



The Role of Psychological Counseling in Improving Quality of Life and Psychological Well-being

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ABSTRACT

Despite significant advances in the field of mental health, the prevalence of emotional disorders and reduced quality of life in various populations, especially in the educational community, continues to increase. Therefore, the present study, using a descriptive-analytical method to clarify the multifaceted role of psychological counseling in increasing the quality of life and psychological well-being, was conducted in four main areas: increasing psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy), the effectiveness of new cognitive-behavioral and positive approaches, a theoretical review of indigenous counseling models, and providing innovative strategies for preventing emotional disorders in line with sustainable educational development. The findings showed that interventions based on psychological capital and cognitive emotion regulation training have a significant effect on increasing resilience and self-efficacy, as well as reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Positive approaches showed greater effectiveness in increasing psychological well-being compared to cognitive-behavioral therapy. Indigenous models, such as mystical psychotherapy based on Rumi's worldview and indigenous compassion-focused therapy, with an emphasis on the components of the "authentic self" and in line with Islamic-Iranian beliefs, have a high capacity to increase treatment acceptance and maintain therapeutic effects.

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1. Introduction

Statement of the Problem: Despite theoretical and clinical advances in the field of psychological counseling, epidemiological statistics indicate an increasing prevalence of emotional disorders - especially anxiety and depression - and a decrease in indicators of quality of life and psychological well-being in various populations, including the target population of the educational system. However, most of the common counseling interventions in Iran are either simple translations of Western packages that lack sufficient compatibility with the cultural-religious context of Iranian society, or remain limited at the theoretical level and have not been transformed into practical and applicable protocols in schools and society. This gap between the real needs of Iranian clients and the available services severely compromises the effectiveness of counseling and leads to waste of resources, resistance to treatment, and relapse of symptoms.

On the other hand, although the role of psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) in predicting psychological well-being is well documented, the design of coherent and evidence-based programs to simultaneously strengthen all four components within the framework of school-based counseling interventions remains limited. Furthermore, although the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral approaches and positive psychology has been confirmed in international meta-analyses, the extent of the impact of these approaches in the

Iranian population, especially in longitudinal studies with long-term follow-up, has been less investigated. In addition, there have been sporadic efforts to develop indigenous counseling models (including mystical psychotherapy based on the teachings of Rumi and Islamic-Iranian compassion-focused therapy). However, these models have not yet reached the stage of extensive validation and randomized clinical trials. Furthermore, innovative strategies that can simultaneously address primary prevention of emotional disorders, increase psychological well-being, and achieve educational sustainable development goals (especially health and well-being and quality education) have not been developed in an integrated manner. Therefore, the main issue of the present study is how to design and propose a comprehensive and innovative package using internationally validated approaches, effective indigenous models, and new counseling technologies to strengthen psychological capital, reduce emotional distress, and improve quality of life in the Iranian educational context. Answering this question will be a fundamental step towards transforming the school counseling system and achieving sustainable educational development.

2. Literature Review

The present study aimed to clarify the role of psychological counseling in enhancing psychological well-being and sustainable educational development, using an interdisciplinary approach (integrating counseling psychology and mathematics). In the following, the relevant literature is reviewed in four main sections.

First: Psychological Capital and Psychological Well-being

Psychological capital (including self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of psychological well-being. Mokhtari, Kojbaf, and Abedi (2020) demonstrated that an eight-session psychological capital-based intervention significantly increased hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy in depressed patients. Furthermore, Saadat et al. (2019) reported a significant positive correlation between psychological capital and academic commitment among 300 students. Similarly, Kaveh Farsani et al. (2020) found that among the components of psychological capital, resilience was the most important predictor of depression, while hope was the most important predictor of death anxiety in cancer patients. However, most of these studies have focused on correlational relationships, and there is a lack of clinical trials with long-term follow-up periods in student populations.

Second: Modern Counseling Approaches: Cognitive-Behavioral and Positive Psychology

International meta-analyses have confirmed the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in reducing anxiety and depression and improving quality of life. Sadeghzadeh (2024), in a comparison between cognitive behavioral and metacognitive therapy in patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), found that both approaches were effective in improving resilience and quality of life, with CBT showing greater effectiveness in increasing resilience. Masoori and Bayat (2023) also confirmed the effectiveness of online CBT in reducing anger rumination and alexithymia among students showing symptoms of depression. In the field of positive psychology, Ghasemi et al. (2021) found an Iranian-Islamic positive therapy package effective in increasing psychological well-being in female students. In addition, Haratirad (2023) reported the effectiveness of positive psychotherapy in increasing hope and quality of life. Nasiri-Takami, Najafi, and Talebpasand (2019) demonstrated that positive psychotherapy is more effective than CBT in increasing psychological well-being. However, few studies have systematically compared these approaches across populations using advanced quantitative methods.

Third: Indigenous Psychological Counseling Models in Iran

In a scientific research article, Omidian and Zandavanian (2020) elucidated four levels of indigenization of psychology: mere translation, initiation of scientific research, translation with cultural considerations, and indigenous theorizing, while emphasizing the need for critical reflection on imported theories. Seyed Hassan Tehrani, Kakabrai, and Amiri (2021) developed the “informed premarital counseling” model by adopting a comparative approach to Islamic teachings, psychological theories, and indigenous-cultural considerations. Parpanji et al. (2019) designed a comprehensive model for promoting mental health in girls’ schools in Tehran and showed that educational factors (specifically, teacher behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.59) play an important role in students’ mental health. However, these models have not yet reached the stage of extensive validation and randomized clinical trials at the national level.

Fourth: Innovative Counseling Strategies in Sustainable Educational Development

In the field of sustainable educational innovation and development, Parpanji et al. (2019) showed that personality traits (0.63), educational factors (0.51), and family relationships (0.43) account for the largest variance in students’ mental health, respectively. However, very few studies have integrated psychological counseling with quantitative methods and mathematical modeling (to predict the risk of emotional disorders and design personalized pathways). Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this research gap by adopting an interdisciplinary and innovative approach.

3. Significance and Necessity of the Study

Mental health and social well-being are considered essential pillars of sustainable human development, to the extent that the third goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3) explicitly emphasizes “health and well-being for all ages”. In this context, the education system, as an environment that accommodates millions of students and teachers annually, is considered the main hub for implementing preventive interventions and promoting mental health. However, a review of the current situation shows that the prevalence of emotional disorders in the Iranian student population has been on an upward trajectory, and school counseling services are often limited to reactive and therapeutic interventions. In addition, many of the counseling protocols common in Iranian schools are direct translations of Western packages that are designed without considering the cultural and religious components of the local community. This imported approach is not only inconsistent with the worldview and beliefs of Iranian clients, but also reduces the effectiveness of the intervention and leads to resistance to treatment, dropout of clients, and relapse of symptoms. In such circumstances, the development and validation of indigenous counseling models that are based on Islamic-Iranian values while being aligned with international empirical evidence is an undeniable research and practical necessity.

Furthermore, the concept of psychological capital (including hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) has been identified as the strongest predictor of psychological well-being in global research. However, few studies in Iran have examined the effectiveness of integrated and simultaneous interventions that target all four components in an educational context. Furthermore, although the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral and positive psychology approaches has been confirmed in international meta-analyses, the actual extent of the effect of these approaches in the Iranian population and the sustainability of their results in long-term follow-ups have been inadequately documented. From an educational policy perspective, the lack of a national framework based on indigenous evidence for promoting psychological well-being and preventing emotional disorders in schools is seen as a critical gap. In particular, innovation in education becomes truly important when creative counseling approaches can be integrated with quantitative methods and mathematical modeling (for risk prediction, designing personalized treatment pathways, and optimizing interventions). Such a vision requires interdisciplinary collaboration between counselors, psychologists, and mathematics experts, which has not yet been systematically pursued in Iran. Therefore, the present study aimed to address these multifaceted imperatives and provide operational solutions for transforming the school counseling system in line with sustainable educational development.

4. Research Objectives

General Objective: Design and validation of a comprehensive package of new counseling strategies based on the integration of psychological capital, cognitive-behavioral, and positive psychology approaches and indigenous models, with the aim of increasing the quality of life, reducing emotional disorders, and achieving sustainable educational development in Iranian society.

Specific Objectives:

- Explaining the role of psychological capital components (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) in predicting the psychological well-being of students and teachers using structural equation modeling and quantitative-mathematical approaches.
- Comparing the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral and positive psychology approaches on quality of life indicators and reduction of emotional distress, stratified by gender and

educational level, through a randomized clinical trial with a six-month follow-up period.

- Conducting a comparative analysis of indigenous counseling models (mystical psychotherapy based on the teachings of Rumi, Islamic-Iranian compassion-focused therapy, and culture-based life skills) and extracting effective components for developing a national mental health protocol for schools.
- Our goal is to develop a machine learning-based decision support system that, by integrating psychological data and mathematical indicators (such as quantitative course grades, temporal patterns of counseling referrals, and emotional screening results), can predict students at risk for emotional disorders and recommend personalized counseling pathways.

Target Beneficiaries: The findings of this study have practical applications and can be used by the Ministry of Education, the National Welfare Organization, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Farhangian University, the Institute for Educational Studies, and the Iranian Counseling Association.

5. Research Questions

Main Question: What is the role of psychological counseling in increasing quality of life and mental health?

Sub-questions:

1. What role does counseling play in increasing psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy)?
2. What are the effects of modern counseling approaches (cognitive-behavioral and positive psychology) on quality of life and reduction of psychological distress?
3. How can indigenous psychological counseling models be adapted to enhance mental health?
4. What innovative counseling strategies are there to promote mental health and prevent emotional disorders in line with sustainable educational development?

6. Research Hypotheses

- It is said that “quality of life” and “mental well-being” are in themselves the ultimate goals of “sustainable development.” A society in which the mental health and well-being of its citizens are not guaranteed will never achieve sustainable development.
- Psychological capital-based counseling interventions (including simultaneous training in hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) significantly increased students' quality of life and psychological well-being compared to the control group. Furthermore, among the four components, self-efficacy played the strongest mediating role in the relationship between counseling and psychological well-being.
- There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and positive psychotherapy (PPT) in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among Iranian adolescents; specifically, PPT shows greater effectiveness than CBT in increasing components of flourishing (PERMA model) and maintaining results during a six-month follow-up.
- Among indigenous counseling models (mystical psychotherapy based on the teachings of Rumi, Islamic-Iranian compassion-focused therapy, and culturally-based life skills), there are at least three common components (self-authenticity, self-other compassion, and alignment with religious beliefs). The integrated theoretical model resulting from the combination of these components has higher content validity and greater acceptability among Iranian clients compared to imported Western approaches.

- A comprehensive package of six innovative strategies (psychological capital empowerment, cognitive emotion regulation, positive psychotherapy, school-based mindfulness, emotion-focused preventive counseling, and tele-counseling) significantly reduces emotional disorders and increases psychological well-being in the school setting.

7. Examining the Role of Counseling in Enhancing Psychological Capital (Hope, Optimism, Resilience, and Self-Efficacy)

Psychological capital (PsyCap), as a central construct in positive psychology, represents a positive and developed state of self, characterized by the components of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. This construct is of great importance because, unlike relatively stable personality traits, it can be changed and developed through targeted counseling interventions. The four components of psychological capital have an interactive and synergistic structure, with each component directly and indirectly related to the quality of life and psychological well-being of clients. Psychological counseling, as a specialized field of psychological sciences, can facilitate the cultivation and promotion of each of these components at the individual, group, and organizational levels by utilizing diverse theoretical approaches (including cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused, and positive psychology approaches). In this regard, extensive empirical evidence emphasizes the effectiveness of counseling interventions in increasing psychological capital.

A) The Role of Counseling in Enhancing Hope

According to Snyder's cognitive-motivational theory, hope is a two-dimensional construct that includes agency (the will to achieve goals) and path thinking (the ability to generate alternative strategies to achieve those goals). Psychological counseling, using realistic goal-setting techniques, redefining perceived barriers, and strengthening path thinking, directly affects both components of hope. Empirical evidence shows that psychological capital-based intervention among patients with depression leads to a significant increase in hope scores compared to the control group (Mokhtari, Kojbaf, & Abedi, 2020). Furthermore, in a study among patients with cancer, hope was identified as the second most important predictor of death anxiety, confirming the moderating role of this component in negative psychological experiences (Kaveh Farsani, 2020).

B) The Role of Counseling in Enhancing Resilience

Resilience, conceptualized as the capacity for positive adaptation in the face of adversity and the ability to return to normal from stressful situations, is not simply an innate phenomenon. Rather, it is the result of a dynamic interaction between an individual's personality traits and their environment and can be developed through education, practice, and experience. Counseling focused on resilience increases clients' coping capacity against life stressors by strengthening problem-solving skills, emotion regulation, and cognitive restructuring of difficult experiences. Research findings show that implementing an eight-session group intervention based on psychological capital significantly increased the level of resilience in patients with depression (Mokhtari, 2020). In addition, resilience has been identified as the most important component of psychological capital in predicting reduction in depression and also the strongest predictor of marital adjustment (Kavah Farsani, 2020; Fazeli Hamedani, 2019).

C) The Role of Counseling in Enhancing Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to individuals' judgments about their abilities to organize and execute the practical courses required to achieve a variety of specified performances. The four main sources of self-efficacy are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. The counseling process directly targets

all four aforementioned sources by providing step-by-step successful experiences (tasks appropriate to ability level), providing reinforcing feedback, modeling, and reducing anxiety states. Empirical evidence suggests that psychological capital-based group counseling for adolescents at risk for mental disorders has led to increased self-efficacy and reduced psychopathological symptoms. Furthermore, research has reported a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and academic commitment, confirming the role of this component in motivation to achieve (Saadat, 2019).

D) The Role of Counseling in Enhancing Optimism

Optimism, conceptualized as a general tendency to expect positive outcomes, is closely related to the adaptive attributional style. Counseling approaches help increase clients' optimism by identifying and restructuring pessimistic attributional patterns (characterized by stability, globalization, and negative personalization) and teaching positive reappraisal skills. Empirical evidence suggests that psychological capital training among students has a significant effect on increasing academic optimism (Beshartipour, 2024, p. 38). Furthermore, optimism is one of the components that is significantly increased as a result of psychological capital-based interventions (Mokhtari, 2020).

8. The Efficacy of Modern Counseling Approaches (Cognitive-Behavioral and Positive Psychology) on Quality of Life and the Reduction of Psychological Distress

According to Lazarus and Folkman's cognitive appraisal theory, psychological stress is the result of an individual's appraisal of their interactions with the environment. This appraisal occurs in two stages: primary appraisal, in which the individual determines whether a situation is a threat to their well-being, and secondary appraisal, in which the individual assesses their coping resources to deal with the perceived threat. Based on this interactive model, coping strategies are classified into two types: problem-focused and emotion-focused. Cognitive-behavioral therapy and positive psychotherapy each attempt, in their own way, to restructure these maladaptive appraisals and increase coping effectiveness.

A) The Efficacy of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy on Quality of Life and the Reduction of Psychological Distress

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), based on the cognitive model of Aaron Beck, is based on the assumption that dysfunctional thoughts and irrational beliefs are key mediators in the emergence of emotional disorders. The goal of treatment is to modify these cognitive biases and reduce psychological symptoms through techniques such as cognitive restructuring, exposure, and behavioral activation. The main mechanism of action of CBT is clarified by identifying and modifying cognitive distortions (including bipolar thinking, catastrophizing, emotional reasoning, and personalization) and increasing problem-focused coping strategies. These cognitive changes lead to reduced amygdala activation and increased prefrontal cortex activity, which in turn leads to reduced psychological symptoms and increased perceived quality of life.

B) The Efficacy of Positive Psychotherapy on Quality of Life and the Reduction of Psychological Distress

Positive psychotherapy (PPT) is rooted in Seligman's flourishing theory, which emphasizes the components of PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement, rather than focusing exclusively on psychopathology. This approach aims not only to reduce negative symptoms, but also to increase the individual's capacity to experience positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, and meaning-making. National evidence suggests that both positive psychotherapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy have had a significant impact on psychological well-being. However, the effectiveness of positive psychotherapy

in increasing well-being was greater than that of CBT (Nasiri, 2019). Among university students, positive psychotherapy was effective in increasing life satisfaction, optimism, and positive affect, and these results were sustained at a two-month follow-up (Golestani-Bakht, 2022). Positive psychology training among students resulted in a significant increase in resilience, and this effect was sustained during the follow-up phase (Khanjani, 2017). In patients with chronic mental disorders, positive psychology interventions had a significant impact on happiness and subjective well-being (Harifi, 2022). In addition, in breast cancer patients, both acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) training and positive psychology interventions were effective in increasing resilience and mental health (Abdian, 2023). The mechanism of action of positive psychotherapy works by strengthening neural networks associated with reward and motivation, increasing cognitive flexibility, and facilitating positive reappraisal of events. By neutralizing negative attentional bias and training individuals to focus on adaptive aspects of their experiences, this approach directly increases perceived quality of life.

9. Theoretical Exploration and Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Psychological Counseling Models in Enhancing Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being, conceptualized beyond the mere absence of psychological symptoms, includes subjective well-being, effective psychological functioning, and self-actualization (Sadoghi & Mirzaei Aliabad, 2018). Contemporary conceptualizations of psychological well-being emphasize components such as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, mastery of the environment, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ziaei, 2020). The localization of psychological science, especially in the field of counseling, is a response to the ineffectiveness of imported approaches in the Iranian-Islamic cultural context (Omidian, 2019). Indigenous counseling models, which are based on distinct anthropological and epistemological foundations, can more effectively achieve the quality of intervention and, as a result, increase the psychological well-being of clients in line with the cultural and religious values of the society.

A) Indigenous Theoretical Models: Mystical and Islamic-Iranian Approaches

The most prominent theoretical effort in the field of localization is the development of a mystical psychotherapy framework based on Rumi's worldview (Farshadan, 2025). In this framework, humans possess a divine and healthy "authentic self," while simultaneously engaging in subjective "false selves," which are the main source of psychological suffering. Mental health is defined as being conditioned by liberation from these imaginary selves and a return to authentic presence, the experience of inner unity and integrity. The ultimate goal of treatment is the manifestation of the authentic self, the achievement of intuitive awareness, the experience of inner peace and authentic joy, and human transcendence (Farshadan, 2025). This model has deep anthropological foundations that, unlike the materialism of Western psychotherapies, can be meaningful and identity-giving for Iranian clients. In this regard, the distinction between Islamic counseling and conventional counseling has been examined at three levels: ontological, anthropological, and epistemological. Islamic counseling pursues goals beyond mere "conformity" or "adaptation" and seeks "growth" and "transcendence" within the framework of divine values (Sanagoizadeh, 2019). This fundamental distinction indicates that indigenous models are not merely an adaptation, but a complete redefinition of the counseling process based on religious foundations. Furthermore, the attempt to develop a mystical psychotherapy framework based on Rumi's perspective, drawing on the capacities of Iranian-Islamic mysticism, offers a deeper understanding of human nature, the origin of psychological suffering, and the therapeutic path

(Farshadan, 2025). With its emphasis on self-knowledge, transcending subjective identities, and increasing awareness, this framework has the potential to create a platform for the development of therapeutic interventions tailored to Iranian-Islamic culture (Farshadan, 2025).

B) Indigenous Intervention Models: Culture-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches

At the practical application level, indigenous culturally-based life skills programs focusing on three components - self-awareness, stress coping, and empathy - have been implemented among divorced women. The findings of this study showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the variables of happiness and resilience, indicating that the indigenous culturally-based program successfully increased the happiness and resilience of divorced women (Rahimi-Sadegh et al., 2020). This finding confirms that life skills training delivered in a culturally familiar and acceptable format for clients is more effective compared to imported models. In addition, the indigenous compassion-focused treatment package was structured around concepts of compassion consistent with Iranian-Islamic religious and cultural beliefs. The results showed that this intervention was effective in improving the general health, psychological capital, and lifestyle of working women (Amani et al., 2022). Compassion-focused indigenous therapy specifically focuses on increasing psychological capital (including self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism), which are known to be the strongest predictors of psychological well-being (Sadooghi & Mirzaei Aliabad, 2018). In this regard, one of the most important achievements of indigenous therapy is the promotion of psychological flourishing, which in contemporary theories is considered a key component of psychological well-being, as flourishing can directly predict psychological well-being (Sadooghi & Mirzaei Aliabad, 2018). In addition, the Human Psychological Flourishing Model (HPFM) showed that teleological orientation, motivation for flourishing, self-management, and facilitators of flourishing have significant direct and indirect positive effects on flourishing. This model has great potential for application in indigenous counseling with the aim of promoting psychological well-being (Ziaei et al., 2020).

C) Comparative Analysis: Points of Divergence and Convergence of Indigenous Models

Indigenous counseling models differ in their anthropological foundations. The mystical model emphasizes the "divine authentic self," while the indigenous cognitive-behavioral model focuses on adaptive functions and objective skills. However, these models converge in their ultimate goal (increasing psychological well-being by strengthening positive inner capacities) and their approach (using indigenous cultural capacities to increase the acceptance and effectiveness of the intervention). Findings indicate that because they are consistent with the worldview and beliefs of Iranian clients, indigenous models encounter less resistance and demonstrate more sustained effectiveness.

10. Provision of Counseling Strategies to Strengthen Psychological Well-being and Prevent Emotional Disorders in Alignment with Sustainable Educational Development

Sustainable educational development requires simultaneous attention to improving academic indicators and the psychological health of stakeholders in the educational system (including students, teachers, and counselors) (Arjand et al., 2017). In this context, psychological well-being is a concept that goes beyond the mere absence of psychopathological symptoms and emphasizes dimensions such as independence, mastery of the environment, personal growth, and positive relationships (Sadooghi and Mirzaei Aliabad, 2018). Given the increasing prevalence of emotional disorders (especially anxiety and

depression) among children and adolescents, the design and implementation of preventive and evidence-based counseling strategies has become a top research and clinical priority (Omid, 2018). Six innovative strategies, supported by national and international research, are presented below.

Strategy 1: Psychological Capital-Based Empowerment Programs

Psychological capital, including the components of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, is considered one of the strongest predictors of psychological well-being in an educational context.

In a study involving 354 female students at Qom University, findings showed that self-efficacy and optimism can directly predict psychological well-being (Vahidi and Jafari-Hendi, 2017). Based on this logic, a psychological empowerment training program for teachers, delivered in 10 two-hour sessions, resulted in a significant increase in psychological capital and job-related emotional well-being in the experimental group, and this effect was sustained during the two-month follow-up phase (Valeh et al., 2021). By rebuilding self-efficacy beliefs, setting optimistic expectations, redefining barriers as solvable challenges, and strengthening social support networks, this program lays the groundwork for the prevention of emotional disorders in the school environment (Bigdley et al., 2017).

Strategy 2: Cognitive Emotion Regulation Interventions

Cognitive emotion regulation strategies refer to the conscious cognitive processes that individuals employ to manage their emotional arousal. In a study involving 350 students at Ilam University, structural equation modeling results showed that adaptive strategies (acceptance, refocusing on planning, and positive reappraisal) have a direct and positive relationship with psychological well-being mediated by positive affect, while maladaptive strategies (self-blame, rumination, and catastrophizing) decrease well-being through the mediation of negative affect (Kuchi et al., 2022). Furthermore, training cognitive emotion regulation strategies in eight sessions for deaf students resulted in a significant reduction in psychological problems, especially depression, anxiety, and stress, in the experimental group (Ashouri et al., 2020). Implementing this program in the form of group workshops for students and teachers has great potential for early prevention of emotional disorders in schools.

Strategy 3: Positive Counseling and Flourishing Programs Based on the PERMA Model

Positive psychotherapy, focusing on the PERMA components (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement), seeks to promote well-being and flourishing beyond simply reducing psychological symptoms. The PERMA flourishing questionnaire has a confirmed factor structure and has demonstrated adequate reliability in a population of Iranian teachers (Sharifian et al., 2019). In a study conducted on 568 students, the Persian version of the PERMA questionnaire showed positive correlations with the subscales of psychological well-being and life satisfaction and negative correlations with depression, anxiety, and stress. Furthermore, research has shown that positive psychotherapy is more effective in increasing psychological well-being than cognitive-behavioral therapy and can be designed and implemented as an effective intervention to prevent emotional disorders in the school environment (Nasiri et al., 2019). An intervention that focuses exclusively on reducing symptoms often neglects the cultivation of positive capacities; therefore, positive, flourishing-based approaches are a necessary complement to traditional school counseling programs.

Strategy 4: Mindfulness and Emotion Regulation in the School Environment

Mindfulness, conceptualized as nonjudgmental awareness of present-moment experiences, has been shown to be effective in reducing test anxiety and increasing cognitive processing efficiency in students. In a study involving 44 female high school students, emotion regulation training based on the Gross model (eight one-hour sessions) significantly reduced test anxiety and increased information processing efficiency (Nikdel & Moradian, 2019). Furthermore, group mindfulness training provided to 30 married women showed that the intervention increased psychological well-being while reducing emotional distress and marital burnout. These findings suggest that integrating short-term mindfulness practices into the weekly school schedule (such as awareness of breathing upon entering the classroom, body scans during recess, and nonjudgmental examination of emotions at the end of the day) can serve as a cost-effective and accessible tool for promoting mental health and preventing emotional disorders in the entire school environment (Bigdeli et al., 2017).

Strategy 5: School-Based Counseling and Emotion-Focused Prevention Programs

School-based emotion-focused prevention programs include a wide range of interventions, including social-emotional skills training, school-based stress management, and group cognitive-behavioral interventions that aim to reduce internalizing symptoms (anxiety and depression) and externalizing symptoms (aggression and disruptive behaviors) among students. In a systematic review examining school-based emotion-focused prevention programs, findings indicate that these programs significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression while increasing coping skills and emotional competence (Namati et al., 2022). School counselors can serve as key facilitators of these programs by implementing emotional screening programs, conducting skills training workshops for teachers and parents, and forming peer support groups. In this regard, developing a local protocol for preventing emotional disorders in schools, by utilizing the cultural and religious capacities of Iranian society, is considered a priority for future research (Omidian, 2020).

Strategy 6: Modern Counseling Technologies (Tele-counseling and Mental Health Applications)

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) have facilitated the provision of remote counseling services, thereby increasing access to preventive interventions, especially for students in disadvantaged areas or those who face transportation barriers. Telephone counseling, using videoconferencing platforms, allows for the delivery of educational content and facilitation of group sessions without the need for physical presence. In addition, mobile phone-based applications that provide short-term mindfulness exercises, daily emotion tracking, and cognitive techniques can serve as self-help tools under the supervision of school counselors. Preliminary research in Iran has shown that telephone counseling based on a cognitive-behavioral approach is effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety among students, while also leading to client satisfaction. However, developing technical infrastructure, training consultants to operate in virtual environments, and addressing issues related to privacy and data confidentiality constitute fundamental challenges in this area (Arzhand et al., 2017).

11. Synergy of Strategies and Its Role in Sustainable Educational Development

While each of the six strategies individually has significant effectiveness in promoting mental health and preventing emotional disorders, their synergy through the design of a comprehensive school-based program can yield more sustainable results. For example, a program that simultaneously focuses on empowering teachers' psychological capital (and thus reducing their burnout), teaching students emotion regulation skills,

implementing mindfulness exercises in the classroom, and providing telephone counseling services to at-risk groups can systematically increase school-wide mental health indicators. Such an approach not only directly aligns with the "health and well-being" goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also lays the foundation for more effective and sustainable learning by reducing absenteeism, dropout, and risky behaviors.

Although each of the six strategies described above has demonstrated independent value in promoting mental health and preventing emotional disorders, integrating them into a comprehensive school-based program is likely to produce more sustainable and widespread results. For example, a coordinated program that simultaneously strengthens teachers' psychological capital, teaches students emotion regulation skills, integrates mindfulness practices into classroom routines, and provides telephone counseling for at-risk groups can improve the mental health of the school community in a systematic and sustainable manner.

Such a multidimensional approach is directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 (good health and well-being) and Goal 4 (quality education). By reducing absenteeism, dropout, and risky behaviors, it can also create the conditions for more effective learning and a more resilient education system.

12. Conclusion

The present study aimed to clarify the multifaceted role of psychological counseling in increasing quality of life and psychological well-being, within the framework of four basic axes: psychological capital, modern therapeutic approaches, indigenous models, and innovative educational strategies. Findings from reputable national studies indicate that psychological counseling not only increases psychological capital by strengthening the components of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, but also, by utilizing cognitive-behavioral and positive psychology approaches, significantly reduces emotional distress and increases perceived quality of life in clinical and non-clinical populations. These findings are consistent with cross-country evidence from meta-analyses and emphasize the sustainability and stability of therapeutic effects. At the indigenous level, theoretical and interventional models based on Rumi's mysticism, indigenous compassion-focused therapy, and life skills based on Iranian-Islamic culture have shown great potential to increase acceptance and ensure sustainable effectiveness of counseling in Iranian society. Comparative analysis of these models shows that localization, beyond the mere translation of concepts, requires redefining anthropological foundations and aligning with the cultural and religious values of the clients. This is particularly meaningful in the context of the title of the present conference - "Creativity and Innovation in Education: Perspectives from Counseling Psychology and Mathematics towards Sustainable Development" - because creativity in designing indigenous interventions and innovation in integrating psychological knowledge with quantitative methods and mathematical modeling (e.g., predicting the risk of emotional disorders using machine learning algorithms) can pave a new path towards sustainable educational development. In response to the main research question, six innovative counseling strategies - including psychological capital-based empowerment, cognitive emotion regulation training, positive psychotherapy and the PERMA flourishing program, school-based mindfulness exercises, emotion-focused preventive counseling, and remote counseling alongside mental health programs - were introduced as operational packages. Simultaneous and coherent implementation of these strategies in a comprehensive school-based program can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, increase indicators of psychological well-being, academic resilience, and achievement motivation among students and teachers, while also increasing the

achievement of goals such as the third Sustainable Development Goal (good health and well-being) and the fourth (quality education), and increase the overall productivity of the education system by reducing dropout, absenteeism, and risky behaviors. Finally, this study shows that creativity and innovation in education are not merely abstract concepts, but can be practically achieved through the design of integrated counseling protocols, the use of modern technologies, and interdisciplinary collaboration between counselors and mathematics and statistics specialists (to develop dynamic assessment tools and predictive models).

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