

Navigating the practice teaching odyssey: unveiling the well-being dynamics of student teachers

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing emphasis on student well-being in educational policy and practice, there remains a need for more consensus on which domains should be studied, resulting in fragmented research. This study addresses this issue by gauging the well-being of student teachers at Caraga State University-Main Campus, Philippines, focusing on cognitive, psychological, social, and material dimensions based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework. The study employed descriptive-correlational research design and data were collected from 62 Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and 66 Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) major in Science student teachers using stratified random sampling. Analysis methods included frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, independent sample T-test, and Pearson product-moment correlation. Results showed that most participants were female and from the BEEd program. Significant differences in well-being were found based on gender, while no significant differences were observed between the programs. Cognitive well-being was associated with psychological and social well-being, and material well-being was significantly linked to both psychological and social well-being. Proposed interventions include financial support, social network enhancement, and academic engagement promotion. These findings present novel insights into the importance of financial aid and robust social networks in improving student teachers' well-being and academic success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching internships train prospective teachers on the rudiments of learning-centered instruction and immerse them in the actual classroom experience, preparing them to become the most equipped and qualified teachers in the country [1]. Numerous countries have placed greater importance on student teaching, recognizing that practical experiences are crucial for enhancing competence and providing a supportive environment, all of which significantly promote student teachers' future career [2]. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) governs student internships in the Philippines. As per the guiding principle [3], the internship allows students to complement their formal learning. These internships are designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that students gain hands-on experience in their respective fields [4]. Every student enrolled in a teacher education program must complete a teaching internship as part of their preparation to enter the workforce as a full-fledged educator [5]. This

internship is a crucial component of professional development in field education [6]. However, during the internship period, student teachers face various challenges affecting their well-being [7].

Student teachers experience cognitive overload and burnout from juggling coursework, lesson planning, and teaching duties and struggle to apply theoretical knowledge due to limited practical experience [8]. Also, materially, financial stress is prevalent, particularly with unpaid internships or insufficient stipends, and restricted access to teaching resources can impede their effectiveness [9]. Moreover, student teachers may feel isolated without adequate support from peers, mentors, or school staff, and difficulties in integrating into the school community can impact their professional relationships [6]. Psychologically, the pressure to excel can lead to significant stress and anxiety, while negative feedback or perceived failures can affect their self-esteem and confidence [10].

Over the past few decades, several research articles [4], [11] have demonstrated the positive learning experiences that student teachers gain during the internship period; however, there is only limited literature that discusses their vulnerability to various contextual and personal stresses that can endanger their health and well-being. In addition, a lot of scholarly works have been done regarding in-service teachers' well-being but only a few were about practice or student teachers. Also, according to Hossain *et al.* [12], there is a lack of agreement on which specific domains should be studied to fully understand student teachers' well-being. Hence, we aim to explore the latter's level of well-being using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework to bridge the gap and to address the challenges they encounter through revisiting the university internship plan. With appropriate information about their well-being, sufficient support will be afforded to them.

Further, our study aims to address the issue by specifically exploring the level of cognitive, psychological, social, and material well-being of student teachers and associating them with their profiles. This investigation may aid in providing comprehensive support mechanisms that can enhance their well-being, ultimately leading to better retention and success rates in the teaching internship and their future career. Thus, the relevance of this study on the internship programs in higher education institutions is obvious.

2. METHOD

The study employed a descriptive correlational design to assess the cognitive, psychological, social, and material well-being of student teachers. It aimed to determine if there were significant relationships among these dimensions of well-being. This study conducted at Caraga State University-Main Campus during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024, the study took place in Butuan City, Caraga Region, Philippines.

The participants of this study were Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Science (BSEd-Science) student teachers from the College of Education of the university. These student teachers, also known as interns, practiced teaching under the guidance of a cooperating teacher. They applied their theoretical knowledge and teaching strategies in actual classroom settings, primarily in public elementary schools within the Department of Education, Butuan City Division.

The study utilized stratified random sampling to select 129 participants; 62 from BEEd and 66 from BSEd-Science student teachers. Cochran's formula was used to determine the study's sample size, where (n) is the sample size, (p) is the maximum variability, (z) is the level of confidence, (e) is the precision level (95%), and ($q=1-p$). The calculation is as in (1).

$$\frac{((1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5))}{(0.05)^2} = 385 \quad (1)$$

However, due to the small population size, the researchers adjusted this using the (2).

$$\frac{385}{(1 + \left(\frac{384}{194}\right))} = 129 \quad (2)$$

It was utilized by Awuah-Frimpong *et al.* [13], who modified Cochran's formula in their study. This sampling formula ensured that the sample size was appropriate given the population size and specified levels of precision, confidence, and variability.

The statistical treatment of the data gathered in this study involved frequency counts and percentages to determine the profile of the participants in terms of gender and program. A weighted mean was used to assess the level of student teachers' cognitive, psychological, social, and material well-being. Additionally, an independent sample t-test identified whether there was a significant difference in the level of well-being of student teachers when grouped according to their profile, and Pearson product-moment correlation determined the significant relationships between and among the domains of well-being.

In gathering data, the study utilized an adapted survey instrument based on the OECD's PISA framework. Modifications were made to align with the study's objectives; hence, the instrument was subsequently validated by three evaluators. It was also piloted with 30 student teachers from a different education program, achieving a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.93, indicating high internal consistency. No items required modification or change. The survey collected information on student teachers' profiles, including gender and program, and assessed their well-being across cognitive, psychological, social, and material domains. Each domain comprised ten questions, providing a comprehensive overview of the student teachers' well-being. Cross-validation of data were conducted through triangulation to enrich the data gathered through the survey.

To ensure ethical clearance for a study, the researchers obtained informed consent from all participants. This was done to ensure that they understood the purpose and methods of the study. The researchers also ensured that the study's design helped minimize any potential harm and that participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. They maintained transparency and open communication with participants throughout the study to uphold ethical standards.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The profile of the student teachers in terms of gender and program

The data presented in Figure 1 reveals a pronounced gender disparity among the student teachers at the College of Education, Caraga State University, with a significant majority (74.82%) being female. This disparity is reflective of broader trends in the teaching profession, where females often constitute the majority. This disparity may have implications for the dynamics within the educational environment, potentially influencing classroom interactions, peer support systems, and the overall culture of the teacher education program.

The slightly higher representation of participants in the BEEd program (51.08%) compared to the BSEd major in science program (48.92%). These results suggest a balanced distribution between these two programs. However, the marginal difference indicates that both programs attract a similar number of students, which could be indicative of the university's efforts to promote both elementary and secondary education pathways equally.

Furthermore, the data from the figure provides valuable insights into the gender and program distribution of student teachers at Caraga State University. Addressing the identified disparities and leveraging the balanced program representation can help create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. These initiatives ultimately benefit the well-being and professional development of all student teachers.

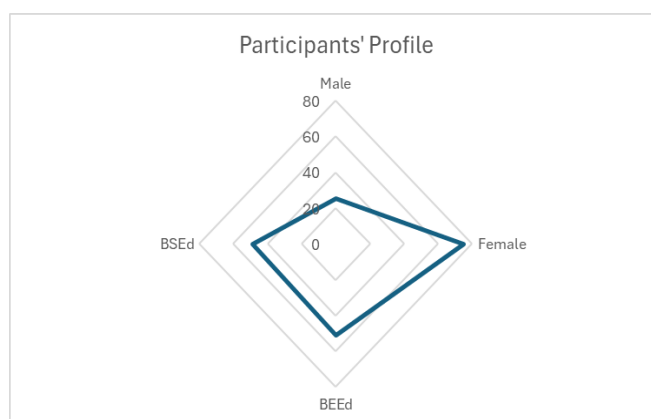


Figure 1. Participants' profile in terms of gender and program

3.2. The well-being of the student teachers in terms of cognitive, psychological, social, and material dimensions

Table 1 reveals that the student teachers exhibit a high level of well-being in three key dimensions: cognitive, psychological, and social. The data indicates that the participants generally are satisfied with their thinking and problem-solving abilities, mental and emotional stability, social interactions, and relationships. However, it can be noted that the material dimension presents a different picture. A score of 2.18, which is categorized as fair, indicates a low level of material well-being, and highlights a significant area of concern.

The data suggests that the participants may face challenges related to financial stability or access to necessary resources, which could impact their overall well-being.

The concern on material insufficiency can have far-reaching implications on the student teachers' overall well-being. Addressing this inadequacy is therefore critical. Financial instability can undermine the benefits gained from high cognitive, psychological, and social well-being. Without adequate financial resources, student teachers may find it challenging to maintain their mental and emotional health, which can, in turn, affect their academic performance and future career prospects.

Table 1. Student teachers' well-being in terms of cognitive, psychological, social, and material dimensions

Dimensions	Level	Verbal description	Interpretation
Cognitive	3.36	Good	High level of well-being
Psychological	3.06	Good	High level of well-being
Social	3.32	Good	High level of well-being
Material	2.18	Fair	Low level of well-being

Range of means: 1.00-1.49 (poor); 1.50-2.49 (fair); 2.50-3.49 (good); 3.50-4.00 (very good)

The proposed interventions, such as financial support, social network enhancement, and academic engagement promotion, are essential steps toward mitigating these challenges. Providing financial aid can alleviate the immediate stressors related to material insufficiency, allowing student teachers to focus more on their studies and personal development. Enhancing social networks can provide additional emotional and practical support, further bolstering their psychological and social well-being. Promoting academic engagement can help student teachers stay motivated and connected to their educational goals, fostering a sense of purpose and achievement.

Given the findings, a significant impact of financial stress on college students in Lebanon was revealed in previous studies [14], [15], affecting their well-being and mental health aspects. The findings reveal how financial stress affects the well-being of student teachers, emphasizing the need for better financial support systems. Further, several researchers [16], [17] suggest that providing adequate financial aid and resources can improve the overall quality of life of student teachers' performance.

In summary, while the student teachers exhibit high levels of cognitive, psychological, and social well-being, the low material well-being score highlights a critical area that needs attention. Addressing financial and material needs is essential for enhancing the overall quality of life and well-being of student teachers. The findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive support systems that include financial aid and robust social networks to ensure the holistic well-being and academic success of student teachers.

3.3. Comparing the level of well-being of student teachers when grouped according to profile

Table 2 displays the study's results on the comparison of the levels of well-being according to the student teachers' profile (gender and program). The data indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the well-being levels of student teachers based on gender. The F-value for this variable is 1.324, with a p-value of 0.049. This data suggests that gender does have a notable impact on the well-being of student teachers in this study.

Table 2. Comparing the student teachers' level of well-being in terms of gender and program

Variables		F-value	P-Value	Decision
Gender	Male	1.324	0.052	Significant
	Female			
Program	BEEEd	3.227	0.733	Not significant
	BSEd Science			

The significant difference in well-being levels based on gender suggests that gender plays a notable role in shaping the well-being of student teachers. This finding aligns with existing literature that often points to gender differences in well-being, potentially due to varying social roles, expectations, and stressors experienced by male and female students. The claim conforms with the statement of participant 23 during the data cross-validation through triangulation:

“Naa koy friends na ma-sharan nako sa akong mga problems regarding acads, mao na dili ko kaayo stress kay maka-unload man ko sa akong emotions sa ilaha.”

“I have friends whom I can share my problems regarding academics, hence I am not stressed since I can unload my emotions to them.” (Translated)

Participant 41 also expressed his idea stating that:

“Medyo maulaw ko mo-share sa akong problema sa akong mga close friend’s kay pasin kantiyawan ra ko nila. Usahay mag-pretend na lang ko na okay ra ko pero nagkalisod na diay ko sa akong studies.”

“I am a bit shy in sharing my problems to my close friends because they might just tease me. Sometimes, I would just pretend that I am okay but the truth is that I am struggling with my studies.”
(Translated)

In addition, participant 10 mentioned that:

“Among topic sa akong mga male friend’s kay puro ra mga binoang mao na maulaw gyud ko mag-share share sa akong mga problem sa eskwela kay KJ lang akong dating.”

“Our usual topic with my male friends are all funny topics that is why I am not comfortable telling them about my issues in school because they might think that I am kill joy.” (Translated)

From the statements provided, female student teachers generally experience better emotional well-being than their male counterparts. Female student teachers benefit from a supportive network of friends with whom they feel comfortable sharing their academic problems. In contrast, male student teachers seem to struggle more with emotional well-being due to their reluctance to share personal issues with friends. They fear being teased or judged, leading them to internalize their struggles and pretend everything is fine. Their social interactions are often centered around humorous topics, making it difficult for them to discuss serious issues. This lack of emotional support and the pressure to maintain a facade of well-being can negatively impact their overall stress levels and mental health. This claim corroborates Yang and Zheng [18], where they highlighted that females tend to perceive more emotional support from other people, such as adults and friends, which positively impacts their well-being.

The significant association of gender on well-being underscores the need for gender-specific interventions and support systems within educational institutions. For instance, female student teachers might benefit from programs that address specific stressors they face, such as balancing academic responsibilities with societal expectations. Similarly, male student teachers might require support in areas where they are less likely to seek help due to cultural norms around masculinity.

In contrast, the analysis shows no significant difference in well-being levels between student teachers in the BEED and BSED Science programs, with an F-value of 3.227 and a p-value of 0.733. This suggests that the type of program only significantly links to the well-being of student teachers. This finding is intriguing as it indicates that the academic demands and environments of these programs may not differ substantially in ways that impact well-being. It also suggests that factors other than the academic program, such as personal characteristics or external support systems, might play a more critical role in influencing well-being.

The findings highlight the importance of considering gender-specific factors when addressing the well-being of student teachers. Educational institutions should develop targeted strategies to support the well-being of both male and female student teachers, recognizing the unique challenges each group faces. Additionally, while the type of program is not associated with the well-being, further research could explore other potential factors that influence well-being across different academic disciplines.

Several studies [15], [19] found similar results on student teachers' well-being. Female student teachers reported higher levels of stress and lower overall well-being compared to their male counterparts, aligning with the findings of our study. Also, a similar findings [20], [21] uncovered that there are no distinctions between the well-being of student teachers in elementary and secondary education programs. These findings affirm the results of this study.

In general, the findings emphasize the need for a holistic approach to supporting student teachers' well-being. It considers gender-specific needs and ensures that interventions are tailored to address these differences effectively. Through these initiatives, educational institutions can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that promotes the overall well-being and academic success of all student teachers.

3.4. Correlating the well-being of student teachers across dimensions

Table 3 exhibits the results of the correlation analysis of the dimensions of the student teachers' well-being. The results indicate significant relationships between various dimensions of well-being among student teachers. The significant positive relationship between cognitive and psychological well-being (R-value of 0.324, p-value of 0.000) underscores the importance of mental engagement and cognitive satisfaction in fostering emotional stability and mental health. This finding aligns with existing literature that suggests cognitive activities and problem-solving skills can enhance psychological resilience and well-being.

Similarly, several studies [22], [23] explained that cognitive aspects were positively linked with all dimensions of psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence, according to previous studies [24]–[26] as part of the psychological continuum, connects emotions with reasoning, meaning that our emotions affect our thoughts, just as our cognitive processes impact our emotional states. Also, Dilekçi and Manap [27] found that “emotional labor” as well as other cognitive concepts are closely linked to the psychological dimensions of well-being, as they involve the cognitive processes of self-reflection, identity formation, and managing emotional expressions in professional settings.

Moreover, the positive correlation between cognitive and social well-being (R-value of 0.177, p-value of 0.037) indicates that students who are cognitively engaged and satisfied with their intellectual abilities are likely to have better social interactions and relationships. This relationship highlights the interconnected nature of cognitive and social domains. The finding further suggests that intellectual fulfillment can enhance social connectedness and support networks.

Given the findings, Chen [28] discovered that negative emotions can limit cognitive abilities and lead to burnout. Additionally, Burić *et al.* [29] highlighted that emotions play a significant role in learning. Furthermore, Ruggeri *et al.* [30] found that positive relationships within schools are crucial for well-being and are fundamental to creating an effective learning environment.

It can be noted, however, that the cognitive dimension is not significantly linked with the material well-being (R-value of -0.075, p-value of 0.379). This result entails that the intellect does not necessarily translate to material stability. This finding is critical as it points to the distinct nature of material well-being, which may be influenced more by external factors such as financial resources and economic conditions rather than cognitive engagement.

Table 3. Significant relationship between and among the dimensions of the well-being of student teachers

Variables		R-value	p-value	Decision	Significant
Cognitive	Psychological	0.324	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
	Social	0.177	0.037	Reject Ho	Significant
	Material	-0.075	0.379	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Psychological	Social	0.257**	0.257**	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
	Material	0.194*	0.022	Reject Ho	Significant
Social	Material	0.204*	0.016	Reject Ho	Significant

Significant @ .05 level

The absence of a significant relationship between social and psychological well-being (R-value of 0.257, p-value of 0.257) is intriguing and warrants further investigation. It suggests that while social interactions are essential, they may not directly impact psychological well-being in the same way cognitive activities do. This could imply that other factors, such as personal coping mechanisms and individual psychological traits, play a more significant role in determining psychological well-being.

The significant positive relationship between psychological and material well-being (R-value of 0.194, p-value of 0.022) highlights the possible influence of financial stability on mental health. Financially secure students are likely to experience less stress and anxiety, contributing to better psychological well-being. This finding emphasizes the need for financial support systems to enhance students' mental health and overall well-being.

Lastly, the significant positive relationship between social and material well-being (R-value of 0.204, p-value of 0.016) indicates that financial stability can enhance social interactions and relationships. Students with adequate financial resources are likely to participate more in social activities and build more robust social networks, which in turn can provide emotional and practical support. Consistent with the findings, Burić *et al.* [29] found that financial aspects of life reflect the person's social dealings, hence Sirgy [31] proposed that policies that aim to improve well-being should consider both social and material aspects, as they are interdependent. Enhancing one dimension can positively impact the other, leading to a more holistic improvement in overall well-being.

In summary, the findings highlight the interconnectedness of different well-being dimensions among student teachers. The critical role of material well-being in boosting both psychological and social well-being is evident, suggesting that improving financial stability can have a positive ripple effect on other aspects of well-being. These insights highlight the importance of comprehensive support systems that address financial, cognitive, psychological, and social needs to enhance the overall well-being of student teachers. Further study could explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships and develop targeted interventions to support student teachers' well-being effectively.

4. CONCLUSION

As highlighted in the findings, there is a significant gender disparity among student teachers, with females being the majority. Females have a slightly higher representation in the BEEd program compared to the BSEd Science program. This demographic distribution provides valuable insights into the composition of student teachers at the university. Student teachers generally report high levels of cognitive, psychological, and social well-being but face challenges in material well-being. This claim suggests that student teachers encounter difficulties in financial stability and access to resources, essentially impacting their overall well-being. Providing financial aid can alleviate these stresses, allowing students to focus more on their academic and personal development.

Moreover, the data reveals that gender is significantly linked to the well-being of student teachers, while the type of program is not. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender-specific factors when addressing the well-being of student teachers. The evidence further reveals that material well-being is critical in boosting both psychological and social well-being. Thus, improving financial stability can have a positive ripple effect on other aspects of student teachers' well-being. These insights highlight the importance of comprehensive support systems that address material, cognitive, psychological, and social needs to enhance the overall well-being of student teachers. Further studies could explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships and develop targeted interventions to support student teachers' well-being effectively. Building strong social networks within the educational environment can provide emotional and practical support for student teachers. Both financial aid and strong social networks are crucial in enhancing their well-being. These findings present novel insights into the importance of these factors in improving student teachers' well-being and academic success. Teacher-training institutions can use these insights to develop initiatives that boost student teachers' cognitive, psychological, material, and social well-being, thereby ensuring academic success.

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C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft

E : Writing - Review & **E**diting

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research involving human participants has adhered to all applicable national regulations and institutional policies, in line with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration, and has received approval from the authors' collegiate review board.

DATA AVAILABILITY

We confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.




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