

Impact of Psychosocial Skills Training on Students' Psychological Well-Being and Academic Performance at Institut Catholique de Kabgayi

¹Joseph Kubwimana, ²Innocent Twagilimana, ³Bizimana Barthelemy

¹Dr Joseph Kubwimana, lecturer at University of Rwanda-College of Education

²Dr Innocent Twagilimana, senior lecturer at University of Rwanda-College of Education

³Dr Barthelemy Bizimana, lecturer at University of Rwanda-College of Education
Corresponding E mail: :kujoseph2002@yahoo.fr

Abstract

This study aims to offer psychosocial skills training to students who struggle with academic integration in higher learning institutions in Rwanda. This training allows a student to regulate and control both his/her own and other people's emotions, which are likely to disrupt his/her ability to learn. The total sample group is 165 students of the first year, enrolled in the Faculty of Education at ICK, during the academic year 2021-2022. These students were selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. They are divided into groups: the intervention group of 82 students who received training of two years on psychosocial skills versus 83 from the control group. The study has adopted a mixed-methods approach to collect, analyse and interpret data. Thus, the training program, academic records, emotional quotient test (EQT), and chi-square tests were used to assess the impact of training psychosocial skills on students' achievements. The results (Chi-square ($22.7 > 7.815$ at 3 ddl at the 5% threshold)) indicated that the psychosocial skills training improved the academic performance and psychological well-being of the intervention group's students ($\chi^2 c = 26.86 > 7.815$) compared to their counterparts in the control group. Not only did training enhance students' emotional and social skills but it also optimised academic performance. The findings of this research contributed valuable insights to educational practitioners, policymakers, and psychologists, guiding the implementation of tailored interventions to enhance students' emotional and social skills.

Keywords: *Psychosocial skills, the Emotional Quotient Test (EQT), academic integration, academic results.*

Accepted 5/5/2025

Published 13/5/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

Background and problem statement

The current knowledge-based society requires workers who are qualified and competent to meet the challenges of the labour market (Sauvé and Viau, 2003; Mutebi & Kiplagat, 2023; MINEDUC, 2018). It is with this perspective that many universities seek to train students both qualitatively and quantitatively by empowering them with quality and diversified training that allow them to be competitive in both national and international labour markets. Thus, the young people who successfully complete this training could participate effectively in the socio-economic development of nations and in their

socio-cultural integration (UNESCO 2015). However, in view of the dropout rates of university students, particularly those in the first year, in both developed and developing countries, it can be said that the ideal that the programme has established is far from being achieved.

In France, for instance, statistics from the Direction de l'Evaluation et de la Prospective (2012-2020) show that 43.8% of students enrolled in the first year for a bachelor's degree went on to the second year, but 29% repeated and 27.2% exited the system. In the United States, the study by Grayson (2003) proved that dropout rates in North

American universities vary between 20 and 25% in the first year and 20 to 30% for the rest of the study cycle.

The research conducted by Barr-Telford et al. (2013) and Boudages (1996) also indicated that in Canada, the dropout rate in the first year is 24% of students enrolled in part-time studies compared to 30% to 70% of students enrolled in distance education institutions. A similar study carried out in Australia by Horstmanshof and Limitat (2014) came to the same conclusions; the dropout rate is 25% of the first academic year.

Statistics from the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi in Rwanda during the academic year 2020-2021 indicated that 25% of students finished the first year with an average of 52%; 18% of them finished the year without passing from two up to four modules, and 8% have completed their first training cycle unsuccessfully.

This massive exclusion of students from the university system also has consequences for the students, the institutions, and society as a whole. The fact that the student has not been able to obtain his/her university degree decreases his/her chances of having a quality job and also limits his ability to develop his/her intellectual and social skills (Grayson, 2003). Downsizing affects the institution's budget; it also calls into question the quality of the supervision of the teaching staff and the reputation of the university.

High drop-out rates coupled with insufficient graduation rates do not favour the growth of the economies of nations, since a country benefits from human capital when its labour force is made up of educated and competent individuals capable of meeting the labour market's requirements. On the other hand, perseverance in studies at a diploma level would promote the economic activity of a society and would, at the same time, increase the job prospects of the population, which guarantees it a place on the world chessboard.

Although some authors linked the failure to financial problems (Finnie and Quiu, 2008), to cognitive aptitudes (Tinto, 1993; 2005), and to the inadequate supervision of the teaching staff, Gauthier (2014) instead found that it is related to the lack of emotional and social skills among students. Indeed, the results of qualitative studies carried out in Canada by Barar and Manser (2009) showed that 31% of students left university for personal problems (low self-esteem, lack of motivation, interpersonal relationship problems), compared to 17% who left their studies for academic issues (the courses are too difficult to understand, problems related to adapting to the pace of work, the courses were found more theoretical than practical, etc.). The problems mentioned by the first category of students were more related to emotional and social skills (or emotional intelligence) than to cognitive or academic difficulties.

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary education, the cultivation of emotional and social skills among students has gained increasing recognition for its potential influence on their psychological well-being and academic performance (Mason, C., et al., 2022). The

intricate interplay between emotional intelligence and social competence is believed to significantly shape the holistic development of individuals, particularly within the context of high learning institutions. Chen, S., et al. (2023).

However, despite the growing emphasis on fostering emotional intelligence and social competencies in educational settings, there exists a notable gap in empirical research that specifically addresses the outcomes of such training programmes within the Rwandan academic context. The need for a comprehensive understanding of how training interventions aimed at enhancing emotional and social skills impacted the psychological equilibrium of students, as well as their academic performance, was paramount for informed educational practices. The Catholic Institute of Kabgayi (ICK) in Rwanda stands for a microcosm for exploring the implications of such training initiatives, providing a unique setting to examine the intricate relationships between emotional and social skills, psychological balance, and academic achievement.

The significance of the study is to allow the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi, as a high learning institution of excellence, to achieve its objective at 100% success and at a very high average. In this sense, the training on emotional intelligence could help first-year students who have difficulty adapting to academic requirements. In other words, it is about developing the emotional capital of students with difficulties related to lack of self-confidence, who live in isolation and have fear and stress which are likely to affect their cognitive functioning and, by extension, their academic results.

Objective of the study

The study has two specific objectives:

- i) To train students in psychosocial skills techniques such as: identification, management, control of emotions and feelings likely to positively influence their Emotional Quotient (EQ).
- ii) To evaluate the influence of the training of emotional and social skills on the psychological balance of students and on their Academic Performance.

From these objectives, we formulated the hypothesis that students who have followed and integrated the training about psychosocial skills are psychologically fulfilled and perform well at school compared to their peers who have not benefitted from the same training. In other words, the management and mastery of emotions as well as feelings lead the student to his/her psychological balance and to good academic performance..

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the importance of psychosocial skills

in promoting the overall well-being of students has gained significant attention in the field of education. The academic environment, particularly in higher learning institutions, is a source of various challenges that impact students' mental health and academic performance. This literature review aims to explore the current state of research on the impact of psychosocial skills training on the psychological well-being of students and its subsequent influence on academic performance, with a specific focus on the case study of Institut Catholique de Kabgayi (ICK) in Rwanda from 2021 to 2023.

Psychological Well-being of Students

For a long time, emotions were disregarded and thought of as a disturbing element of reason. As a result, nowadays they attract the attention of several scholars who understand how important emotions affect the nervous system. Indeed, the work of Damasio (1994) and Worthman (1999) demonstrated that thought, emotion, and feelings are intimately linked by networks of entangled neurones that function as a single entity to enrich our knowledge, our know-how, and our life skills. Contrary to the old conception of the antagonism between reason and feeling, it is not a question of freeing oneself from emotions and substituting them for reason, but of finding the right balance between them.

In the context of education, for example, the work of Niedenthal et al. (2008) and Kubwimanana (2013, 2016) showed that the student learns better when he/she is emotionally involved. He/she easily remembers if, at the time of acquiring knowledge, his affective state has been positive or in balance since negative feelings such as sadness, fear, and anxiety being activated inhibit the memorisation and acquisition of new knowledge.

Since then, many researchers and education practitioners have been interested in developing educational programmes likely to develop the emotional intelligence of students (Martínez, 2001; Zins et al., 2004) in order to reduce the rate of failure in schools. It is in this perspective that Zins et al. (2004) designed a detailed programme geared towards a range of emotional and social skills, including social awareness, self-management and interpersonal relationship management.

In addition, the psychological well-being of students is a multifaceted concept that involves emotional, social, and mental dimensions. Research by Smith and Jones (2022); Garcia, M., & Martinez, P. (2018) indicate a positive correlation between psychosocial skills and psychological well-being, with improved emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills contributing to greater life satisfaction among students. Furthermore, a study by Wang et al. (2023) emphasises the role of psychosocial skills in reducing anxiety and depression levels, promoting a positive mental health environment

within educational institutions

Impact of students' psychological well-being on their Academic Performance

Several studies have explored the link between psychological well-being and academic performance. The research conducted by Garcia et al. (2022) suggests that students with higher levels of psychological well-being tend to demonstrate better academic achievements. Thus, having access to psychosocial skills training, by enhancing students' emotional and cognitive abilities, is posited to influence academic outcomes positively. A longitudinal study carried out by Brown and Smith (2021) found a significant improvement in academic performance among students who underwent psychosocial skills training compared to a control group that did not undergo the same training.

Psychosocial Skills Training and Academic Achievement

Psychosocial skills encompass a range of abilities related to emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and stress management. Thus, its integration into educational curricula has been recognised as a proactive approach to addressing the mental health challenges that students face in academia. In their study, Patel et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of psychosocial skills in fostering resilience and coping mechanisms, leading to enhanced psychological well-being.

In the same perspective, Boyatzis (2007) focused on the training component that addresses the problem of managing negative emotions and feelings within oneself and in others both in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. It was found an educational programme that allows the learners to better manage their negative feelings, such as sadness, fear, isolation, anxiety, etc., likely to interfere with their learning and relationships with others. The work of Bar-On (2007) has also highlighted a significant relationship between a training programme and the psychological development of trainees on the one hand and perseverance and academic success as put forth by Elias et al. (1997) and Parker et al. (2021) on the other hand.

The current literature review underscores the growing body of evidence supporting the positive impact of psychosocial skills training on the psychological well-being of students and its subsequent influence on academic performance. These new trends of research are certainly interesting, especially in the field of education, in the sense that they contribute to the psychosocial integration of students and to the reduction of failure rates in schools and universities. However, it was limited to students from industrialised countries (the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, etc.). Rare are the studies of

this kind carried out in the rest of the world, particularly in Africa. Given that the problem of failure in academia is recurrent in both developed and developing countries, it is important to conduct a study of this kind in similar ways in Rwanda. Thus, the goal of this study is to allow the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi, as an excellent higher learning institution, to achieve its objective at 100% success with a high average rate. In this regard, the training on psychosocial skills will be a contribution to first-year students who struggle adapting to academic requirements.

Theoretical framework

Our study is framed in the experimental design. It is based on the model of Couzon and Dorn (2007), which takes up the contributions of the work of Goleman (1995) and Salovey and Mayer (2000). Couzon and Dorn define psychosocial skills as the ability to recognise and control emotions and feelings in oneself and in others for better adaptation to one's environment. The training in the modular system program is also inspired by the dimensions of emotional and social competence adapted from models resulting from empirical research on psychosocial skills. It borrows from the intentional change theory of Boyatzis (2007), the strengths-based development of Hodges and Clifton (2004), the competency-based model of Mayer and Salovey (1997), Nelson's emotional learning system and Low (2003), and the teachings of positive psychology and the promotion of human functioning based on the scientific data of Linley and Joseph (2004).

Training

The programme includes six main concepts broken down into six emotional and social skills, Couzon and Dorn (2007):

- a) Emotional awareness aims to develop in the student the ability to be aware of him/herself, his/her own emotions and those of others;
- b) Emotional expression allows the person to express their feelings on an intrapersonal level. As for the interpersonal level, it measures the ability to welcome the emotions of others and allow them to express them.
- c) Emotional understanding is the ability to understand the reasons for one's emotions, one's reactions and also the reactions of others;
- d) Emotional mastery includes the ability to manage one's emotions and to adapt to the emotions of others;
- e) Emotional use includes the ability to use one's emotions to achieve one's goals and to manage conflict;
- f) Balance and emotional harmony are the predispositions to implement optimism, self-confidence, good stress management and empathy.

The training sessions were organised once a week for one hour (60 minutes) over a period of 73 weeks, which means two years of training.

Variables

Emotional Intelligence Training is the independent variable in our study. It is the indicator of an emotionally intelligent student who knows how to manage, control and use his emotions appropriately in interaction with his environment. The impact of training on the psychological development of the student is measured using the **Emotional Quotient (EQ) Test of Couzon and Dorn (2007)**. This invites the student to make his/herself-assessment of emotional skills both at the intrapersonal and interpersonal level.

The test was made up of **six items that correspond to six emotional skills**. Each item included four questions, two of which measured a skill at the intrapersonal level, and two others at the interpersonal level. In total, twenty-four questions of which four questions were administered to a student in each item to measure a skill. The scores that subjects could obtain on the EQ test ranged from 1 to 144.

Responses were rated by the subject on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always). The study took place during the 2021-2022; 2022-2023 academic years; that is to say from the beginning of December 2021 to October 30, 2023.

Thus, we distinguish the different levels of scores on the following criteria: A score in the range [0 to 85] corresponds to a low level;

- A score in the range [86 to 110] corresponds to an average level;
- A score in the range [111 to 130] corresponds to a high level;
- A score in the range [131 to 144] corresponds to a very high level.

The different levels of EQ having been identified, it is now important to determine the indicators of the dependent variable.

In the study, academic results, or academic performance, are the dependent variable, in the sense that they depend on the training received by the student at the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi. The concept of academic performance designates, according to DeLansheere (1992), Pempel (2002), Yusuf, Onifade and Bello (2016), the visible, quantifiable results that the learner achieves at the end of a learning process, following a summative evaluation. In our study, the student's performance corresponded to the results he/she obtained in the first and second academic years. These results are then classified according to four levels: Very High, High, Medium and Low.

- The rating scale ranked student performance as follows: Scores in the range [30 to 49] correspond to poor performance;

- Scores in the range [50 to 60] correspond to average performance;
- Scores in the range [61 to 79] correspond to high performance;
- Scores in the range [80 to 100] correspond to very high performance.

These different EQ and performance indicators allowed us to verify the correlation between training and the academic results of students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Rwanda within the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi (ICK). Since this institute is located in the centre of the country, it is accessible to students from all over the country with different rich cultural diversity in terms of openness to other cultures. Though the place fosters the exchange of experiences, it can also be a barrier for certain students who struggle with psycho-social integration due to the pressure to establish new relationships, modify past relationships, manage their personal time effectively, and adapt to a new work environment

Population, sample and sampling strategy

The total population of our study was 550 students of first-year enrolled at ICK for academic year 2021-2022. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ where n= the sample size required, N= the population, e= the allowable error (0.05). By substituting numbers into the formula, ($n = \frac{550}{1+550(0.05)^2} = 165$). A sample size of 165 was obtained.

The total sample group is 165 students, and they are divided into groups: the intervention group of 82 students who received training on psychosocial skills for two years versus the control group of 83 students. These students were selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The total sample group is 165 students, including 88 boys (i.e., 53%) against

77 girls (i.e., 47%) enrolled in the Faculty of Education, which has two departments: Geography-History and Languages. They are divided into groups: the intervention group of 82 students who received training of two years on psychosocial skills versus 83 students from the control group.

Apart from the courses (modules) and academic work required by the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi, the students of the intervention group benefitted from training psychosocial skills of one hour per week (that is, 20

minutes of theoretical course and 40 minutes of practical course) for 72 weeks of the two academic years.

As a result, the students of the control group were satisfied only with the training plan designed by the ICK. We can reject or confirm our two hypotheses by comparing both academic and EQ results obtained from two categories of students.

In the study, the emotional quotient and chi-square tests were used. They allowed us to measure the influence of the training on the psychosocial and academic integration of the students. Therefore, academic records provided information related to academic achievement.

Method of data processing

In terms of data processing, the EQ test was used to arrive at the comparative study between the different levels of student EQ and academic results. Chi-square was used to measure the correlation between the two variables.

Ethical considerations

Before starting data collection, important ethical principles were taken into account in human subject research. Primarily, participants volunteered to participate in the study with assurances that their information would be strictly used for research purposes. Besides, their identities were kept confidential during result dissemination. Participants were also guaranteed the freedom to leave the study at any time without incurring any penalties. Prior to questionnaire completion, participants signed a consent form to provide their answers freely for research purposes .

2. Presentation of the results

Results were presented in the section where the impact of the psychological skills training on the psychological development of students was compared with their academic performance. They were presented in three steps. The first were results from the EQ pre-test administered to first-year students of ICK at the beginning of their academic studies. The second were results obtained after one-year training. Finally, we presented results we got at the end of the second year of their training together with their academic performance. Results were presented in tables numbered in accordance with the tests administered in steps.

a) The EQ test results

Table 1: The results of the EQ pre-test at the beginning academic year 2021-2022

| EQ Students | Very High level | | High level | | Average level | | Low level | | Total | |
|----------------|-----------------|---|------------|------|---------------|------|-----------|------|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gr 1 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 20,7 | 45 | 54,8 | 20 | 24,3 | 82 | 100 |
| Gr 2 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 15,6 | 47 | 56,6 | 23 | 27,8 | 83 | 100 |
| Total | 0 | | 20 | | 92 | | 53 | | 165 | 100 |

Source: Results from the pre-test administered at the beginning of academic year 2021-2022

The results presented in table (1) show that no group of students is scored at a very high EQ level. The majority of them, for both groups, were at the average EQ level,

i.e., 54.8% of students in Group (1) compared to 56.6% in Group (2).

Table 2: The EQ Results after the first year of training

| EQ Students | Very High level | | High level | | Average level | | Low level | | Total | |
|----------------|-----------------|----|------------|----|---------------|----|-----------|----|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gr 1 | 8 | 10 | 26 | 32 | 39 | 47 | 9 | 11 | 82 | 100 |
| Gr 2 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 18 | 49 | 59 | 19 | 23 | 83 | 100 |
| Total | 8 | | 41 | | 88 | | 28 | | 165 | 100 |

Source: Results got in academic year 2021-2022 after one year of the training

The Chi-square test ($15.98 > 7.815$ at 3 ddl at the 5% threshold). The findings of the Chi-square test after first year of training, about emotional skills had a positive impact on the psychological development of students in Group (1) compared to those of group (2). It was found that the students of Gr (1) performed above all at the very high level and high EQ: 10% against 0% and 32% against

18 %. There was a drop in the percentage of EQ results of students in the intervention group at the average and low levels respectively. It was confirmed that there was a relationship between the training and the psycho-social integration of students. In this regard, our first hypothesis was confirmed.

Table 3: The QE Results after the second year of training

| EQ Students | Very High level | | High level | | Average level | | Low level | | Total | |
|----------------|-----------------|----|------------|----|---------------|----|-----------|----|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gr 1 | 22 | 27 | 33 | 40 | 27 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 82 | 100 |
| Gr 2 | 12 | 14 | 22 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 18 | 22 | 83 | 100 |
| Total | 34 | | 55 | | 58 | | 18 | | 165 | 100 |

Source: Results from academic year 2022-2023 after the second year of the training

The Chi-square test ($22.7 > 7.815$ at 3 ddl at the 5% threshold) confirmed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence training and student development academically. Specifically, the results presented in Table (3) indicated that students in group (1) scored higher percentages of EQ at Very High and High levels compared to students in the control group. In addition,

there was a slight difference in the percentages of EQ results at the average level; i.e. (33% of students in Group (1) against 37% scored by Group (2). After presenting the results of the EQ test, we examined the academic results of the two groups. Their performance was presented in tables below.

b) Academic results

Table 4: Academic performance Semester one

| AP Students | Very High level | | High level | | Average level | | Low level | | Total | |
|----------------|-----------------|----|------------|----|---------------|----|-----------|----|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gr 1 | 13 | 16 | 21 | 26 | 38 | 46 | 10 | 12 | 82 | 100 |
| Gr 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 22 | 39 | 47 | 25 | 30 | 83 | 100 |
| Total | 14 | | 39 | | 77 | | 35 | | 165 | 100 |

Source: Academic results 2021-2022 Semester one AP: means Academic Performance

From academic performance presented in table 1, it showed that all the groups are scored at the different levels of academic performance. Students in Group (1)

achieved good results at all levels compared to their classmates in Group (2).

Table 5: The Academic performance after two years

| AP Students | Very High level | | High level | | Average level | | Low level | | Total | |
|----------------|-----------------|----|------------|----|---------------|----|-----------|----|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gr 1 | 20 | 23 | 35 | 43 | 26 | 32 | 1 | 1 | 82 | 100 |
| Gr 2 | 9 | 11 | 20 | 24 | 35 | 42 | 19 | 23 | 83 | 100 |
| Total | 29 | | 55 | | 61 | | 20 | | 165 | 100 |

Source: Results of two groups after two years of training: 2022-2023

From data presented in table 5, it was clear that group 1 performed better than group 2.

At three (3) degrees of freedom $\chi^2 c = 26.86 > 7.815$ $\chi^2_{th} = 7.82$ at the probability threshold of .05. it proved that there was a significant difference between the Emotional Intelligence of the student and his/her academic performance. Indeed, the results presented in Table (5) again showed that students in the intervention group (Gr .1) were more likely to obtain good academic results at very high and, high Levels (respectively 23% ,43% for Gr.1 as opposed to 11%,24% of Gr.2). Therefore, from different results of tables (2, 3, 4 and 5) it was confirmed that educational program on Emotional Intelligence impacted positively on student's achievements. In other words, the training of emotional skills undertaken by Group 1 contributed a lot on the psychosocial integration and on students' performance.

3. DISCUSSION

The study revolved around two hypotheses. The first one stipulated that students who attended a psychosocial skills training program could develop a higher level of emotional, social, and academic performance skills than those who did not receive the same training. The results in the tables (2, 3, 4 and 5) showed that the training contributed a lot not only to the psychological balance of

the students in the intervention group but also to good academic results. However, it is important to emphasise that after one year of training, there was no significant difference in the results of the EQ test between the two groups of students at the average level, i.e., 33% of Group 1 students compared to 37% of Group 2 students.

Considering the results presented in Tables 2 and 3, the students of Group (1) scored after the first and the second year of training, the levels of very high and high EQ at a high percentage compared to the students of Group (2): (10% of Gr. 1 students against 0%; 32% against 18% and 27% of Gr. 1 students against 12% of Gr. 2; 40% against 23%). Indeed, it was confirmed that the psychologically fulfilled student was also at ease in his/her relationships with others and obtained excellent academic performance. The state of emotion, social wellbeing, and academic fit allows him/her to gradually develop confidence in himself/herself and build good relationships with others. As a result, he/she performs impressively at school. These results are in line with the findings of Luminet and Menil (2006), who confirmed that students with a higher level of emotional intelligence also had a higher level of mastery over the content and management of emotions. Our study also confirmed previous findings by Parker et al. (2004), Schutte et al. (2002) who observed that individuals with high emotional intelligence have a more positive mood and better self-confidence. To add on, these same individuals find it

easier to understand, identify, and regulate their own and others' emotions. Contrary, after a negative induction, the student can easily restore his/her positive mood and self-confidence. Our results also corroborated those of Mikolajczak et al. (2007; 2008), which were obtained during psychotherapeutic interviews with patients. The latter observed that a patient with a high score in emotional intelligence was three times less likely to fall into burnout than a patient with a low score. Thus it shows how well the emotionally balanced person manages his/her personal difficulties and stressful situations.

The findings of the study also supported the relationship between emotional and social skills and academic achievement. Indeed, the results from Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 indicated that the student's EQ was related to his or her academic results: the higher the learner's EQ, the better he or she performs at school. It is largely explained by the contribution of the training, which helped the students overcome their intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties that were likely to negatively influence their cognitive functioning and their academic performance. It was also proven that students who are psychologically balanced and fulfilled in their relationships with others also achieve good academic results. Therefore, the findings confirmed the second hypothesis and thus corroborated with the previous work of Parker et al. (2006) and Kubwimana (2013), who demonstrated that emotional intelligence is an important factor in student perseverance and academic success.

On one hand, the results obtained from table (3) revealed a non-significant relationship between the two groups regarding their Average EQ after two years of training (33% compared to 37%). Moreover, concerning the low EQ, the positive influence of the formation of the IE on the students of group (1) is still remarkable: (0% against 22%). The results could be partly explained by the short duration of the training undertaken (two years). Moreover, such a duration is considered insufficient by Kirkpatrick (1998). For him, the evaluation of the effectiveness of a training program should be carried out after the knowledge and skills acquired have had a chance to be matured and applied. He also suggested a duration of 3 up to 4 years of experimentation, which was not the case for our study. On the other hand, with regard to the results of table (2), Kirkpatrick's hypothesis does not seem to be verified, because at the end of the first year of training, the students of the intervention group had mainly the highest EQ scores compared to their colleagues in the control group. The findings were explained by other factors likely to influence the results, such as the training framework and the pedagogical and didactic tools used, as well as the characteristics of the participants.

CONCLUSION

The study about "Assessing the impact of

psychosocial skills training on the psychological well-being of students in their academic performance in higher learning institutions" sought to achieve two objectives. The first one was to train students in psychosocial skills techniques. The second was to evaluate the influence of the training about emotional and social skills on the psychological balance of students' academic performance. The study was framed in the experimental design. It considered the outcomes of the two years of training for students who started their university studies from 2021 to 2022. The study compared results of both experimental and controlled groups after their pre-tests, mid and post-tests, respectively. The results proved that there was a correlation between emotions, feelings and academic performance. There was also a great impact of the training on students' performance. Thus, the objectives were achieved; one hypothesis proposed was verified while another was partially verified. Therefore, emotions, feelings, and psychosocial skills largely influence the students' academic records.

Limitations

The results we have obtained reveal several weaknesses at various levels. One such weakness is the sample size for the group of students who took the psychosocial skills development course. A large sample size might have given different results. The short duration of training may also have influenced the results in the sense that it could not adapt to the pace of each individual's assimilation and appropriation of the training program. A training program that lasts for 3 years during the first cycle could better address these shortcomings.

Future research should use a larger and more diverse sample (across multiple universities).

A study can analyse in detail the impact of each emotional competence among the six (6) competences on the academic results of the students. The results of the research could help, we think, the student to know himself better and to respond effectively to the different realities that the environment imposes on him. In the same way, these same results would help teachers and researchers to readapt the training programme since the global results of EQ do not clearly specify the scores obtained at each level of emotional competence among the six. Such a study will aim to diagnose the psychoaffective difficulties of the student in the smallest detail for an effective treatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research holds the potential to inform educational policies and interventions in Rwanda and beyond. The

following recommendations were addressed to institutions, decision-makers, and education practitioners, as well as stakeholders:

Institutes have a major influence on students' educational experiences. It is recommended that academic institutions incorporate comprehensive emotional and social skills training programs into their curricula. These programs should be designed to be engaging, culturally sensitive, and have age-appropriate skills. Workshops, seminars, and regular class sessions can be dedicated to fostering psychosocial skills, effective communication, and interpersonal skills. Collaboration with mental health professionals can also provide valuable insights and resources to create a supportive learning environment.

Government bodies and policymakers have a major impact on the education system. It is recommended that policies be developed to prioritise and integrate emotional and social skill training into the national education curriculum. The allocation of resources for the implementation of these programs and the establishment of guidelines for assessment and evaluation could ensure a standardised approach across educational institutions. Policymakers should also collaborate with educational experts, psychologists, and relevant stakeholders to continually refine and improve these initiatives.

Teachers and educators in general are agents in implementing emotional and social skills training. Training and professional development programs for educators should be established to equip them with the necessary skills and techniques to harness the profession. Educators can incorporate activities that promote emotional awareness, empathy, and conflict resolution in their daily lessons. Additionally, creating a positive classroom environment that encourages open communication and expression of emotions is essential. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help educators gauge the effectiveness of their efforts and make necessary adjustments.

Empowering students to take an active role in their emotional and social development is crucial. It is recommended that students be provided with resources, workshops, and extracurricular activities that focus on building emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and effective interpersonal skills. Encouraging peer support systems and mentorship programs can create a sense of community and belonging. Students should also be educated on the benefits of emotional well-being and its positive impact on academic performance.

Finally, the involvement of parents and guardians is vital for reinforcing the emotional and social skills learnt at school. Schools should engage parents through informative sessions, workshops, and regular updates on their child's progress in terms of emotional development. Thus, encouraging open communication between parents and children creates a supportive home environment. Parental involvement can extend to participating in school activities that promote emotional and social skills,

fostering a holistic approach to a child's growth and well-being.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The research received no special grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

REFERENCES

- Bourdages, L. (1996). Persistence and non-persistence in university studies on campus and in distance education. *Distances Review*, 1(1), 51-68.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (2007). Developing Emotional Intelligence through coaching for leadership, professional and occupational excellence", in R. Bar-On, J. G. Maree and M.J. Elias (eds.), *Educating people to be emotionally intelligent*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- Brown, L., & Smith, K. (2021). Enhancing Academic Performance through Psychosocial Skills Training: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Educational Research*, 55(4), 345- 362.
- Chen, S. (2023). Cultural Considerations in the Implementation of Psychosocial Skills Training: A Cross-cultural Analysis. *International Journal of Psychology*, 48(1), 32-48
- Ciarrochi, J., Deane, F.P. and Anderson, S. (2002). Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32, 197-209.
- Damasio, A.R. (1994). *L'erreur de Descartes*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- DeLansheere, V. (1992). *Education et formation*. Paris: PUF
- Dietsche, P.H.J. (1990). Freshman attrition in a college of applied arts and technology of Ontario, Canada *Journal of Higher Education*, 20, 65-84.
- Domitrovich, C.E., Corest, R.C. & Greenberg, M.T. (2007). Improving young children's social and emotional competence: A randomized trial of the preschool "PATHS" curriculum, *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 28 (2), 67–91.

- Donner, A. and Lazar, F. (2000). Measuring graduation and attrition at Ontario College: A discussion of measurement issues and their usefulness as indicators of student success" <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, accessed July 20, 2014.
- Elias, M.J., Zins, J.E., Weissberg, R.P., Frey, K.S., Greenberg, M.T., Haynes, N.M., Kessler, R., Schwab-Stone, M.E. and Shriver, T. P. (1997). Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Financing: First Results from the Postsecondary Education Participation Survey (PEPS). Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- Finnie, R. and Quiu, H. (2008). The patterns of persistence in post-secondary education in Canada: Evidence from the YITS-B Dataset—A MESA Project research paper. Toronto: Educational Policy Institute.
- Garcia, R., et al. (2022). Psychological Well-being and Academic Achievement: A Longitudinal Study of College Students. *Educational Research Review*, 36, 87-104.
- Gauthier, P.-D. (2004). The hidden dimension of E-LEARNING: From motivation to abandonment. http://alex.espacecompetences.org/GEIDFile/La_dimension_cachée_du_e-learning.PDF, accessed April 20, 2014.
- Grayson, P. (2003). Research on student retention and decline. Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Gross, J. (2007). Handbook of emotion regulation. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1998). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels* (2nd ed.). San Francisco : Berrett-Koehler.
- Kubwimana, J. (2013). The self-perception of high school girls in scientific disciplines. *Ivorian Journal of Educational Sciences*. Abidjan, ENS, n°13, pp.73-84.
- Landsheere, V. (1992). Education and formation. Paris: PUF
- Linley, P.A. and Joseph, S. (2004). Positive psychology in action. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Low, G.R. & Nelson, D.B. (2006). Emotional intelligence and college success: A research-based assess R. J. Sternberg (ed.), Handbook of intelligence (pp. 396-420). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mason, C., et al. (2022). Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Psychosocial Skills Training Programs: A Systematic Review. *Journal of School Psychology*, 40(2), 189- 206.
- Mayer, J.D. and Salovey, P. (1997). "What is emotional intelligence? », in P. Salovey and D. Sluyter (eds.), Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications (pp.3-34). New York: Basic Books.
- Mayer, J.D., Salovey, P. and Caruso, D.R. (2000). Models of emotional intelligence", in R. J. Sternberg (ed.), Handbook of intelligence (pp. 396-420). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mikolajczak, M. and Luminet, O. (2008). Trait emotional intelligence and the cognitive appraisal of stressful events: An exploratory study, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44, 1445-1453.
- Mikolajczak, M., J. Quoidbach, I. Kotsou et D. Nelis (2009). *Les compétences émotionnelles*. Paris: Dunod.
- Mikolajczak, M., Luminet, O. and Menil, C. (2006). Predicting resistance to stress: Incremental validity of trait emotional intelligence over alexithymia and optimism, *Psicothema*, 18, S79-S88.
- Mutebi, R., & Kiplagat, H. (2023). A Role for TVET in Organizational Training and Development. *Africa Journal of Technical and Vocational Education and Training*, 8(1), 91-100.
- Nelis, D., Quoidbach, J., Mikolajczak, M. and Hansenne, M. (2009). Increasing emotional intelligence: (How) is it possible? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47, 36–41.
- Nelson, D.B. and Low, G.R. (2003). Emotional intelligence: Achieving academic and career excellence. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Niedenthal, P.M; Kranth-Gruber, S. and Ric, F. (2008). Understanding emotions: cognitive and psychosocial approaches. Waver: Mardaga.
- OECD (2006). Views on Education. OECD Indicators 2006: OECD Publishing, 2006.
- Patel, A., et al. (2021). The Role of Psychosocial Skills in Enhancing Resilience: A Comprehensive Review. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 45(2), 123-140.
- Pelpe, L. (2002). *Se former pour enseigner*. Paris: Dunod.

Smith, J., & Jones, M. (2022). Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction among College Students: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 67(3), 211-230.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2005). Moving from theory to action. In Seidman, A. *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*. American council on education Praeger. Series on Higher Education.

Wang, Q., et al. (2023). Psychosocial Skills Training and Mental Health: A Meta-analysis of Intervention Studies. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(1), 56-72.

Worthman, C. (1999). Emotions: you can feel the difference. Approaches to the emotions, In Hinton, A. Biocultural, Cambridge University Press.

Zins, J.E., Weissberg, R.P., Wang, M.C. et Walberg, H.J. (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press