

Peer interaction and social adjustment of first year nursing students

Jheric N. Sandaya*

Filamer Christian University, Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this survey correlational study was to examine the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment of first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College for the school year 2025-2026. The participants of this study were composed of all two hundred one (201) first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College enrolled for the current school year who were randomly selected by using Taro Yamane's Formula. The level of peer interaction of the students was measured by using 19 items of Peer Interaction researcher-made questionnaire which measured the level of communication, cooperation, and emotional support experienced by the students from their peers in their school environment. The level of social adjustment of the students was measured by using 19 items of Social Adjustment researcher-made Questionnaire which measured the ability of the students to adapt to their college life in terms of academics, social life, and emotional life. The independent variable of this study was peer interaction, and the dependent variable of this study was social adjustment. Frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were descriptive statistical tools used in data analysis of this study. Additionally, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed as an inferential statistical method to evaluate the level of significance in the association between the variables. All the inferential tests were fixed at a level of significance of 5%. The results of the investigation revealed that first-year nursing students recorded a "high" level of peer interaction, which means that students tend to engage in communication, cooperation, and mutual support with their colleagues in the course of their studies. The results also revealed that first-year nursing students recorded a "high" level of social adjustment, which means that the students were able to cope with the demands and challenges that came with going to college. The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment of first-year nursing students at Saint Gabriel College for the school year 2025-2026. In addition, findings revealed that a moderate positive and significant relationship exists between the level of peer interaction and the level of social adjustment among first-year nursing students. This implies that students who maintain positive interactions with their peers have a higher ability to adjust socially in a college environment. In conclusion, findings from this study emphasize the significance of peer interaction in facilitating first-year nursing students' adaptation to the demands of college life. Positive peer interaction can help students receive emotional support from their colleagues in the nursing program while enhancing their social adjustment in a college environment.

Keywords: Peer interaction, social adjustment, first-year nursing students.

*Corresponding author / Email: jhericsandaya0303@gmail.com
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INTRODUCTION

Nursing education is a comprehensive process that integrates theoretical knowledge, practical competencies, professional attitudes, and clinical skills while requiring students to adapt successfully to new academic, social, and professional environments. Entering a nursing program presents first-year students with significant adjustments as they transition from secondary education to a learning environment characterized by increased academic rigor, evolving professional expectations, and complex interpersonal interactions. Contemporary developments in information technology and the changing landscape of healthcare education have further transformed nursing education by emphasizing active participation, creative and critical thinking, personal responsibility, collaboration, peer learning, and shared accountability for the learning process. Consequently, nursing students are expected not only to acquire professional knowledge but also to develop the interpersonal and collaborative competencies necessary for effective practice (Sozer & Akçin Şenyuva, 2025).

The transition to higher education places first-year nursing students in a period of considerable academic and social adjustment. During this stage, students must adapt to institutional expectations, establish new relationships, and develop a sense of belonging within their academic community. Peer interaction therefore becomes a fundamental component of students' adjustment because it facilitates communication, emotional support, cooperation, and meaningful social connections that contribute to both academic success and personal development (Brouwer & Engels, 2022). As students navigate unfamiliar educational settings, positive interactions with classmates help reduce uncertainty, strengthen confidence, and foster a supportive learning environment that encourages engagement and persistence throughout their nursing education.

Social adjustment represents an equally important aspect of students' transition to college because it reflects an individual's capacity to adapt effectively to the social expectations, interpersonal relationships, and emotional demands of a new environment. It encompasses the ability to establish healthy relationships, manage stress, maintain emotional stability, and respond constructively to social challenges. For nursing students, social adjustment assumes particular significance because the profession requires effective communication, empathy, teamwork, and collaborative problem solving, all of which are strongly influenced by students' interpersonal experiences during their educational preparation (Shakirova et al., 2024). Consequently, successful social adjustment contributes not only to students' personal well-being but also to their academic achievement, professional competence, and readiness for future clinical practice.

Within nursing education, peer interaction occurs naturally through classroom discussions, laboratory activities, clinical experiences, group projects, and informal social engagement. These interactions provide opportunities for students to exchange knowledge, develop confidence, strengthen communication skills, and receive both academic and emotional support. Positive peer relationships encourage cooperation, motivation, resilience, and a stronger sense of belonging, enabling students to cope more effectively with the demands of the nursing curriculum. In contrast, inadequate peer interaction may contribute to social isolation, diminished self-esteem, increased stress, and poorer academic performance. These contrasting outcomes underscore the importance of understanding how peer relationships influence students' adjustment during the critical first year of nursing education.

The increasing emphasis on collaborative learning within nursing education further highlights the importance of supportive peer relationships in facilitating successful adjustment. Contemporary nursing programs require students to integrate theoretical understanding with practical application while demonstrating critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, and active participation. Such educational expectations reinforce the value of peer assisted learning environments in which students learn from one another, provide mutual encouragement, and develop interpersonal competencies essential for professional nursing practice. At the same time, social adjustment enables students to establish meaningful relationships, regulate emotional responses, and adapt to institutional norms, thereby supporting their overall academic and personal success. Despite recognition of these benefits, first-year nursing students continue to encounter numerous challenges as they adapt to demanding academic workloads and unfamiliar social environments, indicating the need to examine more closely the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment.

The present study is anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which proposes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling within social environments. According to Bandura, individuals acquire behaviors, attitudes, and coping strategies not only through direct experience but also by observing the actions and outcomes of others. Within the context of nursing education, peer interaction provides students with continual opportunities for observational learning as they witness classmates managing academic stress, communicating effectively, collaborating during group activities, and responding to the demands of nursing education. Through these interactions, students internalize adaptive behaviors that influence their own communication patterns, emotional regulation, and social competence. Positive peer models who demonstrate cooperation, empathy, resilience, and professionalism encourage similar behaviors among classmates, whereas exposure to maladaptive behaviors may negatively influence students' adjustment. Furthermore, Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in the ability to succeed in specific situations, is particularly relevant because supportive peer interactions provide encouragement, feedback, and validation that strengthen students' confidence in managing both academic and social challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Consequently, Social Learning Theory provides an appropriate explanation for how peer relationships contribute to the development of adaptive behaviors that facilitate successful social adjustment among first-year nursing students.

Complementing this perspective, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides a broader framework for understanding how multiple environmental systems collectively influence students' development and adjustment. The theory proposes that human development is shaped through continuous interaction between individuals and interconnected environmental systems consisting of the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Among these, the microsystem exerts the most immediate influence because it includes students' direct environments, such as family, school, and peer groups. For first-year nursing students, peer groups within the academic environment constitute a critical component of the microsystem by providing opportunities for emotional support, collaboration, social belonging, and interpersonal development. Through daily communication, teamwork, and shared learning experiences, students establish friendships, exchange ideas, and develop coping strategies that strengthen motivation, social competence, and academic engagement. Conversely, negative peer experiences may contribute to social withdrawal, emotional distress, and academic difficulties.

Bronfenbrenner's theory further emphasizes that development is influenced not only by immediate peer relationships but also by interactions among broader environmental systems. The mesosystem highlights the importance of connections between students' immediate environments, such as relationships among peers, instructors, and families. Positive collaboration among these systems promotes greater academic engagement, emotional well-being, and reduced anxiety by creating supportive educational environments. The ecosystem and macrosystem extend this perspective by recognizing that institutional policies, educational practices, cultural expectations, and societal perceptions of nursing education indirectly shape students' opportunities for interaction and adjustment. The chronosystem further acknowledges that students' adjustment develops progressively over time as they accumulate academic experiences, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and mature personally and professionally. Collectively, these ecological influences demonstrate that social adjustment results from dynamic interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments rather than from isolated personal characteristics alone.

The integration of Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how peer interaction contributes to the social adjustment of first-year nursing students. Existing literature consistently converges in demonstrating that positive peer relationships promote communication, emotional support, confidence, collaboration, and academic engagement while facilitating successful adaptation to higher education. At the same time, the reviewed studies reveal that successful adjustment depends not only on individual characteristics but also on supportive learning environments and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Despite these established findings, relatively few investigations have specifically examined the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students within the local educational context, where the transition into nursing education presents distinctive academic and social challenges. Addressing this gap is important because a clearer understanding of this relationship can guide educators and institutions in designing interventions that strengthen peer support, enhance student engagement, improve emotional well-being, and promote successful adaptation throughout nursing education.

Guided by these theoretical and empirical foundations, the present study examined peer interaction as the independent variable and social adjustment as the dependent variable. By investigating the relationship between these constructs among first-year nursing students, the study seeks to generate evidence that will contribute to the development of more supportive educational environments, strengthen students' academic and social experiences, and enhance their preparation for the interpersonal and collaborative demands of the nursing profession.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students at Saint Gabriel College for the school year 2025-2026. It sought to understand how students' interactions with their peers influence their ability to adapt socially to the college environment.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of peer interaction of first year nursing students?
2. What is the level of social adjustment of first year nursing students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between peer interaction and the social adjustment of first year nursing students?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology employed in investigating the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College during the school year 2025-2026. Specifically, it discusses the purpose of the study and research design, the methods employed in conducting the investigation, and the statistical procedures used in analyzing the data. These sections collectively describe the research framework, participants, instruments, data gathering procedures, and statistical techniques that ensured the systematic conduct of the study.

The study aimed to determine the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College during the school year 2025-2026. Specifically, it sought to determine how students' interactions with their peers influence their ability to adapt socially to the college environment. To achieve this objective, the study employed a survey correlational research design. Survey research is a systematic method of collecting data through questionnaires to obtain information regarding individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and experiences within a defined population (Community Based Research Handbook, 2012). This approach was appropriate because it provided a comprehensive description of the characteristics of the participants at a particular point in time. The correlational component of the design enabled the researcher to determine the existence and degree of relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment without manipulating either variable, making it suitable for examining naturally occurring relationships among the variables under investigation (Capilano, 2008).

The participants consisted of 201 first-year nursing students randomly selected from a total population of 404 first-year nursing students enrolled at Saint Gabriel College during the school year 2025-2026. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation of students from each class section. Following the principles described by Sullivan (2008), the population was divided into strata according to section, after which separate random samples were drawn from each group. The required sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, while proportional allocation ensured that each section contributed respondents corresponding to its population size. Participants were selected through the drawing of lots, wherein each student's name was written on a rolled slip of paper, placed in a container, and randomly drawn without replacement. The final sample included 17 students from Section A, 18 from Section B, 16 from Section C, 19 from Section D, 20 each from Sections E, F, and H, 19 each from Sections G, I, and J, and 11 students from Section K, yielding a total of 201 respondents.

Data were gathered using two standardized research instruments. The Peer Interaction Questionnaire measured the extent of students' interactions with their peers using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Responses were interpreted using descriptive categories of Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, and Very High based on established mean score ranges. Prior to the actual conduct of the study, the instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing among 30 students who were not included in the final sample. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 indicated high internal consistency and reliability. The Social Adjustment Scale was adapted from the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire developed by Baker and Siryk (1989). The instrument likewise employed the same five-point Likert scale and descriptive interpretation. Following expert validation and pilot testing, the instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating very high reliability and confirming its suitability for measuring students' social adjustment.

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Filamer Christian University, the President of Saint Gabriel College, and the Dean of the School of Nursing. Upon receiving institutional approval, permission was also obtained from the first-year nursing students to participate in the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research and were assured that all information gathered would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic research purposes. Informed consent was likewise obtained from the parents to authorize the participation of their children in the study. Printed copies of the Peer Interaction Questionnaire and the Social Adjustment Scale were distributed to the selected participants during class hours, allowing sufficient time for thoughtful responses. The completed questionnaires were collected after one week, after which the data were encoded, processed, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Frequency count and percentage were employed to describe the distribution of respondents across the different class sections. Mean was used to determine the levels of peer interaction and social adjustment among the participants, while standard deviation measured the variability of the responses and indicated the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity within the data. Finally, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was utilized at the 0.05 level of significance to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students. These statistical procedures provided the quantitative basis for interpreting the findings and testing the hypothesis of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study conducted among 201 first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College, gathered through the survey correlational research design using stratified random sampling and two standardized instruments, the Peer Interaction Questionnaire and the Social Adjustment Scale, both employing a 5-point Likert scale. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistical treatment, specifically the computation of means and standard deviations, and inferential statistical treatment using the Pearson r at the .05 alpha level of significance, in order to determine the relationship between the two major variables under investigation. The discussion that follows is grounded strictly in the data gathered from these respondents, and all results are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study, namely to determine the level of peer interaction and the level of social adjustment of first-year nursing students, and to establish whether a significant relationship exists between these two variables. This chapter is divided into two parts, Descriptive Data Analysis, which presents and interprets the mean and standard deviation values pertaining to peer interaction and social adjustment, and Inferential Data Analysis, which presents and interprets the results of the correlational analysis conducted to test the hypothesized relationship between them.

Level of peer interaction of first-year nursing students

The level of peer interaction of first-year nursing students was computed using a five-point scale interpreted as follows: 4.21 to 5.00 as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. Data revealed that the level of peer interaction among first-year nursing students obtained an overall mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.41), which is described as High. This means that the respondents are often engaged in positive and significant interactions with their peers, including having open communication with each

other, working together in academic activities, and providing emotional and social support to one another. These are important interactions, especially for first-year nursing students who are dealing with the academic demands and social atmosphere of college life. This result is consistent with the study of Park and Hong (2021), which stressed that peer interaction is an important factor in facilitating first-year nursing students' adjustment to the academic and social requirements of nursing education, revealing that students who have strong peer support are likely to adjust better in their transition to university life. In the same manner, Kućar et al. (2025) concluded that peer social support is a significant predictor of academic engagement and social connectedness for nursing students. The high level of peer interaction in the current study indicates that the students of Saint Gabriel College are enjoying a supportive peer environment that promotes their academic engagement and social integration.

The high level of peer interaction indicates that the students are able to form supportive peer connections that can help them feel a sense of belonging within the academic community. In the nursing education setting, where teamwork, communication, and interpersonal skills are highly valued, positive peer interaction can help students feel more confident in expressing their ideas, asking questions, and participating in group learning activities. This is also supported by the findings of Hamarash (2025) and Aslan and Erci (2021), who emphasized that peer assisted learning and peer relationships decrease anxiety and boost confidence among first-year nursing students. When students work together intellectually and emotionally, they build better interpersonal relationships and feel less stressed in clinical and classroom settings, which can also help them feel more encouraged to share strategies and academic resources in coping with the demands of a challenging nursing curriculum.

In addition, the high level of peer interaction can be attributed to the shared experiences of first-year nursing students, including the challenges of adapting to new academic standards, exposure to clinical settings, and the heavy workload. These shared experiences may help build stronger peer relationships and encourage students to support each other in their pursuit of academic success and emotional well-being. As students positively interact with each other, they may develop important interpersonal skills, a view consistent with Watson et al. (2025), who describe peer interaction as foundational to professional identity formation and resilience development, skills that are not only useful in students' academic pursuits but also in their future careers as nurses.

In general, the results suggest that peer interaction is an important factor in determining the academic and social experiences of first-year nursing students. Positive peer relationships can serve as a support system that helps students cope with college life and become more actively involved in their learning process, underscoring the significance of peer interaction in nursing programs for the holistic development of students.

Level of social adjustment of first-year nursing students

The level of social adjustment of first-year nursing students was likewise computed using the same five-point scale. Data revealed that the level of social adjustment of first-year nursing students achieved a mean of 3.89 (SD = 0.50), which is classified as High. This means that the respondents are generally able to adjust well to their social environment in the college milieu, possessing the capacity to form friendships, engage in social and academic pursuits, and adjust to the norms and expectations of college life. This finding aligns with the study of Zhao et al. (2023), who found that perceived social support has a significant positive effect on the professional identity and self-efficacy of nursing students, thus improving their adjustment

to academic life, with social adjustment being greatly affected by the availability of supportive peer groups.

A high level of social adjustment implies that first-year nursing students possess the ability to cope with interpersonal relationships and social duties despite the rigors of their academic program. The nature of nursing education demands that students engage in group work, collaborate with their classmates, and communicate effectively in both academic and clinical settings. This capacity for social adjustment can help students feel more at ease in articulating themselves, seeking assistance when needed, and actively participating in the learning process, a pattern similarly reflected in the findings of Zhao et al. (2023) regarding the influence of perceived social support on students' adjustment to academic life.

In addition, the high level of social adjustment also suggests that the students are coping well with the social demands of the transition from senior high school to higher education. It is important to note that adjusting to a new academic environment, making new friends, and coping with academic and social demands can be very challenging for first-year students. However, the results suggest that these nursing students are coping well, a finding also supported by Labrague (2024), who discovered that social support among Filipino nursing students has a positive link with academic self-efficacy and college adjustment. The high social adjustment found in this study can thus be partly explained by the positive peer relationships that exist among the participants. Moreover, Gil et al. (2024) stressed that having positive peer relationships can improve students' feelings of belonging and alleviate feelings of isolation and anxiety, which are important in social adjustment, especially during the demanding first year of nursing studies, and this may have a positive impact on students' overall well-being.

In general, the findings show that first-year nursing students have excellent social adjustment skills, which enable them to adjust well to college life and perform well in their social environment. This is an important consideration in ensuring that the social structures in place at the college support and improve students' adjustment to college life.

Relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment of first-year nursing students

To determine the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment of first-year nursing students, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) analysis was conducted at the 5% alpha level, with $p < 0.05$ interpreted as significant and $p > 0.05$ interpreted as not significant. The data show a moderate and statistically significant relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment among first-year nursing students ($r = 0.591^*$, $p = 0.000$). Since the p -value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two variables is rejected. This implies that as the level of peer interaction increases, the level of social adjustment of students also tends to increase. This finding is consistent with McLean (2022), who found that peer social support is significantly related to decreased stress and enhanced adaptive competence in the first year of nursing education, noting that students who interact positively with peers feel more emotionally and socially integrated. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2025) found that students who perceive higher levels of peer support experience lower levels of stress, higher levels of resilience, and better academic adjustment, with these variables together contributing to enhanced social adaptation.

The moderate positive relationship indicates that students who are actively involved in meaningful and supportive interactions with their peers are also likely to adjust well to the social requirements of college life. Positive peer interactions may help students feel accepted, valued, and emotionally supported, which can boost their confidence in social interactions and help them adapt to new settings. For first-year nursing students, who are often subjected to academic pressure and new social expectations, peer interaction may be an important source of encouragement and reassurance.

On the other hand, students who are socially well adjusted may find it easier to initiate and maintain peer interactions. Students who are comfortable in social situations may be able to communicate effectively, actively participate in group activities, and work with their classmates. The reciprocal nature of the relationship suggests that peer interaction and social adjustment are self-reinforcing, a view supported by Braun et al. (2025), who argue that peer interaction and social integration are mutually enhancing in an academic context. The results have confirmed that peer interaction is an important factor that affects social adjustment among first-year nursing students, as positive peer relationships are an important source of emotional support, intellectual assistance, and a sense of belonging, all of which are critical during the transition to college nursing education and which contribute to a more positive college experience.

The significant relationship also underscores the need for peer support systems in the academic and social lives of first-year nursing students. Nursing education stresses teamwork, cooperation, and interpersonal skills, and positive peer relationships may help students deal with the academic demands, stress, and emotional demands of the nursing program. Students may benefit from peer interaction through the exchange of experiences, academic help, and emotional support, a finding supported by Berdida et al. (2023), who discovered that peer support predicts psychological well-being among Filipino nursing students, which in turn has a direct effect on their social adjustment. In addition, Strout et al. (2023) emphasized that peer support acts as a protective factor against stress and burnout in nursing education. The moderate positive correlation observed in this study indicates that peer interaction is an important factor in helping students overcome the emotional and social difficulties of their first year in college, which may help them adjust socially. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment is rejected, and it is concluded that peer interaction is significantly related to the social adjustment of first-year nursing students, emphasizing the importance of positive peer relationships in helping students adjust to college life.

Taken together, the results of this study reveal that first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College reported a High level of peer interaction ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.41$) and a High level of social adjustment ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.50$), and that a Pearson r analysis revealed a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.591^*$, $p = 0.000$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis at the 5% alpha level. These combined findings directly address the objectives of the study by establishing that peer interaction among first-year nursing students is not merely a favorable social experience but a meaningful correlate of their capacity to adjust to the academic and social demands of college life. This contributes to the field by reinforcing the view, supported by the literature integrated throughout this chapter, that structured and intentional peer support mechanisms within nursing curricula can serve as protective and facilitative factors for students navigating the transition into higher education and the rigors of professional formation. These findings, considered together, provide the empirical foundation upon which the subsequent chapter builds, as it presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from the descriptive and inferential results discussed in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

This study employed a survey correlational research design to investigate the level of peer interaction and social adjustment of 201 first-year nursing students of Saint Gabriel College during the School Year 2025 to 2026, and further sought to determine whether a

significant relationship exists between these two variables. Data were gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire that was validated to ensure that it was free from ambiguity and was reliable, with peer interaction serving as the independent variable and social adjustment as the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation were used to identify the levels of peer interaction and social adjustment, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the two variables, with the significance level set at 0.05. Guided by these procedures, the study found that the level of peer interaction among first-year nursing students was high, that the level of social adjustment among first-year nursing students was likewise high, and that the positive relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment was moderate and statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between the two variables.

From these findings, it can be concluded that first-year nursing students attending Saint Gabriel College usually have a supportive and interactive peer group. The high degree of peer interaction suggests that students are able to build positive relationships characterized by cooperation, effective communication, and mutual support, enabling them to share experiences, exchange ideas, and help each other in dealing with academic stress. A supportive peer group helps create a more engaging and inclusive learning environment, which is particularly helpful for first-year students who are struggling to cope with the demands of nursing education. In much the same way, the students showed a high degree of social adjustment, suggesting that they are able to cope effectively with the social and emotional demands of the transition to college life. This implies that most first-year nursing students are able to adapt to new academic requirements, build meaningful interpersonal relationships, and manage the emotional stressors created by new responsibilities and academic pressures, with their capacity to adjust socially also indicating the development of a sense of belonging and acceptance within the college community, which is crucial for maintaining emotional stability and overall well-being.

Building on these individual findings, it is further concluded that peer interaction is an important aspect of the social adjustment of first-year nursing students. The positive and significant relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment indicates that students who have more frequent positive peer interactions are likely to have better social adjustment, as positive peer relationships offer students encouragement, reassurance, and opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, all of which are important factors in students' ability to adapt to college life. This finding underscores the significance of peer support as a protective component in the early years of higher education. Moreover, peer interaction and social adjustment were found to be closely linked and interactive, in that students who are socially well-adjusted are likely to be actively involved in peer interactions, communicate effectively, and develop positive peer relationships, while these positive peer interactions, in turn, further contribute to students' social adaptability and emotional well-being. This interactive process underscores that peer interaction and social adjustment co-develop and reinforce one another. Taken together, these conclusions point to the overarching finding that it is imperative to encourage positive peer interactions in order to ensure the social adjustment, emotional well-being, and academic success of first-year nursing students, since a learning environment that promotes collaboration, peer support, and positive social relationships can enable students to better cope with the challenges of college life and contribute to their personal and professional development as future nurses.

In light of these findings and conclusions, several recommendations are advanced for the various stakeholders involved. Given the high level of peer interaction found among first-year nursing students, students themselves are encouraged to continue fostering positive and supportive relationships with their peers by taking an active role in study groups, collaborative tasks, and peer discussions, since maintaining open communication and mutual respect can

help develop a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and understood, and can alleviate the stress inherent in a rigorous program such as nursing where teamwork and cooperation are necessary. Teachers, for their part, can continue to use collaborative and interactive learning approaches, such as case analysis, simulation activities, peer-assisted learning, and class discussions, that give students the opportunity to develop both academic knowledge and interpersonal skills, while also monitoring peer interactions and offering guidance when needed to ensure that peer relationships remain healthy and inclusive and that the importance of teamwork in the healthcare field is consistently emphasized. Guidance counselors and the Student Affairs Office can establish organized peer support activities such as buddy programs, peer mentoring, and team-building activities tailored for first-year nursing students, which would help students feel less alone during their college transition, while also serving as mediators in cases of peer conflict to ensure that misunderstandings do not cloud students' academic and emotional well-being. Parents can advise their children to cultivate healthy friendships grounded in cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect, taking interest in their children's social interactions and listening to their concerns in order to offer reassurance that boosts students' confidence in forming good peer associations. School administrators, meanwhile, can continue to provide opportunities for students to interact through academic groups, leadership opportunities, and college-wide events, thereby offering institutional support that emphasizes the importance of peer engagement as a vital component of students' holistic development.

Similarly, given the high level of social adjustment found among first-year nursing students, students are encouraged to continue practicing good coping strategies and achieving a healthy balance between academic obligations and social life, remaining resilient, adaptable, and self-aware, seeking help when needed, and staying receptive to new experiences that lead to growth and independence. Teachers can establish a classroom environment where students feel comfortable voicing their ideas, asking questions, and sharing their own perspectives, since a positive classroom environment enhances students' sense of belonging, an important aspect of social adjustment, while also remaining attentive to students who appear distant or struggling and offering them the necessary guidance or referrals. Guidance counselors and the Student Affairs Office may provide regular seminars, workshops, and group counseling sessions focused on stress management, emotional resilience, communication skills, and conflict resolution to help students develop the emotional maturity and confidence necessary for successful adaptation to the rigors of nursing education. Parents may continue to provide emotional support and encouragement, especially during stressful academic periods, since open communication at home enables students to feel safe and supported even while adjusting to new responsibilities. School administrators may enhance wellness programs and mental health initiatives that promote emotional stability and inclusivity within the campus community, making support systems more accessible and visible so that students feel more at ease seeking help when needed.

Furthermore, in view of the significant relationship established between peer interaction and social adjustment, students can come to understand that their social adjustment skills are directly related to their peer associations, and that by focusing on the development of positive peer relationships, they can improve both their academic performance and their emotional state, drawing on positive peer associations as a source of motivation, comfort, and learning. Teachers can focus on class activities that require students to work together, planning activities that enable students to collaborate effectively while appreciating each other's differences, informed by an understanding of the importance of peer interaction in social adjustment. Guidance counselors and the Student Affairs Office can organize peer-run support groups

where students can freely discuss their adjustment experiences, providing a platform for students to share their experiences and realize that they are not alone in their struggles, while conducting regular evaluations to identify students who require additional support. Parents can help their children understand the importance of keeping good company, encouraging participation in productive activities that further improve their social adjustment skills. School administrators may institutionalize mentoring programs and leadership initiatives that reinforce the positive link between peer interaction and successful adjustment to college life. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to investigate other variables that could be related to the social adjustment of nursing students, such as academic stress, mental health, self-esteem, or support, and to undertake longitudinal and mixed-method studies that further explore the relationship between peer interaction and social adjustment and their effects on students' academic performance.

In conclusion, the enhancement of peer interactions within the academic setting is a crucial element in improving the social adjustment, well-being, and success of first-year nursing students. Encouraging positive peer interactions can enable students to navigate the college environment more effectively and aid in their development as learners and as future professionals in the nursing field.

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