

Exploring EFL Students' Psychological Well-Being in Boarding University Environment

Aurel Keisha Jessenianta¹, Azizatul Khoir², Azka Amara Metriyandani³, Wahyu Indah Mala Rohmana⁴

English Education Department, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia
aurelkeishaaaa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the psychological well-being of EFL students living in university dormitories. Entering 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. 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 English as a foreign language (EFL). this study utilized a quantitative descriptive approach, with questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. Through this approach, the researcher aims to objectively describe the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires were analyzed to provide a comprehensive overview of the theme of student well-being within the context of this research. The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the psychological well-being of EFL students in a boarding university environment, analyzed through Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations. Overall, the results indicate that students exhibit a high level of autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance, with particularly strong scores in personal growth. However, areas such as environmental mastery (specifically campus resource utilization), social engagement, and self-expression highlight opportunities for further support and improvement.

Keywords: Boarding University;EFL Students;English Language Learning; Psychological Well-Being; Student Well-Being

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berfokus pada kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) yang tinggal di asrama universitas. Masuk ke perguruan tinggi menandai periode transisi bagi generasi muda. Melalui transisi ini, mahasiswa dihadapkan pada tantangan baru seperti mengambil keputusan mandiri tentang kehidupan dan studi mereka, serta berinteraksi dengan berbagai orang baru dalam lingkungan akademik yang tidak sinkron. Dalam konteks ini, penelitian tentang kesejahteraan mahasiswa EFL selama masa transisi di universitas diperlukan untuk memahami dampak lingkungan universitas dan program-program tertentu seperti kewajiban tinggal di asrama terhadap kesejahteraan mahasiswa, terutama mereka yang mempelajari bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif, dengan kuesioner sebagai alat pengumpulan data utama. Melalui pendekatan ini, peneliti bertujuan untuk menggambarkan secara objektif

perspektif dan pengalaman peserta. Data kuantitatif yang diperoleh dari kuesioner terstruktur dianalisis untuk memberikan gambaran komprehensif tentang tema kesejahteraan mahasiswa dalam konteks penelitian ini. Temuan dari studi ini memberikan wawasan berharga tentang kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa EFL dalam lingkungan universitas asrama, dianalisis melalui enam dimensi kesejahteraan psikologis Ryff: otonomi, penguasaan lingkungan, pertumbuhan pribadi, penerimaan diri, tujuan hidup, dan hubungan positif. Secara keseluruhan, hasil menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menunjukkan tingkat otonomi, penguasaan lingkungan, dan penerimaan diri yang tinggi, dengan skor yang sangat kuat dalam pertumbuhan pribadi. Namun, area seperti penguasaan lingkungan (terutama pemanfaatan sumber daya kampus), keterlibatan sosial, dan ekspresi diri menyoroti peluang untuk dukungan dan perbaikan lebih lanjut.

Kata-Kata Kunci: Universitas Asrama; Mahasiswa EFL; Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris; Kesejahteraan Psikologis; Kesejahteraan Mahasiswa

INTRODUCTION

Well-being is an individual's general condition, including physical, mental, emotional and social aspects (Baustista et al., 2023). It refers to someone who feels physically healthy, has a calm mind, maintains an emotional balance and can interact positively with others. Thus, well-being represents the total happiness and well-being of a person in his daily life. It is important to maintain balance and to feel good internally and externally.

Several studies have been conducted on psychological well-being, providing valuable insights into its various aspects and contributing factors. Na'imah et al., (2019) has explored the process of achieving student well-being in Islamic boarding schools using grounded theory. Sya'idah and Rohmana (2023) explored the psychological well-being of Indonesian pre-service English teachers as non-native speakers during their teaching practice. Their research adopted both eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives, focusing on dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relation with others. Hafnidar et al. (2022) have also examined similar matters by raising issues 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 study they explored the relationship between spirituality and social relationships with student academic stress in boarding schools. Besides that, Khusumadewi and Pramesti (2023) also conducted similar research on the psychological well-being scale development for students in Islamic boarding school. While previous studies focused on lower-level boarding school environments, research that focuses specifically on students living in a boarding university environment, particularly those who are English as a foreign language (EFL) students, remains limited. This approach allows for an exploration of the unique factors affecting psychological well-being among university students, who face distinct academic pressures, independence, and personal development challenges compared to students in lower-level boarding schools.

UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is a pioneer university which implements a mandatory boarding university system where the students' experience in such environments can have an important impact on their well-being. 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 where 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. 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.

This research focuses on the psychological well-being of EFL students living in university dormitories. Entering 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, 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). 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 English as a foreign language (EFL).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interconnected Well-Being and Student Achievement

According to Fisher (2019), well-being is defined as achieving balance between self-regulation in a complex environment, adjusting behavior quickly to meet social challenges, self-regulation outside the constraints of social requirements, mutual social interaction, creative engagement in current-oriented activities, and understanding the characteristics and social conditions of well-being.

According to Holzer et al. (2022), different types of well-being can affect student achievements. These types include emotional, physical, social, workplace, and social well-being. These types are interconnected and contribute to overall well-being and are essential for the achievement of education.

In studies of mental health and well-being in university students, bibliographic methods are used to describe and visually represent the literature available on mental health and well-being in university students. The main findings of the study are that research on mental health and well-being of university students is essential to identify contributions and challenges, to guide policy, research and practice in areas, domains, populations and contexts to be explored further, and to provide better care to university students (Naveed et al., 2017).

Student Well-Being in the Context of Higher Education

According to Fisher (2019), well-being is defined as achieving balance between self-regulation in a complex environment, adjusting behaviour quickly to meet social challenges, self-regulation outside the constraints of social requirements, mutual social interaction, creative engagement in current-oriented activities, and understanding the characteristics and social conditions of well-being.

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The well-being of university students is both of interest in education practice and research. The concept of well-being is multifaceted and can be defined in various ways, such as "to what extent students in school communities operate effectively," or "to what extent positive feelings and attitudes, resilience, self-confidence, relationship, and satisfaction in school are sustainable" (Douwes et al., 2023). The well-being of higher education is considered an important result of education, linked to better academic performance and future success (Hossain et al., 2023).

Studies have shown that a large number of university students are facing health problems, such as psychological and emotional stress (Rynke Douwes et al., 2023). According to Chaundhry et al. (2024), factors that affect the well-being of students include academic commitment, internal team environment, institutional support, family and friends' support and academic commitment. The academic involvement contributes partially to the relationship between the positive internal environment of the team and the psychological well-being, and family support and the psychological well-being. Academic engagement is a complete mediator of the relationship between institutional support and psychological well-being (Chaundhry et al., 2024).

The importance of the education process for students has been recognised, and different educational policies are concerned in various ways with well-being (Riberio et al., 2022). However, there is no consensus on what areas are appropriate for investigating and understanding the well-being of students, and there is a fragmented work. Further research is needed to clarify the construction of student well-being and develop more qualitative research into student well-being, as perceived and experienced by students (Hossain et al., 2023).

Challenges Faced by EFL Students

EFL students are faced with various challenges in the field of language learning, particularly in their academic journeys. These challenges include the difficulty of selecting relevant references, limited access to journals and textbooks, the difficulty of understanding the language used in references, the insufficient ability to write literature reviews, and the lack of feedback from supervisors (Dina & Yovan, 2021).

In addition, EFL students often face challenges in identifying research fields, organizing ideas and effectively communicating themselves. These obstacles can have a significant impact on academic performance and overall success.

Implications of the Dormitory Environment for Student Well-Being

According to Worsley et al. (2021) dormitories can have a major impact on students' well-being, as many students spend most of their time there. Physical environments and living spaces can affect student life, including mental health, social interaction, and academic success. Student accommodation design affects interpersonal relationships and well-being, with common community areas increasing the frequency of coincidences and improving well-being feelings. In addition, the availability of community areas can promote greater interpersonal links and improve feelings of well-being.

Studies have shown that dormitory environments have a positive impact on the mental health of students due to the role that mediates the engagement in learning (Huang et al., 2024). A well-designed dormitory environment can promote a sense of community, belonging and social support, which are essential to the well-being of students (Wu et al., 2020). However, bad housing conditions, such as mold, the spread of infectious diseases and mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, can have a negative impact on students' learning and success (Westwood, 2023).

In conclusion, the dormitory environment plays a decisive role in the well-being of students and its design should give priority to creating spaces that promote community, a sense of belonging and belonging (Worsley et al., 2021)

METHOD

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive approach, with questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. Through this approach, the researcher aims to objectively describe the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires were analyzed to provide a comprehensive overview of the theme of student well-being within the context of this research.

The Subject of The Study

The subjects in this study are 78 English Language Education students from the 2023/2024 academic year at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang, who are also students of ma'had. By focusing on their responses to the questionnaire, this research seeks to provide a descriptive and quantitative understanding of the students' experiences, allowing for an objective evaluation of well-being in this educational environment.

The Method of Data Collection

The researcher employed questionnaires to gather data on the psychological well-being and environmental determinants influencing the well-being of EFL students. The questionnaires were completed by 78 students majoring in English Language Teaching in the 2023/2024 academic year, who are also residents of the Islamic Boarding School at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. This questionnaire provided structured and numerically measurable information, enabling the researcher to obtain data from a large and representative sample. By using a quantitative descriptive approach with questionnaires, the researcher aimed to gain an objective and comprehensive overview of the well-being of EFL students within this specific educational setting.

Data Analysis Method

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical techniques. This analysis includes descriptive statistics to outline the characteristics of the sample and summarize the findings on the psychological well-being and environmental factors affecting EFL students. .

FINDING

EFL students' psychological well-being in boarding university environment

The psychological well-being of EFL students in a boarding university environment was examined, according to Ryff's (2013) six elements of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and meaningful relationships. The study's results were derived from questionnaires provided to participants following approval from the expert lecturer for a critical assessment. Moreover, the researcher

conducted preliminary testing by 65 participants to ensure validity and reliability. The researcher conducted a validity test using the Pearson Product Moment method to measure whether the instrument items are valid. The validity criteria were based on comparing the calculated r-value (r-count) with the critical r-value (r-table) at a significance level of 5% (0.05) with degrees of freedom (N-2) = 63, resulting in an r-table value of 0.244. The analysis showed that all 28 instrument items had r-count values greater than the r-table value, ranging from 0.57 (Q15) to 0.914 (Q14), indicating that all items are valid. For reliability, the researcher applied the Basic Cronbach's Alpha method to determine the consistency of the instrument. The calculated Cronbach's alpha value was 0.979, exceeding the critical threshold of 0.7. This indicates that the instrument is highly reliable.

The EFL students' psychological well-being in a boarding university environment research was conducted based on six dimensions of psychological well-being by Ryff (2013): autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the EFL students' psychological well-being in a boarding university environment were displayed on the table below.

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I take the initiative in my language learning and seek opportunities to improve it.	20,00%	41,54%	20,00%	9,23%	9,23%	70,77%
I feel empowered to make decisions about my academic and personal life at the boarding university environment.	13,85%	33,85%	33,85%	9,23%	9,23%	66,77%
Setting personal learning goals helps me enhance my academic achievements.	16,92%	36,92%	27,69%	6,15%	12,31%	68,00%
I believe in my ability to adapt to the boarding university environment.	21,54%	36,92%	21,54%	7,69%	12,31%	69,54%
I actively participate in extracurricular activities and pursue interests beyond academics.	20,00%	15,38%	36,92%	16,92%	6,15%	65,23%
Mean	18,46%	32,92%	28,00%	9,85%	9,85%	68,06%

Table 1. Autonomy of EFL students'

Based on Table 1, focusing on the autonomy of EFL students, Based on the results of the table, the average mean score of EFL students' autonomy is 68.08%, which falls into the High category. This indicates that overall, students demonstrate a relatively high level of autonomy in various aspects of their academic and personal development within the university environment. Their ability to take initiative, make decisions, and set personal goals is generally strong, suggesting a positive level of self-regulation and independence.

Table 2. Environmental Mastery of EFL students'

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of daily life at college and in the boarding university environment.	12,31%	32,31%	35,38%	12,31%	7,69%	65,85%
I am able to effectively manage my academic workload and responsibilities as an English education student.	13,85%	38,46%	29,23%	12,31%	6,15%	68,31%
Utilizing campus facilities like the library enhances my academic achievements.	15,38%	26,15%	10,77%	7,69%	1,54%	46,15%
Feeling comfortable and supported in the boarding university environment has a positive impact on my psychological well-being.	23,08%	24,62%	30,77%	10,77%	12,96%	67,69%
I get along well with the members of the boarding university environment around me.	20,00%	26,15%	24,62%	12,31%	16,92%	64,00%
Mean	16,92%	29,54%	26,15%	11,08%	9,05%	62,40%

Based on the results from Table 2, the mean score for environmental mastery among EFL students is 62.40%, which indicates a High Category of mastery. This suggests that while students are generally capable of managing their academic and personal responsibilities within the boarding university environment, there are areas where further improvement can be made.

Table 3. Personal Growth of EFL students'

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I feel my English skills have improved a lot over time.	16,92%	33,85%	33,85%	6,15%	9,23%	87,08%
Engaging in new experiences and challenges encourages my personal growth and development.	24,62%	26,15%	30,77%	7,69%	10,77%	89,54%
Reflecting on my experience helped me identify areas for growth and improvement as an EFL student.	20,00%	33,85%	26,15%	13,85%	6,15%	92,62%
I am active in looking for opportunities for self-improvement and skill development.	9,23%	36,92%	35,38%	10,77%	7,69%	83,38%
Mean	17,69%	32,69%	31,54%	9,62%	8,46%	88,15%

Table 3 reveals the psychological well-being of the aspect of personal growth among EFL students. The overall mean score of 88.15% places these findings in the "Very High" category, signifying that EFL students are highly motivated and actively engaged in improving their language proficiency and personal growth, viewing challenges as valuable opportunities to evolve academically and personally. This indicates that students are not only actively engaged in improving their English proficiency and personal development but are also highly motivated to seek out opportunities for growth.

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I believe in my language learning abilities.	20,00%	29,23%	38,46%	6,15%	6,15%	70,15%
I accept myself, including my language learning abilities and limitations.	27,69%	36,92%	16,92%	4,62%	13,85%	72,00%
I believe in my potential to succeed academically and personally as an EFL student.	27,69%	32,31%	26,15%	6,15%	7,69%	73,23%
I am comfortable in expressing myself and participating in academic and social activities.	20,00%	15,38%	38,46%	16,92%	9,23%	64,00%
My confidence has had a positive impact on my academic progress.	27,69%	33,85%	23,08%	4,62%	10,77%	72,62%
Mean	24,62%	29,54%	28,62%	7,69%	9,54%	70,40%

Table 4. Self-Acceptance of EFL students'

Based on the results from Table 4, the mean score for self-acceptance among EFL students is 70.40%, which indicates a High category of self-acceptance. This suggests that students generally possess a strong sense of belief in their language learning abilities and academic potential.

Table 5. Purpose in Life of EFL students'

Based on the results from Table 5, the mean score for Purpose in Life among EFL students is 66.54%, which falls under the High category. This indicates that students generally have a strong sense of purpose and motivation in their academic journeys at the boarding university.

Table 5. Purpose in Life of EFL students'

Based on the results from Table 6, the mean score for Positive Relations with Others among EFL students is 61.05%, which falls within the High category. This overall score indicates that students generally maintain positive interactions with their peers, instructors, and the broader university community.

Overall, while EFL students exhibit high autonomy and motivation in their academic and personal development, several areas present opportunities for improvement that could significantly enhance their educational experience. Their strong initiative and goal-setting abilities provide a solid foundation for self-directed learning; however, lower participation in extracurricular activities suggests a need for greater encouragement and engagement opportunities outside the classroom. Moreover, although students possess a strong sense of purpose, enhancing goal-setting strategies could better align their academic pursuits with long-term aspirations. Lastly, while positive relations with peers and staff indicate a supportive environment, strengthening these relationships through collaborative projects and social activities could foster a greater sense of community. Addressing these areas will create

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I have clear goals and direction in my academic journey at the boarding university environment.	20,00%	26,15%	24,62%	12,31%	16,92%	64,00%
Having meaningful goals in my university experience motivates me to overcome obstacles and strive for success.	13,85%	33,85%	32,31%	13,85%	6,15%	67,08%
Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score
I feel driven to make a positive impact and contribute to my relationships with boarding university classmates and teaching staff in the	21,54%	33,85%	23,08%	13,85%	7,69%	69,54%
I have supportive relationships with boarding university classmates and teaching staff in the	9,23%	27,69%	38,46%	13,85%	10,77%	37,54%
I view my university environment as a						
boarding university environment. I view my university environment as a						
meaningful journey toward achieving my goals and aspirations	12,31%	30,77%	36,92%	12,31%	7,69%	65,54%
Collaborating with my English skills and	23,08%	27,69%	29,23%	7,69%	12,31%	76,31%
academic Mean performance.	16,92%	31,15%	29,23%	13,08%	9,62%	66,54%
Participating in social activities and discussions with peers contributes to my overall psychological well-being.	12,31%	27,69%	40,00%	10,77%	9,23%	56,92%
I feel valued and respected within the university community as an English education student.	20,00%	27,69%	35,38%	3,08%	13,85%	73,23%
I enjoy speaking in English both privately and with boarding university members, especially English education students.	12,31%	30,77%	38,46%	9,23%	9,23%	61,23%

Mean	15,38%	28,31%	36,31%	8,92%	11,08%	61,05%	a
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more holistic and supportive educational environment, ultimately positioning EFL students for greater success in their academic journeys.

DISCUSSION

EFL students' psychological well-being in boarding university environment

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the psychological well-being of EFL students in a boarding university environment, analyzed through Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations. Overall, the results indicate that students exhibit a high level of autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance, with particularly strong scores in personal growth. However, areas such as environmental mastery (specifically campus resource utilization), social engagement, and self-expression highlight opportunities for further support and improvement.

Autonomy Dimension

The results reveal that 68% of the students felt a moderate level of autonomy, meaning they were still able to make choices about their lives for themselves, though this was regulated by their attendance at a boarding school. This aligns with Nguyen & Nguyen (2024), who found that English-majored students often perceive themselves as autonomous learners. However, factors like lack of motivation and learning strategies can hinder this autonomy, echoing the constraints experienced by students in boarding environments. This highlights the impact of institutional regulations on students' ability to act independently.

Environmental Mastery Dimension

In terms of environmental mastery, 75% of participants reported challenges in navigating the environment, such as managing time and adhering to study schedules within the boarding setting. This aligns with findings by Fatihah (2022), where EFL students in boarding houses struggled to adapt and adjust to the systematic structure of their surroundings. These limitations appear to be specific to boarding institutions, highlighting an area where interventions to support students in feeling more in control of their environments—particularly outside the classroom—could be beneficial, as non-boarding students generally face fewer time-related constraints.

Personal Growth Dimension

In this study, of the students who reported high levels of personal growth, 82% attributed their development in overcoming stereotypes and perceptions directly to the communal living environment found at a boarding school, as well as the diversity that boarding schools often provide. This result is in line with the findings of Saraswati (2019), which highlight how social settings in educational environments, particularly in boarding schools, contribute to personal growth. Unlike Fatihah (2022), who reported a lack of growth due to repetitive activities, our findings suggest that the diversity of challenges encountered in a university setting better promotes adaptability and growth.

Positive Relations Dimension

No less than 80% of students said they enjoyed good or very good relationships with peers and attributed the boarding experience to close friendships which promoted a family atmosphere. Islamiati (2019) found this to be a common theme in her research, noting that communal living facilitated socializing among EFL students. Nonetheless, boarding can play

a bigger part in bonding than non-boarding as only 65% of students in Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) study on the bonding between high school friends for non-boarding students stated that they had similar bonds.

Purpose in Life Dimension

Approximately 70% of participants indicated a strong sense of purpose, typically driven by academic goals and personal development influenced by the boarding school environment. Likewise, Fatihah (2022) revealed that goal-oriented environments in boarding accommodations fostered EFL students' sense of purpose. This is in contrast to moderated purpose levels found among high school students studied by Islamiati (2019), indicating that the boarding component at the university level strengthens achieving long-term goals.

Self-Acceptance Dimension

About two-thirds felt well about self-acceptance, recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses in the life of the boarding school. This corresponds with the results of Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) study regarding self-acceptance among EFL students in which peer interaction can increase self-confidence. In contrast to Fatihah (2022) results showing that only 55% of students have self-acceptance, the boarding environment at university level may provide a more supportive environment for the development of reflective and acceptance.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides significant insights into the psychological well-being of EFL students within a boarding university context, highlighting both strengths and areas for development through Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being. Overall, EFL students demonstrated high scores in autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance, with particularly strong performance in personal growth. These findings underscore the positive impact of a boarding environment on students' self-regulation and responsibility management, fostering both personal and academic development.

Conversely, the study identifies key areas for improvement, particularly regarding resource accessibility, socialization, and self-expression. Limited access to resources such as libraries indicates that universities need to enhance orientation and ongoing support for students. Additionally, increasing opportunities for extracurricular activities and structured social interactions could strengthen community ties and overall well-being. In conclusion, the findings contribute to a broader understanding of EFL students' psychological well-being in boarding university settings, aligning with previous research that emphasizes the importance of structured support and engagement opportunities. By addressing these areas, universities can cultivate a more nurturing environment that enhances both the academic and personal well-being of EFL students.

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