



## Factors Influencing the Psychological Well-Being of EFL Students in a Boarding University Environment

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### Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing the psychological well-being of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students living in university dormitories. The issue of student well-being has gained increasing attention as dormitory life can significantly shape students' academic performance, social adjustment, and emotional balance. The main objective of this research is to identify and analyze the internal and external factors that affect students' mental and emotional well-being within the dormitory environment. The study employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with selected EFL students from a university in Indonesia. Data were analyzed thematically to explore recurring patterns and experiences related to psychological well-being. The findings indicate that several key factors influence students' well-being, including social support, academic pressure, adaptability to dormitory life, and personal motivation. Supportive peer relationships and effective time management were found to enhance students' psychological well-being, whereas homesickness and excessive workload often reduced their emotional stability. The study concludes that maintaining a balanced social and academic environment in dormitories is crucial for sustaining students' well-being. It also suggests that universities should provide targeted counseling and peer mentoring programs to help students cope with emotional and academic challenges. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on student mental health and offer practical insights for improving the dormitory experience of EFL learners.

### Keywords:

Psychological well-being; EFL students; dormitory life; social support; motivation

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Well-being is an individual's general condition, including physical, mental, emotional and social aspects (Baustista TG et al, 2023). This means that someone feels physically healthy, has a calm mind, maintains an emotional balance and can interact positively with others. So well-being is like the total happiness and well-being of a person in his daily life. It is important to maintain balance and to feel good inside and outside. In Islam, having a good psychological well-being is also very important. This state is described on one of the Qur'an verse, as below:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient." (AlBaqarah:155).

Similar research has been conducted by Na'imah et al., (2019) which raised the process of achieving student well-being in Islamic boarding schools using grounded theory. Hafnidar et al. (2022) have also examined similar matters by raising research on the strength of character, quality of life, and psychological well-being of students in islamic boarding schools. Another

similar research was also conducted by Khoirudin et al., (2023). In their research they carried the topic of the relationship between spirituality and social relationships with student academic stress in boarding schools. Besides that, Khusumadewi and Pramesti (2023) also conducted similar research. Khusumadewi and Pramesti raised the topic of psychological well-being scale development for students in islamic boarding school. Khasanah et al., (2022) have also raised this research topic. More specifically, Khasanah et al., examined psychology well being in college students in one of the ma'had in Surakarta. Many studies related to student well-being have been conducted, especially on students studying in boarding schools. However, research that focuses on students living in boarding university, particularly those who are English as a foreign language students, is limited. This suggests a knowledge gap that needs to be filled by researchers to examine the well-being conditions and needs of these students.

However, the research focuses on the psychological well-being of EFL students living in university dormitories. The arrival of the university marks the transitional period for the young generations. Through this transition, students faced new challenges such as making independent decisions about their lives and their studies, and engaging with various new people in the academic environment of a non-synchronous learning environment. Not only that, but many students are often left behind for the first time and are far from their support network. These challenges may affect the mental health and well-being of students in higher education (Hernández-Torrano et al.,2020). UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is an Islamic and general science university. As universities implement mandatory residence systems (schools), students' experience in such environments can have an important impact on their well-being. According to ( Lharasati et al.,2021) Happiness is an important aspect of life. Everyone wants happiness and is committed to achieving it through all necessary means.

In the context of EFL students (English as a foreign language), there may be additional challenges in adapting to different cultural and linguistic environments. Sofyan et al. (2023) Explain the two types of influences on the learning abilities of the learner: the internal influences of the student and the external influences of the environment. The university environment in which students must live in dormitories or residential areas has a significant impact on their well-being. The psychological well-being reflects the positive and healthy psychological condition of the individual, which becomes an important focus in this context. According to Khasanah et al. (2022) People with mental well-being tend to have a positive attitude towards themselves and others, have meaningful goals in their lives, manage their environments, establish a positive relationship with others, and try to explore and develop to the maximum. The impact of university residential environments on the well-being of students includes several aspects, including the influence of increased social interactions, easier access to peer support, easier access to mental health facilities and a different daily experience than non-residential environments.

Previously, research on the well-being of students, particularly in the 10 university environment, may have been conducted, requiring residents to live in dormitories and having a foreign language program. However, it has not been fully investigated the specific focus on EFL students who participate in mandatory boarding programmes at the University of Malang. In this context, research into the wellbeing of EFL students during university intermission is necessary to understand the impact of university environments and specific programmes such as compulsory residence on the well-being of students, especially those studying foreign languages as a second language.

Considering these aspects, the present research focuses specifically on identifying and analyzing the factors that influence the psychological well-being of EFL students living in the boarding university environment at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. To explore this issue comprehensively, the study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using unstructured interviews with selected EFL students, allowing their experiences and perceptions to be expressed naturally and in depth.

## **B. METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the influencing factors of

EFL students' psychological well-being in a boarding university environment. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences, perceptions, and feelings regarding their psychological well-being within a unique academic and residential context. The research was conducted at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang, where students live and study in an Islamic boarding school (ma'had) setting that combines academic learning and spiritual development.

The participants consisted of eight English Language Education students from the 2023/2024 academic year who were also residents of the university's boarding school. They were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that they met the criteria of being active EFL students with at least one semester of experience living in the boarding environment. This sampling method was appropriate for gathering diverse yet relevant perspectives on how the boarding university context influences students' psychological well-being.

Data were collected through unstructured interviews, which allowed participants to express their experiences freely and naturally. The interviews focused on exploring the factors that contribute to or hinder students' psychological well-being in the boarding university environment. The guiding questions included: How do you manage and adapt to the boarding university environment to maintain your well-being while studying English?, How do you make independent decisions and balance your academic and personal life?, and How do you build and maintain positive relationships with peers and teachers? The open-ended format provided flexibility for participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences in their own words, producing rich and detailed qualitative data.

The data collection process began with selecting the eight participants based on their academic status and boarding experience. Each interview was conducted face-to-face in a quiet environment to ensure comfort and openness. The researcher took detailed notes and recorded the conversations with the participants' consent. Afterward, the interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, where the researcher identified recurring themes and patterns that represented key influencing factors on psychological well-being. The transcripts were read repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the content, and initial codes were generated to capture important ideas related to emotional balance, autonomy, relationships, and personal growth. These codes were then grouped into broader categories that reflected the main influencing factors of students' well-being in the boarding university context.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, several strategies were applied. Credibility was strengthened through repeated reading of the interview transcripts and careful interpretation of participants' statements. Dependability was maintained by documenting the research procedures clearly and consistently. Confirmability was ensured by presenting direct quotations to reflect participants' actual voices. Transferability was supported through detailed descriptions of the research setting and participant characteristics, allowing readers to understand the context of the study.

Through this qualitative process, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and authentic understanding of the contextual factors shaping the psychological well-being of EFL students living and learning within a boarding university environment.

## **C. RESULT & DISCUSSION**

The responses to EFL student's interviews were translated into English. Based on the collected data, the researcher found the six factors that affect psychological well-being of EFL students' in boarding university, as follows.

### **1. Social and environmental support**

Based on the interviews conducted, the factors of social support and environment play a significant role in maintaining students' psychological well-being while learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a boarding environment. Some students feel supported by the presence of programs and an environment that encourages the use of English, such as the bilingual program in the boarding university, language days, and

dormitory settings that consistently promote the use of English. For example:

*"With the Language Day held every Thursday, I can gain a deeper understanding of the language and expand my vocabulary each week."*  
(EFL student NB)

EFL student NB feels that the Language Day held every Thursday helps deepen their understanding of the language through weekly vocabulary building.

*"In my opinion, the ma'had program is quite helpful because they have a bilingual program."* (EFL student VR)

*"I need to stay consistent with my motivation to learn, and being in an English-speaking environment has a positive impact on my learning. In my dorm, almost everyone can speak English because many have studied in Pare. Moreover, ma'had programs like International Day really help when it comes to practicing speaking in English."* (EFL student BL)

Based on EFL students VR and BL, they also benefit from ma'had programs like International Day and the English-speaking environment, especially when many of their roommates are also fluent in English. Support from classmates and ma'had programs provides a conducive environment for them to practice speaking English, both inside the classroom and outside the campus environment. However, some also acknowledge the challenges of an unsupportive environment. For example:

*"The ma'had program actually supports us in improving our English skills, such as on language days that require the use of Arabic and English, along with an additional vocabulary lesson once a week. However, the environment in my room does not implement this well and does not sufficiently support me in enhancing my English skills. Nevertheless, I have my own way of improving by listening to English music and analyzing the lyrics to expand my vocabulary."* (EFL student HM)

EFL student HM feels that although the program at the ma'had is very helpful, the environment in her room is less supportive in applying English. To address this, he uses personal methods such as listening to English music to improve her vocabulary.

In conclusion, support from formal programs such as language days and the ma'had, along with social interaction with classmates and roommates, provides an important foundation for students to maintain their psychological well-being while facing the challenges of learning English in a dormitory environment. This support reduces stress, boosts confidence, and offers motivation to continue practicing and improving.

## **2. Academic pressure and achievement demands**

Based on the interviews conducted, students are increasingly facing pressure to excel not only in their coursework but also in supplementary skills such as language proficiency. Among university students, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become essential, given its status as the global lingua franca and its crucial role in accessing a broader spectrum of academic resources. This research explores the academic pressures associated with language achievement demands, focusing specifically on English language proficiency.

*"My view on English is that it is a language used globally, and with English, we can gain significant opportunities in our careers because we can access a vast amount of information. My English skills are indeed slightly below my friends', but I will continue to learn and try to catch up in my English proficiency."* (EFL Student RZ)

The importance of English proficiency among university students is underscored by its role in accessing a broader spectrum of information and enhancing career opportunities. The student emphasizes that English serves as a global language, crucial for

navigating a competitive job market. Despite feeling that his skills are slightly below those of his peers, he is determined to improve and catch up.

*"Having English language skills is very important because it is closely related to academic life and helps us become an interconnected society. In the university context, English proficiency is very helpful when students want to read international articles that do not have Indonesian translations. Therefore, I believe that English skills are essential for student development." (EFL Student OC)*

The student adds that English proficiency is essential for academic success, particularly in university settings. It enables students to engage with international articles and research that may not have Indonesian translations, thereby enriching their educational experience. She believes that strong English skills are vital for personal and academic development.

*"The key is remembering why I'm learning English, so I can stay motivated. Learning is fun, but it can sometimes be overwhelming. To manage my own learning, I study according to my interests, using a relaxed learning style. For example, I learn by watching English films without subtitles, listening to English music, and guessing the vocabulary used while practicing pronunciation. I also remember to take breaks and not to push myself to study continuously without rest; it's better to know my own capabilities." (EFL Student DL)*

The student highlights the significance of motivation in the language learning process. She finds learning enjoyable yet challenging, suggesting a balanced approach to studying. Dela advocates for a relaxed learning style, utilizing English films without subtitles, listening to music, and practicing vocabulary and pronunciation in a way that aligns with her interests. She stresses the importance of recognizing one's own limits and taking breaks, rather than pushing through study sessions without pause.

In conclusion, these perspectives illustrate the pressures students face in achieving language proficiency while balancing the demands of academic life. The drive to excel is matched by the need for effective, enjoyable learning strategies that accommodate individual capabilities.

### **3. Adaptation and adjustment to a new environment**

Based on the interviews conducted, the factor of adapting to a new environment while learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a dormitory involves key factors such as social interaction, independent learning habits, daily use of the language, and community support. Students engage with diverse cultures, fostering communication skills and cultural understanding. The dormitory encourages independence in managing time and responsibilities. Regularly using English in everyday situations enhances language proficiency, while support from peers and tutors provides essential encouragement and assistance in overcoming learning challenges.

*"The way I build positive relationships is by finding a suitable partner who supports me in improving my English skills and doesn't belittle me. I build chemistry by frequently meeting in the ma'had to study together and share knowledge that goes beyond just English." (EFL Student HM)*

EFL student HM focuses on finding a study partner who supports her in improving her English skills. She emphasizes the importance of building positive relationships by frequently meeting in the ma'had to study together and share knowledge, not just about English. This creates good chemistry between her and her partner.

*"Regarding this question, it goes back to me. I'm easy to get along with, and I've always thought that if I struggle with the lessons, I need to get to know the ustad and be close to the ustad/teacher." (EFL Student VR)*

EFL student VR feels that familiarity is key to building positive relationships. He

believes that to understand the lessons well, it's important to be close to the ustad or teacher. This way, he finds it easier to adapt and receive support in his studies.

Overall, each individual has a unique approach to building positive relationships in the ma'had, from seeking study partners and respecting privacy to being active in class and developing closeness with teachers. This creates a supportive environment for learning and mutual encouragement.

#### 4. Confidence and language skills

The fourth factor of psychological well-being is confidence and language skills. As EFL students, they feel that their English language skills are still lacking. EFL students do not feel confident to communicate in English with other students who are more fluent in English, both in daily conversation and in academic and social activities. Some people tend to compare their abilities with others, which makes them feel less confident when they have to talk to someone who has better English skills (Sya'idah & Rohmana, 2023). One of the EFL students stated:

*"So far, I've started to feel that I've improved, although sometimes I still don't feel confident when it comes to conversation." (EFL student BL)*

The statement above shows that EFL student BL feels that her English language skills have developed during college. However, she is still not confident when communicating directly with both friends and lecturers. This sense of lack of confidence often stems from a fear of making mistakes, which gets in the way of their desire to engage in casual conversation.

*"I feel that my English is quite poor, I think my grammar is still lacking." (EFL Student AR) "I can understand and translate quite well, but I still struggle with my grammar." (EFL Student VR)*

Statements from EFL students AR and VR expressed significant concerns regarding their grammar proficiency, which played an important role in their overall language confidence. They may have strong comprehension skills, but continued difficulties with grammatical structures prevent them from expressing themselves confidently.

In conclusion, these statements illustrate how grammatical challenges not only affect students' language skills, but also significantly impact their overall well-being and sense of belonging in an academic setting. In conclusion, lack of confidence in English language skills, especially in grammar and speaking, plays a significant role in affecting EFL students' psychological well-being. Despite making progress in their language development, students like BL, AR, and VR still struggle with the fear of making mistakes, especially in grammatical accuracy. This hesitation impacts their ability to fully engage in academic and social conversations, leading to a reduced sense of confidence and belonging. Overcoming these grammar challenges is crucial to boosting their confidence and growing a more positive experience in their academic environment.

#### 5. Time management and social gaps

Based on the interviews conducted, the factors of time management and balance play an important role in maintaining students' well-being while learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a dormitory environment. Students recognize that the ability to organize study time and other activities significantly affects their learning effectiveness. For example:

*"My approach to managing self-study and my activities involves making decisions between the two. I prioritize more urgent tasks, as long as they do not interfere with other activities. I take time to organize my own study schedule, which allows me to feel more at ease and content while learning English in the university environment." (EFL student OC)*

EFL student OC explains that she prefers to focus on more urgent matters while trying not to interfere with other activities. She also makes time for self-study, which gives

her the flexibility to learn English.

*"It all depends on oneself. When it comes to management, we need to be smart about time management and schedule all activities to avoid conflicts. For studying, find a comfortable place in the dorm or boarding house. Take care of your health by getting enough sleep and don't forget to eat, as eating is important. Campus facilities are also very helpful; thankfully, there is a decent library that can be utilized to the fullest. Most importantly, everything should be kept relaxed and flexible." (EFL student DL)*

Meanwhile, EFL student DL emphasizes the importance of scheduling all activities to avoid conflicts and finding a comfortable place to study. She also reminds us that maintaining health, such as getting enough sleep and eating well, is key to supporting the learning process.

In conclusion, students' ability to manage their time and maintain a balance between studying and other aspects of life is crucial for their well-being. Effective time management helps them reduce stress and enhance their learning effectiveness, while a good balance between study activities and maintaining physical and mental health provides the necessary support to face the challenges of learning English in a dormitory environment.

## **6. Personal goals and motivation**

Students who have a strong sense of purpose or motivation tend to be more psychologically stable. They are better able to handle the academic and social pressures of the university environment. For example:

*"My planning for the future is to continue my studies at a higher level or try to join an exchange student (if given the opportunity), attend training, and take a toefl test. That way my skills might improve." (EFL Student OC)*

EFL Student OC explained that her plans to continue her studies to a higher level or join a student exchange program show a commitment to continue developing her English skills. She believes that by taking the TOEFL training and test, his skills can improve, which contributes to his confidence and well-being.

*"The key is remembering why I'm learning English, so I can stay motivated. Don't forget to take breaks, don't force yourself to learn continuously without stopping, it's better to know your own capabilities." (EFL Student DL)*

EFL Student DL added that it is important to always remember the reason for learning English in order to stay motivated. She noted that while studying can be fun, it can also be stressful at times. Therefore, she advises not to push yourself to study non-stop and it is important to recognize your limits and give yourself time to rest.

*"The most important thing is the intention first, so that we can make a plan for learning and continue to evaluate ourselves as well as where the shortcomings are so that we can understand more later." (EFL Student BL)*

EFL Student BL also emphasized that strong intention is the basis of any learning plan. She believes that by doing self-evaluation and recognizing shortcomings, students can plan more effective learning strategies to understand English better.

In conclusion, EFL students' personal goals and motivation are not only a driver in the learning process, but also contribute to their overall well-being. By having a clear plan, remembering the reasons for studying, and conducting self-evaluations, students can maintain their enthusiasm and mental health in the face of the challenges of learning English in a dormitory environment. This finding supports Ryff's (1989) theory that well-being is influenced by autonomy, relationships, and environmental mastery.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

This study explored the psychological well-being of EFL students living in a boarding university environment, focusing on how various factors influence their mental and emotional balance while pursuing academic and personal growth. Through unstructured interviews with eight students from the English Education Department at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, six key factors were identified as influencing their well-being: social and environmental support, academic pressure, adaptation to a new environment, confidence and language skills, time management, and personal motivation.

Despite offering valuable insights, this study has several limitations. The number of participants was small and limited to eight EFL students from a single university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposive sampling may also introduce bias, as the perspectives represent only students who met the specific criteria. In addition, the reliance on unstructured interviews as the sole data source may not fully capture the complexity of students' well-being in the boarding environment. Future studies could involve larger samples, multiple institutions, or mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

The findings highlight that social interaction, supportive programs such as Language Day and International Day, and peer encouragement play a crucial role in fostering a positive learning atmosphere. However, challenges such as academic pressure, lack of confidence, and time management issues still affect students' mental health and sense of balance. Developing personal motivation and setting clear goals were found to be important strategies for maintaining psychological stability.

Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how boarding environments affect EFL students' psychological well-being. It suggests that universities should strengthen support systems—both academic and emotional—to help students adapt better and thrive within residential learning contexts. Future studies could further explore intervention strategies or compare well-being levels between boarding and non-boarding EFL students to gain broader insights.

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