

The Role of Counselors in Improving the Psychological Well-Being of College Students

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Abstract

Students' psychological well-being is an important aspect in supporting academic success and personal development. Counselors in universities play a strategic role in helping students overcome psychological challenges, such as stress, anxiety, and burnout, while building resilience, motivation to learn, and healthy social relationships. This study aims to examine the role of counselors in improving the psychological well-being of students and examine the implications of digital counseling services in the modern era. This article uses a narrative approach based on a literature review, highlighting different forms of counseling services, including individual counseling, group counseling, psychoeducation, career counseling, and crisis support. The results of the study showed that each counselor service had a significant positive impact, including improving emotion regulation, reducing stress, increasing academic motivation, and creating a more supportive social environment. In addition, digital service innovations, such as e-counseling and technology-based applications, have been proven to be able to expand access and increase the effectiveness of psychological support for students. The discussion emphasized that optimizing the role of counselors requires campus policy support, continuous training, and technology integration by paying attention to data security and privacy aspects. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening digital-based counseling services to answer new challenges in supporting students' mental health in a sustainable manner.

Keywords : Counsellor, Psychological Well-Being, Students, Counselling Services, Digital Counselling

Introduction

The psychological well-being of students is becoming an increasingly important issue in the context of modern higher education. Students are faced with a variety of complex pressures, ranging from academic demands, social issues, to economic burdens that often disrupt their mental balance. Various studies show that the level of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout is increasing among students, so that it has a direct impact on the learning process, social relationships, and academic achievement (Cerolini et al., 2023;Pizzo et al., 2024;Kivlighan et al., 2020). This situation demands serious attention from universities in building a supporting ecosystem that not only focuses on the academic aspect, but also on the dimension of student psychological well-being as a whole.

In facing these challenges, the existence of campus counselors plays a very vital role. Counselors not only function to provide guidance services when students face problems, but also play a role in creating a safe learning environment, building emotional awareness, and fostering resilience that is important for dealing with academic and daily life pressures (Ummah et al., 2025;Nursakinah, 2024;Wang & Sheibani, 2024;Jia & Chu, 2023). Counseling interventions in the form of individual and group services have been proven to have a significant impact on improving emotional regulation, strengthening interpersonal skills, and helping students organize a positive mindset in dealing with various situations (Wang & Sheibani, 2024;Jia & Chu, 2023). Thus, counselors have a real contribution not only in solving short-term problems, but also in the formation of psychologically resilient student characters.

A number of empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of counseling in college. Counseling services are proven to reduce anxiety levels, improve emotional regulation, and improve students' academic performance (Liao et al., 2025;Kivlighan et al., 2020;Pizzo et al., 2024). The results of the study showed that counseling interventions, both group-based and individual, consistently had a positive impact on students' psychological well-being (Cerolini et al., 2023;Wang & Sheibani, 2024). However, various obstacles are still encountered in the implementation of counseling services, including social stigma that makes students reluctant to use services, limited number of counselors, and lack of understanding of the academic community about the importance of counseling in the campus environment (Cerolini et al.,

2023;Nguyen Huynh Thi & Van Tran, 2024). These obstacles need to be seriously examined because they have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of existing counseling programs.

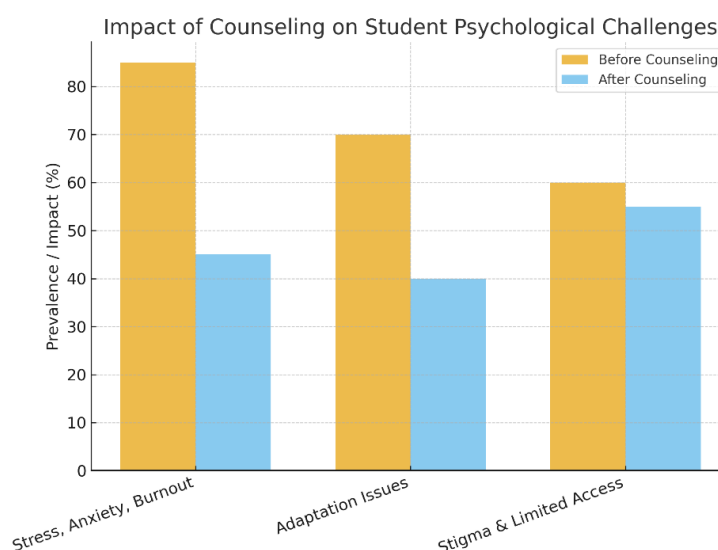


Figure 1. Visualization of Student Challenges and the Impact of Counseling

Although the effectiveness of counseling has been widely researched at the international level, studies focusing on the Indonesian context are still relatively limited. In fact, the characteristics of culture, the education system, and the needs of students in Indonesia have their own peculiarities that require adjustments in the counseling intervention model. The lack of research examining the role of counselors in Indonesian universities creates gaps in the scientific literature, so further studies are needed to explore how counseling services can be optimized according to the local context (Nursakinah, 2024; Cerolini et al., 2023; Nguyen Huynh Thi & Van Tran, 2024). The latest studies have the potential to enrich understanding of how counselors can bridge student needs, as well as provide strategic recommendations for universities in strengthening counseling services.

Based on the description above, this article aims to examine the role of counselors in improving the psychological well-being of college students. The focus of the study is directed at the relevant forms of counseling interventions, the impact they have on psychological well-being and academic performance, and the challenges of implementing counseling services in

universities. In addition, this article also seeks to propose future research directions that can strengthen the empirical basis regarding counseling in the context of Indonesian higher education, thereby making a real contribution to the development of counseling guidance policies and practices on campus. (Ummah et al., 2025);(Nursakinah, 2024);(Cerolini et al., 2023;Wang & Sheibani, 2024;Jia & Chu, 2023;Pizzo et al., 2024). Thus, the urgency of this topic lies in the importance of providing adaptive and effective counseling services in supporting students to achieve sustainable psychological well-being.

Research methods

Research on student psychological well-being can use quantitative, qualitative, and *mixed methods*. The selection of a research design depends on the focus of the study, the objectives to be achieved, and the context of the participants. Quantitative approaches are generally used to measure well-being with standardized psychological scale instruments such as *Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)*, *WHO-5 Well-Being Index*, *Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF)* and *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)* (Stavraki et al., 2022;Fung et al., 2022;Marmara et al., 2021;Sarasjärvi et al., 2023;Yeo & Suárez, 2022;Bonacchi et al., 2021;Longo et al., 2020;Sischka et al., 2020). Through this instrument-based survey, researchers can objectively assess the condition of student welfare.

Instead, a qualitative approach is used to explore students' subjective experiences through in-depth interviews, observations, or group discussions. This method allows researchers to discover patterns of students' experiences in dealing with stress, anxiety, and social adaptation (Stavraki et al., 2022);(Zhang et al., 2024). Meanwhile, *mixed methods* Combining both approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding, with quantitative data that is general is reinforced by a more in-depth personal narrative of students (Zhang et al., 2024).

Research Design	Key Focus	Instruments/Methods	Data Type
Quantitative	Objectively measuring well-being levels	PWBS, WHO-5, MHC-SF, WEMWBS	Scale score
Qualitative	Exploring students' subjective experiences	Interviews, observations, FGDs	Narrative & theme

Mixed Methods	Combination of objective measurement & in-depth exploration	Surveys + interviews/observations	Score + narrative
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Table 1. Student Psychological Well-Being Research Approach

Students are the main participants in this study, both from the general population and certain groups such as first-year students or students with adaptation problems (Stavraki et al., 2022; Bonacchi et al., 2021). The research instrument was selected based on the purpose of the study. For quantitative, psychological scale is used, while qualitative uses interview guidelines or field observations.

Analysis techniques also vary. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including validity, reliability, correlation, regression, and *factor analysis* (Marmara et al., 2021; Sarasjärvi et al., 2023). Qualitative data were analyzed with a thematic approach to find patterns of student experience (Zhang et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research *mixed methods* integrating the two techniques so that the research results are more comprehensive.

In summary, the flow of research on student psychological well-being can be described in **Figure 2** below.

Flowchart of Research Method on Student Psychological Well-Being

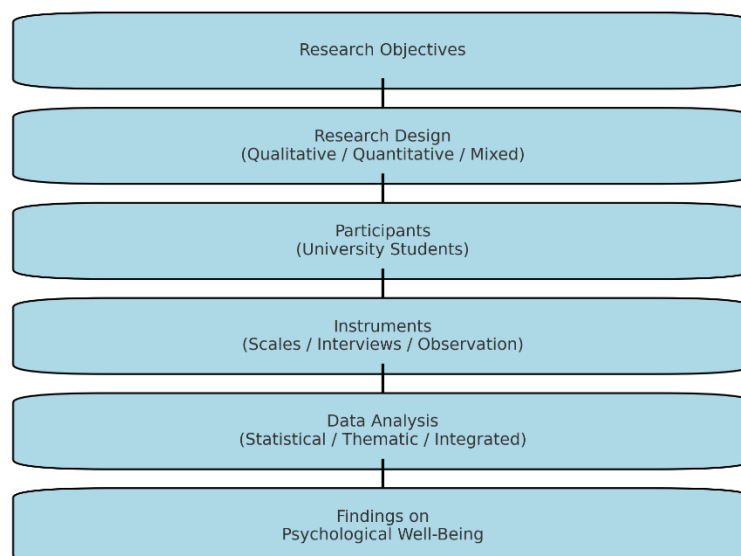


Figure 2: Narrative Flowchart of Research Methods.

Results and Discussion:

The results of the study show that the role of counselors in higher education is manifested in various forms of services that target the personal, social, academic, and career dimensions of students. First, individual counseling services focus on addressing specific psychological problems experienced by students, such as academic stress, anxiety, and personal problems. Through counseling techniques such as relaxation, time management, learning skill development, and self-regulation, counselors are able to help students find adaptive solutions (Harahap, 2024); Ummah et al., 2025; Jaelani et al., 2024).

Second, group counseling services have been proven to be effective in improving students' social skills and resilience. The program allows students to share experiences, learn coping strategies together, and build stronger social support. A number of studies report that group counseling significantly lowers levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout, as well as improves students' emotional balance (Lin et al., 2025; Jaelani et al., 2024; Muda et al., 2025).

Third, counselors also provide psychoeducation services and career guidance. These services include counseling on mental health, strengthening adaptation skills, and more targeted future planning. Thus, students are not only helped in overcoming psychological problems, but also better prepared to face the challenges of the world of work and design careers according to their potential (Mustofa et al., 2024; Minor & Farley-Smith, 2024; Jia & Chu, 2023; Sui & Leng, 2023).

Fourth, the role of counselors can be seen in providing crisis support and creating a supportive campus environment. Counselors play an important role in helping students cope with crisis situations, such as family conflicts, traumatic events, or serious adjustment issues. In addition, counselors contribute to creating a campus atmosphere that is safe, welcoming, and encourages collective mental health (Ummah et al., 2025; Rustianti & Fitriani, 2024; Nursakinah, 2024).

Overall, the counselor's intervention had a positive impact on students. The data showed an increase in emotional regulation, resilience, and social skills, a decrease in stress, anxiety, and burnout, an increase in learning motivation and academic engagement, and an improvement in the quality of interpersonal relationships. This impact can be seen briefly in Table 2 below.

Form of Counselor Services	Major Impact on Students	Source
Individual counseling	Reduced stress, increased self-regulation	Ummah et al. (2025); Harahap (2024); Jaelani et al. (2024)
Group counseling	Improved social skills, resilience	Muda et al. (2025); Lin et al. (2025); Jaelani et al. (2024)
Psychoeducation & guidance	Motivation to learn, career readiness	Mustofa et al. (2024); Minor & Farley-Smith (2024); Jia & Chu (2023); Sui & Leng (2023)
Crisis support	A supportive environment, problem solving	Ummah et al. (2025); Nursakinah (2024); Rustianti & Fitriani (2024)

Table 2. The Impact of Counselor Services on Students

The visualization of the findings is reinforced by the bar chart in **Figure 3**, which illustrates a comparison of the effectiveness of counseling services on student welfare.

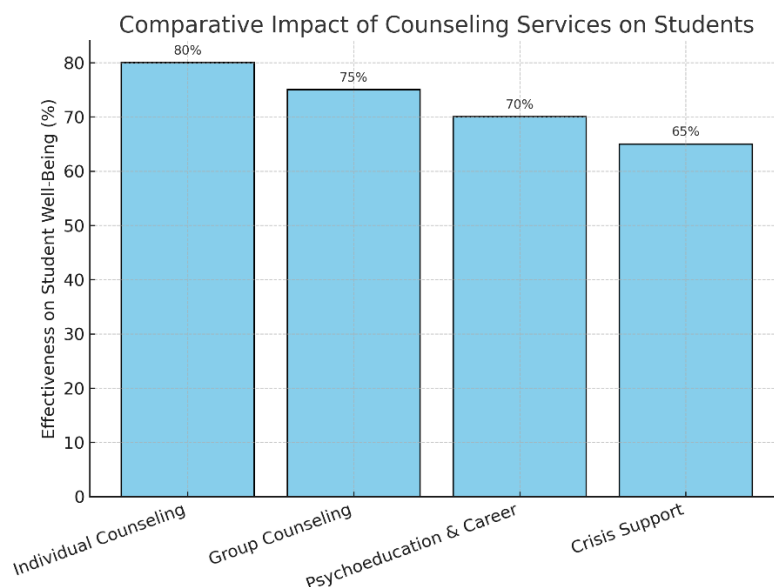


Figure 3: Comparison of the Impact of Counseling Services on Student Well-Being

The results of the graph show that individual counseling has the highest effectiveness with an achievement of around 80%, followed by group counseling at 75%. Psychoeducation and career guidance services ranked third with an effectiveness of 70%, while crisis support showed an effectiveness of 65%. Despite the variations, all counselor services have been proven to make a positive contribution to students. Individual counseling stands out for

focusing on personal issues, while group counseling emphasizes social support. Psychoeducation helps prepare students for academic and career challenges, while crisis support serves as an important protection when students face emergency situations.

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with various international findings that affirm that counseling services are able to improve students' psychological well-being, reduce stress and anxiety, and improve academic performance (Lin et al., 2025). However, in Indonesia, the implementation of counseling services still faces challenges. The limited number of counselors, the lack of student understanding of the benefits of counseling, and the social stigma towards mental health services are significant obstacles (Mustofa et al., 2024; Muda et al., 2025; Nursakinah, 2024; Jaelani et al., 2024).

The relevance of this research is even more evident when it is associated with the local context of higher education in Indonesia. The diverse characteristics of students demand that counselor intervention strategies be adjusted to suit cultural norms and psychosocial needs. Collaboration between counselors, lecturers, and parents is indispensable to create a more holistic support system (Ummah et al., 2025; Mustofa et al., 2024). In addition, technological developments open up opportunities for more flexible digital counseling services, so that they can reach students who are reluctant to attend in person due to time constraints and social stigma (Nursakinah, 2024).

Factors supporting the success of counseling include cross-party collaboration, ongoing training for counselors, and the use of digital platforms to expand access to services. On the other hand, the most prominent obstacles are students' stigma towards counseling, limited resources, and lack of mental health literacy among academics. Blake (2020) emphasizes that the role of counselors is often trapped in ambiguity due to unclear expectations, thus reducing the effectiveness of services.

Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of counselors in the higher education ecosystem. Optimizing counseling services requires campus policy support, increasing the number of professionals, digital-based innovations, and improving student mental health literacy. These efforts will make counseling not only a solution to psychological

problems, but also a strategic instrument in building a healthy, productive, and supportive campus for all students..

Conclusion

Counselors have a very vital role in supporting the psychological well-being of students. The services provided, both through individual counseling, group counseling, psychoeducation, and crisis support, have been proven to help students manage emotions, reduce stress, increase learning motivation, and strengthen social relationships. Thus, counseling not only functions as a treatment for psychological problems, but also as a strategic means to support academic success and student self-development as a whole.

The integration of digital technology in counseling services opens up new opportunities to expand reach, increase effectiveness, and create more adaptive services. Digital platforms such as e-counseling, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence-based services can be innovative solutions in answering the needs of students in the modern era. However, the implementation of digital services needs to be balanced with data protection policies and improving the competence of counselors so that services remain safe, reliable, and relevant to the needs of students.

Overall, optimizing counseling services requires institutional policy support, cross-party collaboration, and sustainable innovation. These efforts will ensure that counseling can play an important pillar in building a healthy, supportive, and able to answer the psychological challenges of students in the present and future.

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