant difference in the respondents' academic stress when grouped according to their household monthly income ($T = -2.409$, $P < .05$) with those respondents having ₱10,957 and above household monthly income being more academically stressed ($M = 2.8038$) than those with less than ₱10,957 household monthly income ($M = 2.7472$). This present finding provides additional insight into the relationship between academic stress and socioeconomic status. While other studies have related lower socioeconomic status to greater academic stress (Jain et al., 2017), the result of this study shows that students with higher socioeconomic status experience greater academic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressure to excel may have caused students from families with high socioeconomic status to experience academic stress at a higher level during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Curtin (2013), research has shown that children and adolescents from high socioeconomic households are usually expected to excel in their academics and extracurricular activities which gives them relentless pressure. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions, students are confined to their homes and have fewer opportunities for easing their academic pressures, which makes them more susceptible to academic stress. However, it may also be noted that the majority of the respondents (72.5%) in this study are from households with less than ₱10,957 monthly income. This large variation in sample sizes may have affected the study's findings.

Table 8. Significant differences between academic stress and profile based on T-test and ANOVA results.

Variables	T-Value	F-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Stress			
Sex	-.170		.865
College		7.051**	.000
(I) (J) Mean Difference			
COEA CAS			.000
CICS			.030
CIT			.000
CPAD,CHK,CVM -09855*			.015
HMI	-2.409*		.016
Mean			
<₱10,957 2.7472			
₱10,957 and above 2.8038			

* - Significant at .05 ** - Significant at .01

4.8 College Students' Psychological Well-Being by Sex, College of Origin, and Household Monthly Income (HMI)

Table 9 shows the significant differences in the respondents' psychological well-being when grouped according to their profile variables. An independent T-test was performed to assess the data in terms of sex. The result supported the null hypothesis since no statistically significant difference in the respondents' psychological well-being when grouped according to sex ($T=-1.415$, $P>.05$) was found.

In terms of college, ANOVA was performed since the respondents' college of origin was grouped into four. The results contradict the null hypothesis, indicating that there is a significant difference in the respondents' psychological well-being when grouped according to college ($F=4.207$, $P<.01$). The results of the Post Hoc Test specifically showed that the College of Arts and Sciences students' psychological well-being scores are significantly higher from those in the College of Information and Computing Sciences ($MD=.11260$, $P<.05$), and the College of Industrial Technology ($MD=.13246$, $P<.01$) respectively. The three colleges' different academic curricula and students' relationships with their professors may have an impact on the significant difference that was found.

To assess the data with respect to the respondents' socioeconomic status, which was determined by their household's monthly income, T-test was used. When respondents were grouped according to their household monthly income, the results showed a significant difference in their psychological well-being ($T=-3.218$, $P.01$), with respondents with a household monthly income of ₱10,957 and above revealing higher psychological well-being ($M=3.8231$) than those with household monthly incomes of less than ₱10,957 ($M=3.7454$). To support this present finding, Bernardo and Resurreccion's (2018) study revealed that the external-spirit locus of hope has a positive relationship with life satisfaction in persons with better financial capabilities and less financial stress. Students who are not under financial strain experience better life satisfaction which translates to higher psychological well-being.

Table 9. Significant differences between psychological well-being and profile based on T-test and ANOVA results.

Variables	T-Value	F-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Psychological Well-being			
Sex	-1.415		.157
College		4.207**	.002
(I) CAS			
(J) CICS			.011
Mean Difference			
			.002
(I) CIT			
Mean Difference			
			.001
HMI	-3.218**		
Mean			
<₱10,957		3.7454	
₱10,957 and above		3.8231	

* - Significant at .05 ** - Significant at .01

4.9 College Students' Self-Compassion by Sex, College of Origin, and Household Monthly Income (HMI)

Table 10 presents the significant differences in the respondents' self-compassion when grouped according to their profile variables. To evaluate the data in terms of sex, a separate T-test was run. No statistically significant difference in the respondents' self-compassion when categorized by sex ($T=.041$, $P>.05$) was discovered, which confirmed the null hypothesis. This is similar to the results of studies that explored the self-compassion of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies found that there are no considerable differences between males and females in relation to their levels of self-compassion (Azeem et al., 2021; Boehning, 2021). However, the result of this study contradicts past findings that self-compassion is higher in men than women (Neff, 2003b; Yarnell et al., 2015). This could be due to a sample that was predominately female. Given that previous studies have demonstrated that gender differences in self-compassion are often minimal, it is possible that these differences might have been visible in a larger sample with a more evenly distributed gender distribution, similar to that of Yarnell et al. et al. (2015), who yielded 13, 339 participants in total.

As to college, since the respondents' college of origin was classified into four groups, an ANOVA was conducted. The findings supported the null hypothesis by demonstrating that there is no significant difference in the respondents' self-compassion when grouped according to college ($F=.739$, $P>.05$). This implies that one's academic preparation plays a negligible if not, a no significant role in one's self-compassion.

T-test was used to examine the data in view of the respondents' socioeconomic status, which was determined by their household monthly income. The results revealed a significant difference in the self-compassion of the respondents when grouped according to their household monthly income ($T=-2.352$, $P<.05$), higher self-compassion is seen among respondents with household monthly incomes of ₱10,957 and above ($M=3.1762$) than those with household monthly incomes of less than ₱10,957 ($M=3.1241$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. To support this finding, another study found that family income levels and self-compassion levels are positively correlated (Erzen&Yurtcu, 2013). These results may be explained by the possibility that households with greater incomes may better meet their children's necessities and create better living conditions which in turn can foster their self-compassion.

Table 10. Significant differences between self-compassion and profile based on T-test and ANOVA results.

Variables	T-Value	F-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-compassion			
Sex	.041		.967
College		.739	.565
HMI	-2.352*		.019
Mean			
<₱10,957	3.1241		
₱10,957 and above	3.1762		

* - Significant at .05 ** - Significant at .01

V. Conclusion

On the basis of findings, the study concludes that self-compassion has a positive relationship to psychological well-being and academic stress. Higher self-compassion reflects better psychological well-being which means that psychological well-being increases when individuals understand, give acceptance, and care for themselves in critical times. Moreover, although self-compassion and academic stress are positively correlated, the relationship in this study is considered weak or minimal. Additionally, the findings of this study revealed that self-compassion tends to vary depending on socioeconomic status while academic stress and psychological well-being tend to vary depending on the course taken as well as socioeconomic status.

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