

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2026, Vol. 7, No. 2, 559 – 572

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.07.02.07>

Research Article

Exploring the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces Among College Students

Maria Teresa N. Bernabe, Ma. Crisandra C. Timbang, Alora Erica S. Salcedo*, Ken Paul M. Espinosa

Baliuag University, Baliwag City, 3006, Philippines

Article history:

Submission 14 December 2025

Revised 12 February 2026

Accepted 23 February 2026

*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

aloraericasalcedo@baliuagu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The increasing use of cafés by college students for academic activities highlights the need to examine their effectiveness as informal learning spaces. However, empirical evidence on how these environments support learning, performance, and student well-being remains limited. This study aimed to assess college students' perceptions of cafes as informal learning spaces and determine how these venues are utilized for academic purposes. A descriptive-quantitative research design was employed, involving 100 college students who regularly studied in selected cafes in Baliwag City, Bulacan, Philippines. Data were collected using an expert-validated survey questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistical techniques. Findings revealed that students generally perceived cafes as conducive learning environments, particularly in terms of comfort (overall mean = 3.19) and accessibility (overall mean = 3.01). Physical amenities were also rated positively (overall mean = 2.86), although noise level received the lowest mean score (M = 2.51), indicating a key challenge. In terms of utilization, cafés supported self-directed learning (overall mean = 3.07) and positively influenced learning performance (overall mean = 3.06), with motivation emerging as the strongest factor (M = 3.12). Additionally, cafes contributed significantly to student well-being (overall mean = 3.18), especially in enhancing mood and motivation (M = 3.33) and reducing academic stress (M = 3.22). The study concludes that cafes function as effective informal learning spaces that promote motivation, independent learning, and well-being among college students. The findings offer practical implications for cafe owners and higher education institutions in developing more student-centered, supportive informal learning environments.

How to cite:

Bernabe, M. T. N., Timbang, M. C. C., Salcedo, A. E. S., & Espinosa, K. P. M. (2026). Exploring the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces Among College Students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 7(2), 559 – 572. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.07.02.07

Keywords: *Informal learning spaces, Cafés, College students, Self-directed learning, Learning performance, Student well-being, Higher education*

Background

The evolution of learning spaces has extended beyond traditional classroom settings, with cafes emerging as significant informal learning environments for college students. These spaces have become increasingly integral to college students' academic experiences, offering unique environments that blend social interaction with academic pursuits. Studies have shown that informal learning spaces, particularly cafes, could facilitate collaborative learning, enhance student engagement, and provide comfortable environments conducive to both individual and group study (Jian et al., 2025; Phan & Le, 2025; Thompson, 2020). The integration of cafes into academic life reflects a broader shift in higher education towards more flexible, student-centered learning environments that accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences (Makhathini & Kanosvamaha, 2025)

In recent years, cafes have emerged as popular study destinations among college students, transforming these establishments into informal learning space (Adityawirawan & Kusuma, 2021). The ambient atmosphere, characterized by gentle background sound and social interactions, created an environment conducive to academic work. College students frequently chose these alternative study locations over traditional library settings, citing enhanced focus and productivity.

In Baliwag City, Bulacan, Philippines, numerous cafes attracted college students for both individual and group study sessions. Research indicated that college students who chose to study in cafes reported improved concentration levels, potentially contributing to better academic performance (Guo et al., 2024; Viado, 2024). This shift in study habits reflected a broader trend in how modern college students approached their academic responsibilities.

According to the studies by Kurnianto and Ardillah (2025) and Villagonzalo et al. (2025), the relationship between cafe study environments and academic performance suggested

that these alternative spaces might offer advantages for certain college students. The combination of ambient noise, social atmosphere, and available amenities created conditions that some college students found more conducive to learning than traditional academic settings. According to Wu et al. (2021), this phenomenon highlighted the evolving nature of college student study preferences and raised important considerations for educational institutions regarding the design of learning spaces. The popularity of cafes as study locations demonstrated college students' desire for flexible, comfortable environments that balanced social interaction with academic focus.

Moreover, a study by Ahmad et al. (2023) found that cafes functioned effectively as informal learning spaces, potentially supporting improved academic outcomes through their unique environmental characteristics. This understanding could inform future developments in institutional learning space design and student support services. The transformation of learning environments witnessed a significant shift as cafes emerged as informal learning spaces. College students increasingly gravitated towards these informal settings, which seamlessly integrated comfort, accessibility, and social interaction into their educational pursuits (Purwadi & Manurung, 2020). These places changed from being merely social gathering places to becoming lively spots for learning.

Cafes are redefined as alternative study environments, accommodating various academic activities (Jian & Liu, 2025). College students utilized these spaces for completing assignments, engaging in collaborative projects, and pursuing independent learning endeavors. The physical amenities, accessibility, and social atmosphere significantly influenced college students' learning experiences, marking a departure from conventional study locations such as libraries and study halls.

Despite their growing popularity as academic spaces, college students' perceptions

about cafes on their learning outcomes and academic behavior remained largely unexplored. While research existed on various informal learning spaces, there has been limited investigation into the specific benefits cafes provided to college student learning, particularly in higher education. An examination of physical amenities, accessibility, and social environment promised valuable insights into both the advantages and challenges of utilizing cafes for academic purposes. This investigation aimed to enhance understanding of how these spaces affected college students' academic performance, self-directed learning capabilities, and overall well-being. The findings held particular significance for higher education institutions and cafe proprietors, offering guidance in creating more conducive informal learning spaces tailored to college students' needs.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore how cafes served as informal learning spaces for college students. Specifically, it sought to assess college students' perceptions of the roles of cafes as conducive environments for learning and to determine how they utilize these spaces for academic purposes.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Ray Oldenburg's Third Place Theory (1989), which focuses on the concept of informal, public spaces where people can gather and interact outside of their home (first place) and work (second place). These "third places" are characterized by their neutrality, accessibility, and informal atmosphere, offering a relaxed environment for social interaction. Examples include coffee shops, cafes, libraries, and parks. Oldenburg emphasized that third places served as important venues for building social ties, fostering a sense of community, and encouraging spontaneous conversations. They provided opportunities for individuals to engage in leisure activities, share ideas, and connect with others, promoting social cohesion and well-being (Lukito & Xenia, 2017).

Moreover, Ray Oldenburg's Third Place Theory emphasized the importance of informal, neutral spaces where people gather outside of home and work, known as third places (Sandikci et al., 2025). Cafe perfectly embodies this concept, offering college students a comfortable, accessible, and relaxing environment conducive to informal learning. In these third places, college students can engage in self-directed learning, choosing their own pace and learning materials without the constraints of a formal classroom setting. The physical amenities like Wi-Fi, power outlets, and comfortable seating further support college students in their academic activities, allowing them to focus on studying, working on assignments, or engaging in group discussions. The social atmosphere in these spaces fosters interaction, collaboration, and peer learning, all of which enhance college students' academic performance and make learning more engaging and enjoyable.

Additionally, Oldenburg's theory highlighted the role of third places in fostering a sense of community and well-being. Cafes, with their inviting and informal settings, contribute significantly to student well-being by reducing the stress and isolation often felt in traditional academic environments. The opportunity for social interaction in cafes provides emotional support, creating a sense of belonging and reducing academic pressure. These spaces serve as a hybrid environment where college students can balance their academic goals with personal relaxation, ultimately improving both their learning outcomes and mental health. In this way, cafes serve as vital third places for students to thrive socially and academically.

Thus, this theory was found to be relevant to the present study, as it explained how cafes served as informal, accessible spaces for the college students to engage in social interactions and self-directed learning outside of traditional classrooms. These environments aligned with Oldenburg's concept of third places, offering a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere that encourages collaboration, enhances academic performance, and promotes student well-being.

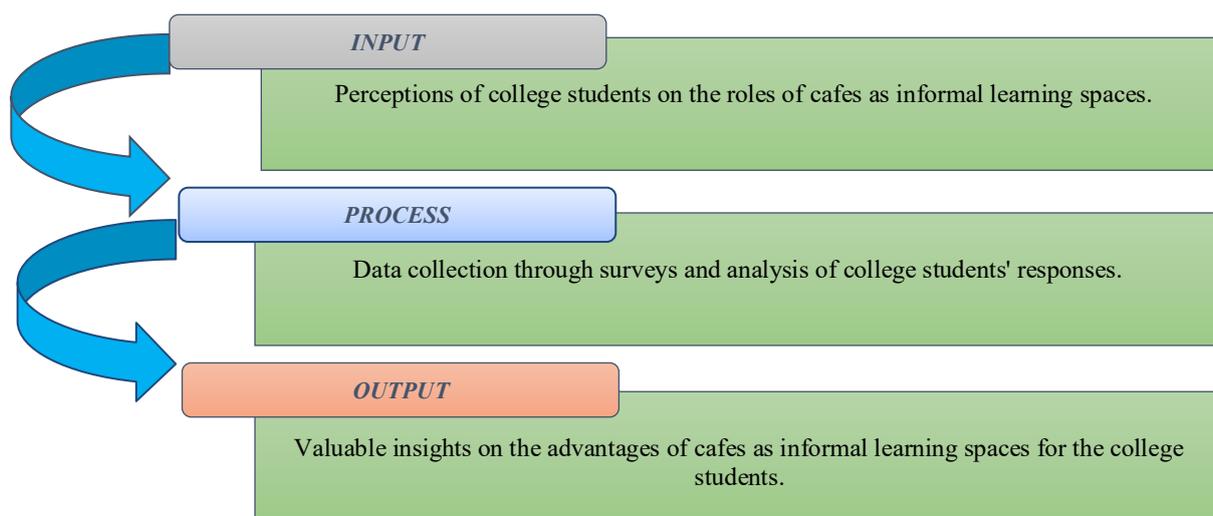


Figure 1. The Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

The input section of the model involved the evaluation of the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces. Additionally, the features of the cafes were considered, and how college students utilized this venue for academic purposes. These inputs served as the foundation for evaluating how these establishments contributed to college student learning experiences.

The process section involved data collection through surveys. This method gathered feedback from the college students who served as the primary respondents in this study. In addition, the college students' responses were evaluated through statistical analysis aligned with the study's objectives.

The output section was based on the college students' perceptions of the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces. The valuable insights found on both the advantages and challenges of utilizing cafes for academic purposes served as a basis, aiming to enhance understanding of how these spaces affected college students' learning experiences. The output provided valuable understandings into the effectiveness of cafes as environments conducive to learning.

Methods

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research method to explore the perceptions of college students on the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces. This methodology is

commonly employed in quantitative research to organize systematic descriptions of features, behaviors, or perceptions of specific populations (McCombes, 2023). The descriptive research focused on providing an accurate representation of the subject without manipulating the variables under consideration, making it suitable for understanding trends, preferences, and experiences (Siedlecki, 2020).

Through this methodological approach, quantifiable data was collected regarding how college students perceived the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces, examining various aspects including physical amenities, accessibility, comfort levels, and social atmosphere. The selected method aligned effectively with the study's objective to identify patterns and insights without establishing causal relationships. The descriptive-quantitative research method ensured that findings provided a straightforward and easily measurable understanding of how cafes functioned as informal learning spaces for college students.

Moreover, the investigation maintained a systematic approach to data collection and analysis, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon under study. This methodological framework proved particularly appropriate for capturing the nuanced ways in which college students utilized cafe spaces for educational purposes while maintaining the academic rigor necessary for scholarly research.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study employed a purposive convenience sampling technique involving 100 college students enrolled in higher education institutions in Baliwag City, Bulacan, Philippines, with most respondents coming from Baliuag University, where nearby cafés are commonly used as study spaces. Data were gathered in selected cafes frequently patronized by students for academic activities, namely J.Sy Cuisine, Tempresso Coffee, Casita Ajaa, and Joe Bean. Participants were included if they were 18 years old and above, enrolled from first to fourth year, and regularly used cafés for academic purposes such as reviewing lessons, completing assignments, or engaging in group discussions. These criteria ensured that respondents could provide informed consent and had direct, relevant experience with cafés as informal learning environments, thereby enhancing the validity and relevance of the findings.

Instrument of the Study

The study used an expert-validated survey questionnaire to collect data from the selected respondents. This ensured that the content was appropriate, reliable, clear, and relevant to the research objectives. Moreover, a pilot test was conducted with a small number of respondents to identify any issues that needed addressing and ensuring the validity of the questionnaire and reliability of data.

The survey questionnaire served as the primary instrument to explore the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces among college students. A 4-point Likert scale was employed to measure responses from the participants, with four (4) indicating the highest form of agreement and one (1) as the lowest. Each component was measured to determine the existing perceptions of the college students on the roles of cafes and how the utilization of these establishments contributed to their learning experiences. The standardized format allowed the subjects to quantitatively combine their ratings on the same scale, improving the reliability and comparability of the data collected.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a methodological procedure in the collection of data from the

respondents. The researchers asked permission from owners and managers of the selected cafes to conduct an investigation and distribute survey questionnaires to the targeted respondents. The participants were approached based on inclusion criteria. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the participants in either conventional format or via electronic form. Moreover, the researchers ensured their availability throughout the process of data collection to address any questions or concerns of the respondents. The data was collected during class breaks or at times when participants were available. After data collection, the completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completeness. The data was then encoded into statistical software for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study ensured that ethical considerations were upheld throughout the process of data collection procedure. The researchers clearly explained the purpose of the study to the respondents, ensuring that the college students were informed about the nature of the research and process of collection of data. Moreover, the researchers ensured participants' anonymity and confidentiality. The names of the participants were kept private, and information obtained from the college students was only used for the purpose of the study. The principle of self-determination was also guaranteed. The participants were informed about their right to participate and option not to be involved in the study and that they could withdraw even if the study was still being conducted.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

The study used appropriate statistical techniques aligned with the research objectives. The researchers utilized descriptive statistics to determine the perceptions of the college students on the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces, focusing on physical amenities, accessibility, comfortable environment, and social atmosphere. Moreover, this was used to determine how college students utilized cafes as informal learning spaces for self-directed learning, learning performance, and student well-being.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This presents the respondent's demographic profile when it comes to age, sex, year level, program, and cafe visit frequency. These factors helped analyze how different college students' groups utilized cafes as informal learning spaces and their study habits in such environments.

In terms of age, most of the respondents were aged 18-20 years old, making up 52% of the total sample. This was followed by the 21-23 age group at 34%, while a smaller percentage, 9%, fell within the 24-26 age range. The least represented group was 27 years old and above, comprising only 5% of the respondents. This distribution suggested that the majority of cafe users among college students were younger, like in their years of study. The decreasing percentage among older students might have indicated differences in study habits, preferences for other learning environments, or external responsibilities such as work.

In terms of sex, the respondents were nearly evenly distributed, with 49% identifying as male and 48% being female. While the small percentage of 3% preferred not to disclose their gender. This balanced distribution suggested that both male and female college students engaged in cafe-based learning at similar rates. The presence of respondents who chose not to specify their gender highlighted the importance of inclusivity in research, recognizing diverse identities within the student population.

In terms of year level, the majority of respondents were first-year college students, making up 49% of the total sample. This was followed by third-year students at 21%, second-year students at 18%, and fourth-year students at 12%. The high percentage of first-year students suggested that newer college students usually used cafes as informal learning spaces, possibly due to their need for study environments outside traditional classrooms. Meanwhile, the lower percentages in high level

might have indicated the upper-year students had already established alternative study habits or preferred other learning spaces.

In terms of program, the majority of respondents (17%) were enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), followed by those in the Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE) at 13%. Other notable groups included college students in Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) at 10% and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) at 8%. Smaller percentages came from various courses such as Bachelor of Arts in Communication (BAC), BS Nursing, and Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA), each with 5%. The remaining respondents represented a diverse range of programs, including Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (BAPS), Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology, and others, each making up smaller proportions. This distribution highlighted that BS program students, particularly those in Nursing, Civil Engineering, and Hospitality Management, were the primary users of cafes as informal learning spaces.

In terms of cafe visit frequency, most of the respondents visited cafes multiple times a week, with 33% going 2-3 times a week. This was followed by those who visited once a week (26%) and 2-3 times a month (26%), indicating that an important part of college students used cafes regularly. Meanwhile, 10% visited daily, suggesting a smaller group that heavily relied on cafes for studying or leisure. Only 5% rarely or never visited cafes, implying that the majority of respondents saw cafes as viable spaces for studying and other academic activities.

The Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces

This presents college students' perceptions of the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces based on physical amenities, accessibility, comfort, and social atmosphere. It examined the quality of amenities, ease of access, overall comfort, and the cafe's social environment in supporting academic activities.

Physical Amenities

Table 1. The Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Physical Amenities

Physical Amenities	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. The cafe provides adequate lighting for reading and studying.	2.91	Agree
2. The seating arrangements in the cafe are comfortable for prolonged use.	3.02	Agree
3. The cafe has sufficient electrical outlets for charging devices.	2.94	Agree
4. The noise level in the cafe is conducive to studying and learning.	2.51	Disagree
5. The cafe provides a clean and well-maintained environment for students.	2.93	Agree
Overall	2.86	Agree

Table 1 presents the perception of college students regarding the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of physical amenities. The statement "The seating arrangements in the cafe are comfortable for prolonged use" received the highest mean score of 3.02, qualitatively interpreted as "agree." This suggested that college students generally found cafe seating suitable for extended study sessions. While the second highest rating was for "The cafe has sufficient electrical outlets for charging devices," with a mean score of 2.94, also qualitatively interpreted as "agree," indicating that most of the college students found the availability of charging ports adequate. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated statement was "The noise level in the cafe is conducive to studying and learning," which had a mean score of 2.51, qualitatively interpreted as "disagree." This suggested that many college students found noise a challenge when using cafes as study spaces. Moreover, the overall mean score of 2.86 indicated that college students tended to agree that

cafes provided appropriate physical amenities for learning. Nevertheless, the issues about noise levels implied that even though cafes provided fundamental study facilities, they might not always provide the best setting for intensive learning.

The findings of the present study were supported by the studies by Adityawirawan and Kusuma (2021) and Nguyen et al. (2025), which indicated that students held a strong notion that cafes stood at the top as the ideal informal learning space facility-wise. This unveiled that college students selected their learning spaces as cafes because these provided them with the necessary physical amenities support primarily expected to boost their learning performance. In addition, evidence of a conducive environment was found to be offered by cafes for both individual and collaborative learning activities due to the presence of physical and social factors in such environments.

Accessibility

Table 2. The Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Accessibility

Accessibility	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. The cafe is conveniently located near my school or residence.	3.05	Agree
2. The cafe has reasonable operating hours that accommodate students' study needs.	3.10	Agree
3. The cafe is easily accessible via public transportation or walking.	3.20	Agree
4. The cafe provides adequate space for students to gather and study.	3.05	Agree
5. The cafe's pricing is affordable for students using it as a study space.	2.65	Disagree
Overall	3.01	Agree

Table 2 presents the perception of college students regarding the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of accessibility. The statement “The cafe is easily accessible via public transportation or walking” received the highest mean score of 3.20, qualitatively interpreted as “agree,” suggesting that most college students found cafes convenient to reach. This was followed by the statement “The cafe has reasonable operating hours that accommodate students’ study needs,” with a mean score of 3.10, indicating that college students appreciated the availability of cafes during their preferred study times. However, the lowest-rated statement, “The cafe’s pricing is affordable for students using it as a study space,” received a mean score of 2.65, qualitatively interpreted as “disagree.” This suggested that many college students found cafe prices relatively high, potentially limiting their ability to use cafes frequently for studying. Moreover, the overall mean score of 3.01 indicated that there was a general agreement among college students that cafes were found to be accessible based on

location, transportation, and space capacity. Yet, affordability remained an issue that might have affected the college students’ ability to use cafes as regular learning spaces.

The findings of the present study were supported by Dahal et al. (2025), who indicated that the students viewed cafes as being normally chosen for their convenient locations, excellent public transport links, and spacious open areas conducive to studying. The affordability factor working against the regular use of cafes for study could have been deterred if the college students had studied there with less frequency. This provided an account of Internet ‘cyber’ cafes where obstacles were raised regarding accessibility and availability, while it was noted that money would preclude students from more regular use of these venues for study. This indicated that although physical accessibility was found to be an important factor, the economic one essentially determined the viability of activity in cafes as a regular informal learning environment for students.

Comfortable Environment

Table 3. The Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Comfortable Environment

Comfortable Environment	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. The cafe has a relaxing ambiance that enhances my focus and learning.	3.18	Agree
2. The temperature and ventilation in the cafe are comfortable for studying.	3.27	Strongly Agree
3. The cafe staff are accommodating and create a welcoming environment.	3.21	Strongly Agree
4. The cafe allows students to stay for extended periods without pressure to leave.	3.28	Strongly Agree
5. The background music (if any) in the cafe is not disruptive to studying.	3.03	Agree
Overall	3.19	Agree

Table 3 presents the perception of college students regarding the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of comfortable environment. The statement “The cafe allows students to stay for extended periods without pressure to leave” received the highest mean score of 3.28, qualitatively interpreted as “strongly agree,” indicating that the college students appreciated the flexibility of staying in

cafes for long study sessions. This was followed closely by the statement “The cafe staff are accommodating and create a welcoming environment,” with a mean score of 3.27 qualitatively interpreted as “strongly agree,” suggesting that friendly service contributed to a positive study experience among college students. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated statement was “The background music (if any) in the cafe is

not disruptive to studying," with a mean score of 3.03, qualitatively interpreted as "agree." This indicated that while most college students did not find background music too distracting, opinions might have varied depending on personal preferences. Moreover, the overall mean score of 3.19 indicated agreement among college students that cafes provided a comfortable environment for study. The ability to stay for long periods, good ventilation, and accommodating staff contributed to this perception, making cafes a favorable choice for informal learning spaces.

Social Atmosphere

Table 4. The Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Roles of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Social Atmosphere

Social Atmosphere	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. The cafe encourages collaborative learning among students.	3.04	Agree
2. The cafe provides a conducive space for academic discussions and group studies.	3.09	Agree
3. The students feel comfortable interacting with peers and discussing academic topics in the cafe.	3.12	Agree
4. The cafe allows for a balance between socialization and individual study.	3.17	Agree
5. The cafe environment encourages motivation and productivity for learning.	3.16	Agree
Overall	3.11	Agree

Table 4 presents the perception of college students regarding the roles of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of social atmosphere. The statement "The cafe allows for a balance between socialization and individual study" received the highest mean score of 3.17, qualitatively interpreted as "agree," indicating that college students appreciated the flexibility of using cafes for both group discussions and personal study. This was followed by "The cafe environment encourages motivation and productivity for learning," with a mean score of 3.16, suggesting that the college students found cafes inspiring spaces for academic activities. Moreover, the overall mean score of 3.11 suggested that college students agreed that cafes provided a positive social atmosphere that encouraged both motivation and academic engagement.

The findings of the present study were supported by the study of Maspul (2024), who found that a cafe has a good, positive social environment and atmosphere that motivated

The findings of the study were supported by Ferreira et al. (2021), who proved that cafes were found to be great study environments. Informal and friendly environments made it easier for the college students to focus on a productive session. Availability of drinks and other light foods in a generally relaxed atmosphere contributed towards comfort (Omar & Ab Rashid, 2023). All these reasons combined have made cafes study-friendly for the college students wanting comfort along with effectiveness.

students toward learning. The informal setting of cafes could actually energize the mood of college students and get them activated for learning. As well as that, the social interactions and sense of a community within cafes could augment college students' well-being with the academic experience. Such factors put together bring about the attractiveness of cafes as spaces for college students who like to have a surrounding environment for academic work.

The Utilization of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces

This presents how college students utilized cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of self-directed learning, learning performance, and student well-being. It explored how college students managed their own learning in cafe settings, the impact of cafes on their academic performance, and how these spaces contributed to their overall well-being, including stress reduction and motivation.

Self-Directed Learning**Table 5. The Utilization of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Self-Directed Learning**

Self-Directed Learning	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. The students use the cafe to independently review academic materials.	3.01	Agree
2. Studying in a cafe helps the students manage their learning schedule effectively.	3.06	Agree
3. The cafe provides an environment conducive to self-paced learning.	3.11	Agree
4. The students visit the cafe to work on academic projects without external pressure.	3.07	Agree
5. Being in a cafe helps the students stay focused and engaged in learning activities	3.07	Agree
Overall	3.07	Agree

Table 5 presents the utilization of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of self-directed learning. The statement "The cafe provides an environment conducive to self-paced learning" received the highest mean score of 3.11, qualitatively interpreted as "agree," indicating that college students found the cafe suitable for independent study at their own pace. This was followed by the statements "The students visit the cafe to work on academic projects without external pressure" and "Being in a cafe helps the students stay focused and engaged in learning activities," both with a mean score of 3.07, suggesting that cafes offered a space where the college students could work comfortably and stay productive. On the other hand, the lowest-rated statement, "The students use the cafe to independently review academic materials," received a mean score of 3.01, still qualitatively interpreted as "agree." This implied that while the college students did utilize cafes for reviewing lessons, they might prioritize them more for other academic tasks

like project work or general studying. Furthermore, the overall mean of 3.07 suggested that the college students agreed that cafes supported self-directed learning in providing a flexible and comfortable environment for independent studying and academic tasks.

The results of the current investigation were supported by the study of Hsu et al. (2022), which indicated that informal learning spaces are areas that are not tied to a discipline but are frequently used by both staff and students for self-directed learning activities, which could take place within or outside library spaces. Such informal learning spaces could be cafes, often known for their relaxed and inviting ambience, conducive to an environment for self-paced study and contemplation. Additionally, Wu et al. (2021) found that cafes were found to be one of the most highly valued informal learning spaces on campus because they allowed students to independently engage in academic pursuits.

Learning Performance**Table 6. The Utilization of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Learning Performance**

Learning Performance	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. Studying in a cafe improves the students' concentration on academic tasks.	3.00	Agree
2. The students are more productive when working in a cafe environment.	3.04	Agree
3. The students feel more motivated to complete academic work in a cafe.	3.12	Agree
4. The cafe setting enhances the students' ability to retain information.	3.06	Agree
5. The students achieve better academic results when they study in a cafe.	3.07	Agree
Overall	3.06	Agree

Table 6 presents the utilization of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of learning performance. The statement "The students feel more motivated to complete academic work in the cafe" received the highest mean score of 3.12, qualitatively interpreted as "agree," suggesting that college students found cafes to be motivating environments for studying. This was followed by the statement "The students achieve better academic results when they study in a café" with a mean score of 3.07, indicating that the college students believed cafe study sessions contributed positively to their academic performance. On the other hand, the lowest-rated statement, "Studying in a cafe improves the students' concentration on academic tasks," received a mean score of 3.00, still qualitatively interpreted as "agree." This implied that while the college students generally found cafes beneficial for studying, maintaining full concentration in these environments might have still been a challenge for some. Furthermore, the overall mean score of

3.06 suggested that the college students agreed that cafes have a positive impact on their learning performance by enhancing motivation, productivity, and academic outcomes.

The results of the current investigation were supported by a study by Kurnianto et al. (2025), which indicated that the learning performance effect of the cafe has a positive impact on motivation, productivity, and even academic achievements in students. The noise and social environment of cafes induced by the ambient noise were found to improve an individual's creativity and concentration, hence better learning outcomes. Additionally, as indicated by Ricupero and Ritter (2024), caffeine was found to be a very suitable stimulant in cafe study settings to improve alertness and cognition for enhanced academic performance. Thus, the comfortable setting with obvious access to stimulants like coffee made it a preferred choice by the college students to improve their academic involvement.

Student Well-Being

Table 7. The Utilization of Cafes as Informal Learning Spaces in Terms of Student Well-Being

Student Well-Being	Respondents	
	Mean	QI
1. Studying in a cafe helps the students to reduce academic stress.	3.22	Strongly Agree
2. The ambiance of a cafe positively affects students' mood and motivation.	3.33	Strongly agree
3. The students feel more comfortable studying in a cafe compared to other places.	3.15	Agree
4. The social interactions in the cafe contribute to students' overall well-being.	3.04	Agree
5. The students feel less isolated when studying in a cafe environment.	3.16	Agree
Overall	3.18	Agree

Table 7 presents the utilization of cafes as informal learning spaces in terms of student well-being. The statement "The ambiance of a cafe positively affects the students' mood and motivation" received the highest mean score of 3.33, qualitatively interpreted as "strongly agree." This indicated that the college students found cafe environments uplifting and beneficial for their motivation. This was followed by "Studying in a cafe helps the students to reduce academic stress," with a mean score of 3.22, suggesting that the college students viewed

cafes as stress-relieving study spaces. On the other hand, the lowest-rated statement, "The social interactions in cafes contribute to students' overall well-being," received a mean score of 3.04, qualitatively interpreted as "agree." This implied that while the college students acknowledged the social benefits of cafes, they might not have seen them as the primary factor influencing their well-being. Furthermore, the overall mean score of 3.18 suggested that the college students agreed that cafes contributed positively to their well-being in

providing a motivating atmosphere and reducing academic stress.

These findings aligned with the study of Vlado (2024), which indicated that a safe and informal environment is good for dealing with students' well-being. Cafes offer a much-needed break from the otherwise rigorous life that is being attended to by the college students these days so they can continue to focus and work productively. The availability of fresh food, snacks, and beverages means one can maintain high energy levels during prolonged studies, all of which contribute to the good life. Coffee is suggested to make one happier and less anxious and could further help out students going through academic stress. All of these built a case for cafes as supportive environments in further enhancing motivation among students and relieving academic stress.

Conclusions

The study concluded that cafes were found to be popular informal learning spaces, particularly among younger and first-year students, with the majority of respondents coming from Bachelor of Science programs like Nursing, Civil Engineering, and Hospitality Management. Gender did not significantly affect cafe usage, and most college students visited cafes regularly, highlighting their importance as flexible study environments. Older and upper-year college students used cafes less, possibly due to established study routines. Overall, cafes were seen as valuable learning spaces, especially for college students seeking an informal and social atmosphere.

Moreover, the study concluded that the college students generally perceived cafes as suitable for studying, offering comfortable amenities and accessibility. However, noise levels and affordability remained concerns, so while cafes were found to be viable learning spaces, they might not be an ideal study place for all college students.

Additionally, the study concluded that cafes supported self-directed learning, improved motivation, and contributed to academic performance among college students. They positively affected student well-being by reducing

stress and encouraging a motivating atmosphere, making them great informal learning spaces.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, cafes are recommended to further enhance their role as informal learning spaces by addressing key concerns identified by the respondents. Cafe owners and managers may consider providing designated low-noise or quiet study areas, improving seating comfort, ensuring adequate electrical outlets, and maintaining a conducive study atmosphere. In addition, offering student-friendly pricing options or study-oriented packages may help mitigate affordability issues that limit frequent academic use.

Higher education institutions are encouraged to acknowledge cafés as complementary informal learning environments by exploring partnerships with student-friendly cafes near campus. Institutions may also integrate cafe-inspired features such as flexible seating, relaxed ambiance, and extended study hours into on-campus informal learning spaces to better support student learning, motivation, and well-being.

College students are advised to maximize the academic benefits of cafes by selecting appropriate study times, such as off-peak hours, and choosing environments that minimize distractions while supporting sustained focus and productivity.

Future researchers may expand this study by examining discipline-specific differences in cafe-based learning, comparing cafés with other informal learning spaces, or employing longitudinal and mixed-method designs to further explore the long-term academic and well-being effects of studying in informal learning environments.

References

- Adityawirawan, S. S. K., & Kusuma, H. E. (2021). Café as student's informal learning space: A case study in Bandung, Indonesia. *DI-MENSI: Journal of Architecture and Built Environment*, 48(2), 109-120. <https://doi.org/10.9744/di-mensi.48.2.109-120>

- Ahmad, S., Ansari, A. N., Khawaja, S., & Bhutta, S. M. (2023). Research café: An informal learning space to promote research learning experiences of graduate students in a private university of Pakistan. *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education, 14*(3), 381-398. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-01-2023-0011>
- Dahal, A., Bharati, D., Subedi, K., Roka, R., Lamichhane, S., Bhandari, U., & Parajuli, S. K. (2025). Students' preference between off-campus cafes vs campus space for group studies. *International Journal of Education Management and Technology, 3*(2), 655-671. <https://doi.org/10.58578/ijemt.v3i2.7015>
- Ferreira, J., Ferreira, C., & Bos, E. (2021). Spaces of consumption, connection, and community: Exploring the role of the coffee shop in urban lives. *Geoforum, 119*(1), 21-29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.12.024>
- Guo, W., Wang, L., & Caneparo, L. (2024). Research on the factors that influence and improve the quality of informal learning spaces (ILS) in university campus. *Buildings, 14*(11), 3458. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings14113458>
- Hsu, C. H., Chin, D. C., & Yau, O. K. (2022). Usage of informal learning spaces among students from academic units with versus without dedicated buildings on campus. *Journal of Learning Spaces, 11*(1), 1-12. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1359061.pdf>
- Jian, S., & Liu, H. (2025). Psychological comfort, creativity, and learning efficiency in informal learning spaces: A university student dataset. *Data in Brief, 59*, 111450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2025.111450>
- Jian, S., & Liu, H. (2025). Psychological comfort, creativity, and learning efficiency in informal learning spaces: A university student dataset. *Data in Brief, 59*, 111450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2025.111450>
- Kurnianto, G. W., & Ardillah, R. T. R. (2025). Study time at the coffee shop: Exploring student motives through a phenomenological study. *Indonesian Psychological Research, 7*(1), 43-54. <https://doi.org/0.29080/ipr.v7i1.1376>
- Kurnianto, G. W., Aggacitto, & Ardillah, R. T. (2025). Study time at the coffee shop: exploring student motives through a phenomenological study. *Indonesian Psychological Research, 7*(1), 43-54. <https://doi.org/10.29080/ipr.v7i1.1376>
- Lukito, Y. N., & Xenia, A. P. (2017, December). Café as third place and the creation of a unique space of interaction in UI campus. In *IOP conference series: Earth and environmental science* (Vol. 99, No. 1, p. 012028). IOP Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/99/1/012028>
- Makhathini, S. M., & Kanosvamaha, T. P. (2025). Cafés of connection: Exploring the social role of third places in global south universities. *South African Geographical Journal, 1-20*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2025.2481859>
- Maspul, K. A. (2024). Exploring the relationship between coffee shop visitors' coping strategies and well-being. *Jurnal Psikologi, 1*(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.47134/pjp.v1i2.2028>
- McCombes, S. (2023, June 22). *Descriptive research | Definition, types, methods & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/>
- Nguyen, A., Nguyen, B., Le, H., & Pham, K. (2025). Physical and social factors influencing university students' preferences for informal learning spaces. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools Current Perspectives, 15*(1), 12-42. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjgc.v15i1.9644>
- Oldenburg, R. (1989). *The great good place: Cafes, coffee shops, bars, and the hand-crafted public spaces that hold our communities together*. Paragon House.
- Omar, A., & Ab Rashid, P. D. (2023). The influence of ambience and social interaction on

- young adults' intention to patronize coffee shops. *ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7, 53-65. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/86236>
- Phan, A. N. Q., & Le, C. (2025). From coffee shops to online platforms: Students' construction of and experiences in multiple higher education learning spaces. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 44(1), 222-236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2429466>
- Purwadi, Y. S., & Manurung, E. M. (2020). Cafes: New learning and knowledge production space for millennial students. *Journal of Economics and Business*, 3(1), 247-253. SSRN: <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1992.03.01.194>
- Ricupero, S., & Ritter, F. E. (2024). Caffeine and cognition: A cognitive architecture-based review. *Theoretical Issues in Ergonomics Science*, 25(6), 655-679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1463922X.2024.2323547>
- Sandikci, O., Saatcioglu, B., & Fischer, E. (2025). Creating and maintaining digital third places: Orchestrating interaction ritual chains at a distance. *Journal of Retailing*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2025.08.001>
- Siedlecki, S. L. (2020). Understanding descriptive research designs and methods. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 34(1), 8-12. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NUR.0000000000000493>
- Thompson, D. (2020). The role of social spaces in contemporary college learning environments. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 89, 115-128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.54321>
- Viado, M. P. (2024). Coffee consumption and its perceived effects on the study habits of higher education students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(8), 3062-3070. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.05.08.11>
- Villagonzalo, B., Mazzeo, H., Fuentes, S., Mananquil, A. M., Monroy, A. M., Namoco, K. F., & Pa-alan, E. S. (2025). Factors affecting local coffee shop preferences of students. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(5), 536-543. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.183>
- Wu, X., Kou, Z., Oldfield, P., Heath, T., & Borsi, K. (2021). Informal learning spaces in higher education: Student preferences and activities. *Buildings*, 11(6), 252. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings11060252>