






Subjective Well-Being Profile of University Students and Its Influencing Factors

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ABSTRACT

Background: Subjective well-being is an important indicator of psychological health and life satisfaction among university students. Understanding students' well-being is essential because academic demands, social adjustment, and developmental transitions during university life can significantly affect their psychological condition. **Objective:** This study aims to examine the profile of subjective well-being among university students and to identify the factors influencing it. **Method:** A quantitative survey design was employed, involving undergraduate students from several academic programs. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured dimensions of subjective well-being, including life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, along with several potential influencing factors, such as academic stress, social support, and personal motivation. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the profile of students' subjective well-being, while inferential analysis was applied to determine the factors associated with variations in well-being levels. **Results:** Students demonstrate varying levels of subjective well-being across different dimensions, with several factors showing significant relationships with overall well-being. **Conclusion:** These findings highlight the importance of academic and psychosocial environments in supporting students' psychological health. **Contribution:** The study contributes to a better understanding of university students' well-being. It provides educators and institutions with insights to develop strategies that enhance students' psychological well-being and overall quality of life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Subjective well-being is a primary indicator of individual development, particularly among university students navigating the transition to early adulthood (Peng et al., 2023). Subjective well-being refers to how individuals cognitively evaluate their lives while simultaneously experiencing positive and negative emotions (Joshano, 2025). Ideally, university students are expected to maintain a favourable balance between life satisfaction and emotional experiences, enabling them to adapt to academic demands,

build meaningful relationships, and develop a coherent sense of identity (Liu et al., 2025). Within higher education, subjective well-being functions not only as a marker of personal adjustment but also as a psychological resource that supports resilience, motivation, and readiness to face life challenges (Sood & Sharma, 2020).

However, real-world conditions indicate that not all university students achieve an optimal level of subjective well-being (Allen & Anderson, 2018). Academic pressure, social expectations, environmental transitions, and developmental uncertainties often lead to emotional strain and

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fluctuating life evaluations (Mastorci et al., 2024). University students may experience difficulty regulating affect, maintaining motivation, or sustaining positive life appraisal (Guilmette et al., 2019). These challenges suggest that subjective well-being remains a critical concern in educational contexts, particularly because early adulthood is a period marked by heightened sensitivity to academic and social stressors (Wu & Becker, 2023).

Low subjective well-being has implications that extend beyond emotional discomfort. Diminished life satisfaction and persistent negative affect are associated with reduced academic engagement, impaired concentration, and weakened interpersonal functioning (Schoemaker et al., 2024). When university students struggle to maintain balanced emotional appraisal, their capacity to participate fully in learning environments may decline. Prolonged low well-being can hinder identity development and preparedness for future professional and social responsibilities (Toubassi et al., 2023).

Subjective well-being is understood as the integration of cognitive judgments about life satisfaction and affective experiences. Theoretical models emphasise that well-being emerges from the interaction between internal regulatory capacities, such as emotional management and coping skills, and external conditions, including social support and academic climate (Sarzhanova & Nurgabdeshev, 2025; Shen et al., 2024; Ma & Liu, 2024). In the context of university students, these internal and external conditions may function as important factors influencing the level and distribution of subjective wellbeing across student populations.

Studies on university students' subjective well-being have consistently positioned well-being as a multidimensional construct integrating life satisfaction and emotional experience, emphasising its central role in academic adjustment and personal development (Delgado-Lobete et al., 2020; Serban-Opreescu et al., 2019; Zalazar-Jaime et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2024). Contemporary literature highlights that subjective well-being is closely linked to coping capacity, social support, and academic engagement, with many studies reporting that student populations tend to cluster around medium well-being levels (Tomás et al., 2020; Huang & Zhang, 2022; Dong et al., 2022; Mammadov et al., 2024). Prior investigations predominantly examine correlational relationships between well-being and psychological variables such as stress, resilience, and motivation, yet gender comparisons often yield inconsistent findings.

Although prior studies highlight the theoretical and empirical importance of subjective well-being in higher education, most focus on predictive modelling or intervention outcomes rather than providing a comprehensive descriptive account of students' well-being profiles and their associated factors. As a result, limited research systema-

tically examines how subjective well-being is distributed across student populations or how demographic and contextual variables contribute to these variations. This gap results in a lack of integrated empirical evidence that combines descriptive profiling with influencing factors, thereby constraining its application in institutional counseling strategies and preventive mental health frameworks.

This study aims to examine the profile of subjective well-being among university students and to identify the factors influencing it. By analysing the distribution of students' well-being levels alongside relevant demographic tendencies, the study seeks to provide a clearer empirical picture of student well-being within higher education contexts.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach using a survey design to obtain a systematic and objective overview of university students' subjective well-being profiles and to identify demographic factors associated with variations in well-being levels, without administering any treatment or intervention. The descriptive method enables the identification of patterns in the distribution of subjective well-being and the examination of differences across variables such as gender, while the survey method facilitates efficient data collection from a large number of participants and reflects respondents' actual conditions at the time of the study. Accordingly, this study focuses on mapping students' psychological conditions and identifying associated factors rather than testing causal relationships.

2.2 Participants

Participants were all university students majoring in guidance and counseling at IKIP Siliwangi from the class of 2024, totalling 144 individuals: 72 male and 72 female. A total sampling technique was used, meaning that the entire population meeting the research criteria was included as respondents. Involving the full population aimed to increase the accuracy of the subjective well-being profile description and to allow proportional comparative analysis based on gender as one of the factors associated with students' subjective well-being.

2.3 Data Collection

The instrument used in this study was a Subjective Well-Being Scale designed to measure university students' subjective well-being through indicators of adaptability, emotional regulation, self-acceptance, and behavioural consistency. The scale consisted of 38 statements using a Likert response format. Validity testing showed that all items had correlation coefficients exceeding the critical r value (0.157), indicating that each item was valid. Relia-

bility testing yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.813, indicating high internal consistency and confirming the instrument’s suitability for research use. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires to all participants during a single data collection period. Respondents received an explanation of the study objectives and instructions for completing the instrument to ensure consistent understanding.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores to illustrate the overall profile of university students’ subjective well-being. Subjective well-being levels were categorised using predetermined score intervals to describe the distribution of well-being within the student population. In addition, a comparative analysis by gender was conducted by examining mean score differences to identify trends in subjective well-being between male and female students, as one factor associated with variations in well-being levels.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Overall Profile of University Students’ Subjective Well-Being

This section presents the general distribution of subjective well-being among university students, categorised into low, medium, and high levels. Understanding this overall profile is important because it provides an initial picture of students’ psychological condition within the studied population. The analysis highlights the proportion of students who experience optimal well-being, those who demonstrate moderate adjustment, and those who may require psychological or academic support.

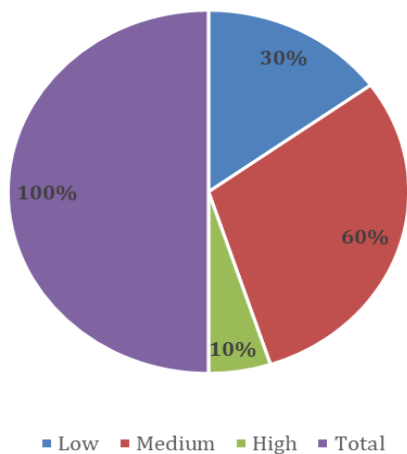


Fig. 1. Percentage Distribution of University Students’ Subjective Well-Being Profile

The chart above shows the overall distribution of university students’ subjective well-being levels. The majority of university students (60%) fall into the medium category, indicating that most participants experience a balanced, but not optimal, level of subjective well-being. A substantial proportion (30%) is categorised as low, suggesting that nearly one-third of university students may experience reduced life satisfaction or emotional well-being that could warrant attention or support. Only 10% demonstrate high well-being, indicating that relatively few university students reach an optimal psychological state. From a population perspective, the distribution suggests that subjective well-being is centred in the middle range, with a notable skew toward medium functioning rather than flourishing. This pattern may suggest opportunities for interventions to strengthen emotional resilience and life satisfaction.

3.1.2 Subjective Well-Being Profile of Female University Students

This subsection focuses on the distribution of subjective well-being, specifically among female university students. Examining gender-specific patterns allows researchers to determine whether psychological well-being is evenly distributed across demographic groups or whether certain groups exhibit distinct patterns of emotional functioning. The analysis provides insight into how female students experience life satisfaction, emotional stability, and overall psychological adjustment during their university years.

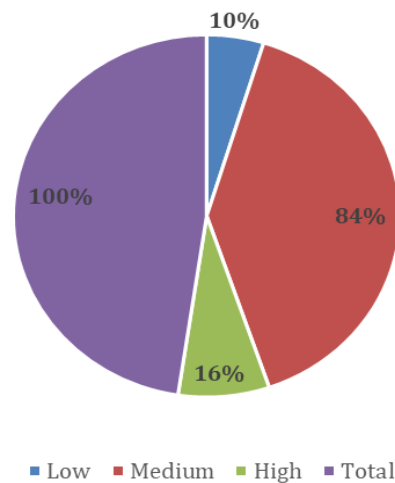


Fig. 2. Percentage Categorisation of Female University Students’ Subjective Well-being Profile

The chart above shows that subjective well-being is overwhelmingly concentrated in the medium category (84%), indicating generally stable psychological functioning. Only 10% fall into the low category, suggesting a relatively small subgroup that may experience emotional or cognitive strain. Meanwhile, 16% demonstrate high sub-

jective well-being, reflecting strong adaptive functioning and positive self-perception. The dominance of medium scores suggests consistency in psychological adjustment among female participants. The presence of a meaningful high-well-being subgroup indicates variability and potential protective factors worth exploring in future research, such as coping strategies or social support.

3.1.3 Subjective Well-Being Profile of Male University Students

This subsection examines the subjective well-being profile of male university students to compare their psychological distribution with that of the overall student population and with female participants. Investigating these patterns helps identify whether male students' demonstrate similar levels of emotional adjustment and whether certain trends indicate greater vulnerability or resilience within this group.

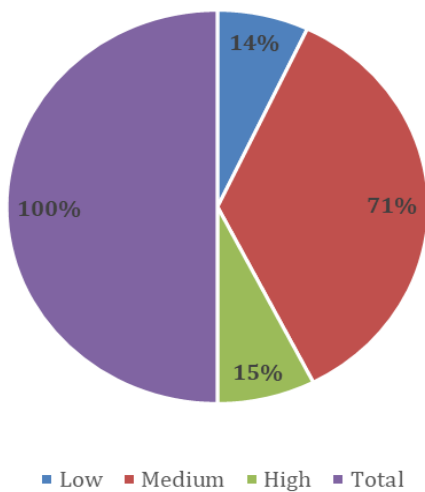


Fig. 3. Percentage Categorisation of Male University Students' Subjective Well-being Profile

The chart above shows that male university students also predominantly fall within the medium subjective well-being range (71%), mirroring the general trend seen among female participants. However, the low category (14%) is slightly higher than among females, suggesting a marginally greater vulnerability among male university students. The high category (15%) is comparable to that of female participants, indicating similar proportions of strong psychological functioning. This distribution reflects balanced but varied well-being among male university students. The slight increase in low scores may suggest differences in emotional expression, coping mechanisms, or social factors influencing psychological health.

3.1.4 Gender Differences in Subjective Well-Being

This subsection compares the mean subjective well-being scores between male and female university students to determine whether meaningful differences exist between the two groups.

Gender comparisons are commonly conducted in well-being research to understand whether social roles, emotional regulation patterns, or contextual factors contribute to variations in psychological functioning.

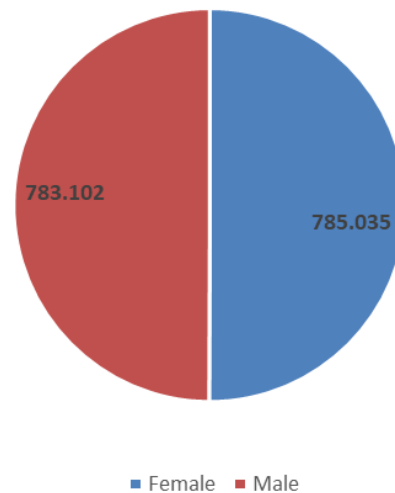


Fig. 4. Gender Differences in Subjective Well-being

The chart above shows that the mean subjective well-being scores for female university students (78.50) and male university students (78.31) are extremely close, indicating minimal gender differences in overall subjective well-being. The difference of less than 0.2 points suggests practical equivalence between groups. From a statistical perspective, such a small gap would likely not reach significance without very large samples. Conceptually, this implies that subjective well-being in this population is influenced more by shared contextual or developmental factors than by gender alone.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Subjective Well-Being Profile of University Students

The primary finding is that most university students fall in the medium range of subjective well-being. According to Diener's theoretical framework, subjective well-being comprises two core components: cognitive evaluation of life satisfaction and the balance between positive and negative affect (Meléndez et al., 2019). The predominance of a medium level of well-being suggests that students generally maintain a relatively stable integration of these cognitive and affective dimensions despite academic and social pressures. This distribution pattern illustrates the overall profile of students' subjective well-being while also reflecting the influence of contextual and personal factors that shape their psychological experiences during university life.

From a developmental standpoint, early adulthood represents a transitional period characterised by identity exploration and role adjustment. In psychosocial develop-

ment theory, Erikson identified this stage as involving identity consolidation and intimacy formation, processes that often lead to emotional fluctuations (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2018). Therefore, medium subjective well-being should not be interpreted as a deficiency but rather as an adaptive equilibrium within a developmental transition. Empirical studies on college populations consistently report clustering in moderate well-being ranges, supporting the interpretation that this level reflects normative developmental adjustment rather than psychological impairment (Marquand et al., 2019). These developmental processes are among the contextual factors influencing the level and distribution of students' subjective well-being.

The causal dynamics underlying this equilibrium can be further explained through emotion regulation theory. The process model developed by James Gross emphasises that cognitive reappraisal enhances positive affect and reduces negative affect (Yih et al., 2019). When students reinterpret academic stressors as manageable challenges, the intensity of negative emotional responses decreases before escalating into distress. Prior empirical research demonstrates that students who employ adaptive emotion regulation strategies tend to report more stable and satisfactory well-being levels (Yih et al., 2019). In this context, emotion regulation capacity functions as an important psychological factor influencing variations in students' subjective well-being.

At the same time, the identification of a subgroup with low subjective well-being aligns with prior research linking diminished life satisfaction to academic stress, emotional exhaustion, and maladaptive coping. Longitudinal studies among university students show that lower subjective well-being predicts elevated risks of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Li et al., 2023). Mechanistically, persistent negative affect may alter cognitive appraisal patterns, gradually reducing overall life satisfaction. These findings indicate that academic demands and ineffective coping strategies may serve as risk factors for lower levels of subjective well-being among some students.

Conversely, students in the high well-being category reflect characteristics associated with psychological flourishing. Within positive psychology, Seligman conceptualised flourishing through the PERMA model, consisting of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Hejazi et al., 2021). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that flourishing students exhibit stronger resilience, higher intrinsic motivation, and better academic performance (Hejazi et al., 2021). The presence of this subgroup indicates that supportive psychological resources and positive academic environments may serve as protective factors that enhance students' subjective well-being.

Unlike many prior studies that primarily rely on mean comparisons, this study contributes by presenting subjective

well-being as a distributional phenomenon rather than solely as a central tendency. By mapping the proportional spread across categories, the findings reveal heterogeneity within the student population and highlight the potential role of psychological and contextual factors in shaping variations in well-being levels. This distributional perspective provides a clearer understanding of the profile of university students' subjective well-being and the factors that may influence its development within higher education settings.

3.2.2 Subjective Well-Being Profile Based on Gender

Gender-based comparisons reveal only marginal differences, with female students demonstrating slightly higher subjective well-being scores. Subjective well-being theory emphasises that cognitive appraisal and affective balance are shaped primarily by lived experience, coping strategies, and social context rather than biological distinctions alone (Das et al., 2020). Cross-cultural research increasingly suggests that gender differences in well-being are context-dependent and often modest in magnitude (Golinelli et al., 2025).

The slight advantage observed among female students may relate to socialisation patterns that encourage emotional expression and relational support-seeking behaviours. Social psychological research consistently identifies social connectedness as a strong predictor of life satisfaction and positive affect (Zhang et al., 2021). Studies among university populations show that perceived social support mediates the relationship between stress and well-being, potentially explaining the minor differences observed (Wilson et al., 2020). In this mechanism, social support reduces the intensity of stress appraisal and enhances coping confidence, thereby indirectly stabilising affective balance.

However, male students demonstrate comparable levels of well-being, indicating that alternative coping mechanisms, particularly problem-focused strategies, can be equally adaptive (Fischer et al., 2021). Empirical findings confirm that task-oriented coping does not inherently reduce subjective well-being. Instead, effectiveness depends on situational demands and flexibility in strategy use (Guadalupe et al., 2025). The overlapping distribution across genders reinforces the interpretation that contextual and developmental influences outweigh categorical gender distinctions.

The dominance of medium well-being in both groups underscores the shared impact of academic pressures, institutional culture, and peer dynamics. Contemporary research supports the argument that environmental conditions often exert a stronger influence on student well-being than gender identity alone (Vantieghem & Van Houtte, 2020). By examining well-being distribution rather than solely mean differences, this study demonstrates substan-

tial psychological overlap between male and female students. Thus, gender functions more as a contextual modifier than as a primary determinant of subjective well-being.

3.2.3 Factors Influencing University Students' Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being among university students is influenced by multiple interrelated dimensions, including personal, psychological, academic, social, and environmental factors. These factors interact dynamically in shaping students' cognitive and emotional evaluations of their lives. As illustrated in Figure 5.

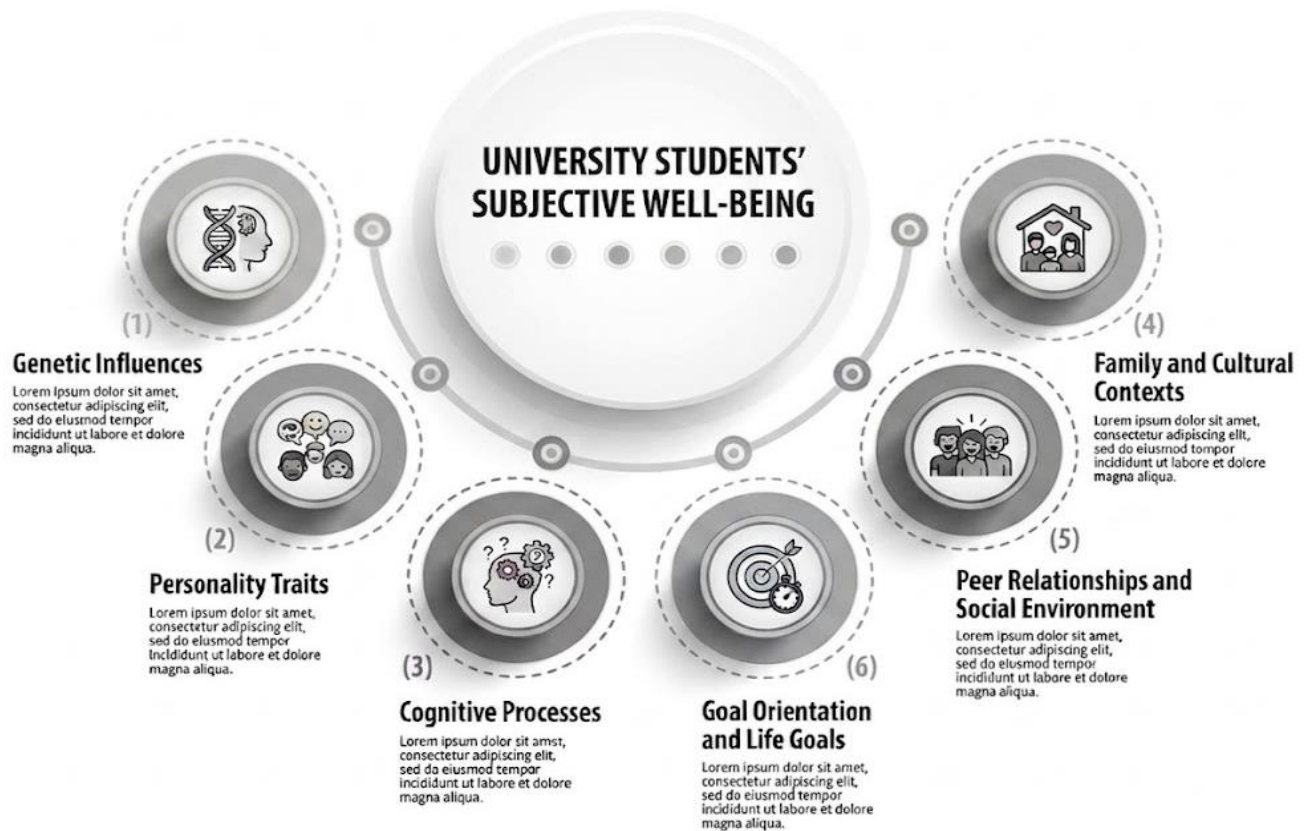


Fig. 5. Factors Influencing University Students' Subjective Well-Being, including Individual, Psychological, Academic, Family, Social, and Environmental Factors.

The findings presented in Figure 5 indicate that university students' subjective well-being is shaped by the dynamic interaction of these interrelated factors. Genetic influences and personality traits provide foundational predispositions that affect emotional stability and life satisfaction, while cognitive processes shape how students perceive, interpret, and respond to life experiences. Additionally, family and cultural contexts contribute to value formation and emotional support, whereas peer relationships and the broader social environment foster a sense of belonging and interpersonal connectedness. Goal orientation and life goals further provide meaning, direction, and motivation, which are essential for sustaining well-being. Collectively, these dimensions operate in an integrated manner, influencing students' cognitive and emotional evaluations of their lives. Thus, subjective well-being among university students is inherently multidimensional, emerging from the continuous interaction of these factors and ultimately shaping their overall quality of life.

The distribution of subjective well-being identified in this study reflects the interaction of multiple psychological and environmental factors that shape students' life evaluations and emotional experiences. Multidimensional models of subjective well-being emphasise that well-being emerges from the interplay between internal psychological resources and contextual conditions. One important psychological factor is self-efficacy. According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, individuals' beliefs about their ability to perform tasks influence their motivation, emotional responses, and persistence when facing challenges (Bembenutty et al., 2024). When university students perceive themselves as capable of managing academic demands, they tend to interpret stressors as manageable challenges rather than threats. This cognitive appraisal strengthens life satisfaction and reduces negative affect. Prior research consistently demonstrates that students with higher self-efficacy report greater life satisfaction and lower levels of psychological distress (Jhang, 2019).

Emotion regulation capacity also plays a central role in influencing students' subjective well-being. Empirical evidence shows that students who can reinterpret stressful situations constructively maintain a more stable balance between positive and negative affect (Maqsood et al., 2024). This finding supports theoretical perspectives suggesting that adaptive regulation mechanisms help sustain subjective well-being under academic demands (Tomás et al., 2020). Through repeated experiences of successfully managing emotional responses, students develop stronger resilience, which contributes to more stable well-being levels over time.

In addition to internal psychological resources, external factors such as social support significantly influence students' subjective well-being. Social support theory suggests that meaningful interpersonal relationships strengthen feelings of belongingness and competence (Chen et al., 2025). Empirical studies consistently show that peer support, family connectedness, and faculty mentorship are positively associated with life satisfaction and act as protective factors against stress-related declines in well-being (Oddone Paolucci et al., 2021). Social support operates both directly, by increasing positive emotional experiences, and indirectly, by buffering the negative effects of academic and social stressors.

From an ecological perspective, the university environment also plays a critical role in shaping students' subjective well-being. The academic climate, availability of counseling services, and opportunities for collaborative learning influence how students evaluate their experiences within higher education. Research has shown that supportive academic environments and accessible psychological services are associated with higher levels of student well-being (Obeidat et al., 2024). The presence of both medium and low well-being categories identified in this study suggests that students may experience varying levels of access to or engagement with these institutional resources.

Developmental factors related to early adulthood further contribute to variations in subjective well-being. This life stage involves processes such as identity exploration, increasing autonomy, and career preparation, all of which intensify self-evaluative processes and emotional experiences (Mannerström et al., 2019). Longitudinal research indicates that personal skills such as effective time management, adaptive coping strategies, and institutional support significantly contribute to stable well-being trajectories throughout the university years (Au et al., 2023). These developmental and contextual influences help explain the variability in students' subjective well-being levels.

The findings suggest that university students' subjective well-being is a dynamic condition shaped by the interaction between psychological competencies and environmental support. Identifying its variations and associated

factors provides a basis for developing campus strategies that prevent psychological distress and promote positive well-being among university students.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study highlight important implications for higher education institutions and student support services. Although most university students demonstrate moderate levels of subjective well-being, the presence of students in the lower category indicates a need for targeted psychological and counseling support. Universities are encouraged to integrate well-being promotion into counseling services, academic advising, and campus programs. Counselors and student affairs professionals can develop preventive and developmental interventions that focus on emotional regulation, social connectedness, and adaptive coping strategies. Furthermore, the identified gender differences underscore the importance of implementing gender-sensitive counseling programs tailored to students' specific psychological needs.

4.1 Research Contributions

This study contributes to the literature on student psychology by providing an empirical description of university students' subjective well-being in a higher education context. It offers updated evidence on well-being levels and gender-based patterns, enhancing understanding of students' psychological conditions in contemporary academic settings. The findings also serve as a reference for counselors, educators, and researchers concerned with student mental health. Furthermore, this study provides a foundation for future research examining broader psychological, social, and academic factors influencing student well-being using more advanced analytical approaches.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research employed a descriptive quantitative design that primarily focused on describing the distribution of subjective well-being among university students, without examining causal relationships between variables. As a result, the study does not provide empirical evidence regarding the specific psychological or contextual factors that influence students' subjective well-being. Second, the sample was limited to students from a particular institutional context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Third, the use of self-report questionnaires may introduce potential response bias, as parti-

cipants' answers may be influenced by social desirability or personal perceptions at the time of data collection.

5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future studies are encouraged to expand this line of research by employing more comprehensive research designs and analytical approaches. Researchers may examine the relationships between subjective well-being and various psychological, social, and academic factors such as social support, emotion regulation, academic stress, and self-efficacy using correlational or multivariate methods. Future research may also include more diverse samples from different universities, academic disciplines, and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, qualitative or mixed-methods approaches could provide deeper insights into students' lived experiences and the contextual factors that shape their subjective well-being.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the overall profile of university students' subjective well-being predominantly falls within the medium category. This finding indicates that most students exhibit a relatively balanced level of life satisfaction and emotional experience as they navigate the academic, social, and developmental challenges of university life. A medium level of subjective well-being reflects a transitional psychological condition in which students are still developing emotional regulation, adaptive coping strategies, and self-understanding. Although this level suggests generally adequate psychological adjustment, it also highlights the importance of continuous support to enhance students' well-being and promote more optimal psychological functioning.

The analysis also indicates that gender differences in subjective well-being are relatively small, with female students showing slightly higher well-being levels than male students. This pattern suggests that gender alone does not substantially determine variations in students' subjective well-being. Instead, the findings imply that subjective well-being is influenced by a combination of psychological and contextual factors experienced by students during their academic life. Both male and female students demonstrate similar adaptive characteristics, emphasizing the importance of developing inclusive support systems that strengthen emotional skills, coping abilities, and personal resilience.

Furthermore, the study highlights several factors that may influence university students' subjective well-being. Internal psychological resources, such as emotional regulation abilities and adaptive coping strategies, contribute to students' capacity to maintain a positive evaluation of their lives. At the same time, external conditions, including social support and a supportive educational environment,

play an important role in sustaining positive emotional experiences and life satisfaction. These interacting factors illustrate that subjective well-being among university students emerges from the dynamic relationship between personal competencies and environmental support systems.

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CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Luna Nurani Zakiah: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Data Curation. Maya Masyita Suherman: Conceptualization. Tb. Moh. Irma Ari Irawan: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing. Rina Marlina: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing. Muhammad Amirullah: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no any financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct or presentation of the work presented in this manuscript.

Informed Consent Statement

The authors declare that this study was conducted in accordance with study ethics, including obtaining approval from the relevant institution. This process respects the autonomy of participants, ensures the confidentiality of their data, and prioritizes their safety and well-being, in compliance with applicable study ethics guidelines. Written and verbal informed consent, or assent for minors, was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

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