



Creative Minds, Healthy Habits: Exploring and Comparing the Self-Care Behavior of Student Artists in Metro Manila

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Abstract

Student artists find themselves in a difficult socio-academic position, having to meet strict academic standards while fulfilling the demanding, performance-oriented requirements of their creative work. Grounded in Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, this study explored the multi-dimensional self-care behaviors of university-level student artists in Metro Manila, Philippines. Using a cross-sectional quantitative survey design, data were collected from a specialized sample of student artists who leaned heavily toward the performing arts ($N = 68$) via the 33-item Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS). Descriptive rankings revealed significant unevenness in self-care allocation, with participants highly prioritizing Supportive Relationships ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .91$) while systematically neglecting Physical Care ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .77$). This lopsided profile reflects a reliance on indigenous communal buffer systems (such as *kapwa* and *pagdamay*) to insulate against acute academic stressors while leaving somatic health compromised. Independent-samples *t*-tests indicated that demographic variations were largely homogeneous across gender, membership role, and specific group membership ($p > .05$), but yielded a significant isolated main effect for academic year level on Supportive Relationships, $t(60.0) = 2.53$, $p = .014$, Cohen's $d = .61$. Specifically, lower class ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .69$) reported significantly higher relational care investment than their upper-class counterparts ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.02$), capturing a progressive social withdrawal as terminal production requirements and career precarity intensify in the senior years. These findings highlight pervasive cultural scripts of physical overextension within creative student populations. They underscore the urgent institutional necessity for tailored, structurally sound campus wellness programs engineered to protect the self-care agency of aspiring artists. Specifically, institutions should embed mandatory somatic recovery blocks and peer-led physical wellness check-ins directly into high-stakes upper class rehearsal and production schedules.

Keywords: student artists, self-care behaviors, Orem's self-care deficit nursing theory, Mindful Self-Care Scale, higher education, Philippines.



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INTRODUCTION

Self-care is a multifaceted process of intentionally engaging in behaviors that promote healthy functioning to enhance overall well-being (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000, as cited in Dorociak et al., 2017). This holistic practice encompasses distinct physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social health dimensions designed to optimize human functioning. It is widely recognized as vital for building psychological resilience, managing long-term health, and preventing systemic exhaustion. However, within higher education, existing university wellness frameworks

frequently overlook the nuanced, uneven allocations of self-care unique to artistic disciplines. Because institutional supports remain tailored to traditional college cohorts, they fail to address the specific somatic and psychological vulnerabilities of student creators, leaving a critical gap in campus health design. As individuals transition from youth to adulthood, their unique self-care routines are shaped heavily by personal circumstances, environmental challenges, and the institutional frameworks surrounding them.

Within the higher education system, student organizations provide critical spaces where

individuals seek peer support, comfort, and a sense of communal safety. Among these, student artists constitute a significant and uniquely vulnerable subpopulation. Student artists navigate a precarious socio-academic position, balancing rigorous academic benchmarks with the demanding, performance-driven exigencies of creative production. This dual burden exposes them to intense psychological and systemic pressures. Grounded empirical research indicates that art students exhibit heightened stress profiles compared with traditional college cohorts, resulting in significantly higher baseline utilization of student counseling services. Despite these documented vulnerabilities, existing university wellness frameworks frequently overlook the nuanced, uneven allocations of self-care unique to artistic disciplines.

To bridge this gap, this study explores the multi-dimensional self-care behaviors of university-level student artists within the unique cultural and academic landscape of Metro Manila, Philippines. This investigation is theoretically anchored in Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, which emphasizes the design of purposeful activities that individuals must initiate and perform on their own behalf to maintain, restore, and improve their health and quality of life. According to Orem, when an individual's personal self-care agency is outpaced by compounding environmental demands, a self-care deficit occurs. This deficit necessitates structured, supportive-educative institutional systems to restore equilibrium. In the context of student artists, the acute, overlapping pressures of terminal creative productions and rigid academic benchmarks are hypothesized to overextend their adaptive agency, precipitating deep, unaddressed somatic deficits.

Furthermore, analyzing these behaviors requires examining how localized cultural dynamics influence the allocation of health resources. In the Philippines, interpersonal coping mechanisms are inherently bound to indigenous communal buffer systems most

notably *kapwa* (shared identity) and *pagdamay* (shared empathy). While these cultural scripts offer robust relational insulation against acute academic stressors, they may paradoxically mask severe physical vulnerabilities by encouraging students to prioritize collective, relational support over necessary somatic upkeep.

Using a cross-sectional quantitative survey design, this study utilizes the 33-item Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS) to evaluate self-care practices across six distinct domains: mindful relaxation, physical care, self-compassion and purpose, supportive relationships, supportive structure, and mindful awareness. By identifying which domains receive the most and least attention, and evaluating how critical demographics (such as gender, year level, membership role, and artistic medium) influence these choices, this paper aims to expose pervasive cultural and systemic scripts of physical overextension within creative student populations. Ultimately, these insights will serve as an authentic empirical foundation for developing tailored campus wellness programs that protect and enhance the self-care agency of aspiring artists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory (S-CDNT). The conceptual structure of preventive health management within specialized populations requires a robust framework that maps the relationship between individual capability and environmental strain. This study is theoretically anchored in Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory (S-CDNT). This nursing theory formalizes health preservation as a goal-oriented, purposeful action that individuals intentionally initiate, develop, and execute on their own behalf to maintain life, health, functioning, and well-being (Orem, 1971). While originally engineered to guide clinical interventions, Orem's conceptualization emphasizes that self-care is a learned, regulatory behavior that operates as a dynamic interplay among distinct sub-theories: the

Theory of Self-Care, the Theory of Self-Care Deficit, and the Theory of Nursing Systems (Orem, 1971; Khademian et al., 2020).

The Theory of Self-Care posits that human beings are active, self-regulating agents who possess a learned repertoire of behaviors termed "self-care agency" that enables them to manage their internal and external environments to sustain health and equilibrium (Orem, 1971). This agency is continually challenged by the "therapeutic self-care demand," which is the total sum of deliberate care actions required to meet the individual's current health needs. Orem categorizes these demands into universal self-care requisites (basic physiological necessities such as adequate sleep, air, food, and water) and developmental or health-deviation requisites (Orem, 1971). When an individual's self-care agency successfully expands to meet or exceed these compounding demands, a state of wellness equilibrium is maintained. However, the core of Orem's conceptual framework is the Theory of Self-Care Deficit. A self-care deficit occurs when an individual's internal self-care agency is outpaced or completely overextended by compounding environmental, developmental, or situational demands (Orem, 1971). Within a higher education context, student artists present a stark manifestation of this deficit. The acute, overlapping demands of rigid academic benchmarks and terminal creative productions overextend their personal self-care agency, precipitating deep, unaddressed somatic deficits such as chronic sleep deprivation, structural physical exhaustion, and neglected injury rehabilitation (Munro, 2014).

When a self-care deficit is empirically identified, S-CDNT triggers the Theory of Nursing Systems to restore functional equilibrium (Orem, 1971). For university student populations, a supportive-educative configuration is uniquely effective (Khademian et al., 2020). In this system, the individual retains control over the execution of their actions. However, the institutional framework must actively intervene through targeted environmental modifications, formalized policy

boundaries, and explicit resource allocations to bolster the individual's adaptive agency and eliminate the structural barriers that drive health neglect (Khademian et al., 2020; Labrague et al., 2017).

The Dual-Life Stressors and Vulnerabilities of Student Artists. Student artists occupy a precarious and highly fragmented position within the higher education landscape, regularly navigating a taxing "double life" characterized by conflicting operational demands. On the one hand, they are traditional undergraduate students who must fulfill standard academic requirements, complete theoretical coursework, maintain competitive grade point averages, and meet institutional administrative benchmarks (Lim et al., 2024). On the other hand, they function as pre-professional creative producers who must endure prolonged technical rehearsal blocks, rigorous studio confinement, demanding physical choreography, and intensive behind-the-scenes production maintenance. This combination of heavy operational tracks exposes student artists to severe physical and psychological pressures that differ fundamentally from the experiences of traditional, lecture-based undergraduate cohorts. Grounded empirical research indicates that this specialized demographic exhibits elevated stress profiles, making them significantly more vulnerable to systemic exhaustion and driving a higher baseline utilization of campus psychological and counseling services compared to traditional college populations (Greason et al., 2015).

Local literature highlights that student artists frequently undertake these intense operational burdens out of a profound, all-consuming intrinsic creative passion rather than for clear external validation or immediate financial incentives (Justiniani, 2014). However, this deep creative drive can function as a serious psychological double-edged sword. The intense internal pressure to achieve artistic excellence often socializes students into ignoring basic somatic warning signs, pushing them to endure severe physical pain, vocal strain, and deep

emotional exhaustion under the assumption that suffering is an indispensable component of authentic artistic development (Justiniani, 2014; Munro, 2014). From a physical care perspective, the rigid scheduling of performing and visual arts organizations which frequently requires studio or stage labor to run late into the night systematically forces students to sacrifice their universal self-care needs. This results in chronic sleep deprivation, reliance on poor nutritional choices, and the neglect of critical musculoskeletal recovery (Munro, 2014).

Psychologically, the highly evaluative nature of creative education further exacerbates these vulnerabilities. Because artistic production requires an intense investment of the self, student artists frequently experience a profound fusion of personal identity with creative output. When their work is subjected to public critique or peer evaluation, it can trigger intense performance anxiety, toxic perfectionism, and an acute fear of failure (Greason et al., 2015). Despite these documented vulnerabilities, existing university wellness frameworks frequently overlook the nuanced, highly uneven allocations of self-care unique to artistic disciplines, leaving students to manage systemic somatic deficits in isolation.

Operationalizing Wellness: The Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS). To accurately evaluate, diagnose, and mitigate the self-care deficits emerging within specialized student populations, health practices cannot be treated as a single, uniform habit. Instead, self-care must be operationalized through a validated, multidimensional framework that captures distinct behavioral choices. This study utilizes the Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS), developed by Cook-Cottone and Guyker (2018), which differentiates itself from traditional wellness inventories by explicitly integrating mindful awareness into daily routines. Grounded in clinical theory, the MSCS conceptualizes self-care as an active, daily process of attending to one's basic physiological and emotional needs by mindfully shaping one's immediate environment, structural routine, and interpersonal relationships (Cook-Cottone &

Guyker, 2018). When mapped onto Orem's framework, the MSCS functions as a highly precise empirical diagnostic tool, measuring the execution of targeted self-care actions across six specific, interconnected domains:

Mindful Relaxation and Mindful Awareness. These cognitive and behavioral domains function as critical psychological counterweights to performance anxiety. By training the individual to ground themselves in the present moment without immediate self-judgment, these domains interrupt the cycle of toxic perfectionism and allow students to process stressors more effectively (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018).

Physical Care. This domain addresses core universal self-care requirements, emphasizing adequate sleep hygiene, balanced nutrition, and intentional biomechanical rest (Cook-Cottone, 2015). For student artists, this represents the physical foundation required to endure long, exhausting hours in the studio and on stage without sustaining injury (Munro, 2014).

Self-Compassion and Purpose. This dimension functions as an emotional shield against the intense pressures of public critique and identity fusion. By decoupling a student's core human worth from the subjective success of their creative output, self-compassion helps preserve psychological resilience (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018).

Supportive Relationships. This domain measures the health and availability of social support networks. It evaluates the student's capacity to maintain safe emotional outlets and secure interpersonal spaces outside of competitive, evaluative academic or artistic environments (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018).

Supportive Structure. This structural domain encompasses time-management habits, environmental organization, and organized daily routines. It directly measures a student's capability to systematically navigate the logistical chaos of a dual-track academic and creative life (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018).

Indigenous Coping Frameworks: Kapwa and Pagdamay. Analyzing the health behaviors and self-care allocation profiles of student artists in the Philippines requires examining localized sociocultural dynamics. According to foundational concepts in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) popularized by Virgilio Enriquez (1992), interpersonal coping mechanisms within the archipelago are fundamentally distinct from Western individualistic models. Instead, they are deeply bound to indigenous communal concepts, primarily *kapwa* (shared identity) and *pagdamay* (shared empathy or communal burden-sharing) (Enriquez, 1992). These two concepts were explored further below:

Kapwa (Shared Identity). This foundational concept represents a psychological orientation that explicitly rejects individualistic separation, emphasizing instead a deep, core connection with others and driving students to treat their peers not as competitors but as extensions of the self (Enriquez, 1992).

Pagdamay (Communal Sympathy). This concept dictates an active, voluntary sharing of burdens during times of acute distress, structural crisis, or high academic pressure (Enriquez, 1992).

Within the close-knit ecosystems of university student groups and creative organizations (*orgs*) in the Philippines, these indigenous cultural scripts function as highly optimized social buffers. They provide student artists with collective resilience, communal protection, and deep emotional insulation against intense academic and institutional stressors (Cleofas, 2021). Rather than managing stress through individual behavioral modifications, Filipino university students routinely leverage their close peer networks to construct collaborative shock absorbers, distributing the emotional weight of intensive production cycles across the group (Cleofas, 2021).

However, this indigenous coping dynamic functions as a complex, double-edged sword within health allocation profiles. While *kapwa* and *pagdamay* are highly effective at sustaining

psychological and relational well-being, they can paradoxically mask severe physical vulnerabilities. Because the dominant cultural script strongly prioritizes collective harmony, mutual care, and the group's success, student artists may focus heavily on maintaining external support networks while systematically neglecting personal somatic upkeep. This imbalance can lead to a lopsided self-care profile where severe physical overextension is normalized and treated as an acceptable sacrifice for the collective good of the production or organization.

Addressing the Literature Gap. A distinct, unaddressed gap persists in current interdisciplinary literature at the intersection of nursing theory, student affairs administration, and creative arts education. The vast majority of empirical research utilizing Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory remains strictly confined to clinical environments, burnout profiles, or chronic illness management (Khademian et al., 2020; Labrague et al., 2017). Conversely, existing literature surrounding creative populations typically focuses on performance psychology or injury statistics in isolation, rarely offering a holistic behavioral framework for preventative health management (Munro, 2014). This study addresses this academic omission by translating the mechanics of S-CDNT into an actionable wellness diagnostic tool, delivered via the MSCS, for university student artists. By examining how localized cultural scripts such as *kapwa* and *pagdamay* interact with these behavioral choices, this research provides the empirical groundwork for designing tailored, structurally sound institutional interventions that safeguard the self-care agency of aspiring artists.

Synthesis of Frameworks and Theory-Derived Hypotheses. To understand the structural forces shaping the wellness behaviors of Filipino student artists, this study integrates Orem's S-CDNT, the dual-life realities of creative students, the multidimensional metrics of the MSCS, and the indigenous psychological constructs of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. These distinct frameworks do not operate in isolation;

rather, they intersect to establish the theoretical logic directly underlying the study's hypotheses.

Orem's (1971) theory posits that an individual's self-care agency must expand dynamically to meet increasingly complex therapeutic self-care demands. For student artists, these demands are dramatically intensified by their "double life" obligations, which pair heavy academic tracks with intensive, late-night production schedules (Lim et al., 2024; Munro, 2014). The MSCS serves as the primary diagnostic lens for examining how these students allocate their self-care agency across six distinct behavioral domains (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018). Crucially, the indigenous cultural frameworks of *kapwa* and *pagdamay* dictate where this limited agency is directed. Because these local scripts strongly socialize students toward collective harmony and shared burden-bearing (Enriquez, 1992), student artists are culturally incentivized to over-invest their regulatory behaviors into outward-facing, group-sustaining domains (Cleofas, 2021).

This intersection directly supports the first hypothesis: that student artists will exhibit significant unevenness in their allocation of self-care. Because *kapwa* and *pagdamay* prioritize communal cohesion (Enriquez, 1992), student artists are expected to maintain robust scores in relational and emotional domains (such as Supportive Relationships and Self-Compassion) measured by the MSCS (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018). However, because these communal scripts normalize individual physical sacrifice for the collective success of a production, this cultural buffer acts as a double-edged sword, masking somatic vulnerabilities (Cleofas, 2021; Justiniani, 2014). Consequently, students are theorized to systematically neglect their universal self-care requisites, resulting in severely depressed scores in the Physical Care and Supportive Structure domains of the MSCS (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018; Munro, 2014).

Furthermore, this synthesis justifies the second hypothesis regarding demographic variables

and the absence of complex interaction effects. While individual demographic factors such as gender, year level, or specific group membership may create isolated, localized differences in specific MSCS domains due to varying workloads or social roles, the overarching pressures of artistic training and the macro-level cultural scripts of Filipino society remain constant across the entire sample (Cleofas, 2021; Greason et al., 2015; Justiniani, 2014). The shared experience of navigating dual-life stressors under the structural influence of *kapwa* uniformizes how student artists navigate their self-care deficits. Therefore, while individual variables may yield independent main effects, the pervasive nature of these shared institutional and cultural realities theoretically suppresses the emergence of complex, multi-way statistical interactions among demographic variables.

Statement of the Problem and Operational Hypothesis. The present study addressed gaps in the literature by examining the self-care behaviors of a specialized sample of student artists ($N = 68$) across six distinct domains: mindful relaxation, physical care, self-compassion and purpose, supportive relationships, supportive structure, and mindful awareness. Specifically, this study aimed to identify which self-care domains received the most and least attention, while exploring how demographic characteristics; gender, year level, membership role, and specific group membership influenced domain focus. Given the rigorous nature of artistic training, it was hypothesized that student artists would exhibit significant unevenness in their allocation of self-care, prioritizing certain domains over others. Regarding demographic influences, it was tentatively hypothesized that individual demographic factors would yield localized differences in specific domain scores. However, given the exploratory framework and the need to protect statistical power, it was hypothesized that no complex, multi-way interaction effects would emerge among these variables.

METHOD

Research Design. To align with these hypotheses, this study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2021). This non-experimental approach is suited for measuring self-care behaviors across the six target domains at a single point in time without manipulating the research environment. The design enabled the examination of naturally occurring variations in the specialized sample. The independent variables consisted of participant demographic characteristics (gender, year level, membership role, and specific group membership). The dependent variables were the individual continuous scores obtained from the Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS), a psychometrically validated 33-item self-report instrument scored on a 5-point Likert scale (Cook-Cottone, 2015, 2018). Data were gathered using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire to ensure data integrity and participant anonymity while maximizing response rates within this niche population.

Sampling Technique. The study employed a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques under a non-probability sampling design. Non-probability sampling is appropriate when the research focus requires specific population traits rather than statistical generalization to an entire population (Saunders et al., 2019).

First, purposive sampling was used to ensure that all participants met the specific inclusion criteria for the study objectives: they must be college student artists currently studying in Metro Manila. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select information-rich cases that are directly relevant to the core phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

Second, convenience sampling was integrated through the recruitment process. The study invitation was posted publicly on various social media platforms (Facebook) and distributed directly to accessible online student artist organizations based in Metro Manila. This

approach leverages readily available digital spaces to gather data efficiently from a targeted demographic (Bryman, 2016).

Finally, the study employed snowball sampling, in which initial participants voluntarily shared the recruitment invitation with peers who also met the established criteria. Snowball sampling is a highly effective method for expanding sample sizes within specific communities by utilizing the social networks of existing participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Despite its utility for this targeted demographic, the reliance on a non-probability sampling design introduces inherent methodological limitations. Because participants were not selected through random sampling, the findings lack statistical generalizability to the broader population of all college student artists beyond Metro Manila (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the integration of convenience and snowball sampling introduces potential selection bias. Online recruitment through specific Facebook groups and existing student organizations may overrepresent highly active or digitally connected artists while excluding those outside these networks. Similarly, because snowball sampling relies on the social circles of initial participants, it carries the risk of a "homophily bias," where the sample becomes homogenous and reflects shared perspectives rather than a diverse range of experiences within the student artist community (Cohen et al., 2018). The researchers mitigated these limitations by strictly adhering to the established inclusion criteria and focusing the analysis on deep, qualitative insights rather than population-wide generalizations.

Participants. The participants in this study are 68 student artists recruited from colleges and universities in Metro Manila. Purposive sampling was utilized to select individuals who met the inclusion criteria: (1) 18 years old and above, and (2) currently a member of any specific student artist group managed by a college or university in Metro Manila.

Due to the specialized nature of the population and the final sample size, demographic variables were collapsed into binary categories to preserve statistical power, ensure adequate cell sizes, and prevent empty cells during comparative analysis. This strategy was necessary to maintain statistical power, prevent the inflation of Type II errors, and satisfy the minimum expected cell frequency assumptions required for robust categorical analysis, which are severely compromised by small, fragmented cells (Field, 2013).

Consequently, the year level was divided into Lower class (1st- and 2nd-year students) and Upper class (3rd- to 5th-year students). Specific group memberships were categorized as either Performing Arts (theater, dance, music) or Management (administrative, production, documentation). Gender (female and male) and membership role (officer and member) were similarly treated as binary variables for statistical comparison. All participants volunteered for the study and provided informed consent before data collection.

Instrument. To identify participants' Self-Care behaviors, the Mindful Self-Care Scale, developed by Cook-Cottone & Guyker (2018), was used in this exploration. This version of the scale provides a broader framework for understanding and promoting self-care, making it a more effective tool for developing meaningful programs. It is a 33-item scale that could be accomplished in 10-15 minutes. It consists of 6 subscales, each containing 6-13 items. The subscales are mindful relaxation, physical care, self-compassion and purpose, supportive relationships, supportive structure, and mindful awareness. Three items measuring the individual's general or global self-care practices were the final part of the assessment. Participants will report how frequently they have engaged in the described situation over the past 7 days by rating it on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Regularly). There are also items that participants will score in reverse, from 1 (regularly) to 5 (never).

Data Collection. Participants' identities were safeguarded with strict confidentiality, and participation in the study was purely voluntary. The project leader reached out to various student artist groups via email and social media to invite them to participate in the study. Data was collected via a Google Form. The Google Form started with an informed consent screen. When the student agreed to participate in the study, they proceeded to the Demographics part, followed by the questionnaire. Only the project leader had access to the raw data. All collected data was stored in a password-protected digital folder accessible only to the project leader. Data will only be used for the purposes outlined in this research. Data will be retained securely for five (5) years, adhering to ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis. The statistical analysis plan was designed to address each hypothesis while safeguarding statistical power. First, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for each self-care domain to rank and evaluate the hypothesized unevenness in self-care allocation. Second, to test for localized demographic differences, inferential analyses specifically, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine the main effects of each demographic factor on individual domain scores. Finally, to honor the exploratory framework and preserve statistical power given the small sample size ($N = 68$), the analysis intentionally omitted complex, multi-way interaction terms, focusing instead on isolated group comparisons.

Ethical Considerations. Informed consent was included in the Google Form for the participants. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymization of responses and secure data storage. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. Privacy and confidentiality were observed throughout the study with proper documentation. Benefits of participation were discussed and distributed accordingly through a thank-you card and a small token.

RESULTS

A total of 68 student artists participated in the study. The sample was predominantly female ($n = 50$, 73.5%) and heavily weighted toward performing artists ($n = 58$, 85.3%), with management students accounting for the remaining 14.7% ($n = 10$). Distribution across academic year levels was nearly equal, comprising 35 upper class (51.5%) and 33 lower class (48.5%). Regarding membership role, members represented 54.4% ($n = 37$) of the sample, while officers accounted for 45.6% ($n = 31$). Complete demographic characteristics are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample ($N = 68$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Specific Group		
Performing	58	85.3
Management	10	14.7
Gender		
Female	50	73.5
Male	18	26.5
Year Level		
Lower class (1st–2nd year)	33	48.5
Upper class (3rd–5th year)	35	51.5
Membership Role		
Member	37	54.4
Officer	31	45.6

Note. Percentages may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Rankings for Mindful Self-Care Scale Domains ($N = 68$)

Rank	Self-Care Domain	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Supportive Relationships	4.06	.91
2	Self-Compassion and Purpose	3.76	1.01
3	Mindful Awareness	3.68	.94
4	Supportive Structure	3.62	.90
5	Mindful Relaxation	3.57	.85
6	Physical Care	2.94	.77

To evaluate the hypothesis that student artists would demonstrate significant unevenness in their self-care allocation, overall means and standard deviations were calculated and ranked for each of the six Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS) domains (see Table 2). Descriptive analyses revealed that Supportive Relationships received the highest level of

attention from the sample ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .91$), followed closely by Self-Compassion and Purpose ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.01$). In contrast, participants allocated the least attention to Physical Care ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .77$). These findings support the hypothesis, demonstrating a descriptive disparity in how student artists prioritize different dimensions of wellness.

Localized Demographic Differences. To test the hypothesis that individual demographic factors would yield localized differences in self-care, a series of independent-samples *t*-tests was conducted across the six MSCS domains. Regarding year level, a significant main effect emerged exclusively for the Supportive Relationships subscale, $t(60.0) = 2.53$, $p = .014$, Cohen's $d = .61$. Specifically, Lower class reported significantly higher self-care attention ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .69$) than the Upper class counterparts ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.02$). No statistically significant differences were detected based on year level for the remaining five domains (all $p > .05$).

Table 3
Inferential Test Matrix for Localized Demographic Differences Across Self-Care Domains ($N = 68$)

Self-Care Domain	Gender	Membership Role	Year Level	Specific Group
Mindful Relaxation	$t(26.1) = -.50$, $p = .625$, 95% CI [-0.687, 0.392]	$t(65.6) = -.22$, $p = .824$, 95% CI [-0.531, 0.423]	$t(64.9) = 1.45$, $p = .151$, 95% CI [-0.127, 0.832]	$t(13.6) = 1.48$, $p = .163$, 95% CI [-0.225, 1.126]
Physical Care	$t(29.1) = -1.43$, $p = .162$, 95% CI [-0.943, 0.143]	$t(65.4) = -1.01$, $p = .315$, 95% CI [-0.723, 0.236]	$t(65.9) = 0.92$, $p = .357$, 95% CI [-0.253, 0.701]	$t(11.8) = -1.01$, $p = .331$, 95% CI [-1.040, 0.308]
Self-Compassion and Purpose	$t(22.7) = -1.19$, $p = .245$, 95% CI [-0.937, 0.149]	$t(65.8) = -.66$, $p = .513$, 95% CI [-0.636, 0.320]	$t(65.5) = -.06$, $p = .955$, 95% CI [-0.489, 0.462]	$t(16.1) = .059$, $p = .567$, 95% CI [-0.516, 0.827]
Supportive Relationships	$t(25.1) = -.25$, $p = .803$, 95% CI [-0.616, 0.462]	$t(65.8) = -1.32$, $p = .191$, 95% CI [-0.794, 0.166]	$t(60.0) = 2.53$, $p = .014^*$, 95% CI [0.118, 1.092]	$t(16.9) = -1.29$, $p = .215$, 95% CI [-1.005, 0.342]
Supportive Structure	$t(30.4) = -.58$, $p = .569$, 95% CI [-0.696, 0.383]	$t(63.8) = -1.98$, $p = .052$, 95% CI [-0.964, 0.004]	$t(65.9) = .17$, $p = .869$, 95% CI [-0.436, 0.516]	$t(12.2) = 0.68$, $p = .508$, 95% CI [-0.436, 0.909]
Mindful Awareness	$t(24.0) = -1.50$, $p = .146$, 95% CI [-1.019, 0.070]	$t(65.9) = -1.59$, $p = .117$, 95% CI [-0.862, 0.101]	$t(63.4) = 1.49$, $p = .140$, 95% CI [-0.121, 0.838]	$t(12.1) = -.99$, $p = .344$, 95% CI [-1.018, 0.329]

Note. For demographic variables that violate the assumption of homogeneity of variance (such as Specific Group due to the 58 vs. 10 sample split), Welch's correction is reported with adjusted degrees of freedom. * $p < .05$.

Parallel inferential analyses were conducted to evaluate the main effects of the remaining demographic characteristics, specifically gender, membership role, and membership in a specific group. These analyses revealed no statistically significant differences across the six self-care domains among the three

demographic categories (all $p > .05$). Subgroups within these factors demonstrated statistical equivalence across all facets of wellness, confirming that these demographic traits did not systematically influence self-care prioritization. Complete inferential metrics, including all non-significant t -values, degrees of freedom, exact p -values, and confidence intervals are systematically structured in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

The empirical findings from this investigation provide critical, nuanced insights into the behavioral configurations of wellness management among university-level performing arts student-artists within the Metro Manila higher-education landscape. The first hypothesis posited that student artists would demonstrate substantial, systemic unevenness across individual self-care domains, prioritizing specific facets of wellness while neglecting others due to the intense environmental strains of their creative education. The ranked descriptive metrics strongly validate this hypothesis, revealing a distinct optimization hierarchy. Participants heavily prioritized social and emotional domains, specifically maximizing their investment in Supportive Relationships ($M = 4.06$) and Self-Compassion and Purpose ($M = 3.76$)—while systematically suppressing their execution of Physical Care ($M = 2.94$), which emerged as the single lowest-scoring domain by a substantial margin.

This pronounced, systematic neglect of physical health aligns directly with emerging behavioral patterns documented among creative and arts-focused student populations in highly competitive urban centers in the Philippines. These students routinely confront dense academic workloads, compressed project deadlines, consecutive technical production weeks, and exhausting rehearsal cycles, which trigger chronic sleep deprivation, irregular eating habits, and acute biomechanical fatigue (Lim et al., 2024; Munro, 2014). However, within the specialized training ecosystems of

Philippine higher education arts programs, this physical overextension is rarely recognized as a hazard. Instead, a pervasive, culturally normalized glorification of the "suffering artist" narrative persists (Justiniani, 2014). While these findings are discussed under the broader umbrella of creative education, it is critical to acknowledge that the observed somatic neglect heavily reflects the operational realities of performing arts tracks (e.g., theater, dance, music). These disciplines entail rigid group rehearsal schedules and extreme physical exertion that may differ significantly from the solitary studio confinement or asynchronous digital workflows characteristic of visual arts and digital design tracks. Therefore, the emergent self-care hierarchy should be interpreted primarily as a reflection of performing arts subcultures rather than an absolute generalization of all creative student populations. Aspiring Filipino visual and performing artists are frequently socialized by peers, instructors, and industry mentors alike to treat extreme physiological strain, exhaustion, and the suppression of biological self-care as an essential rite of passage or a necessary badge of honor to achieve authentic creative excellence (Justiniani, 2014). Consequently, basic somatic requirements such as sleep hygiene, dietary stability, and physical recovery are routinely discarded to meet intense creative benchmarks.

Conversely, the high prioritization of the Supportive Relationships domain represents a direct structural manifestation of deep-seated Filipino interpersonal dynamics. The intense reliance on close-knit peer cohorts and student organizational structures as a primary defense mechanism against academic and production stress directly mirrors the foundational indigenous psychological concepts of *kapwa* (shared inner self) and *pagdamay* (communal empathy or burden-sharing) (Enriquez, 1992). Within the Philippine academic landscape, student-led organizations (*orgs*) and creative cohorts function as essential collective shock absorbers (Cleofas, 2021). Rather than navigating intense environmental pressures through highly individualistic behavioral

modifications such as structured exercise routines, clinical nutritional planning, or independent medical maintenance Filipino student artists lean heavily on their shared identity networks to establish collective resilience (Cleofas, 2021). This collectivist coping orientation constructs a highly optimized interpersonal buffer system, allowing students to leverage emotional solidarity and mutual aid to insulate themselves against acute academic anxiety. However, as Orem's framework explicitly maps, this reliance functions as a complex, double-edged sword. While these indigenous communal buffers effectively preserve psychological and emotional resilience, they mask severe physiological vulnerabilities by normalizing individual biological overextension for the collective good of the production or organization.

The second hypothesis stated that individual sociodemographic characteristics would yield localized variations across specific self-care domain scores. This hypothesis was only partially supported by the inferential metrics, as independent-samples *t*-tests revealed a singular, isolated main effect: academic year level significantly influenced attention to supportive relationships. Specifically, lower class students reported a significantly higher investment in supportive social networks ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .69$) than their upper-class counterparts ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.02$), yielding a strong effect size (Cohen's $d = .61$).

This developmental trajectory captures a critical sociodynamic transition that is deeply rooted in the cultural imperatives of *kapwa* and *pagdamay* as freshman and sophomore students navigate the university ecosystem. First- and second-year student artists face immense pressure to secure a clear sense of belonging within their respective creative organizations, overcome the acute vulnerability associated with foundational professional training, and construct cooperative peer networks necessary to navigate complex theatrical, musical, or visual productions. In the context of Filipino indigenous psychology, this acute adjustment period triggers a heightened

operationalization of *kapwa*, where lower class students actively seek *pakikipagkapwa* (the act of treating the other as a fellow human being and extending oneself to the collective) to mitigate their shared academic anxieties. By heavily investing in supportive relationships, these younger students establish an early baseline of *pagdamay*, treating their peer cohorts as essential communal lifelines. They explicitly maximize their relational care investment because their survival in a high-stress creative environment depends on their capacity to collectively absorb and distribute burdens, transforming university spaces into shared, empathic refuges.

By contrast, the notable drop-off in relational care observed among upper class students represents a concerning developmental shift toward progressive social withdrawal and deep academic burnout, indicating a breakdown or exhaustion of these indigenous cultural buffers. As advanced creative students in the Philippines progress into their third, fourth, and fifth years, the character of their therapeutic self-care demands changes dramatically. The pressure of terminal academic requirements such as major graduation recitals, senior thesis showcases, and independent gallery exhibitions intensifies to a crushing degree. This severe operational workload is further compounded by looming career anxieties regarding the economic precarity of the local Philippine creative industry, where stable, sustainable employment is rarely guaranteed. Confronted with these overwhelming systemic pressures, upper class students exhaust their internal psychological capital. This systemic depletion forces them to pull back from the very social networks and “*pagdamay*-driven” communal buffer systems that sustained them during their early university years, thereby leaving them highly isolated precisely when their stress peaks. The erosion of relational care in later years suggests that the intense, individualistic demands of terminal artistic execution eventually override the collectivist, *kapwa*-centered coping strategies that protect lower class students.

Importantly, parallel inferential analyses revealed widespread statistical equivalence across all self-care domains when evaluating gender, specific membership roles (officers vs. members), and specific artistic disciplines. This homogeneity implies that the uneven prioritization of wellness specifically, the severe suppression of physical care is neither distinct to a particular subgroup nor limited to a particular leadership tier. Rather, it represents a pervasive, institutionalized behavioral characteristic embedded within the broader collective student-artist culture in the Philippines. This systemic configuration confirms that individual-level interventions are insufficient to resolve these deficits; structural, policy-driven reforms are required to transform the environment in which these students operate.

Conclusion. This study provides empirical evidence documenting the multi-dimensional self-care configurations of university-level student artists within the higher education landscape of Metro Manila. By framing behavioral patterns through Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory (S-CDNT), the analysis reveals a stark, structural imbalance in how these specialized students manage their health equilibrium (Khademian et al., 2020). The descriptive findings demonstrate a distinct priority hierarchy: student artists aggressively maximize their interpersonal and social resources, resulting in an exceptionally high investment in *Supportive Relationships* ($M = 4.06$). Conversely, they systematically compromise their biological well-being, leading to a severe suppression of *Physical Care* ($M = 2.94$) (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018).

This behavioral paradox cannot be explained by individual variations alone. Rather, it reflects deep-seated socio-cultural scripts within the Philippine arts ecosystem. The optimized investment in relational networks serves as a practical implementation of indigenous communal buffer systems, specifically *kapwa* (shared identity) and *pagdamay* (shared empathy) (Enriquez, 1992). These collectivist coping scripts enable creative cohorts to serve

as structural shock absorbers, using peer solidarity to insulate individuals from acute academic and production stress (Cleofas, 2020).

However, this indigenous coping mechanism functions as a double-edged sword. While it protects psychological resilience, it normalizes somatic overextension for the collective good of the production or organization. Student artists routinely sacrifice basic universal self-care requisites such as sleep, nutrition, and injury rehabilitation to satisfy intense creative benchmarks (Greason et al., 2015).

Furthermore, inferential testing demonstrates that this lopsided care matrix is highly homogeneous across gender, organizational roles, and artistic media. This widespread equivalence indicates that physical neglect is an embedded, systemic characteristic of the broader collective student-artist culture rather than an isolated phenomenon. The singular, isolated main effect for academic year level on relational care where lower class ($M = 4.33$) significantly outscore upper class ($M = 3.80$) highlights a critical developmental trajectory.

As creative students' progress into their terminal years, the compounding pressures of graduation recitals, solo exhibitions, and the looming precarity of their careers in the local creative economy exhaust their psychological capital (Cleofas, 2020). This resource depletion forces upper class into a state of progressive social withdrawal, severing the very communal buffer systems that sustained them during their early years at university.

Ultimately, these findings show that the therapeutic self-care demands placed on student artists vastly outpace their internal adaptive agency (Greason et al., 2015). This severe structural imbalance results in chronic self-care deficits that endanger both their academic journey and their long-term health (Labrague et al., 2017). Resolving this problem requires shifting the burden of wellness away from individual student survival. Academic institutions must proactively implement structured, supportive-educative environments

to protect, restore, and enhance the self-care agency of aspiring artists (Khademian et al., 2020; Labrague et al., 2017).

Recommendations. To systematically address the chronic self-care deficits identified within this population, university administrations, student affairs units, and campus health centers must transition away from passive wellness frameworks and deploy a formal, supportive-educative system tailored to the structural demands of creative disciplines (Khademian et al., 2020). First, structural reforms must be enacted to protect basic universal self-care requisites, beginning with institutional boundaries that protect physical health (Labrague et al., 2017). Universities must enforce mandatory operational curfews that require all rehearsal halls, fine arts studios, and design production spaces to close by 10:00 PM to prevent overnight neglect of health. This policy must be paired with a mandatory ten-hour turnaround rule, which dictates a minimum ten-hour rest window between the conclusion of any late-evening technical rehearsal or production wrap and the student's first academic lecture the following morning. To bridge the gap between policy and daily behavior, campus health centers should institute mandatory, structured sleep hygiene workshops scheduled during midterm and production-heavy weeks to equip students with evidence-based strategies for rapid cognitive down-regulation and sleep banking. Faculty supervisors must also integrate mandatory, structural micro-rest intervals, scheduling ten minutes of complete physical rest for every fifty minutes of continuous rehearsal or studio labor to actively mitigate physical fatigue and biomechanical strain. Furthermore, academic departments must implement formal, site-specific injury recovery and rehabilitation protocols such as access to specialized physical therapy assessments, supervised stretching regimens, and clear medical clearance pathways for repetitive strain injuries to ensure that physical setbacks are treated with professional care rather than ignored for the sake of performance.

Second, the intense psychological vulnerabilities caused by identity fusion and performance anxiety require decentralized, specialization-specific mental health interventions (Greason et al., 2015). Academic institutions should step away from centralized clinics and instead station satellite wellness offices and dedicated counselors directly within creative arts to eliminate geographic barriers and minimize the social stigma of seeking help (Greason et al., 2015). Furthermore, student affairs units should integrate artistic resilience and metacognition workshops at the start of each term, utilizing localized somatic regulation training (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation) to help students manage acute performance anxiety before stepping on stage and teaching student artists explicit cognitive strategies to navigate rigorous faculty assessments and to decouple their self-worth from subjective artistic feedback.

Third, to counter the progressive social withdrawal and depletion of relational capital observed among senior students, universities must offer targeted developmental support (Cleofas, 2020). Departments should establish senior peer mentorship networks that intentionally pair upper class with incoming lower-class cohorts, a structure that preserves vital interpersonal connections and keeps senior students actively anchored to the university's collective *kapwa* and *pagdamay* buffer systems (Cleofas, 2020; Enriquez, 1992). This interpersonal preservation must be matched with creative industry navigational seminars built directly into the senior curriculum, offering practical workshops on financial literacy and career planning to actively reduce the ambient professional anxiety that drains the upper-class psychological capital (Cleofas, 2020).

Finally, institutional policies and cultural expectations must change through rigorous advocacy. University administrations should implement formal wellness accreditations for all student-led creative organizations. Most importantly, faculty members and professional mentors must actively reform the instructional

narrative by explicitly modeling and rewarding sustainable somatic preservation as an indispensable prerequisite for long-term professional mastery, rather than praising extreme physical exhaustion as a sign of artistic dedication.

Limitations. While this study offers empirical insights into the health behaviors of an underrepresented student population, several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgment to guide future research. First, the study relies on a specialized sample of 68 student artists, which limits overall statistical power and prevents the use of complex multivariate regression models or path analyses to trace the exact directional interactions between specific stressors and self-care dimensions. Second, geographic and discipline skews limit the external validity of these findings. Because data collection was strictly confined to higher education institutions in Metro Manila and leaned heavily toward performing arts organizations (85.3%), the conclusions may not readily transfer to creative students at rural regional institutions or those enrolled in non-performing majors such as fine arts, digital design, and creative writing.

Furthermore, the sample leans heavily toward individuals enrolled in performing arts organizations, leaving visual artists, digital designers, and creative writers underrepresented, which is an important gap considering that different creative mediums carry unique operational schedules and physical demands that this study could not fully evaluate. Third, the study suffers from methodological vulnerabilities inherent in self-report questionnaires such as the Mindful Self-Care Scale (Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018). This approach introduces potential social desirability bias, as participants might overestimate their cognitive mindfulness or relational investments while underreporting the full extent of their physical neglect. This quantitative design also captures static behavioral choices but cannot document the raw, qualitative personal experiences driving those choices.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the data captures self-care behaviors at a single point in time. While the independent-samples *t*-test identified a significant drop-off in supportive relationships among upper class, this design cannot definitively prove a longitudinal causal link across student trajectories. To address these limitations, future researchers can employ longitudinal designs that track Filipino student artists across multiple academic terms to map how self-care behaviors fluctuate in response to shifting academic and performance demands. Furthermore, future studies can employ stratified random sampling to obtain a more balanced, multi-institutional cohort across diverse public and private universities in the Philippines, ensuring better representation of visual arts and cultural management majors. Finally, integrating qualitative methodologies, such as semi-structured focus groups or daily micro-diaries would enrich future investigations by providing deeper contextual insight into the structural barriers, local economic pressures, and institutional resource constraints that prevent student artists from engaging in adequate physical self-care.

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