



## **Influence of Social-Emotional Learning, Integrated Counselling on Academic and Behavioural Outcomes in Multicultural Schools in Kwara State University, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study evaluated the influence of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into university counselling services at Kwara State University, Nigeria. Employing a qualitative case study design, five counsellors, ten lecturers, and twenty undergraduates participated in the interviews, observation, and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed five emergent themes: cultural responsiveness, academic engagement, behavioural regulation, implementation enablers, and implementation barriers. Counsellors grounded SEL competencies in local proverbs, vernacular usage, and Adire motifs, which enhanced student comprehension and emotional connection. Students reported increased intrinsic motivation, goal attainment, and class participation, lecturers confirmed a 30% rise in voluntary contributions. Behavioural referrals dropped from twelve to five per semester as students applied breathing techniques, “I-statements” to manage stress and resolve conflict. Autonomy in session design and administrative support were key facilitators, why timetable conflicts and resource shortages hindered consistent delivery. Framed by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, findings underscore the need to adapt SEL interventions across



microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem levels. The study concluded that culturally tailored SEL counselling can improve both academic and behavioural outcomes. Recommendations include structured faculty training, dedicated counselling spaces, and bended delivery models, future researchers should explore quantitative measures of SEL influence and long-term sustainability in similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Academic Engagement, Behavioural Regulation, Cultural Responsiveness, Ecological Systems Theory, Social-Emotional Learning, University Counselling.

## **Introduction**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in developing students' emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and resilience, particularly in multicultural educational settings. SEL encompasses a set of competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which are essential for students' comprehensive development and success in school environments (Mahoney et al., 2021). The integration of SEL into school counselling is driven by the recognition that effective counselling practices can significantly enhance both academic and behavioural outcomes for diverse student populations (Burgin et al., 2021). However, more evidence is needed to justify the systematic integration of SEL practices into counselling frameworks, especially in multicultural contexts where the needs of students can vary widely (Huynh et al., 2021).

Integrating SEL into school counselling is imperative as it serves as a foundation for promoting academic success and emotional well-being among students. Research indicates that SEL not only improves emotional competence but also positively influences academic performance (Mahoney et al., 2021; Korpershoek et al., 2016). Furthermore, effective SEL programmes help cultivate a supportive school climate that enhances students' motivation and reduces negative behavioural issues (Stelitano & Steiner, 2021; Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). By incorporating culturally responsive practices, school counsellors can address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds, thereby fostering an inclusive learning



environment that values the contributions of all students (Neelakantan et al., 2024; Setyaputri et al., 2021).

In specific contexts, counsellors have reported gaining autonomy and flexibility to design and implement SEL interventions that cater to the specific needs of their student populations. For example, school counsellors in India have highlighted the importance of building strong relationships with students to effectively facilitate SEL initiatives, and similar sentiments have been echoed in multicultural settings where understanding individual student backgrounds can enhance the effectiveness of SEL programs (Neelakantan et al., 2024; Setyaputri et al., 2021).

Despite existing research on SEL, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these integrative approaches affect academic and behavioural outcomes, specifically in multicultural schools (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). While programs have been developed in various countries, such as Singapore's CASEL initiative and the UK's SEAL program, the application and effectiveness of these practices in culturally diverse classrooms require further examination (Huynh et al., 2021). Thus, the objective of this evaluation is to analyse the outcomes of SEL-integrated counselling interventions in multicultural settings, aiming to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and school counsellors.

To fully understand how Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) integrated counselling influences student outcomes in complex educational environments, this study is framed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). This theory posits that student development is shaped by multiple interacting systems: the microsystem (e.g., direct interactions with counsellors and lecturers), the mesosystem (e.g., collaboration between counselling units and academic departments), and the macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms, language practices, and institutional policies in Kwara State). In multicultural university settings, where students navigate diverse linguistic, ethnic, and socio-emotional landscapes, SEL interventions cannot be effective in isolation. Instead, they must be embedded across these ecological layers. By applying this framework, the study examines not only individual-level changes in students' behaviour and engagement but also how



institutional structures and cultural contexts enable or constrain SEL implementation.

This investigation seeks to highlight effective practices, identify obstacles faced in SEL implementation, and develop a framework for future SEL integration that accommodates a diverse student body. By doing so, this research will not only contribute to academic literature but also enhance practice in multicultural educational environments.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At Kwara State University, Nigeria, undergraduates in multicultural settings increasingly exhibit maladaptive behaviours including emotional dysregulation, interpersonal conflict, classroom disengagement, and rising disciplinary incidents often rooted in academic stress, cultural dislocation, and unaddressed psychosocial needs. Yet university counselling services remain largely generic, reactive, and disconnected from structured social-emotional skill development.

While Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has demonstrated efficacy in improving self-regulation and engagement in global educational contexts, its integration into university-level counselling, particularly in African multicultural settings, is critically underdeveloped (Bierman et al., 2010; Loeb et al., 2019). Existing research focuses overwhelmingly on primary and secondary schools, leaving a gap in understanding how SEL competencies can be adapted for young adults navigating identity, diversity, and academic transition in higher education.

Even where SEL principles are informally applied, implementation is often inconsistent and undermined by competing academic priorities, timetable constraints, and lack of institutional support (Al-Wattary, 2021). Without intentional, culturally grounded integration, SEL risks becoming an ad hoc add-on rather than a core component of student support, failing to address root causes of behavioural and academic decline.

Consequently, universities may continue to see escalating distress, poor conduct, low retention, and diminished learning, especially among culturally diverse students who struggle to access emotionally safe spaces. This study addresses an urgent need: to evaluate how SEL-integrated counselling, when tailored to local contexts and embedded



within university structures, can mitigate these challenges and foster resilient, engaged, and academically successful student communities.

### **Research Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To explore how school counsellors implement SEL-integrated counselling programmes in multicultural school settings.
2. To examine students' and teachers' perceptions of the influence of SEL-integrated counselling on academic engagement and classroom behaviour.
3. To identify challenges and enablers of SEL-integrated counselling implementation in culturally diverse schools.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do school counsellors implement SEL-integrated counselling programmes in multicultural schools?
2. What are students' and teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the effects of SEL counselling on academic and behavioural outcomes?
3. What factors influence the effectiveness and sustainability of SEL counselling in multicultural educational environments?

### **SEL Frameworks and Their Core Competencies**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks, such as those developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), emphasise several core competencies essential for holistic student development. These competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Lawson et al., 2018). Alexander and Vermette propose a model that intertwines the CASEL competencies with additional skills, thereby streamlining the framework for practical classroom application (Alexander & Vermette, 2019). This refinement facilitates explicit instruction, allowing educators to embed SEL discussions within content lessons, thereby enhancing student engagement and emotional growth (Alexander & Vermette, 2019; Humphrey et al., 2017).

### **SEL in Multicultural Settings**

The implementation of SEL in multicultural settings requires a culturally responsive approach to ensure that all students feel validated and understood (Odak et al., 2023). SEL programs, when effectively



adapted, can promote inclusivity and empathy among diverse student populations. Morizio et al. demonstrate that integrating art and creative activities into SEL can help urban youth from various cultural backgrounds develop empathy and emotional connection, which are crucial for fostering a positive school climate (Morizio et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers' perspectives on SEL's effectiveness often reflect their understanding of its relevance across different cultural contexts, influencing how these frameworks are applied (Al-Wattary, 2021). Therefore, a culturally tailored SEL approach is vital for addressing the unique challenges presented in multicultural educational environments (Odak et al., 2023).

### **Influence of SEL on Academic and Behavioural Outcomes**

Research has consistently shown that SEL interventions can positively influence both academic and behavioural outcomes. For instance, Bierman et al. reported that SEL programs foster improved behavioural engagement and self-control in students, leading to enhanced academic performance (Bierman et al., 2010). Further evidence from a study by Low et al. indicates that while SEL skills indirectly bolster academic abilities, participants demonstrated significant improvements in social-emotional competencies, which can enhance overall school functioning (Low et al., 2019). Moreover, findings from a study by Schonfeld et al. reveal that effective SEL curricula significantly contribute to students' academic achievements and well-being, showcasing the potential of SEL to address various dimensions of student success (Schonfeld et al., 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study anchored on the following theories:

#### **Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)**

Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted environments influencing student development. This theory posits that individual growth is shaped not only by immediate interactions within the family and school but also by broader cultural contexts (Odak et al., 2023).

#### **Explanation of Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's model identifies several nested systems, including the microsystem (immediate environment, such as family and school),



mesosystem (interconnections between microsystems), exosystem (external influences like community services), and macrosystem (cultural values and laws) (Odak et al., 2023). By acknowledging these interconnected systems, educators can appreciate the complexity of students' social-emotional landscapes and the myriad factors that influence their learning.

### **Relevance to SEL in Diverse School Contexts**

The application of Ecological Systems Theory to SEL is particularly relevant in multicultural school settings. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how diverse cultural contexts and familial backgrounds influence students' emotional and behavioural responses (Odak et al., 2023). By considering the various layers of influence, educators can tailor SEL interventions to effectively meet the needs of all students, fostering inclusive environments that promote both social-emotional and academic development (Alexander & Vermette, 2019; Humphrey et al., 2017).

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2014) to evaluate the implementation and perceived influence of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)-integrated counselling on academic and behavioural outcomes at Kwara State University, Nigeria, a multicultural public university serving students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The case study approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration of a bounded phenomenon within its real-life context, allowing for a rich description of how SEL is adapted, delivered, and experienced across stakeholder groups

A total of 35 participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement with or exposure to SEL-integrated counselling:

**Five university counsellors (C01-C05):** All held formal counselling roles within the University Counselling Unit, had completed at least one university-level training in psychological support, and had facilitated SEL activities during the 2023–2024 academic year.

**Ten lecturers (L01-L10):** Selected from two faculties (Education and Humanities) with high student diversity; all had regular classroom



interaction with undergraduates who attended SEL counselling and could observe changes in engagement or behaviour.

**Twenty undergraduate students (S01-S20):** Recruited via snowball sampling following initial recommendations from counsellors and lecturers; inclusion required documented participation in at least three SEL counselling sessions and willingness to reflect on their academic and emotional experiences.

The sample size was determined by principles of informational redundancy and contextual saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), not statistical generalizability. Five counsellors provided sufficient variation in experience and practice; ten lecturers ensured representation across departments and teaching levels; twenty students allowed for diversity in gender, ethnicity, and academic performance while enabling thematic depth in focus groups. This configuration aligns with qualitative best practices for multi-stakeholder case studies in educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In depth Three complementary methods were used to address the research questions:

1. **Semi-structured interviews** (60–90 minutes) with counsellors and lecturers explored how SEL was implemented (RQ1) and their perceptions of its influence (RQ2).
2. **Student focus groups** (four groups of five students each) elicited shared experiences of SEL's influence on motivation, goal-setting, and peer interactions (RQ2).
3. **Non-participant observations** of six SEL sessions (three per faculty) documented culturally responsive practices (e.g., use of proverbs, Adire motifs, Yoruba vernacular), directly addressing RQ1 and RQ3.
4. **Document analysis** of university policies (e.g., Student Support Framework, Counselling Unit Operational Guidelines), session logs, and training materials provided institutional context and triangulated self-reported data.

This multi-method approach ensured methodological triangulation, enhancing credibility and providing a holistic view of SEL integration from policy intent to lived experience while directly answering all three research questions.



## Results

All audio recordings and field notes were transcribed verbatim and imported into qualitative analysis software. A six-phase thematic analysis was undertaken: familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition and reporting as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Document data were coded both inductively and deductively to corroborate emerging themes. Credibility was enhanced through member checking with a subset of participants, peer debriefing among the research team and maintenance of an audit trail.

The findings are presented in alignment with the three research questions guiding the study. Each subsection corresponds to a specific research question, with themes and subthemes reported only where they directly address that question. Illustrative quotations are included to substantiate participants’ accounts.

### Theme Subthemes Definition Illustrative quote (ID)

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Theme	Subthemes	Definition	Illustrative quote (ID)
<b>1. Cultural Responsiveness</b>	1.1 Local value framing	Adaptation of SEL materials and examples to reflect students’ cultural backgrounds and languages.	“We began sessions by discussing proverbs familiar to most students; it made the concepts stick.” (L04)
	1.2 Vernacular use		
	1.3 Symbolic integration		
<b>2. Academic Engagement</b>	2.1 Intrinsic motivation	Changes in students’ drive to learn, ability to set and revisit goals, and willingness to engage in class.	“After counselling, I started setting weekly study targets and met them.” (S12)
	2.2 Goal setting		
	2.3 Class participation		
<b>3. Behavioural Regulation</b>	3.1 Self-control strategies	Development and application of techniques enabling students to manage emotions,	“She taught us breathing exercises before debates; I no
	3.2 Peer communication		



	3.3 Conflict resolution	interact positively, and resolve disputes.	longer panic when my turn comes.” (S07) “Management gave us weekly time slots specifically for SEL— without that, we couldn’t have run sessions.” (C02)
<b>4. Implementation Enablers</b>	4.1 Counsellor autonomy	Factors that facilitated SEL integration include	
	4.2 Continuous training	freedom in design, ongoing professional development, and formal endorsement from leadership.	
	4.3 Administrative support		
<b>5. Implementation Barriers</b>	5.1 Academic timetable conflicts	Obstacles to consistent delivery such as competing academic demands, a lack of materials or space, and uneven commitment across staff and students.	“Sometimes our sessions clashed with exams; students skipped counselling to attend tests.” (C05)
	5.2 Resource shortages		
	5.3 Variable buy-in		

**Research Question One:** *How do school counsellors implement SEL-integrated counselling programmes in multicultural schools?*

Findings relating to this research question revealed that counsellors implemented SEL-integrated counselling through culturally responsive pedagogical strategies, flexible session design, and symbolic integration of local knowledge systems. Three interrelated practices characterised implementation: local value framing, vernacular use, and symbolic integration.

**Cultural Responsiveness in SEL Implementation**

Counsellors consistently adapted SEL content to reflect students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Observations and interviews showed that sessions frequently began with Yoruba proverbs to introduce SEL competencies such as self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. For example, one counsellor



opened a session with the proverb “*Óràn bí ọba, kì í sàń lórí àjà*” (“A king’s affairs never spill on the dust”) to contextualise responsible decision-making as a communal rather than individual obligation. Observation notes from the Faculty of Education indicated that this approach immediately engaged students and prompted discussion grounded in shared cultural understanding.

Code-switching between English and Yoruba was also a deliberate instructional strategy. Students reported that explanations delivered in Yoruba enhanced clarity and emotional connection, particularly during discussions of stress management and emotional regulation. One student noted:

*“When the counsellor switched to Yoruba for emotional-management tips, I understood better.”* (S03)

In addition, counsellors incorporated indigenous symbols, particularly Adire textile motifs, to illustrate relational networks and support systems. Document analysis of session plans confirmed that these motifs were intentionally used to visualise social connections. During observed sessions, students actively sketched these symbols while mapping peer and family support structures, demonstrating meaningful engagement with culturally familiar representations.

Together, these practices indicate that SEL-integrated counselling was not implemented as a standardised curriculum but as a locally adapted, culturally embedded intervention, shaped by counsellors’ contextual knowledge and autonomy.

**Research Question Two:** *What are students’ and teachers’ experiences and perceptions regarding the effects of SEL counselling on academic and behavioural outcomes?*

Results addressing this question revealed perceived improvements in academic engagement and behavioural regulation, as reported by students and lecturers and corroborated by observations and institutional records.

### **Academic Engagement**

Students described heightened intrinsic motivation following participation in SEL-integrated counselling. Across focus groups, participants reported increased willingness to set academic goals,



manage study time, and engage more actively in learning tasks. One student stated:

*“I now wake up aiming to finish one lecture note before breakfast.”*  
(S14)

Counsellors reinforced these outcomes by introducing structured weekly action plans linked to academic milestones. Analysis of counselling logs showed that 18 of the 20 participating students completed at least three out of five planned academic tasks. Lecturers further confirmed improvements in assignment submission rates and classroom attentiveness, particularly in the Faculties of Education and Humanities. Lecturers also reported a noticeable rise in class participation. A comparison of attendance and participation records indicated an estimated 30% increase in voluntary contributions during tutorials after SEL counselling was introduced. Students attributed this change to reduced anxiety and improved confidence, often linked to breathing and grounding techniques learned during counselling sessions. As one student explained:

*“I volunteer now because I’ve learned breathing exercises that calm me.”* (S07)

### **Behavioural Regulation**

Students reported acquiring practical strategies for managing emotions and resolving interpersonal conflict. Observations documented repeated practice of the “4-7-8” breathing technique during counselling sessions. In follow-up interviews, 16 of the 20 students reported using this technique during examinations or stressful academic situations.

Focus-group discussions further revealed improved peer communication through the use of “I-statements.” One participant explained:

*“Instead of blaming, I say ‘I feel upset when...’ and it stops fights.”*  
(S11)

Lecturers corroborated these self-reports, noting fewer classroom disruptions and improved peer interactions. Faculty meeting minutes recorded a decline in disciplinary referrals from twelve to five incidents per semester following the introduction of SEL-integrated counselling, suggesting a perceived positive influence on behavioural outcomes.



**Research Question 3:** *What factors influence the effectiveness and sustainability of SEL counselling in multicultural educational environments?*

Findings related to this research question identified both implementation enablers and implementation barriers affecting the effectiveness and continuity of SEL-integrated counselling.

**Implementation Enablers**

Counsellor autonomy emerged as a critical facilitator. Counsellors reported having the flexibility to design sessions based on students' cultural backgrounds and immediate needs rather than following prescriptive scripts. One counsellor explained:

*"We chose examples from our student groups; that kept them engaged."* (C02)

Continuous professional training also supported effective implementation. Document analysis confirmed the existence of quarterly workshops organised by the Counselling Unit, which counsellors rated positively in feedback reports, particularly for strengthening skills in cultural adaptation.

Administrative support further enhanced sustainability. University policy documents formally allocated counselling slots within the academic timetable, which lecturers and counsellors agreed legitimised SEL activities and improved student attendance.

**Implementation Barriers**

Despite these enablers, several barriers constrained consistent implementation. Counselling registers showed that approximately 25% of scheduled sessions were cancelled due to clashes with lectures or examinations. Counsellors also reported inadequate infrastructure, with four of the five counsellors conducting sessions in shared offices or corridors due to a lack of private counselling rooms.

Variable buy-in among academic staff further limited integration.

Some lecturers perceived SEL as peripheral to academic instruction.

One lecturer remarked:

*"I see the value, but tight syllabus delivery leaves no room."* (L09)

These factors collectively influenced both the reach and sustainability of SEL-integrated counselling within the university context.



## Discussion

The integration of culturally responsive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into university counselling at Kwara State University yielded measurable improvements in students' academic engagement and behavioural self-regulation. Critically, these gains were not merely the result of generic SEL delivery but emerged because counsellors anchored abstract competencies in students' cultural schemas using Yoruba proverbs, vernacular code-switching, and Adire textile motifs. This approach succeeded because it reduced cognitive and affective distance between therapeutic concepts and students' lived realities. As Odak et al. (2023) argue, cultural validation not linguistic translation alone is essential for emotional resonance. Our findings confirm this: sessions opened with proverbs like “*Ọ̀ràn bí ọ̀ba, kì í sà̀n lórí àjà*” (“A king's affairs never spill on the dust”) framed responsible decision-making as a communal virtue rather than an individualistic skill, aligning with collectivist values common among Yoruba and other Nigerian ethnic groups (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). This cultural grounding activated familiar narrative structures, enhancing comprehension and lowering psychological resistance a mechanism consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is most effective when mediated through culturally meaningful tools.

Students heightened intrinsic motivation and goal-directed behaviour further reflect the influence of culturally congruent self-regulation strategies. The 90% completion rate of weekly action plans and increased class participation align with Mahoney et al.'s (2021) assertion that SEL fosters academic agency but our data reveal a key nuance: motivation was sustained not by generic goal-setting exercises, but by linking objectives to locally valued outcomes, such as family honour or community contribution. This echoes findings from Neelakantan et al. (2024) in India, where SEL efficacy depended on framing success in terms of relational responsibility rather than personal achievement. Similarly, the 30% rise in voluntary classroom contributions corroborates Korpershoek et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis, yet our study clarifies how: breathing techniques reduced performance anxiety by regulating autonomic arousal a physiological pathway



emphasized by Bierman et al. (2010) but rarely operationalized in non-Western contexts.

The drop in disciplinary referrals from twelve to five per semester demonstrates that behavioural regulation can be taught even in higher education, challenging assumptions that SEL is only relevant in primary settings. Students' adoption of "I-statements" and conflict scripts mirrors Schonfeld et al.'s (2015) findings, but with a critical adaptation: these tools were introduced through indigenous storytelling, not role-play, making them feel less foreign and more authentic. This supports Hassan et al.'s (2016) observation in Syrian refugee contexts that trauma-affected youth engage more deeply with psychosocial support when it avoids clinical jargon and instead uses culturally embedded metaphors.

Two structural enablers amplified these effects. First, counsellor autonomy allowed real-time adaptation of content consistent with Humphrey et al.'s (2017) finding that rigid fidelity undermines SEL relevance in diverse classrooms. Second, administrative endorsement (e.g., timetabled sessions, training) signaled institutional legitimacy, echoing Low et al.'s (2019) conclusion that top-down support transforms SEL from an "add-on" to a core function. Conversely, barriers like timetable conflicts and lack of private space replicated challenges documented by Al-Wattary (2021) in Qatar, underscoring a global tension between academic priorities and psychosocial care.

Viewed through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), success emerged from alignment across levels:

**Microsystem:** Culturally attuned counsellor–student interactions–built trust.

**Mesosystem:** Collaboration with lecturers reinforced SEL norms beyond counselling rooms.

**Macrosystem:** Proverbs and Adire motifs drew on shared cultural capital, validating students' identities.

This multi-layered integration explains why outcomes surpassed those in studies where SEL was implemented as a decontextualized curriculum (e.g., Jones et al., 2010). Cultural responsiveness was not decorative it was functional, transforming SEL from a foreign import into a locally owned practice. Future work should test whether similar



adaptations yield comparable gains in other African universities, while addressing logistical gaps through blended models that preserve cultural integrity without overburdening infrastructure.

### **Conclusion**

Culturally adapted SEL counselling at Kwara State University was associated with enhanced student motivation, goal-directed behaviour, class participation, and reduced disciplinary incidents. Key facilitators were counsellors' autonomy and institutional endorsement; persistent barriers included scheduling conflicts and inadequate private spaces.

### **Recommendations**

1. **The University Counselling Unit**, in collaboration with the Faculty of Education, should formalise mandatory training for counsellors on culturally adapting SEL content specifically incorporating local proverbs, vernacular code-switching, and indigenous symbols such as Adire motifs into all professional development programs.
2. **The Office of Student Affairs**, in partnership with the Counselling Unit, should establish regular feedback mechanisms (e.g., semesterly student focus group discussion and lecturer surveys) to inform the continuous refinement of counselling strategies and ensure responsiveness to evolving student needs.
3. **University Management** (including the Vice-Chancellor's Office and Academic Planning Unit) should allocate dedicated, private counselling rooms across faculties and integrate SEL sessions into the official academic timetable to prevent scheduling conflicts. Additionally, they should fund ongoing peer-coaching workshops, coordinated by the Counselling Unit, to sustain counsellor expertise and practice innovation.

### **Implications**

This study demonstrates that embedding SEL within university counselling, when tailored to local cultural contexts, can improve both academic and behavioural outcomes. Institutional policies must recognise SEL as an academic priority rather than an extracurricular add-on.



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