
THE ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES IN PREDICTING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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Abstract: Nursing students face complex academic and clinical demands, including academic pressure, exposure to critically ill patients, and professional competency requirements, which may negatively affect their psychological well-being. Adaptive coping strategies are considered important resources for maintaining psychological well-being; however, studies examining coping as a predictor of psychological well-being among nursing students remain limited. **Objective:** To investigate the predictive role of coping strategies on psychological well-being among nursing students while controlling for age, gender, and academic year. **Methods:** A quantitative study with a cross-sectional predictive correlational design was conducted among 241 nursing students selected through proportional random sampling from a population of 608 undergraduate nursing students. Data were collected using coping strategy and psychological well-being questionnaires. Hierarchical linear regression was employed to examine the predictive role of coping, controlling for age, gender, and academic year. **Results:** The control model, including age, gender, and academic year, was not a significant predictor of psychological well-being ($R^2 = 0.020$; $p = 0.182$). After coping was added, the explained variance increased significantly to $R^2 = 0.139$ ($\Delta R^2 = 0.118$; $\Delta F = 32.398$; $p < 0.001$). Coping emerged as a significant positive predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.346$; $p < 0.001$). Gender also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.170$; $p = 0.007$), whereas age and academic year were not significant predictors. **Conclusion:** Adaptive coping significantly predicts psychological well-being among nursing students. Strengthening coping skills can be an effective strategy for promoting and maintaining students' psychological well-being.

INTRODUCTION

In higher education settings, students are expected not only to achieve academic excellence through participation in lectures, laboratory activities, clinical practice, presentations, and other academic tasks, but also to engage actively in social, cultural, and community-related activities that contribute to their personal and professional development (Arnett, 2023). These expectations position students as future professionals and agents of

social change, requiring not only intellectual competence but also psychological resilience and adaptive capacities.

Among students in the health sciences, nursing students face particularly demanding educational experiences due to the integration of theoretical learning and clinical training. Their educational journey requires the development of professional competencies, effective communication skills, emotional regulation, and the ability to adapt to dynamic healthcare environments. Moreover, exposure to patients with complex health conditions, rigorous competency assessments, and heavy academic workloads may increase their vulnerability to psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and diminished psychological well-being (Galanis et al., 2021). Consequently, nursing students must develop effective personal resources and coping mechanisms to manage the diverse academic and clinical challenges encountered throughout their education.

One of the most important psychological resources in dealing with stressors is coping. Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage internal and external demands perceived as stressful or exceeding available resources (dos Santos et al., 2025). The literature generally distinguishes coping into two broad categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves active efforts to address the source of stress through planning, problem-solving, information seeking, and resource utilization. Conversely, emotion-focused coping aims to regulate emotional reactions to stressful situations through strategies such as seeking emotional support, practicing relaxation techniques, acceptance, and cognitive reframing (Fariz et al., 2025). Evidence suggests that individuals who utilize adaptive coping strategies tend to experience better psychological adjustment, greater resilience, and improved mental health outcomes (Freire et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of coping strategies is closely linked to psychological well-being, a key indicator of positive mental health. Psychological well-being encompasses multiple dimensions of optimal psychological functioning, including self-acceptance, positive interpersonal relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. During early adulthood, maintaining psychological well-being is particularly important because individuals are simultaneously navigating developmental transitions, academic demands, and future career planning. Higher levels of psychological well-being have been associated with stronger academic engagement, enhanced motivation, improved adaptability, and greater professional preparedness (Pellerin & Raufaste, 2022). In contrast, poor psychological well-being may contribute to chronic stress, burnout, psychological distress, and diminished academic performance (Galanis et al., 2021).

Although previous studies have extensively explored the relationship between coping and negative psychological outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and burnout among healthcare students, research examining coping as a predictor of positive psychological functioning remains relatively limited. In particular, empirical evidence on the predictive role of coping in psychological well-being among nursing students remains insufficient. Most studies have focused primarily on reducing psychological distress rather than identifying factors that promote positive mental health and flourishing (Freire et al., 2020; Pellerin & Raufaste, 2022). Addressing this gap is essential because understanding the role of coping in

psychological well-being may yield valuable insights for developing preventive and promotive mental health interventions within nursing education programs.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of coping in predicting psychological well-being among nursing students. By identifying the role of coping strategies in students' psychological well-being, the findings are expected to support the development of evidence-based interventions to strengthen adaptive coping skills and promote positive mental health outcomes in nursing education settings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Participants: This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, predictive-correlational design to examine the role of coping strategies in predicting psychological well-being among nursing students. The research was conducted at the Department of Nursing, Health Polytechnic of the Ministry of Health Surakarta (Poltekkes Kemenkes Surakarta), Indonesia, between May and June 2026. The study population comprised 608 undergraduate nursing students enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Nursing Program across all academic years (Years I–IV). The minimum sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a required sample of 241 participants. Respondents were selected through proportional random sampling to ensure representation from each academic year. **Instruments:** Coping strategies were assessed using a 14-item Coping Strategy Questionnaire, rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Total scores ranged from 14 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater use of adaptive coping strategies. Psychological well-being was measured using a 28-item questionnaire covering six dimensions: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, and purpose in life. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Total scores ranged from 28 to 140, with higher scores reflecting better psychological well-being. **Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 21. Prior to regression analysis, the normality of residuals was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and visual inspection of the Normal Q–Q Plot. Although the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test yielded a p-value of 0.048, the residual distribution was judged approximately normal based on graphical assessment and the relatively large sample size ($n = 241$). Hierarchical multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate the predictive role of coping strategies on psychological well-being. In the first model, age, gender, and academic year were entered as control variables. Coping strategy scores were subsequently added in the second model to assess their unique contribution beyond demographic factors. Model fit was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , F-statistics, standardized beta coefficients (β), and significance levels. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 3. Model Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Well-Being(n = 241)

| Model | Prediktor | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | SEE | ΔR ² | F Change | p |
|-------|---|-------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|-----------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Gender, Age, Academic level | 0,142 | 0,020 | 0,008 | 3,873 | 0,020 | 1,633 | 0,182 |
| 2 | Gender, Age, Academic level , Coping | 0,372 | 0,139 | 0,124 | 3,639 | 0,118 | 32,398 | 0.001 |

Table 4. Regression Coefficients for Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting Psychological Well-Being (n = 241)

| Model | Prediktor | B | β | t | p |
|---------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Model 1 | Gender | 1,914 | 0,158 | 2,488 | 0,014* |
| | Age | -0,099 | -0,076 | -1,167 | 0,244 |
| | Academic level | 0,455 | 0,043 | 0,657 | 0,512 |
| Model 2 | Gender | 2,059 | 0,170 | 2,733 | 0,007* |
| | Age | -0,052 | -0,040 | -0,339 | 0,735 |
| | Academic level | -0,014 | -0,002 | -0,020 | 0,984 |
| | Coping | 0,212 | 0,346 | 5,692 | <0,001*** |

DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Coping and Psychological Well-Being Among Nursing Students.

The hierarchical regression analysis showed that demographic variables (age, gender, and academic level) did not significantly predict psychological well-being in Model 1, explaining only 2.0% of the variance ($R^2 = .020$, $p = .182$). After coping was entered into Model 2, the explanatory power of the model increased substantially to 13.9% ($R^2 = .139$), representing a significant increase of 11.8% in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .118$, $p < .001$). Coping emerged as a significant positive predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = .346$, $p < .001$), whereas gender remained a significant but weaker predictor ($\beta = .170$, $p = .007$). In contrast, age ($\beta = -.040$, $p = .735$) and academic level ($\beta = -.002$, $p = .984$) were not significant predictors. These findings indicate that coping contributes uniquely and substantially to psychological well-being beyond demographic characteristics and represents the strongest predictor in the model.

Nursing students are frequently exposed to a range of academic and clinical stressors that can challenge their psychological adjustment. Beyond fulfilling academic requirements, they are expected to develop clinical competencies, engage effectively with patients, and adapt to complex healthcare environments. The demands associated with clinical placements, exposure to critically ill patients, heavy academic workloads, and ongoing competency assessments may contribute to heightened stress levels and place students at risk for psychological distress (Galanis et al., 2021). Within this context, coping serves as a critical psychological mechanism that enables students to manage stressors effectively and maintain emotional stability. The predominance of moderate coping levels observed in this

study aligns with previous research indicating that students commonly employ a variety of coping strategies to navigate academic and personal challenges. Adaptive coping approaches, including problem-solving, planning, and seeking social support, have been consistently associated with reduced stress and improved adjustment to the demands of higher education (dos Santos et al., 2025). Similarly, studies conducted among Indonesian student populations have demonstrated that effective coping contributes to better stress management and enhanced psychological well-being (Fariz et al., 2025). These findings suggest that although students may experience considerable academic pressure, many possess sufficient coping resources to mitigate its negative effects.

Most respondents also reported moderate levels of psychological well-being, indicating a relatively adequate capacity to manage academic, social, and personal demands. Nevertheless, the predominance of moderate rather than high levels of psychological well-being suggests that many students have not yet achieved optimal psychological functioning. Psychological well-being encompasses multiple dimensions, including positive interpersonal relationships, environmental mastery, personal growth, a sense of purpose in life, autonomy, and self-acceptance. Previous studies have shown that students who cultivate meaningful social connections, maintain clear life goals, and adapt effectively to environmental demands tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being (Pellerin & Raufaste, 2022).

Taken together, the findings underscore the significance of coping as an important psychological resource that supports students' mental health and well-being. Students who utilize adaptive coping strategies appear better equipped to manage stress, regulate their emotions, and respond constructively to academic and clinical challenges. Consequently, nursing education institutions should prioritize the development of mental health promotion initiatives aimed at strengthening students' coping capacities. Such initiatives may include stress management training, counseling services, programs to enhance problem-solving skills, and efforts to foster stronger social support networks. By promoting adaptive coping, educational institutions may help students achieve higher levels of psychological well-being and better prepare them for the professional demands of nursing practice.

2. The Role of Coping in Predicting Psychological Well-Being Among Nursing Students

The results of this study demonstrated that coping was a significant predictor of psychological well-being among nursing students ($\beta = 0.346, p < .001$). This finding supports the study's hypothesis and suggests that students with stronger coping abilities tend to report higher levels of psychological well-being. The ability to cope effectively may help nursing students navigate the academic demands, clinical responsibilities, and psychosocial challenges inherent to nursing education. As a result, students who are better equipped to manage stress are more likely to maintain positive psychological functioning.

The present findings are consistent with those reported by Dong et al. (2024), who found that adaptive coping strategies contribute to improved psychological well-being by strengthening resilience and enhancing social support. Students who use adaptive coping mechanisms are generally better at regulating stress, maintaining positive emotional states, and responding effectively to challenging situations. Consequently, coping serves as an important protective factor that supports psychological adjustment and overall well-being.

These findings are further supported by Dias et al. (2024), who highlighted that nursing students are routinely exposed to multiple stressors throughout their academic and clinical training. Clinical placements, academic workloads, and professional expectations can create substantial psychological pressure. In this context, the development of positive coping strategies becomes essential for successful adaptation to both educational and professional demands. Adaptive coping enables students to respond constructively to stressful situations and reduces the negative impact of stress on mental health

Similarly, Fichardt et al. (2023) reported that psychological well-being among health science students is closely linked to effective stress management and coping abilities. Students who possess stronger coping skills tend to demonstrate better psychological adjustment and healthier mental health outcomes than those who rely on less adaptive coping strategies. Collectively, these findings reinforce the notion that coping is a key psychological resource that promotes well-being among students in demanding health-related disciplines.

In addition to coping, gender emerged as a significant predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.170$, $p = .007$). The positive regression coefficient indicates that male students reported higher levels of psychological well-being than female students after controlling for age, academic level, and coping. This finding is consistent with the study by Zhang et al. (2024), which identified gender differences in stress responses and in the utilization of coping strategies among healthcare students. Such differences may influence how students experience and manage stress, ultimately affecting their psychological well-being.

The observed gender disparity is supported by Del Pino and Matud (2024) and Agormedah et al. (2024), who reported that female students tend to experience higher levels of stress, psychological symptoms, and psychological distress than their male counterparts. Greater exposure to these psychological challenges may place female students at increased risk of reduced psychological well-being. From a psychosocial perspective, females are generally more responsive to emotional and interpersonal stressors, whereas males are more likely to adopt problem-focused coping strategies that facilitate effective stress management and adaptation to challenging situations (Graves et al., 2021). These differences in stress responses and coping styles may partially explain the observed variation in psychological well-being among nursing students. Nevertheless, Khan et al. (2025) emphasized that faculty support and a supportive educational environment play an important role in reducing stress and promoting psychological well-being regardless of gender. Therefore, although gender-related differences may influence students' psychological well-being, institutional support can serve as a key protective factor that helps buffer the adverse effects of stress and promotes positive psychological adjustment.

Despite the significance of gender, its contribution was considerably smaller than that of coping. The standardized beta coefficient for coping ($\beta = 0.346$) was approximately twice that of gender ($\beta = 0.170$), indicating that coping represents a more influential predictor of psychological well-being. This finding suggests that students' capacity to manage stress and adapt to everyday challenges plays a more substantial role in determining psychological well-being than demographic characteristics alone.

The study also found that age and academic level were not significant predictors of psychological well-being. This result suggests that psychological well-being among nursing

students may be shaped more strongly by internal psychological resources than by demographic factors. The finding is consistent with Naz et al. (2024) and Cen et al. (2025), who reported that protective psychological factors, including resilience and social support, demonstrate stronger associations with psychological well-being than demographic variables. Therefore, psychological well-being appears to depend less on students' background characteristics and more on their ability to effectively manage challenges and maintain adaptive psychological functioning.

Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of coping in promoting psychological well-being among nursing students. Given the substantial academic and clinical pressures encountered throughout nursing education, interventions to strengthen coping skills may yield meaningful benefits for students' mental health. Educational institutions should therefore consider implementing comprehensive support programs that include stress management training, counseling services, resilience-building initiatives, and the development of problem-solving skills. Such efforts may enhance students' psychological well-being, improve their ability to cope with professional demands, and contribute to their long-term success in the nursing profession.

CONCLUSION

Coping was a significant predictor of psychological well-being among nursing students. Students with higher coping abilities tended to report better psychological well-being. Gender was also a significant predictor, whereas age and academic level were not. These findings indicate that psychological well-being is influenced more by adaptive coping abilities than by demographic characteristics.

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HALAMAN INI SENGAJA DIKOSONGKAN