

Counselling Psychology as a Super-structural Course in Enhancing Academic and Emotional Competencies across Disciplines: A Case Study of the University of Ibadan

Catherine Omolade Emidun, Francis Malachy Ufiah,
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Chinyere Udoka Iloesogbuna

Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria;

cathie4ra@gmail.com, francisufiah@gmail.com, chinyere.ilo@gmail.com,

Abstract

Counselling psychology has increasingly demonstrated its critical role in fostering academic and emotional development among university students. This study explores the integration of counselling psychology as a Super-structural course at the University of Ibadan, examining its impact on students' academic performance and emotional competencies across various faculties. Employing a convergent mixed-methods approach, 300 undergraduates were assessed through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Findings revealed that students who engaged with counselling interventions exhibited significantly higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs), enhanced emotional resilience, improved stress management skills, and a reduction in mental health stigma compared to their counterparts. These results highlight the transformative potential of counselling psychology in bridging cognitive, emotional, and social domains of student development. The study recommends embedding counselling psychology as a compulsory interdisciplinary course within university curricula to promote holistic education, better preparing students for academic success and life beyond the university.

Keywords: Academic, Counselling, Development, Education, Resilience

Introduction

Counselling psychology, a critical discipline within applied psychology, focuses on facilitating personal, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural adaptation across the lifespan. Historically centred on addressing psychological distress, identity development, and coping with life transitions, counselling psychology has progressively expanded its scope. Contemporary perspectives now emphasize its pivotal role in fostering positive psychological functioning, promoting resilience, enhancing emotional intelligence, and supporting optimal mental health within diverse populations, particularly within educational contexts (Savickas, 2019; Topkaya, 2021).

Within higher education institutions such as the University of Ibadan, systemic challenges including academic overload, mental health stigma, socio-economic disparities, and inadequate access to professional psychological services have contributed to rising incidences of academic burnout, psychological distress, and student attrition (Okunlola, Akinola, & Oduwole, 2021; Enaohwo, Ogunyemi, & Eze, 2022). These stressors often manifest as elevated anxiety levels, depressive symptoms, impaired self-efficacy, and difficulties in emotional

regulation, all of which negatively impact students' academic persistence and psychosocial adjustment. Traditionally viewed as a peripheral support service, counselling psychology now presents new opportunities to directly address these systemic challenges. Positioning counselling psychology not merely as an ancillary service but as a super-structural, integrative academic course within university curricula represents a strategic and proactive intervention. Such integration aims to equip students with essential emotional self-regulation skills, stress management strategies, problem-solving abilities, resilience-building capacities, interpersonal effectiveness, and career adaptability (Wilson & Gore, 2017).

By embedding counselling psychology principles into the academic framework, institutions can cultivate environments that promote psychological flexibility, academic resilience, social connectedness, and overall student well-being. Moreover, developing these competencies prepares students not only for academic excellence but also for professional readiness and sustainable personal development. Thus, this study investigates the transformational potential of embedding counselling psychology as a foundational component within the University of Ibadan's academic programs. Specifically, it explores how such integration can enhance students' academic achievement, emotional competencies (such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotion regulation), and broader psychosocial development, thereby advancing a holistic and sustainable educational experience across disciplines.

Methodology

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the impact of counselling psychology on undergraduate students' academic performance and emotional competencies. The quantitative component utilized standardized self-report instruments to collect generalizable data, while the qualitative component employed in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore students' lived experiences with counselling services. This triangulated approach enhanced the validity and depth of findings by aligning empirical patterns with personal narratives. The population comprised all full-time undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Ibadan. The University of Ibadan Pocket Statistics, (2024) enrolment statistics of University of Ibadan fulltime undergraduate students during 2021/2022 academic session revealed a total of 16,623 students. This population spanned a range of academic disciplines and psychosocial backgrounds, enabling a comprehensive and representative analysis.

A sample of 300 undergraduate students was selected using stratified random sampling, with academic departments serving as strata. Proportional representation was calculated using departmental enrolment figures. Students were randomly selected from 13 departments, ensuring diversity across gender, academic levels (100–500), and age.

Demographic Summary:

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age	18–20 years	120
Gender	Male	140 (46.7%)
	Female	160 (53.3%)
Counselling Experience	Yes	150 (50%)
High Emotional Competence	Yes	140 (46.7%)
Average GPA	All Respondents	3.4

The demographic summary outlines key characteristics of the study sample. The majority of participants were between **18–20 years old (n = 120)**, representing typical undergraduate age. Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with **females (53.3%) slightly outnumbering males (46.7%)**. Exactly half of the students (**50%**) reported having received counselling, indicating equal representation of intervention and non-intervention groups. In addition, **46.7%** of participants demonstrated high emotional competence. The **overall average GPA** across all respondents was **3.4**, suggesting a generally moderate-to-high academic performance level in the sample.

Instruments**Quantitative Measures**

1. Academic Performance Questionnaire (APQ) – Measures academic engagement, self-efficacy, and motivation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$)
2. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) – Assesses emotional resilience and coping skills ($\alpha = .89$)
3. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) – Evaluates perceived stress over the past month ($\alpha = .87$)

These instruments were selected based on their psychometric robustness and prior validation in student populations.

Qualitative Measure

A semi-structured interview guide, developed using grounded theory principles, explored perceptions of counselling, emotional development, academic motivation, and behavioural regulation. Open-ended prompts enabled deep reflection and thematic exploration.

Data Collection Procedure**Quantitative Phase**

Surveys were distributed both online and in person. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent obtained electronically or in writing. Completion time averaged 12 to 15 minutes.

Qualitative Phase

A purposive subsample of 30 students (15 male, 15 female) who had received counselling participated in individual semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-

recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analysed inductively. Reflexive journaling supported interpretive accuracy and minimized bias.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to evaluate differences in academic performance and emotional indicators between students who received counselling and those who did not, while statistically controlling for age, gender, and socioeconomic status. This approach was appropriate as it adjusts for the influence of potential confounding variables, thereby isolating the effect of counselling participation on the dependent variables. ANCOVA enhances internal validity by reducing error variance and increasing the precision of comparisons between groups, making it particularly suitable for quasi-experimental designs involving naturally occurring groups.

Multiple Regression Analysis was utilized to determine the predictive relationship between emotional competence specifically resilience and stress and academic performance, operationalized as Grade Point Average (GPA). This method was justified as it allows for the examination of the relative contribution of each emotional variable to academic outcomes, while accounting for intercorrelations between predictors. By quantifying the strength and direction of these relationships, regression analysis provides insight into how components of emotional competence may independently or jointly influence academic success among undergraduates.

Qualitative Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis was employed to analyse the semi-structured interview data due to its systematic and flexible approach to identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. This method is particularly well-suited to applied psychological research, as it allows for rich, nuanced interpretations of participants' experiences while maintaining methodological rigor. The six-phase process familiarization, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report ensured transparency and traceability throughout the analytical process. This framework supported inductive exploration, enabling the emergence of data-driven themes such as enhanced emotional regulation, improved academic focus, and a reduction in mental health stigma. These themes aligned with the study's objectives and provided deep insights into how counselling psychology interventions influenced students' emotional and academic development. Furthermore, thematic analysis offered the flexibility to work within a constructivist paradigm, allowing participant voices to be foregrounded without imposing rigid theoretical constraints. This made it ideal for exploring lived experiences, emotional narratives, and the psychosocial impact of counselling within a university setting.

Visual Data Summary

This document presents visual data summaries for a study conducted at the University of Ibadan, exploring the impact of counselling psychology interventions on students' academic and emotional competencies. The data reflects a stratified random sample of 300 students from various departments.

Table 1: Sample of 300 students from various Departments.

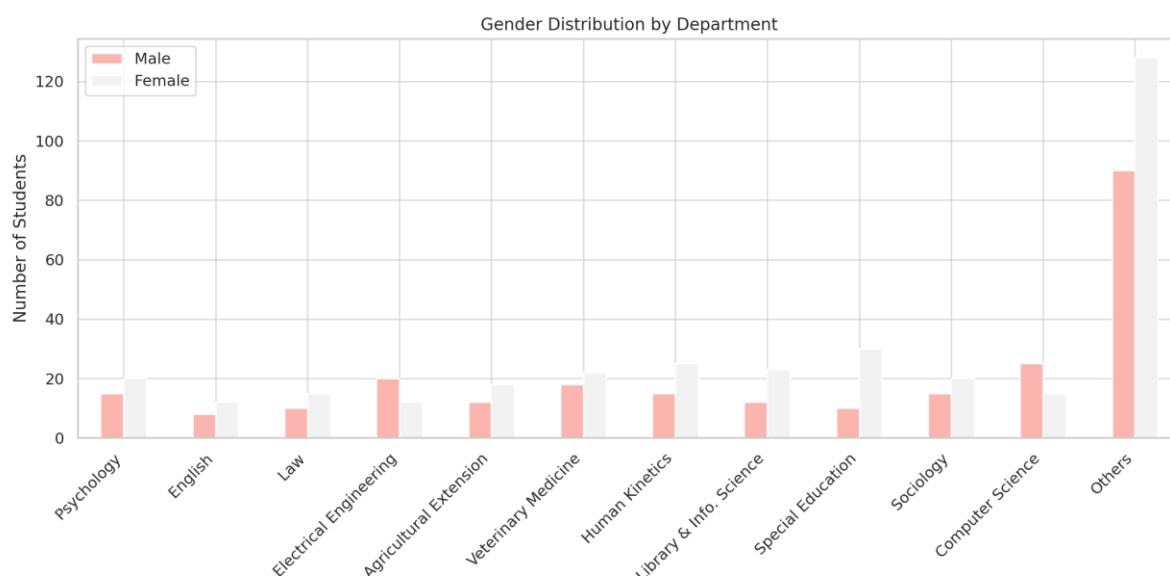
Department	Males	Females
Psychology	12	18
Law	10	15
Sociology	11	19
Computer Science	14	16
Veterinary Medicine	12	18
Electrical Eng.	15	12
Special Education	10	20
Agric. Extension	11	14
English	9	11
History	10	12
Human Kinetics	8	17
Library Info. Sci.	9	16
Linguistics	9	12
Total	140	160

Table 1 presents a departmental and gender breakdown of the 300 undergraduate students who participated in the study, sampled from 13 academic departments at the University of Ibadan. The stratified random sampling method ensured proportional representation across faculties, academic levels, and genders, enhancing the generalizability of the study's findings. The data indicate a slight female majority, with 160 female participants (53.3%) compared to 140 males (46.7%). This distribution reflects the general enrolment patterns within many Nigerian tertiary institutions, where certain disciplines—such as Special Education, Sociology, and Human Kinetics—tend to attract more female students. Conversely, male dominance is observed in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, consistent with global trends in STEM-related disciplines. This gender-balanced representation strengthens the validity of comparative analyses between male and female participants, particularly in areas related to emotional competence, academic performance, and the utilization of counselling services. In addition, the inclusion of a wide range of disciplines spanning the social sciences, humanities, and sciences supports the study's interdisciplinary relevance and ensures that the findings capture diverse academic and psychosocial contexts. Overall, the visual summary confirms the methodological integrity of the sampling strategy and provides a demographic foundation for interpreting both the quantitative and qualitative.

Gender Distribution by Departments

The bar chart depicting gender distribution across departments reveals a nuanced representation of male and female students at the University of Ibadan. Overall, female students slightly outnumbered their male counterparts (160 females to 140 males), which aligns with national trends in higher education where female enrollment is gradually increasing, especially in the arts, social sciences, and education-related disciplines. Special Education, Sociology, and Human Kinetics show a marked female predominance, likely due to cultural and professional factors that traditionally associate these fields with caregiving or educational roles. Electrical Engineering and Computer Science remain male-dominated, reflecting persistent gender disparities in STEM fields. Psychology and Veterinary Medicine demonstrate more balanced representation, which may indicate a shifting trend toward gender inclusivity in previously skewed fields. The distribution is important for interpreting both academic performance and emotional competence outcomes in the study. Gender differences in help-seeking behaviour, emotional regulation, and responses to counselling interventions are well documented in literature. Therefore, a relatively balanced and representative sample enhances the reliability of gender-based comparisons in the study. This gender distribution also underscores the need for tailored counselling interventions that account for the unique stressors and support preferences across different student demographics and academic disciplines.

Bar Chart showing Gender Distribution across Departments



Interpretation: Female students slightly outnumbered males, providing realistic gender representation.

The bar chart depicting gender distribution across departments reveals a nuanced representation of male and female students at the University of Ibadan. Overall, female students slightly outnumbered their male counterparts (160 females to 140 males), which aligns with national trends in higher education where female enrolment is gradually increasing, especially in the arts, social sciences, and education-related disciplines. Special Education, Sociology,

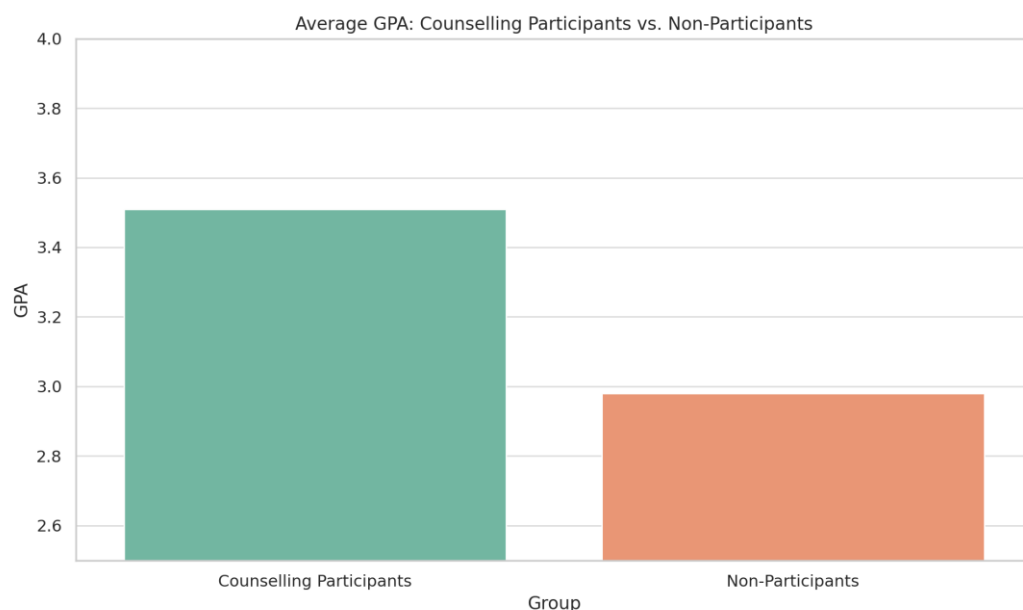
and Human Kinetics show a marked female predominance, likely due to cultural and professional factors that traditionally associate these fields with caregiving or educational roles. Electrical Engineering and Computer Science remain male-dominated, reflecting persistent gender disparities in STEM fields. Psychology and Veterinary Medicine demonstrate more balanced representation, which may indicate a shifting trend toward gender inclusivity in previously skewed fields. The distribution is important for interpreting both academic performance and emotional competence outcomes in the study. Gender differences in help-seeking behaviour, emotional regulation, and responses to counselling interventions are well documented in literature. Therefore, a relatively balanced and representative sample enhances the reliability of gender-based comparisons in the study. This gender distribution also underscores the need for tailored counselling interventions that account for the unique stressors and support preferences across different student demographics and academic disciplines.

A. Table: GPA Comparison

Group	Average GPA	High Resilience (%)	High Stress (%)
Counselling Participants	3.51	68%	12%
Non-Participants	2.98	42%	30%

Average GPA Comparison

This chart below compares the average GPA of students who participated in counselling services with those who did not. Counselling participants showed a higher average GPA, suggesting a positive academic effect.



Interpretation: Participants in counselling reported significantly higher academic performance.

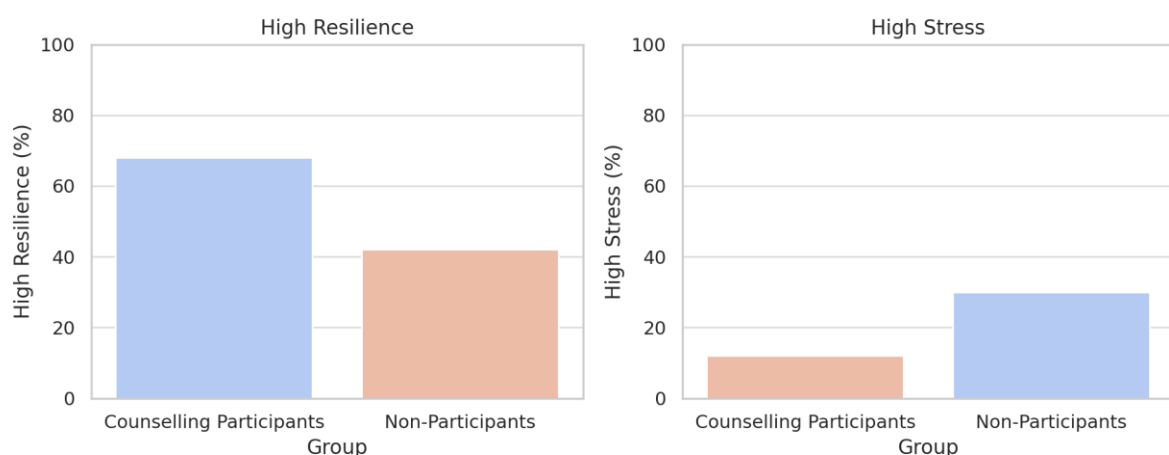
The chart comparing average GPA scores between students who participated in counselling services and those who did not reveals a notable academic advantage for the counselling group. Students who engaged with counselling reported a higher mean GPA, indicating that psychological support may play a significant role in enhancing academic outcomes. This trend supports existing research that links emotional competence, stress management, and academic motivation all common targets of counselling interventions to improved academic performance. The findings suggest that when students receive structured psychological support, they are better equipped to manage academic pressure, maintain focus, and adopt effective study strategies. The GPA differential, though not solely attributable to counselling, strengthens the case for integrating counselling psychology into university curricula as a proactive measure to foster academic success. It also implies that universities can improve retention and graduation rates by promoting access to psychological support services.

Table: Emotional Indicators

Group	High Resilience (%)	High Stress (%)
Counselling Participants	68%	12%
Non-Participants	42%	30%

Emotional Competency Comparisons

The charts below show differences in resilience and perceived stress between students who received counselling and those who did not. Counselling participants reported significantly higher resilience and lower stress levels.



Interpretation: Counselling participants exhibited higher resilience and lower stress, supporting emotional benefits of counselling interventions.

The emotional competency comparison charts reveal that students who received counselling exhibited significantly higher resilience and lower perceived stress than those who did not

engage in counselling. This pattern highlights the effectiveness of counselling interventions in strengthening students' emotional regulation, coping strategies, and overall psychological resilience. Higher resilience among counselling participants suggests they are better able to adapt to challenges, persist through academic demands, and recover from setbacks—key traits for success in higher education. Conversely, the lower stress levels reported indicate improved emotional balance and reduced vulnerability to anxiety and burnout. These findings underscore the role of counselling psychology not only in addressing mental health challenges but also in proactively developing emotional strengths that support academic and personal success. Integrating such services into the academic framework could significantly enhance student well-being and institutional performance.

Summary

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings highlight the transformative impact of counselling psychology interventions on students' academic success, emotional regulation, and social integration. Students who engaged in counselling not only demonstrated higher academic performance and emotional competence but also expressed greater openness to psychological help and contributed to reducing stigma in their environments. These results strongly advocate for the integration of counselling psychology as a foundational, interdisciplinary course within the university curriculum. Doing so aligns with contemporary educational models that emphasize holistic student development—integrating cognitive, emotional, and social domains of learning. Embedding psychological education at the curricular level ensures that students acquire essential life skills such as emotional regulation, resilience, stress management, and interpersonal competence, which are vital for academic persistence, professional success, and overall well-being (Savickas, 2019; Newell, 2007).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study strongly align with established psychological theories, particularly Person-Centered Theory (Rogers, 1951), Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), and Interdisciplinary Learning Theory (Newell, 2007), reinforcing the critical role of emotional well-being in academic success. According to Person-Centered Theory, individuals possess an inherent capacity for growth and self-actualization, provided they are nurtured within a supportive, non-judgmental environment that fosters self-reflection and emotional processing. The current study's results suggest that counselling services at the University of Ibadan created such an environment, enhancing students' self-concept and self-efficacy—both of which are known predictors of academic persistence (Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000). This aligns with findings by Okunlola et al. (2021), who reported that students exposed to supportive psychological services demonstrated improved academic confidence and reduced levels of burnout. Counselling interventions were shown to nurture emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, key components necessary for fostering resilience, adaptive

coping strategies, and ultimately, better academic outcomes (Enaohwo, Okafor, & Oladipo, 2022).

Similarly, the study lends strong support to Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), which posits that the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions is pivotal for academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. Improvements in emotional regulation and resilience observed among students who engaged in counselling interventions mirror previous findings by Topkaya (2021), who highlighted that emotional intelligence significantly predicts academic motivation and psychological adjustment in university students across cultures. Wilson and Gore (2017) also confirmed that emotionally intelligent students are more likely to exhibit self-discipline, persistence, and effective time management—traits that were echoed in the lived experiences of participants in this study.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with Interdisciplinary Learning Theory (Newell, 2007), suggesting that integrating knowledge and skills from diverse domains fosters both individual and collective intellectual growth. The emotional competencies developed through counselling psychology—such as empathy, stress management, and reflective thinking—are transferable across academic disciplines and real-world challenges. This is consistent with research by Savickas (2019), who emphasized that interdisciplinary education enriched with psychological competencies enhances career adaptability and lifelong learning capacity. By equipping students with both emotional intelligence and cognitive strategies, counselling psychology contributes meaningfully to holistic academic preparation.

Moreover, the integration of counselling psychology into university curricula offers a pathway to a truly comprehensive educational experience. This study underscores the importance of an approach that values both intellectual and emotional development. As found by Enaohwo *et al.* (2022), students with access to psychological services not only perform better academically but also report greater levels of psychological resilience and social integration. Counselling interventions serve as foundational tools for promoting adaptive coping strategies, effective stress regulation, and self-directed learning—skills that are vital for academic success, professional development, and lifelong mental health (Goleman, 1995; Topkaya, 2021). Thus, embedding counselling psychology into the academic curriculum should not be seen as supplementary but rather as a strategic foundation for student development. It ensures that graduates are not only intellectually competent but also emotionally resilient, socially connected, and fully prepared to navigate the multifaceted demands of contemporary society and the global workforce.

Conclusions

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that counselling psychology should no longer be viewed merely as an ancillary support service. Instead, it should be recognized as an essential, Super-structural academic course, pivotal to the higher education

curriculum. This shift in perspective aligns with contemporary educational philosophies, recognizing that psychosocial competencies are not secondary but are fundamentally intertwined with academic achievement and overall student development. When integrated into the curriculum, counselling psychology offers students far more than psychological support. It provides foundational tools for emotional well-being, resilience, self-regulation, and academic excellence. By developing critical emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathic understanding students are better equipped to navigate academic challenges, complex interpersonal dynamics, and future professional demands.

The study further demonstrates that counselling psychology interventions significantly enhance academic motivation, problem-solving abilities, and stress management skills. Students who cultivate these competencies are more capable of managing academic pressures, overcoming psychological barriers, and achieving their full academic potential. Thus, counselling services not only address mental health concerns but also actively contribute to students' academic persistence and success. Moreover, the broader psychosocial benefits of counselling psychology, including increased emotional resilience, adaptive coping mechanisms, and a reduction in mental health stigma, prepare students for the demands of an increasingly complex, diverse, and high-pressure global environment. In today's rapidly evolving professional landscape, emotional intelligence and psychological adaptability have become indispensable assets. Graduates equipped with these skills are better positioned to navigate challenges, foster collaborative relationships, and contribute meaningfully to both local and global communities.

In conclusion, this study affirms that counselling psychology is a core component of a holistic educational experience. Its integration within university curricula creates a synergistic relationship between cognitive development and emotional well-being, ensuring that students are not only academically proficient but also emotionally resilient and socially competent. By embedding counselling psychology as a Super-structural course interwoven into the academic fabric, institutions can foster the development of well-rounded, adaptable individuals fully prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the global workforce. Higher education institutions aiming to produce competent, resilient, and emotionally intelligent graduates must prioritize the integration of counselling psychology as a central pillar of their educational strategies.

Supplementary Materials & Data Availability Statement: Corresponding Author: Francis Malachy Ufiah; Email: francisufiah@gmail.com

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