

Navigating Transitions: A Psychoeducation Toolkit for First-Year Engineering Students' Academic and Social Adjustment to Hybrid Learning

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ABSTRACT

This psychoeducation toolkit was developed using an action research framework to support first-year engineering students in navigating the unique academic and social challenges of hybrid learning in the post-pandemic context. Drawing on phenomenological insights from Firmante's (2024) study on Filipino engineering students' transition to college in hybrid settings, the toolkit addresses difficulties such as managing academic workload, overcoming social isolation, adapting to new learning platforms, and regulating emotions in a hybrid learning environment. Grounded in action research principles, namely iterative development, participatory input, and context-specific adaptation, the toolkit integrates qualitative findings from Firmante's study to inform the structure and content of the intervention. Six weekly modules (each 90 minutes) are designed to be delivered in both face-to-face and online formats to accommodate varied student schedules and technological access. Each session targets specific competencies: Session 1 focuses on understanding hybrid learning and its impact; Session 2 on academic adjustment and stress management; Session 3 on social integration and relationship building; Session 4 on coping with mental health challenges; Session 5 on self-advocacy and seeking help; and Session 6 on building resilience and well-being. Intended outcomes of the toolkit include improved time management skills, enhanced emotional regulation, increased peer interaction, and elevated mental health literacy. The toolkit aims to facilitate a smoother and more resilient transition to college life for first-year engineering students engaged in hybrid learning environments by providing an evidence-based, contextually grounded group psychoeducation intervention.

Keywords: Hybrid Learning Adaptation, First-Year Engineering Students, Psychoeducational Intervention, Academic Adjustment and Social Adjustment

INTRODUCTION

Global education has experienced a profound transformation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating the adoption of hybrid learning modalities that blend online and face-to-face instruction. This shift has posed unique challenges for first-year university students, particularly in developing countries such as the Philippines, where educational infrastructure and psychosocial support mechanisms remain uneven (AlMunifi & Alfawzan, 2023; Losa-Iglesias et al., 2023). These students are expected to swiftly adjust to a new academic culture with increased demands for independent learning, reduced peer interaction, and inconsistent access to digital technologies (AlMunifi & Alfawzan, 2023).

In light of this changing educational environment, stakeholders are being urged to prioritize students' well-being through inclusive educational policies, evidence-based treatments, and mental health initiatives. Aligning these efforts with national mental health initiatives, such as the Philippine Council for Mental Health Strategic Framework 2024–2028, can enhance both academic performance and psychological resilience among students (Department of Health, 2024). Collaboration between educators and school-based mental

health professionals is particularly critical for fostering holistic student development in hybrid learning environments (Khaskheli et al., 2024).

Recent studies underscore that hybrid learning can intensify academic stress and emotional fatigue due to blurred boundaries between home and school life, fluctuating student engagement, and limited opportunities for peer support (Yorkovsky & Levenberg, 2022; Losa-Iglesias et al., 2023). Engineering students, in particular, appear more susceptible to psychological distress, given the rigor of their coursework and the high-pressure, competitive nature of engineering programs (Jensen et al., 2023; Khaskheli et al., 2024). The resulting isolation, performance anxiety, and adjustment difficulties have raised concerns regarding their mental health and academic persistence.

While existing literature has explored the general challenges posed by hybrid learning (AlMunifi & Alfawzan, 2023; Yorkovsky & Levenberg, 2022), there remains a notable absence of psychoeducational interventions that are specifically tailored to the socio-cultural and academic context of Filipino first-year engineering students. Firmante's (2024) phenomenological investigation illuminated students' lived experiences and coping mechanisms during the post-pandemic transition, yet did not propose a structured, actionable response to their adjustment needs.

The present study attempts to address this gap by developing a context-specific psychoeducation toolkit. Unlike previous interventions, this toolkit is discipline-specific and culturally relevant, with the goal of assisting first-year engineering students in adjusting academically and socially to hybrid learning environments. Additionally, it offers a fresh and expandable method of integrating mental health interventions into higher education, and it is consistent with national mental health laws like the Philippine Mental Health Act (Republic Act No. 11036).

Academic-Social Adjustment Challenges in the New Normal

Among the most pivotal transitions for students is the shift to their first year of university, which typically brings substantial changes in terms of autonomy and responsibility. This transition is often marked by a heightened sense of independence as students leave their home environments and face the challenges of managing their academic, personal, and social lives (Firmante, 2024).

Adapting to university life is a multifaceted process shaped by various social, institutional, academic, and emotional factors (Baker & Siryk, 1984; López-Angulo et al., 2021; Gravini et al., 2021; Sahão & Kienen, 2021). Social adaptation plays a central role, as students must build relationships and integrate into the university community, directly impacting their sense of belonging and overall well-being. Hence, building robust social networks can help reduce feelings of loneliness and offer crucial emotional support, both of which are critical for preserving mental health during this time of change (López-Angulo et al., 2021). Hence, schools also offer tools that students may use, such as mental health services, academic advising, and orientation programs, which make the transfer much easier and guarantee that students feel academically and personally supported (Gravini et al., 2021).

Thus, adapting to university is not solely an academic challenge but a comprehensive, multidimensional process influenced by interconnected social, institutional, and emotional factors. Students must learn to work in a new environment, live independently, and work with

new people and experience stressors related to their academic and social adjustments (Van Viet, 2021). Understanding and addressing these elements holistically is key to supporting students in navigating this significant life transition and ensuring their long-term success in higher education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments all over the world have imposed restrictions - one of which is on education. It signaled the start of the transition to online learning, whereas the immediate shift made it possible for education to adjust, deliver, and better meet students' diverse learning needs. Students and professors needed to adapt rapidly from in-person teaching to an abrupt transition to complete online learning. In order to lessen the negative consequences of these changes, programs that promote resilience, mental health, and academic and social integration have proven essential (Van Viet, 2021). Moreover, hybrid classes have been promoted during the return to everyday academic life after two years of isolation.

Hybrid learning is a platform where students spend half of their learning time online and the other half in a physical classroom. Consequently, many researchers have been interested in evaluating and analyzing this learning platform to develop recommendations based on new and sudden experiences. This includes engineering courses that were considered hard to deliver to students in a way other than the in-class, face-to-face traditional learning techniques (Yorkovsky & Levenberg, 2022; Grodotzki et al., 2021).

Understanding Students Characteristics and Academic and Social Adjustment in Hybrid Learning

The transition to hybrid learning in the post-pandemic provides opportunities and challenges -for first-year students adjusting to university life - various factors influence this adjustment. This can include students' personalities or characters that play a crucial role in adapting to academic demands and navigating social relationships in both virtual and face-to-face settings.

Students' interactions with their classmates or peers, time management, and class participation may be impacted by personality qualities such as introversion, conscientiousness, or adaptability. For example, naturally disciplined and self-directed students may find adjusting to the demands of independent online learning simpler. For people who thrive in social settings, however, the absence of face-to-face interaction may be more challenging, affecting their motivation and feeling of community (Firmante, 2024).

Understanding and recognizing first-year students' unique experiences specific to their academic and social adjustment in post-hybrid learning is necessary for creating an appropriate psychoeducation intervention program. It aims to assist students in discovering their individual learning preferences and styles. It also seeks in providing the students with the skills or tools required in hybrid learning contexts, both academically and socially. Furthermore, school counselors can help students have a healthy and satisfying college experience by encouraging self-awareness and offering focused support.

Program Framework

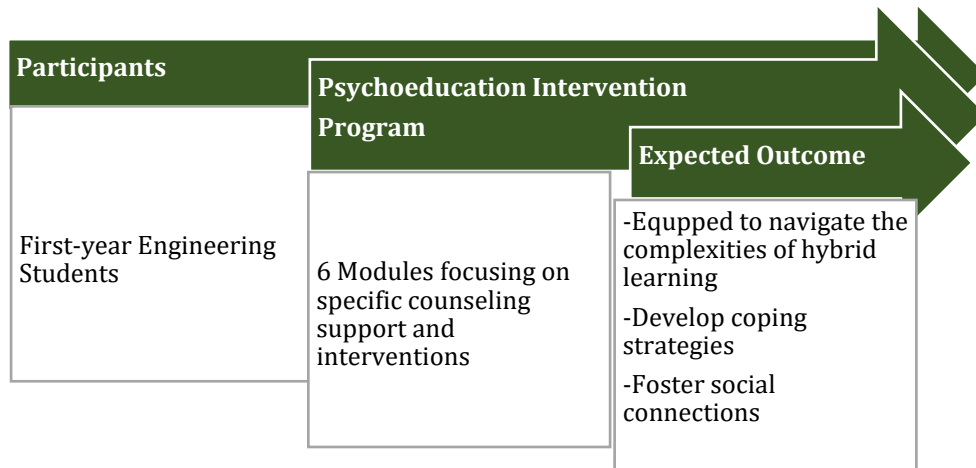


Figure 1 Framework for psychoeducation intervention program for first-year engineering students

This psychoeducation toolkit is grounded both cognitive-behavioral and developmental theories, emphasizing prevention, adaptability, and resilience-building. Cognitive-behavioral theory posits that individuals can learn to manage their emotions and behaviors by understanding and modifying maladaptive thought patterns (Beck, 2011). Meanwhile, developmental theory particularly Erikson's psychosocial development model emphasizes the importance of successfully navigating developmental tasks such as identity formation and peer relationships during adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). These frameworks support students in understanding their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions while navigating key academic and social transitions.

Drawing on the findings of Firmante (2024), the program specifically addresses the lived experiences and adjustment challenges students encounter as they navigate hybrid learning. The study revealed various opportunities and challenges in academic and social domains. Additionally, students valued the time-saving, adaptable, and less tiring nature of hybrid models, but they also voiced worries about fragmented timetables, restricted peer interaction, and less emotional support.

In response to these results, the psychoeducation curriculum is organized around six evidence-based modules that address the unique academic and psychosocial requirements discovered in Firmante's research. These include: *Module 1 Understanding Hybrid Learning and Its Impact*, which introduces learners to the design of hybrid learning; *Module 2 Academic Adjustment and Stress Management*, which addresses study skills, time management, and coping with stress; *Module 3 Social Integration and Relationship Building*, which is designed to promote peer relationships and establish supportive network; *Module 4 Coping with Mental Health Challenges*, which introduces techniques for managing stress, anxiety, and emotional strain; *Module 5 Self-Advocacy and Seeking Help*, which encourages the use of school-based mental health services and reinforces help-seeking behavior; and *Module 6 Building Resilience and Well-being*, which consolidates learning and promotes long-term personal growth. As a result, the program aims to achieve the following outcomes: equip students to navigate the complexities of hybrid learning; help them develop effective coping strategies for academic and

emotional stressors; and foster meaningful social connections to enhance peer support and reduce feelings of isolation.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employs a four-phase action research framework of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on developing a psychoeducational toolkit to support Filipino first-year engineering students adapting to hybrid learning environments. The research is currently in the planning phase, which is guided by Firmante's (2024) phenomenological study that identified students' key post-pandemic adjustment challenges: academic self-management, social isolation, fluctuating motivation, and limited peer interaction.

In this initial stage, 20 engineering students (chosen on the basis of their hybrid learning experience) and school counselors are co-developing the toolkit using focus group discussions (FGDs). These forums are intended to validate the cultural appropriateness, usability, and comprehensibility of the module content prior to piloting. The resulting draft modules will then move forward into the next three action research phases, each designed to refine the intervention through structured, evidence-informed cycles.

During the Action Phase, the draft toolkit will undergo a three-session trial with opportunities for real-time adjustments to the content based on participant feedback, together with incorporating peer mentoring tactics into Module 3 to increase participation. The Observation Phase will be used to track the effectiveness of the toolkit and identify challenges as well as places of success. Projected outcomes could be indicators like 40% of students indicating difficulty concentrating on online portions, along with 80% indicating enhanced knowledge of counseling services.

Lastly, throughout the Reflection Phase, the toolkit shall go through iterative revision based on gathered data, with accommodations to session organization, content presentation, and engagement strategies as required. This Participatory Cyclic Process guarantees that the intervention continues to be responsive, contextually relevant, and sustainable, developing in accordance with changing needs of students in blended learning environments.

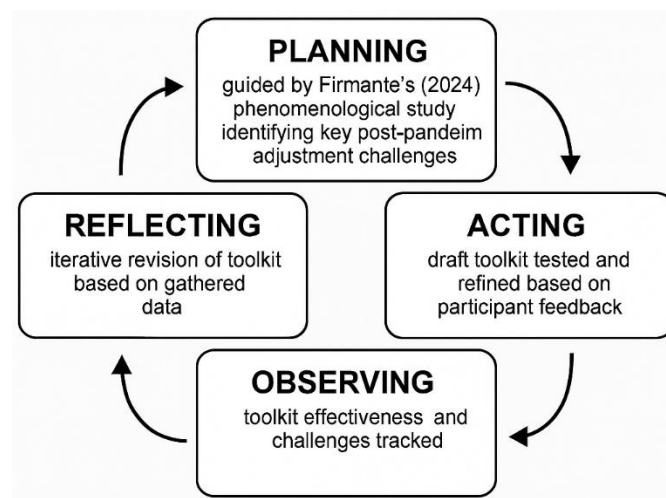


Figure 2 *Four-Phase Action Research Cycle for Developing a Psychoeducational Toolkit*

This action research cycle diagram shows the four main steps used in the study to develop and improve a psychoeducational toolkit for first-year engineering students in a hybrid learning setup. It follows a cyclical (repeatable) process to make sure the toolkit fits students' real needs.

Data Collection and Analysis Plans

The data from the feedback forms, follow-up surveys, and FGDs will be analyzed using a mixed-methods approach: Quantitative data from feedback forms and surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., mean ratings, frequency of responses) to assess overall participant satisfaction and the perceived effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals. Moreover, the Qualitative data from open-ended questions on feedback forms and FGDs will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to students' academic and social adjustment, activities' effectiveness, and improvement areas.

Ethical Considerations

In order to protect participant safety, confidentiality, and well-being, the psychoeducation program will prioritize ethical issues. Every student will give their informed consent after being fully educated about the program's objectives, hazards, and voluntary nature. They will also be given the assurance that their personal information will be kept private. To protect the privacy of all session content and feedback, the program will adhere to stringent confidentiality protocols. If a participant shows signs of emotional distress or needs more help, the facilitator will refer them to mental health services in line with established referral criteria with the participant's consent. Additionally, there will be crisis management and emergency procedures in place, with facilitators who have had mental health first aid training or certification as guidance counselors. Participants will have the freedom to withdraw from the program at any time without experiencing any consequences, and their data will be anonymized and used only for assessment. This approach ensures that the program is conducted with respect for students' privacy and well-being while offering appropriate support when necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of the psychoeducation toolkit was informed by recent research and direct student experiences, particularly those captured in Firmante's (2024) phenomenological study on academic and social adjustment among first-year engineering students in a post-pandemic hybrid learning context. This study served as a foundation for tailoring each module to address students' key challenges in adapting to hybrid academic environments.

Firmante's (2024) study showed that a substantial number of students appreciated the flexibility provided by hybrid learning, especially the ability to access materials asynchronously and manage their own schedules. A significant number of students found it challenging to manage both asynchronous and face-to-face sessions, while they frequently reported struggles with effective time organization. Several students communicated feelings of academic exhaustion and stress, which intensified when they attended both virtual and physical classes on the same day. Numerous individuals reported an intensified sense of

isolation due to restricted social opportunities, which exacerbated their emotional detachment. A significant deficiency in emotional and social support networks existed, particularly for individuals who did not receive guidance from peers, organizations, or upperclassmen.

The study identified specific needs that led to the development of each toolkit module to address key themes.

Table 1 Common Challenges Reported by First-Year Engineering Students in Hybrid Learning and Corresponding Toolkit Modules

Challenges	Description	Toolkit Module Response
Time Management Difficulties	Difficulty balancing asynchronous and face-to-face sessions	<i>Module 2: Academic Adaptation and Stress Management</i> — Provides tools for time management and stress reduction.
Social Isolation/ Limited Interaction	Limited opportunities to build relationships, especially for freshmen	<i>Module 3: Building Social Connection</i> — Encourages community engagement and relationship-building online and offline.
Inconvenient Class Schedules	online and in-person classes scheduled back-to-back on the same day	<i>Module 2: Academic Adaptation and Stress Management</i> — Offers strategies to manage scheduling conflicts and cope with fatigue.
Lack of Emotional/ Social Support	Limited support from peers, organization, or upperclassmen/ higher batch	<i>Module 4: Coping with Mental Health Challenges</i> — Provides coping strategies and emotional wellness tools.
Unclear on How to Avail/ Get Support	Uncertain about how and where to seek help when facing academic or personal concerns.	<i>Module 5: Self-Advocacy and Help-Seeking</i> — Educates students on navigating support systems and seeking assistance.
Low Resilience and Burnout	Expressed exhaustion and difficulty sustaining motivation over time	<i>Module 6: Resilience and Well-Being</i> — Promotes self-care practices like mindfulness and emotional resilience.

The toolkit recognizes the benefits of hybrid learning technologies, such as access to learning materials and opportunities for repeated review. Module 1 orients students to the hybrid learning environment and offers tips for maximizing the available digital tools, in alignment with research showing that understanding the structure and advantages of hybrid systems enhances academic outcomes (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Bashir et al., 2021; Yorkovsky & Levenberg, 2022).

Module 2, dedicated to academic adaptation and stress management, delivers practical approaches to handle time management while addressing academic pressures and timetable conflicts. The extensive body of research supports the importance of organizational abilities and stress-management techniques for student adaptation (Morton et al., 2014; Sahao & Kienen, 2021).

Module 3, which focuses on social connection and relationship-building, was created in response to findings that 60% of students struggled to form meaningful peer relationships in hybrid learning settings. Participants reported feelings of social isolation and a lack of emotional support. Existing research mirrors these concerns by documenting student

challenges in relationship building due to a lack of consistent face-to-face interaction (McCabe, 2016; Khaskheli et al., 2024). This educational module activates participation across digital and physical spaces while advancing techniques to develop peer networks and community bonds.

Given the psychological toll of hybrid learning, Module 4 focuses on mental health and emotional regulation, equipping students with coping mechanisms for managing stress and anxiety. Firmante's (2024) study found a gap in emotional support among students, a trend supported by broader data indicating a rise in mental health issues in hybrid or online academic settings (Copeland et al., 2021; WHO, 2022; DOH, 2023). This module responds directly to that need with evidence-based mental health strategies.

Students also expressed a need for clearer support systems within their institutions. Module 5 was developed to promote self-advocacy, teaching students how to access resources, communicate with faculty, and seek help when needed. The importance of self-advocacy, particularly for first-year students, is well documented in studies on student transition and adjustment (Terenzini et al., 1994).

Module 6 explores resilience and well-being while advocating self-care techniques, including mindfulness and self-compassion. Resilience as a determinant for academic achievement and emotional balance gains recognition, especially within remote and hybrid learning environments (Naidu, 2021; Fernández et al., 2017).

Proposed Outline for Six Psychoeducation Sessions

Module 1: Understanding Hybrid Learning

This module introduces the special needs and nature of hybrid learning. According to Firmante's (2024) research, hybrid students struggle with technology acclimation, self-regulation, and time management. The module starts with a Kumustahan Session, a quick check-in session that builds rapport and enables the students to air their experiences and concerns. This strategy assists in responding to social isolation and uncertainty, prevalent problems in students moving into hybrid learning. The session also acclimates the students to self-reflection and normalizes challenges so that students can feel heard and less alone.

Firmante's (2024) study highlighted the importance of peer interaction and social support in addressing feelings of isolation. The Kumustahan Session specifically targets this by creating an opportunity for students to connect with each other, normalize their experiences, and form a supportive cohort. The use of structured reflection ensures that the activity is not merely a casual check-in but an intentional practice of fostering group cohesion and emotional readiness for the program.

Objective: Provide first-year engineering students with a foundational understanding of hybrid learning and help them identify its impact on their academic and social experiences.

Topics Covered

1. Introduction to hybrid learning: challenges and opportunities.
2. Common struggles and adjustments in a hybrid environment.
3. Balancing academic and social life in a hybrid learning setting.

Activities

Activity 1: Kumustahan Session (Check-in session)

In the first activity, the introduction of the group facilitator and members will be executed. The facilitator will pull out the common reasons that will be cited by the

members, which will let them experience some of their reasons for joining the group. Participants will then be able to find shared experiences and motives when the facilitator identifies and highlights common themes or causes among the members. Based on their answers, the facilitator will also go over typical difficulties and experiences that first-year students have, especially when it comes to hybrid learning.

Activity 2: Groupings (Group sharing)

Students will be grouped accordingly, where they will reflect on their initial experiences with hybrid learning. This could include discussions about the difficulties they've faced and their expectations for the future.

Activity 3: Plenary Sharing

Each group will have a representative who will summarize all information shared by the group and will share it in the plenary. This will be followed by integration and summarization by the facilitator.

Materials: Name tags, Laptop, LCD projector

Platform: In-person Activity

Module 2: Academic Adjustment and Stress Management

Firmante (2024) identified significant academic stress, such as challenges with time management, workload, and staying motivated in a hybrid learning modality. This module addresses these issues by introducing practical strategies for academic self-management, including goal setting, time-blocking, and prioritization techniques. Evidence-based techniques such as cognitive-behavioral strategies are employed to help students manage stress and maintain focus. Activities like group problem-solving and stress-relief exercises will be used to equip students with the tools necessary to succeed academically while managing the pressures of hybrid learning.

Objective: Help first-year engineering students develop effective strategies for managing academic stress and adapting to new learning styles in the hybrid environment.

Topics Covered

1. Time management and study techniques for hybrid learning.
2. Identifying academic stressors (e.g., workload, isolation, procrastination).
3. Stress-reduction strategies (e.g., relaxation exercises, mindfulness).

Activities

Activity 1: Discussion on Time Management

The facilitator will discuss and educate students on time management. Afterward, a workshop will be on organizing and prioritizing tasks in a hybrid learning environment. Students will then be grouped and given a worksheet to use as a scheduling tool to plan their week. When everyone is done in the group, they will discuss and share with their group how they balance online and face-to-face sessions, followed by the group sharing in the plenary.

Activity 2: Stress Management Exercises

The facilitator will introduce simple stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or guided meditation, and encourage students to practice these techniques during study breaks.

Materials: Name tags, Laptop; LCD projector; worksheets, pens

Platform: In-person Activity

Module 3: Social Connectedness and Relationship Building

According to Firmante's (2024) research, social isolation is one of the most common problems, and students struggle to connect in hybrid learning environments. The main goals of this module are to improve communication, foster friendships, and build social support. Icebreakers, group discussions, and peer networking activities are designed to promote positive interaction and guide students through the hybrid environment. The module invites students to interact with their fellow students and with teaching staff and support services, meeting the deficiency of face-to-face contact frequently complained of by first-year students. Objective: Address feelings of social isolation and support first-year engineering students in building relationships with peers, professional organizations, and professors.

Topics Covered

1. Social challenges in hybrid learning (e.g., limited face-to-face interactions, difficulty connecting).
2. How to build and maintain relationships with peers.
3. Participating in online and offline student organizations and activities.

Activities

Activity 1: Support Circles

The facilitator will form a small group discussion where students can openly talk about their social struggles and successes in adapting to hybrid learning. They will guide the discussion, emphasizing the importance of building social support networks.

Activity 2: Student Testimonials

An upperclassman will be invited to share their experiences on hybrid learning, specifically focused on building social support and maintaining it. This could be a partnership with the engineering organization that can help participants build connections and provide a source of support within their college.

Materials: Name tags, Laptop, LCD projector

Platform: In-person Activity

Module 4: Coping with Mental Health Challenges

Firmante's (2024) research posited that the hybrid learning approach made mental health issues, including stress, anxiety, and depression, worse. With an emphasis on mental health literacy, this module gives students coping mechanisms, how to spot signs of mental health issues, and how to get help when needed. Students will learn evidence-based strategies to manage their distress, including breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, and cognitive reframing. Students are encouraged to put their mental health first via the module's lessons on stigma reduction and the value of help-seeking behaviors.

Objective: Provide first-year engineering students with counseling support and tools to address mental health concerns that may arise due to the transition to hybrid learning.

Topics Covered

1. Common mental health issues in hybrid learning: anxiety, loneliness, burnout, and depression.
2. How to recognize signs of mental health challenges and seek support.
3. Coping strategies and mental health resources.

Activities

Activity 1: Mental Health Literacy

The facilitator will discuss mental health and enhance participants' awareness, knowledge, and understanding of mental health concepts, common mental health challenges in college, and available support systems, promoting help-seeking behavior, emotional resilience, and overall well-being during their academic transition.

Materials: Laptop, PowerPoint presentation

Platform: Online

Module 5: Self-Care and Seeking Help

Students may disengage or avoid asking for help in a hybrid learning environment. Self-advocacy and the utilization of existing support networks, including peer networks, academic advising, and counseling services, are emphasized in this module. Role-play exercises and structured scenarios allow students to practice assertive communication and learn self-advocacy skills for academic and social situations. The module uses self-determination theory, which enables students to become responsible for their academic success and mental well-being.

Objective: Empower first-year engineering students to advocate for themselves and seek help when needed, both academically and emotionally.

Topics Covered

1. Defining self-care: physical, emotional, mental, and social aspects
2. Myths about self-care (e.g., it's not just about bubble baths!)
3. Creating a personalized self-care plan

Activities

Activity 1: Understanding Self-Care: What It Is and Why It Matters

The facilitator or an invited resource person will talk and discuss self-care that will help participants identify what practices work best for them.

Activity 2: Recognizing When to Seek Help and Making Referrals

The facilitator will introduce the counseling services available to them including when to seek help and how to make a referral. This will help students become more aware of the support systems they can access and feel more confident in reaching out when needed.

Materials: Laptop, PowerPoint presentation

Platform: Online

Module 6: Building Resilience and Well-being

The last module is on resilience development and sustainable well-being. Based on Firmante's (2024) research regarding students' requirements to learn adaptive coping techniques and emotional regulation, the last module asks students to examine their personal growth and difficulties encountered during the program. Gratitude practice, journal entries, and planning for future goals are some of the activities intended to foster a growth mindset and prepare the students for the coming academic and personal challenges. The module concludes with a group reflection session where students articulate their most significant takeaways and establish goals for ongoing development beyond the program.

Objective: Foster emotional resilience and promote well-being in first-year engineering students as they navigate the hybrid learning environment.

Topics Covered

1. The importance of emotional resilience in overcoming challenges.
2. Techniques for building mental and emotional strength (e.g., gratitude practices, positive affirmations).
3. Maintaining physical health and well-being to support mental health.

Activities

Activity 1: Resilience-Building Workshop

The facilitator will hold a workshop where students learn and practice resilience-building exercises, such as gratitude journaling, focusing on strengths, and setting small, achievable goals.

Activity 2: Well-being Challenge

As a culminating activity for this psychoeducation, the facilitator will introduce the participants to a week-long well-being challenge where students engage in daily activities that promote physical and mental health (e.g., 10-minute daily exercise, mindfulness practice, socializing with peers).

Materials: Name tags, Laptop, LCD projector, worksheets, pens

Platform: In-person Activity

Psychoeducation Group Session Objective

The primary objective of the psychoeducation group sessions is to provide structured, evidence-informed interventions aimed at supporting first-year engineering students in their academic and social adjustment to post-pandemic hybrid learning. This program is designed as a psychoeducational intervention, not as a form of therapy or process-oriented group work. As such, the focus is on the dissemination of knowledge, development of practical skills, and promotion of adaptive strategies rather than on emotional processing or therapeutic dialogue.

The content of the sessions addresses key areas identified in the adjustment experiences of students, including academic stress, time management, mental health challenges, and social isolation. The skills training provides students with mechanisms to handle academic pressures while managing stress and developing a sense of belonging in the hybrid learning environment through guided discussions, interactive activities, and skills training in a context. The sessions serve as a platform for participants to develop peer support, build networks, and engage in shared learning experiences, which help build community bonds.

The psychoeducational framework ensures that students are engaged in a structured, goal-oriented process that enhances both personal and academic functioning within a non-clinical, supportive group setting.

Participants

The psychoeducation intervention was intended for first-year engineering students enrolled in the current academic year. Participation is by invitation, and acceptance will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Announcements and invitations will be distributed through academic units, student affairs offices, the counseling and psychological service office, and digital platforms frequently accessed by students. Each module offering will accommodate no more than 20 participants, slightly more than the standard group size of 8 to 15, but still allow for active participation through gated sessions.

Group Orientation

The Orientation Phase is a crucial stage in getting students ready for the psychoeducation program. Students will attend an orientation before the sessions start, which will cover the program's objectives, organization, and expectations. Students can better grasp what to anticipate from this phase and how to actively interact with the content and activities.

During the orientation, the facilitator will provide an overview of the program's goals and the topics discussed. In addition to the roles of the facilitator and the students, expectations for constant attendance, confidentiality, and polite participation will be covered. This session also allows students to express their personal goals, clarify any questions, and better understand how the program may benefit them.

By establishing a clear foundation and shared understanding, the orientation helps students feel more prepared, engaged, and confident in their participation, promoting a safe and constructive environment for learning and growth.

Psychoeducation Group Session Components

The psychoeducation program is designed to support first-year engineering students in their academic and social adjustment to post-pandemic hybrid learning. It consists of six modules, each focused on specific challenges identified in the literature and Firmante's (2024) study on Filipino students' experiences with hybrid learning. The following are Module 1: Understanding Hybrid Learning and Its Impact; Module 2: Academic Adjustment and Stress Management; Module 3: Social Integration and Relationship Building; Module 4: Coping with Mental Health Challenges; Module 5: Self-Advocacy and Seeking Help; and Module 6: Building Resilience and Well-being.

Program Evaluation

The programs will be evaluated both formative and summative in order to achieve sustained attention, create meaningful impact, and achieve relevance. Evaluation will be conducted in the program and will gather participant feedback through session-based forms that assess the content's clarity, facilitation style, engagement, the helpfulness of materials, and other relevant information. Feedback gathered will assist in improving the subsequent sessions. In the post-program evaluation, follow-up surveys will be aimed at identifying the shift of participants in terms of academic adjustment, social integration, and mental health alertness. Other selected participants will participate in focus group discussions to capture consolidated qualitative data on the impact of the program on the participants academically and socially, as well as for the transition, and recommend any changes needed. The strategies for these combined evaluations are intended to optimize the program's leverage around student's well-being and adjustment to hybrid learning systems.

Follow-up Check-in

A follow-up evaluation may be conducted a few weeks after the program to see if participants have applied what they learned (e.g., practicing self-care, seeking counseling, helping peers). This is an invitational wherein the facilitator will email the participants about how they are adjusting as a result of the psychoeducation they have attended.

Referral Procedures and Follow-up

This group is not intended for group counseling or group psychotherapy, the referral procedures should follow the usual protocols used in individual counseling or psychotherapy sessions. Members who wish to seek help for other emotional or psychological issues are encouraged to make appointments with university counselors or school psychologists to address their specific concerns. Additionally, the group facilitator may refer members who appear to require further assessment or intervention.

The findings of Firmante (2024) and the wider research support the need for an evidence-based psychoeducation model for first-year students in the hybrid learning contexts. The toolkit addresses both the academic and social adjustment, offering targeted support through six structured modules that reflect students' real-world needs and experiences. This approach is consistent with national guidelines promoting student well-being and development, such as the CHED Memorandum Order No. 9 (2013), which promotes the implementation of comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs in higher education and the Philippine Mental Health Act (RA 11036), integrating accessible mental health education and psychosocial support within the academic setting.

CONCLUSIONS

After the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid learning, which combines online and in-person learning modalities, became a popular model and is still influencing the post-pandemic educational paradigm. Although the approach offers adaptable and variable learning settings, first-year engineering students may find it difficult to navigate both modes. Resolving these challenges is important in terms of enabling students to attain academic success and emotional well-being. In accordance with national policy, including the Philippine Mental Health Act, institutions of higher education are encouraged to implement accessible mental health services, which are critical for student retention and participation. This paper proposes the development and implementation of an intervention toolkit for promoting first-year engineering students' adjustment to hybrid learning. The toolkit addresses the unique problem of engineering students by offering them coping measures against academic stress, coping with the complexity of hybrid learning, and promoting healthy social relationships. By incorporating organized psychoeducational interventions, the toolkit promotes adaptive learning behaviors and students' sense of belonging among the student population. The toolkit is intended to be used alongside national mental health policy, with real-world solutions that can be applied across other university settings. It includes clear, step-by-step action for university administrators, counselors, and policymakers to support students' mental health and academic success. These include the development of implementation timelines, the specifications of training faculty and staff need, and the formulation of evaluation strategies to determine its effectiveness. Furthermore, this research places the toolkit at the center of the changing dynamic of hybrid learning. As technologies in education, like artificial intelligence, continue to inform the future of learning, the toolkit is versatile enough to be used to tackle emerging challenges and trends, keeping first-year engineering students supported as they navigate an increasingly more complex learning environment. However, the present toolkit acknowledges its limitations, particularly the limited generalizability of findings to engineering students. Future research is recommended to explore the application and effectiveness of the toolkit

across other disciplines, which may present different adjustment needs and contextual challenges.

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