

The Impact Of Cyber Counseling On Mental Health Outcomes In Rivers State University Students

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Abstract:

This study examined the impact of cyber-counseling on mental health outcomes among students of Rivers State University, with emphasis on psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being. The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The population comprised all undergraduate students of Rivers State University, with an estimated population of 30,000, from which a sample size of 400 students was selected using Taro Yamane's formula. A multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Cyber-Counseling and Mental Health Outcomes Questionnaire (CCMHOQ), which was validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Data analysis was carried out using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that cyber-counseling has a significant positive impact on students' psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being. Specifically, increased utilization of cyber-counseling services was associated with reduced emotional distress, improved coping behaviors, and enhanced social interaction among students. Based on these findings, the study concluded that cyber-counseling is an effective and relevant approach for addressing mental health challenges among university students. It was recommended that universities integrate cyber-counseling into their student support systems, provide training for counselors, and create awareness to encourage student participation.

Keywords: Cyber-counseling, mental health outcomes, psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, social well-being, university students.

Introduction

The mental health of university students has emerged as a significant global public health concern, with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, stress, and other psychological disorders reported across diverse educational contexts. Studies indicate that a substantial proportion of university students experience at least one form of mental health challenge during their academic journey, often linked to academic pressure, financial strain, social transitions, and uncertainty about future careers [1]. Despite the availability of conventional face-to-face counseling services within many institutions, utilization remains relatively low, largely due to stigma, fear of disclosure, limited accessibility, and time constraints [2]. This persistent gap between mental health needs and service utilization has necessitated the exploration of alternative, more flexible approaches to psychological support.

In response, cyber-counseling, also referred to as online or digital counseling, has emerged as a modern intervention that leverages internet-based technologies such as video conferencing, chat platforms, mobile applications, and web-based therapeutic programs to deliver mental health services. Cyber-counseling offers several advantages, including increased accessibility, anonymity, cost-effectiveness, and convenience, making it particularly appealing to university students who are often digitally inclined [3]. Empirical evidence suggests that digital mental health interventions can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, with web-based and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) platforms showing particularly strong effectiveness among university populations [4]. In some cases, online counseling interventions have been associated with measurable improvements in emotional well-being and even academic performance outcomes among students [5].

Furthermore, cyber-counseling addresses one of the most critical barriers to mental health service utilization, which is stigma. Many students are more willing to engage in online counseling because it allows for privacy and reduces the fear of being judged or socially labeled. Research has shown that students perceive online counseling as less stigmatizing and more approachable compared to traditional face-to-face methods, with a significant proportion reporting high satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of such services [6]. This shift toward digital platforms aligns with broader global trends in e-health and telepsychology, where technology is increasingly used to bridge gaps in healthcare delivery and improve service reach.

However, the effectiveness of cyber-counseling is not entirely without debate. While several studies affirm its positive impact on psychological outcomes, others report mixed findings when compared to traditional counseling approaches. For instance, experimental research comparing online and face-to-face counseling has indicated that while both approaches can improve psychological well-being, differences in outcomes may depend on factors such as the nature of the intervention, level of interaction, and individual student characteristics [7]. Additionally, issues such as digital literacy, internet accessibility, user engagement, and confidentiality concerns continue to influence the overall effectiveness of cyber-counseling interventions.

In the Nigerian context, and particularly within universities such as Rivers State University, mental health challenges among students are increasingly recognized but remain inadequately addressed due to limited counseling infrastructure, cultural perceptions of mental illness, and insufficient professional support systems. Traditional counseling services are often underutilized, and many students resort to informal coping mechanisms that may not adequately address their psychological needs. Cyber-counseling presents a potentially transformative solution in this setting by offering scalable, accessible, and culturally adaptable mental health support. Studies within similar contexts have highlighted that digital counseling platforms can overcome socio-cultural barriers and enhance help-seeking behavior among students by providing discreet and user-friendly channels for psychological support [8].

Given these developments, there is a growing need to empirically examine the impact of cyber-counseling on mental health outcomes among university students, particularly within localized contexts such as Rivers State University. While global literature provides evidence of its effectiveness, contextual factors such as technological infrastructure, cultural attitudes, and

institutional support systems may influence its adoption and outcomes in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating how cyber-counseling affects mental health outcomes among students, thereby contributing to both academic discourse and practical interventions aimed at improving student well-being.

Statement Of The Problem

The rising prevalence of mental health challenges among university students has become an issue of serious concern, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria where institutional support systems remain limited. Students in tertiary institutions are increasingly exposed to multiple stressors, including academic workload, financial difficulties, social pressures, and uncertainty about future employment. These stressors have contributed to growing cases of anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and poor psychological well-being among students. In Rivers State University, anecdotal observations and emerging reports suggest that many students experience mental health difficulties, yet only a small proportion seek professional counseling support.

One of the major barriers to effective mental health intervention among students is the low utilization of traditional face-to-face counseling services. Factors such as stigma associated with mental health issues, fear of being judged, lack of confidentiality, time constraints, and limited availability of trained counselors discourage students from accessing these services. As a result, many students resort to informal coping mechanisms, including peer discussions or complete avoidance, which may not adequately address their psychological needs and can sometimes worsen their mental health outcomes.

In recent years, cyber-counseling has been introduced as an alternative approach to delivering mental health services, offering advantages such as anonymity, flexibility, and ease of access. While studies conducted in other parts of the world have reported positive outcomes associated with cyber-counseling, including reductions in anxiety and depression levels, there is limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness within the Nigerian university context. Specifically, in Rivers State University, it remains unclear whether cyber-counseling is accessible to students, the extent to which it is utilized, and how it influences their mental health outcomes.

Furthermore, contextual factors such as digital literacy, internet accessibility, cultural perceptions of mental health, and institutional readiness may significantly affect the adoption and effectiveness of cyber-counseling among students. Without empirical investigation, assumptions about its benefits may remain speculative and may not reflect the realities of students within this environment.

Therefore, the problem of this study lies in the lack of sufficient empirical evidence on the impact of cyber-counseling on mental health outcomes among students of Rivers State University. This gap makes it difficult for university administrators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to make informed decisions regarding the integration of cyber-counseling into existing student support systems. Consequently, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the extent to which cyber-counseling influences the mental health outcomes of university students in Rivers State University.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of cyber-counseling on psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being among students of Rivers State University.

1. To determine the impact of cyber-counseling on the psychological well-being of students in Rivers State University.
2. To assess the impact of cyber-counseling on the behavioral functioning of students in Rivers State University.
3. To examine the impact of cyber-counseling on the social well-being of students in Rivers State University.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of cyber-counseling on the psychological well-being of students in Rivers State University?
2. What is the impact of cyber-counseling on the behavioral functioning of students in Rivers State University?
3. What is the impact of cyber-counseling on the social well-being of students in Rivers State University?

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the psychological well-being of students in Rivers State University.

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the behavioral functioning of students in Rivers State University.

H₀₃: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the social well-being of students in Rivers State University.

Literature Review

Concept of Cyber-Counseling

Cyber-counseling refers to the provision of professional psychological support through digital platforms such as video calls, emails, live chats, mobile applications, and web-based programs. It represents a shift from traditional face-to-face counseling to technology-mediated therapeutic interactions designed to improve accessibility and flexibility in mental health service delivery [9]. With the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies, cyber-counseling has become increasingly integrated into modern healthcare systems, particularly in addressing the mental health needs of digitally active populations such as university students.

The emergence of cyber-counseling is closely tied to the limitations of conventional counseling services, especially in contexts where mental health resources are scarce or underutilized. Scholars have noted that cyber-counseling provides anonymity and convenience, which reduces barriers such as stigma and scheduling conflicts that often prevent individuals from seeking help [10]. For students, who are typically more comfortable with digital communication, this approach offers a familiar and less intimidating pathway to psychological support.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that cyber-counseling can be as effective as traditional counseling in treating common mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (iCBT), for instance, has shown significant success in reducing symptoms and improving overall mental health outcomes [11]. However, concerns remain regarding issues such as confidentiality, therapeutic alliance, and digital access, which may influence its effectiveness across different settings.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is a core dimension of mental health outcomes, encompassing emotional stability, life satisfaction, and the absence of psychological distress such as anxiety and depression. It reflects an individual's ability to manage stress, maintain a positive outlook, and function effectively in daily life [12]. Among university students, psychological well-being is often threatened by academic pressures, financial challenges, and social adjustments, making it a critical area of concern for mental health interventions.

Studies have consistently shown that poor psychological well-being among students is associated with negative academic and personal outcomes, including reduced concentration, low academic performance, and increased dropout rates [13]. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving psychological well-being are essential for enhancing both academic success and overall quality of life. Cyber-counseling has been identified as a promising tool in this regard, as it provides timely support and coping strategies that help students manage emotional distress.

Research indicates that online counseling interventions, particularly those based on cognitive behavioral therapy, can significantly improve psychological well-being by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety [14]. The flexibility and accessibility of cyber-counseling allow students to engage with therapeutic content at their own pace, thereby promoting sustained emotional improvement. Nevertheless, the extent of its effectiveness may vary depending on factors such as user engagement and the quality of the digital platform.

Behavioral Functioning

Behavioral functioning refers to the observable actions and coping behaviors that individuals exhibit in response to their mental health status. It includes aspects such as academic engagement, time management, sleep patterns, and the use of adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. For university students, behavioral functioning is a key indicator of how well they are managing the demands of academic and social life.

Poor mental health is often reflected in dysfunctional behaviors such as absenteeism, procrastination, substance use, and social withdrawal [15]. These behaviors not only affect academic performance but also contribute to a cycle of worsening mental health outcomes. Therefore, interventions that target behavioral change are essential in improving overall student well-being.

Cyber-counseling has been shown to influence behavioral functioning by providing structured guidance, self-help tools, and real-time feedback that encourage positive behavioral changes. Online interventions often incorporate techniques such as goal setting, behavioral activation, and stress management, which help students develop healthier habits. As a result, students who engage in cyber-counseling are more likely to adopt effective coping strategies and demonstrate improved academic and social behaviors.

Social Well-being

Social well-being involves the quality of an individual's interpersonal relationships, sense of belonging, and ability to interact effectively within a social environment. It is an essential component of mental health, as strong social connections are associated with better emotional resilience and overall life satisfaction. For university students, social well-being is particularly important as they navigate new social environments and build relationships.

Students with poor mental health often experience difficulties in social interaction, including isolation, communication challenges, and reduced participation in group activities. These issues can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, creating a negative feedback loop that affects overall well-being. Therefore, improving social well-being is a critical objective of mental health interventions.

Cyber-counseling can enhance social well-being by providing a safe space for students to express themselves and develop interpersonal skills. Some digital platforms include group counseling sessions, peer support forums, and interactive tools that foster social connection and engagement. Research suggests that students who participate in online counseling report improved communication skills, increased social confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging (Richards & Viganó, 2013). However, the lack of physical interaction in cyber-counseling may limit its effectiveness in addressing certain social challenges.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies have increasingly examined the effectiveness of cyber-counseling in improving mental health outcomes among university students. For instance, Auerbach et al. conducted a large-scale cross-national study to assess the prevalence of mental health disorders among university students and the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Using a survey design across multiple countries, the study found that digital mental health interventions significantly improved students' psychological well-being, particularly in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. The

findings support the relevance of cyber-counseling as a viable tool for addressing student mental health challenges.

Karyotaki et al. carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy for depression. The study analyzed multiple randomized controlled trials and found that online CBT interventions were highly effective in reducing depressive symptoms. The study concluded that cyber-counseling platforms can serve as an alternative to traditional therapy, especially for populations with limited access to mental health services. This finding is directly relevant to the present study, as it highlights the potential of cyber-counseling to improve psychological well-being among students.

Zeren et al. conducted a non-randomized controlled trial to compare the effectiveness of online and face-to-face counseling among university students. The study involved undergraduate students and utilized standardized psychological assessment tools to measure outcomes. The results indicated that both online and traditional counseling significantly improved mental health outcomes, although differences were observed in the level of interaction and engagement. The study underscores the importance of contextual factors in determining the effectiveness of cyber-counseling.

Similarly, Richards and Viganó explored the role of online counseling in enhancing student mental health through a qualitative and quantitative approach. The study found that students reported high satisfaction with online counseling services due to their accessibility and anonymity. Participants also demonstrated improvements in behavioral functioning, including better coping strategies and increased academic engagement. The study recommends the integration of cyber-counseling into university support systems.

In the Nigerian context, Okeke et al. investigated the use of internet-based mental health interventions among university students. The study employed a descriptive survey design and found that while awareness of digital counseling platforms was increasing, actual utilization remained low due to factors such as limited internet access and cultural perceptions of mental health. The findings highlight the need for localized studies to better understand the impact of cyber-counseling within specific institutional contexts such as Rivers State University.

Theoretical Review

Stress and Coping Theory

The study is anchored on the Stress and Coping Theory developed by Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman in 1984. The theory explains how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to stressful situations, emphasizing that stress is not merely a result of external events but is largely determined by an individual's cognitive appraisal of those events and their ability to cope with them. According to the theory, when individuals encounter a potential stressor, they engage in a primary appraisal to determine whether the situation is threatening, harmful, or challenging, followed by a secondary appraisal where they evaluate their available coping resources and options.

A central assumption of the theory is that coping strategies play a crucial role in determining mental health outcomes. Coping is broadly categorized into problem-focused coping, which involves actively addressing the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, which involves managing emotional responses to stress. Effective coping strategies are associated with better psychological well-being, improved behavioral functioning, and stronger social adjustment, while ineffective coping can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and maladaptive behaviors. Within the context of university students, the theory is particularly relevant because students are frequently exposed to academic, financial, and social stressors that require continuous appraisal and coping.

The relevance of the Stress and Coping Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how cyber-counseling influences mental health outcomes. Cyber-counseling serves as a coping resource that provides students with psychological support, guidance, and strategies to manage stress more effectively. Through online counseling platforms, students can learn adaptive coping mechanisms, reframe negative thoughts, and regulate their emotional responses, thereby improving their psychological well-being. In addition, cyber-counseling can promote positive behavioral changes by

encouraging healthy routines and coping habits, as well as enhance social well-being by improving communication skills and reducing feelings of isolation.

Furthermore, the theory supports the idea that accessibility and immediacy of coping resources are critical in determining their effectiveness. Cyber-counseling, by virtue of its flexibility and availability, increases the likelihood that students will seek help when needed, thereby strengthening their coping capacity. This aligns with the core proposition of the theory that individuals who have access to adequate coping resources are better equipped to manage stress and maintain positive mental health outcomes. Therefore, the Stress and Coping Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between cyber-counseling and mental health outcomes among students of Rivers State University.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design to examine the impact of cyber-counseling on mental health outcomes among students of Rivers State University. The choice of this design was based on its suitability for establishing the nature and strength of relationships between variables without manipulating them. Specifically, the design enabled the researcher to investigate how cyber-counseling relates to psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being among students.

The study was conducted at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, a public tertiary institution located in Rivers State, Nigeria. The university hosts a large and diverse student population, providing an appropriate setting for examining issues related to mental health and the adoption of digital counseling interventions. The population of the study comprised all undergraduate students of Rivers State University, estimated at approximately 30,000 students based on available institutional records.

A sample size of 400 students was selected for the study using Taro Yamane's formula at a 0.05 level of significance, which yielded a minimum sample size of approximately 395, and was rounded up to ensure adequate representation. A multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents. Faculties were first stratified, after which departments were randomly selected. Within the selected departments, students were chosen using simple random sampling to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of being included in the study.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Cyber-Counseling and Mental Health Outcomes Questionnaire (CCMHOQ), which was designed by the researcher in line with the study objectives. The instrument was organized into five sections, with Section A capturing demographic information such as age, gender, and level of study, while Sections B to E focused on cyber-counseling utilization, psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being respectively. The items in these sections were structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was subjected to face and content validation by the researcher's supervisor and two experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated to improve the clarity and relevance of the items. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study conducted among 30 students from a university outside the study area. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study.

The data collection process was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to the respondents, and a period of two weeks was allowed for completion and retrieval. This approach ensured a high response rate and accuracy of data collection.

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The

decision rule was that the null hypothesis would be rejected if the p-value was less than 0.05, and accepted if otherwise.

Result

Hypothesis One: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the psychological well-being of students in Rivers State University.

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Cyber-Counseling and Psychological Well-being

Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.245	0.182		6.84	0.000
Cyber-Counseling	0.583	0.037	0.620	15.76	0.000

Model Summary

R = 0.62

R Square = 0.384

Adjusted R Square = 0.381

Std. Error of Estimate = 0.58

ANOVA

F = 248.36

Sig. = 0.000

Table 4.1 shows that cyber-counseling has a strong positive relationship with psychological well-being (R = 0.62). The R² value of 0.384 indicates that 38.4% of the variation in psychological well-being is explained by cyber-counseling. The F-value (248.36) with a significance level of 0.000 shows that the model is statistically significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.620$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that cyber-counseling significantly improves psychological well-being. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the behavioral functioning of students in Rivers State University.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Cyber-Counseling and Behavioral Functioning

Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.378	0.194		7.10	0.000
Cyber-Counseling	0.521	0.038	0.570	13.84	0.000

Model Summary

R = 0.57

R Square = 0.325

Adjusted R Square = 0.322

Std. Error of Estimate = 0.61

ANOVA

F = 191.48

Sig. = 0.000

Table 4.2 indicates that cyber-counseling is positively related to behavioral functioning (R = 0.57). The R² value of 0.325 shows that 32.5% of the variation in behavioral functioning is explained by cyber-counseling. The F-value (191.48) is statistically significant at 0.000, confirming the model's adequacy. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.570$, $p < 0.05$) reveals that cyber-counseling has a

significant positive impact on students' behavioral functioning. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant impact of cyber-counseling on the social well-being of students in Rivers State University.

Table 4.3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Cyber-Counseling and Social Well-being Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.412	0.201		7.02	0.000
Cyber-Counseling	0.498	0.039	0.540	12.81	0.000

Model Summary

R = 0.54

R Square = 0.292

Adjusted R Square = 0.289

Std. Error of Estimate = 0.63

ANOVA

F = 164.27

Sig. = 0.000

Table 4.3 reveals a positive relationship between cyber-counseling and social well-being ($R = 0.54$). The R^2 value of 0.292 indicates that 29.2% of the variation in social well-being is explained by cyber-counseling. The F-value (164.27) with a significance level of 0.000 confirms that the model is statistically significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.540$, $p < 0.05$) shows that cyber-counseling significantly enhances social well-being among students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that cyber-counseling has a significant positive impact on the psychological well-being of students in Rivers State University. The regression result showed a strong relationship between cyber-counseling and psychological well-being, indicating that increased engagement with cyber-counseling services is associated with reduced levels of anxiety, stress, and depression among students. This finding aligns with the work of Karyotaki et al., who reported that internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy significantly reduces depressive symptoms among users. Similarly, Harith et al. found that digital mental health interventions are effective in improving emotional stability and overall psychological health among university students. The implication of this finding is that cyber-counseling provides a viable and effective alternative to traditional counseling methods, particularly in environments where stigma and accessibility issues limit the use of face-to-face services.

The study also found that cyber-counseling significantly influences the behavioral functioning of students. The positive relationship observed suggests that students who engage in cyber-counseling are more likely to adopt healthier coping strategies, demonstrate improved time management, and exhibit better academic engagement. This finding supports the study by Andersson et al., which established that internet-based therapeutic interventions contribute to positive behavioral changes through structured guidance and behavioral activation techniques. In addition, Dempsey et al. noted that improved mental health is closely linked to better academic behaviors and reduced maladaptive coping mechanisms among students. This result implies that cyber-counseling does not only address internal emotional states but also translates into observable improvements in students' daily functioning and academic activities.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that cyber-counseling has a significant positive impact on students' social well-being. The results indicate that students who utilize cyber-counseling services

tend to experience better interpersonal relationships, improved communication skills, and a stronger sense of belonging. This finding is consistent with the study by Richards and Viganó, which reported that online counseling enhances users' social confidence and interpersonal skills through interactive and supportive digital environments. Likewise, Hefner and Eisenberg emphasized the importance of social support in improving mental health outcomes among university students. The implication of this finding is that cyber-counseling can serve as a platform for fostering social connection and reducing feelings of isolation, which are common among students experiencing mental health challenges.

The findings of this study demonstrate that cyber-counseling has a multidimensional impact on students' mental health outcomes, positively influencing psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being. These results reinforce the growing body of literature that supports the effectiveness of digital mental health interventions in higher education settings. However, while the findings are encouraging, they also suggest the need to consider contextual factors such as digital accessibility, user engagement, and institutional support systems to maximize the benefits of cyber-counseling among students in Rivers State University.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of cyber-counseling on mental health outcomes among students of Rivers State University, with particular focus on psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social well-being. The findings of the study clearly demonstrated that cyber-counseling plays a significant role in improving students' mental health across these three dimensions. Students who engaged with cyber-counseling services showed better emotional stability, adopted healthier behavioral patterns, and experienced improved social interactions compared to those with limited or no engagement.

The study therefore concludes that cyber-counseling is not just a convenient alternative to traditional counseling but a relevant and effective intervention for addressing the growing mental health challenges among university students. Its accessibility, flexibility, and level of privacy make it especially suitable within the university environment where stigma and time constraints often limit the use of conventional counseling services. However, the effectiveness of cyber-counseling is influenced by factors such as digital access, user engagement, and institutional support, which must be considered for optimal implementation.

Recommendations

1. The management of Rivers State University should integrate cyber-counseling into its existing student support services by establishing accessible and well-structured digital counseling platforms for students.
2. The university should provide adequate training for professional counselors on the effective use of digital tools to enhance the quality of cyber-counseling and ensure meaningful engagement with students.
3. Regular awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate students on the availability, benefits, and confidentiality of cyber-counseling in order to reduce stigma and encourage its utilization.

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