










Understanding Mental Well-Being Among University Students in Indonesia: A Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Nov 07, 2025
Revised Dec 30, 2025
Accepted Jan 22, 2026
OnlineFirst Jan 31, 2026

Keywords:

Flourishing
Guidance and Counseling
Higher Education
Mental Well Being
University Students

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Mental well-being is a crucial component of university students' academic functioning and personal development. However, empirical evidence describing students' mental well-being levels, particularly in non-Western contexts, remains limited. This study aims to describe the level of mental well-being among university students at two higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive quantitative design. A total of 449 undergraduate students were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling from two universities with different student population characteristics. Data were collected using the Indonesian-adapted version of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of students' mental well-being levels.

Main Findings: These findings highlight the importance of strengthening preventive and promotive mental health initiatives in higher education settings. Campus-based interventions, such as mindfulness programs and counseling services, may play a strategic role in supporting students' transition from moderate mental well-being toward flourishing.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study provides empirical insight into students' mental well-being profiles within the Indonesian higher education context and offers practical implications for the development of guidance and counseling services.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a state of well-being that enables individuals to realize their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, and contribute productively to society [1]. Previous studies have documented a significant increase in stress, anxiety, and depression among university students due to academic demands and social pressures. Data from the Basic Health Research survey reported that the prevalence of emotional mental disorders reached 6.1% (approximately 11 million people) among individuals aged 15 years and older, with

depression rates of 6.2% among those aged 15–24 years [2]. In Indonesia, suicide remains a serious public health concern, with an estimated 10,000 cases annually, equivalent to one case per hour. Furthermore, suicidology experts have reported that 6.9% of university students experience suicidal ideation, and approximately 3% have attempted suicide [3].

Academic stress and poor mental health have therefore become critical issues in the current educational context. Excessive academic demands, social expectations, and limited coping resources may increase students' vulnerability to psychological distress. As a result, mental well-being among university students has gained increasing attention, as it plays a vital role in helping students cope with stress, maintain psychological balance, and improve overall quality of life. Mental well-being emphasizes the positive aspects of human functioning, including resilience, optimism, and the capacity to manage challenges effectively. Empirical evidence has shown that poor mental health and academic stress are associated with decreased academic performance and lower quality of life among students [4]. Conversely, good mental well-being contributes positively to learning motivation, academic achievement, and life satisfaction [5].

Mental well-being is commonly defined as a positive psychological condition in which individuals are able to cope with life's pressures, experience satisfaction, and maintain confidence in their abilities [6]. Higher levels of mental well-being have also been shown to reduce the risk of mental disorders and promote psychological resilience [7]. Conceptually, mental well-being is rooted in subjective well-being theory, which conceptualizes well-being as positive life experiences characterized by happiness and life satisfaction (Monden, 2024). Within the higher education context, this perspective underscores the importance of understanding not only psychological problems but also students' positive psychological states. In Indonesia, studies have indicated that student mental well-being tends to fall in the moderate category, largely due to academic burdens and limited access to psychological services [8]. Based on this context, the present study focuses on describing the level of mental well-being among students at two universities in Tasikmalaya City.

Despite the growing body of research on student mental health, most existing studies have primarily focused on psychological distress, mental disorders, or negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Comparatively fewer studies have provided a comprehensive descriptive picture of students' mental well-being levels, particularly from a positive psychology perspective. In the Indonesian context, available evidence suggests that students' mental well-being generally falls within the moderate category, often attributed to academic burdens and limited access to psychological support services [8]. However, empirical data that systematically describe the distribution and profile of mental well-being levels across different higher education institutions remain limited. This lack of detailed descriptive evidence makes it difficult for universities to design preventive and promotive mental health programs that are responsive to students' actual psychological conditions.

Therefore, there is a clear need for descriptive research that maps the level of mental well-being among university students as a foundational step for developing effective guidance, counseling, and mental health promotion programs. Based on this research gap, the present study aims to describe the level of mental well-being among students at two universities in Tasikmalaya City. By providing an empirical overview of students' mental well-being levels, this study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of students' psychological conditions and to inform the development of campus-based mental health interventions within the Indonesian higher education context.

There are also studies that measure psychological well-being limited to specific dimensions (e.g., psychological well-being), rather than assessing it holistically or within a comparative framework of well-being categories (languishing, moderate, flourishing) [9]. Although the literature on university students' mental well-being has grown, a gap remains regarding the transition process from moderate well-being to flourishing, particularly in the context of Indonesian students. Many local studies describe students' psychological well-being from the perspective of individual dimensions, yet only a few examine the determinant factors and the dynamics of the transition toward a flourishing condition.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by evaluating the general profile of students' mental well-being and examining the characteristics of students located on the spectrum between moderate well-being and flourishing, including relevant psychosocial factors within the campus life context. Based on this research gap, a descriptive study is needed to map the levels of students' mental well-being as an initial foundation for the development of guidance services, counseling, and mental health promotion in higher education. Accordingly, this study aims to describe the levels of mental well-being among students at two higher education institutions in the city of Tasikmalaya. The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical insights into the mental well-being conditions of university students and to serve as a basis for the development of campus-based mental health interventions within the context of higher education in Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design. A total of 449 students participated in the study and were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling from two universities with different student population sizes. The research instrument used was the Indonesian-adapted version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of mental well-being categories.

The instrument used in this study was the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), which has established construct validity. Findings from studies on the Indonesian version of the WEMWBS indicate that the instrument demonstrates very high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90 [10]. The scale consists of 14 positively worded items, such as "I've been feeling optimistic about the future." Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The total score ranges from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating better mental well-being. The WEMWBS integrates both hedonic (positive affect) and eudaimonic (psychological functioning) perspectives within a single instrument [11].

The data analysis procedures included assigning scores to each item using the 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always), followed by calculating the total mental well-being score by summing the responses across the 14 items, resulting in a score range of 14–70. Mental well-being levels were then categorized into several levels (low, moderate, and high) based on predetermined score ranges. Subsequently, frequency and percentage distribution analyses were conducted to describe the proportion of students in each mental well-being category. Descriptive statistical measures, including minimum and maximum values, mean, and standard deviation, were calculated to provide an overall overview of respondents' mental well-being levels.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed that most students were in the moderate category, indicating that they were reasonably capable of managing stress, maintaining social relationships, and finding meaning, but had not yet reached an optimal state, commonly referred to as flourishing. This finding is supported by Keyes' (2002) theory, which positions mental health along a spectrum of languishing–moderate–flourishing. These results are consistent with the study [12] which found that Indonesian students tend to fall within the moderate level of well-being. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Mental Well-Being

Category	Interval Score	f	%
High	≥ 57	53	10.62
Moderate	42-57	320	64.12
Low	≤ 42	76	15.23
Total		499	100

Table 1 presents the distribution of students' mental well-being levels based on score categories. The majority of students fall into the moderate category, with score intervals ranging from 42 to 57, totaling 320 students (64.12%). This is followed by the low mental well-being category (score ≤ 42), which includes 76 students (15.23%). Meanwhile, 53 students (10.62%) are classified as having high mental well-being, with scores ≥ 57 . Overall, the findings indicate that most students demonstrate a moderate level of mental well-being. The general overview of students' mental well-being is illustrated in Figure 1.

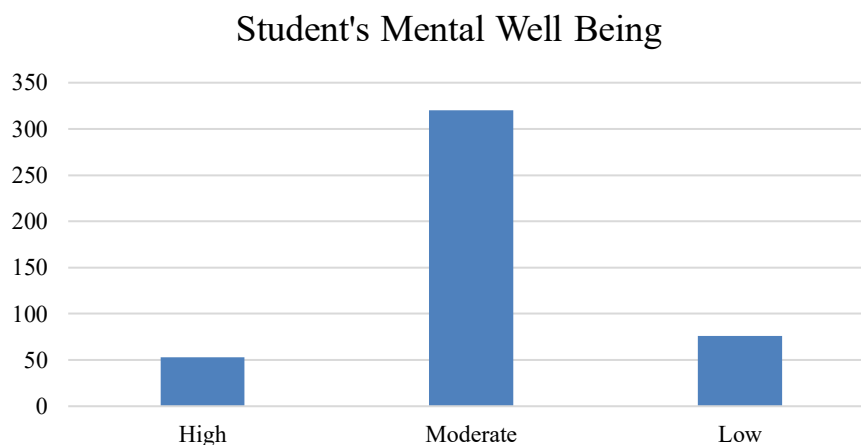


Figure 1. Student's Mental Well Being

Figure 1 illustrates the overall mental well-being of students based on the percentage achievement of mental well-being scores. The visualization indicates that the majority of students fall within the moderate mental well-being category, which dominates the percentage distribution. In contrast, the proportions of students classified as having low and high mental well-being are comparatively smaller. These findings suggest that, in general, students' mental well-being is at a moderate level, although there remains a group of students who may require particular attention regarding their mental well-being. Figure 2 below explains the average achievement of mental well-being across two universities.

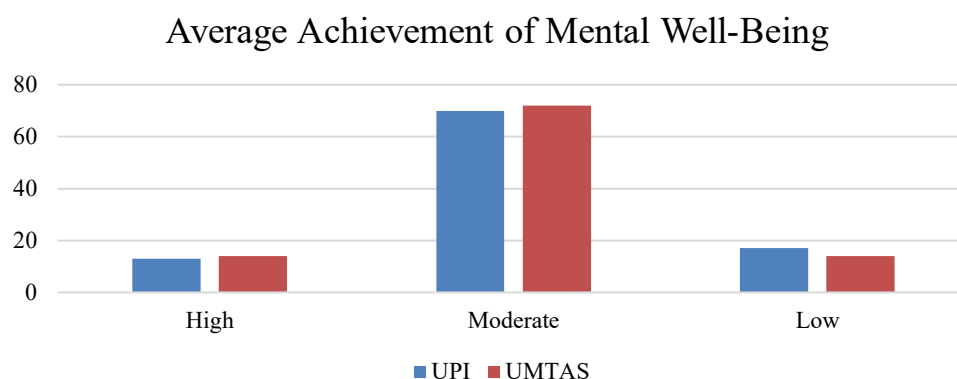


Figure 2. Average Achievement of Mental Well-Being Across Two Universities

Based on Figure 2, the distribution of average mental well-being achievement among students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya (UMTAS) and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) is presented. Overall, the majority of students from both universities were in the moderate category, with 72% at UMTAS and 70% at UPI. In the high category, the proportion of students was relatively small, approximately 14% at UMTAS and 13% at UPI. Meanwhile, the low category accounted for 14% of UMTAS students and 17% of UPI students. These findings show a relatively similar pattern between the two universities, namely a predominance in the moderate category with slight variations in the low and high categories. The results indicate that most students, both at UMTAS and UPI, were at a moderate level of mental well-being. The comparison between universities shows a relatively similar pattern, although slight differences were observed in the average scores. This condition suggests that students have an adequate capacity for psychological adaptation in coping with academic and social demands, yet there is still room for development to achieve a flourishing state [13]. In line with the research conducted, the results show that flourishing is an important predictor of quality of life among university students [14].

The small differences in proportions in the low and high categories between the two universities may be explained by contextual factors. Academic environments, campus cultures, and differences in student population size can influence variations in mental well-being achievement [15]. For instance, UPI students showed a slightly higher percentage in the low category, which may be related to the complexity of academic demands at a larger university. Conversely, UMTAS had slightly more students in the high category, which may be influenced by a more personalized learning environment. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that student mental well-being is not only influenced by individual factors but also by institutional characteristics and environmental support [16]. The description of students' mental well-being by gender is illustrated in Figure 3.

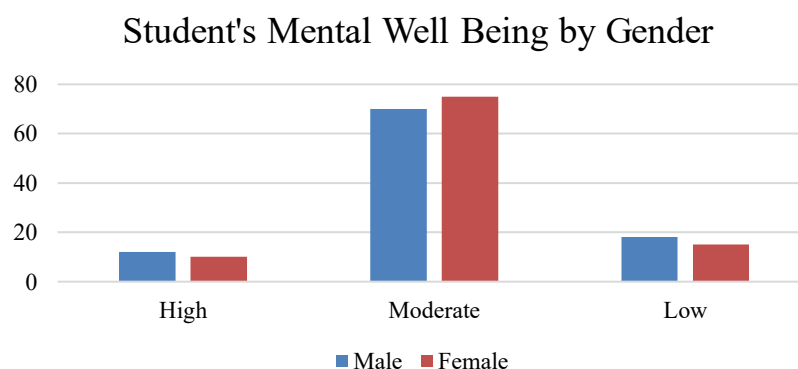


Figure 3. Students' Mental Well Being by Gender

Based on the data in Figure 3, most respondents, both male and female, fell into the moderate category. Specifically, 70% of male students and 75% of female students were classified as moderate. In the high category, only 12% of males and 10% of females were recorded, while in the low category, 18% of males and 15% of females were found. Overall, the majority of respondents demonstrated a moderate level of well-being. This indicates that students generally have some adaptive capacity but have not yet reached an optimal state. Female students were slightly more likely to fall into the moderate category compared to males, although the difference was not significant. These findings are consistent with study who emphasized that educational environments and institutional support play an important role in maintaining student well-being stability [17]. The presence of respondents in the low category also highlights the need for special attention, such as counseling programs, coping skills training, or mindfulness-based activities to enhance well-being. This aligns with Ryff and Keyes who stated that psychological well-being results from the interaction between individual factors and supportive environments [15]. Thus, comprehensive strategies are required to help students progress from the moderate category to the high category, while reducing the number of students in the low category. In the Indonesian context, these results are consistent with prior studies highlighting that institutional characteristics, student population size, and academic environments significantly influence student mental well-being [18]. They also correspond with national findings showing that these factors are determinants of student well-being [19]. This study further shows that there are differences, although not statistically significant, between Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. This finding is in line with Rahimsyah and Muhajirin who found that students in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya had medium to high levels of psychological well-being in dimensions such as self-acceptance, autonomy, mastery, and purpose in life [19]. In addition, a study in Bandung by Rahayu et al. on nursing students reported that academic pressure and clinical practice demands affected the variability of students' psychological well-being [20].

Study from Dogde, et.al explained that well-being is an individual's ability to balance resources with life challenges. This means that well-being increases when resources exceed challenges, and decreases when challenges exceed the individual's capacities [21]. Supported by Monden's theory, individuals assess their own health not only based on objective physical aspects but also on their personal perceptions of their health condition and these perceptions are correlated with how they evaluate their overall life well-being. Within the context of the two-continua model, empirical research indicates that the majority of university students fall within the category of moderate mental health, while the proportion of those achieving a flourishing status is relatively lower. These studies also show that students classified as flourishing experience lower levels of anxiety and depression compared to those in the moderate well-being or languishing categories [22].

Other studies have demonstrated associations between students' mental well-being and academic outcomes as well as engagement in campus life. Students categorized as flourishing within the mental health model generally exhibit better academic performance and more stable psychological adaptation than those who remain at the level of moderate well-being or languishing. Additional research supports the notion that learning experiences, including instructional support and a positive academic context, can predict multiple dimensions of student well-being, encompassing both hedonic (emotional) and eudaimonic (psychological and social functioning) aspects. Furthermore, studies mapping the factors that enable students to thrive psychologically and socially within higher education environments have contributed to the identification of conditions that foster student flourishing. The primary aim of this line of research is to inform the development of theories and practices that support student well-being [23].

Kotera et al. further emphasize that global well-being models cannot always be applied directly in Indonesia, as Indonesian students display a unique structure of well-being [24]-[26]. This finding is important for researchers, educational practitioners, and policymakers to ensure that well-being interventions or programs are relevant to the psychological and cultural context of Indonesian students [27]-[31]. Many studies in Indonesia support the idea that social support positively influences students' well-being, meaning that the more social support individuals receive, the higher their level of well-being. This is consistent with international literature, which highlights the importance of social support as a psychological resource that can enhance quality of life, happiness, and emotional stability [32]-[38]. These findings imply that universities need to strengthen student counseling services, mindfulness programs, self-compassion training, and healthy campus policies. Contributing factors often reported include academic workload, task pressures, and adaptation to campus environments. Limited access to counseling and mental health services remains a significant issue, emphasizing the need for more targeted interventions at each university, such as counseling centers, mindfulness training, peer support, and programs to develop students' socio-emotional capacity. Therefore, universities should recognize that their role is not only to support students in planning their future but also in developing academic abilities that contribute to the enhancement of their psychological well-being [39]-[45]. The findings recommend that universities integrate mental well-being development programs into student services and counseling units. The study also showed no significant differences in students' mental well-being based on gender. However, the research has limitations, as it only involved two universities; thus, the results cannot be generalized to all

students in Tasikmalaya. This study is limited by its descriptive design, which does not allow for an explanation of the factors influencing students' mental well-being. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ analytical or longitudinal designs to examine the determinants of students' mental well-being in greater depth and to evaluate the effectiveness of relevant interventions. Future studies are recommended to include more campuses and additional psychosocial variables. The overall description of student well-being levels can serve as a baseline for identifying initial needs in developing programs tailored to the conditions of students at each university. It is crucial for higher education institutions to enhance their services aimed at fostering students' mental well-being [46]-[50].

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a descriptive quantitative overview of mental well-being among university students in Indonesia. Students at the two universities in Tasikmalaya were predominantly found in the moderate category of mental well-being. The results moderate level indicating that most students are able to adapt to academic demands and daily life and this condition reflects a reasonably good state of well-being but indicates the need for interventions to help students progress toward flourishing. However, the presence of students with lower levels of mental well-being highlights a potential risk of psychological vulnerability that warrants attention. These findings emphasize mental well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, and social functioning. The study offers empirical evidence that can inform higher education institutions in developing targeted promotive and preventive strategies, including counseling services, psychoeducational programs, and the enhancement of supportive campus environments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by a 2025 research grant from the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM). The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation and gratitude to DPPM for the financial support provided. Special thanks are also extended to the leadership and academic communities of the two universities in Tasikmalaya for granting permission, support, and facilities that enabled this study to be carried out successfully. The authors also wish to express their highest appreciation to all students who participated as respondents in this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, A.P.R. and M.M.; Methodology, A.P.R.; Software, G.S.S.; Validation, A.P.R., N.N.R., and K.B.; Formal Analysis, A.P.R.; Investigation, A.P.R., T.A., and N.L.Z.; Resources, M.M. and K.B.; Data Curation, N.N.R. and G.S.S.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, A.P.R.; Writing – Review & Editing, A.P.R., M.M., and K.B.; Visualization, G.S.S. and T.A.; Supervision, M.M. and K.B.; Project Administration, A.P.R.; Funding Acquisition, M.M.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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