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Psycho-Pedagogical Fundamentals Regarding Educational Counseling of Students in the University Environment

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Abstract: *The concept of cooperation has acquired increasing relevance in contemporary pedagogical and psychological research, particularly within the context of university counselling. This paper examines the evolution of cooperation from its traditional behaviourist definitions to its current multidimensional conceptualisation, integrating cognitive, affective, social, motivational, and behavioural dimensions. The study aims to clarify how cooperation has been theorised over time, to identify the key dimensions relevant to the counselling process, and to analyse the ways in which cooperation influences the counsellor-student relationship. A qualitative conceptual methodology was employed, based on an analytical review and synthesis of classical and contemporary literature. The findings indicate a clear shift from viewing cooperation as a visible, structured behavioural pattern to understanding it as a dynamic process shaped by internal psychological mechanisms, interpersonal dynamics, and contextual factors. The results further show that cooperation significantly enhances the quality of university counselling by fostering psychological safety, strengthening communication, facilitating engagement, and improving the effectiveness of interventions. Additionally, cooperation supports the creation of personalised, context-sensitive strategies that enhance students' academic adjustment and personal development. The paper concludes that cooperation is a foundational mechanism in university counselling, essential for building trust, sustaining motivation, and supporting positive educational outcomes. These insights contribute to current theoretical debates and provide a useful framework for practitioners seeking to optimise their counselling practice.*

Keywords: *cooperation; university counselling; cognitive–affective processes; student engagement; interpersonal communication; psychological safety; educational psychology.*

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Introduction

The concept of cooperation within the university context has evolved significantly over time, reflecting wider transformations in education, psychology, and sociology (Cerghit, 2002; Cristea, 2003). Both classical and contemporary research show that the ways in which individuals interact, collaborate, and coordinate their behaviours serve as major indicators of social and cognitive development (Golu, 2002; Cucoş, 2006). In the university environment, cooperation becomes a central element of educational processes, academic counselling, and professional training (Iucu, 2006; Gibson & Mitchell, 2007).

The specialist literature highlights that cooperative interactions contribute to the development of academic identity, emotional regulation, career orientation, and socio-educational adjustment (Jigău, 2001; Dandara, 2009). Cooperation goes beyond a simple behavioural dimension, encompassing complex processes such as interpersonal communication, conflict management, decision-making, role negotiation, and the assumption of responsibilities (Clegg, 2003; Cuznețov, 2010). Thus, cooperation is a multidimensional construct with cognitive, social, affective, and motivational implications (Guțu, 2003; Cosmovici & Iacob, 2008).

At the heart of this process lies counselling, a psychological and educational activity designed to support students in their personal development, academic adjustment, management of emotional difficulties, and optimisation of performance (Dryden & DiGiuseppe, 2003; Dumitru, 2008). Cooperation between counsellor and student represents a critical factor for the effectiveness of interventions, for decision-making autonomy, and for academic success (Holdevici, 2001; Gibson & Mitchell, 2007). Studies show that a cooperative relationship fosters self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, career orientation, and the prevention of university dropout (Jinga & Negreț, 1999; Cristea, 2000; Goleman, 2001; Cuznețov, 2014).

Most studies, however, examine cooperation either from a general psychological perspective or from a broad pedagogical perspective, without providing a clear synthesis of how the concept evolves and operates within the specific context of university counselling. This absence represents a significant theoretical gap.

The present paper seeks to address this gap through an integrated analysis of the concept of cooperation, specifically in relation to the process of university counselling. The originality of the study lies in the articulation

of a conceptual framework that brings together the key contributions of both classical and contemporary authors, highlighting the convergences, divergences, and limitations of existing approaches. Furthermore, the paper proposes a reinterpretation of cooperation as a multidimensional process that includes cognitive, motivational, affective, and social components, thus offering a valuable perspective for both researchers and practitioners.

The theoretical implications concern the clarification of how cooperation influences the effectiveness of counselling interventions, while the practical implications refer to the development of supportive university policies, personalised counselling strategies, and institutional programmes designed to strengthen cooperative interactions within the academic environment. In this way, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of cooperation in students' academic and professional development.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

Q1. How has the concept of cooperation evolved in pedagogical and psychological literature?

Q2. Which dimensions of cooperation are relevant to the process of university counselling?

Q3. In what ways does cooperation influence the counsellor–student relationship and the effectiveness of interventions?

Q4. What are the theoretical and practical implications of an integrated model of cooperation in university counselling?

The purpose of this article is to analyse the conceptual evolution of the idea of cooperation, to synthesise the main theories in the specialist literature, and to highlight the relevance of cooperation within the process of university counselling. The article provides an updated systematisation of theoretical models, identifies points of convergence and divergence among authors, and formulates analytical directions useful for understanding the role of cooperation in the academic environment.

Literature review

Cooperation was initially understood as a set of coordinated actions between two or more individuals directed towards achieving a common objective (Cerghit, 2002; Cucoş, 2006). In these early definitions, emphasis was placed on observable behaviours, the synchronisation of activities, and the ways in which individuals adjusted their actions to contribute to the completion of a task (Golu, 2002). Cooperation was regarded as a form of interaction grounded in positive interdependence, in which each member's

success depended on the success of the others (Clegg, 2003). In this sense, individual responsibility and direct communication were viewed as central elements of the process (Cosmovici & Iacob, 2008). The classical model described cooperation as an observable, relatively stable behaviour in which efficiency depended on the clear coordination of roles and adherence to group norms (Cristea, 2003).

As research in psychology, sociology, and educational sciences developed, the perspective on cooperation expanded significantly (Gibson & Mitchell, 2007). Modern approaches consider cooperation to be a dynamic and complex process that simultaneously involves cognitive, affective, and social dimensions (Dumitru, 2008). The cooperative process is not limited to visible activities; it also includes the ways in which individuals perceive shared goals, evaluate their own abilities, manage differences between them, and build mutual trust (Cuzneţov, 2014). In this broader framework, cooperation is based on intrinsic motivation, the valuing of common objectives, role negotiation, the assumption of responsibility, and the willingness to adapt one's behaviour for the benefit of the group (Goleman, 2001). These elements highlight the fact that authentic cooperation goes beyond simple synchronised actions and involves internal processes of reflection, adjustment, and commitment (Golu, 2005).

Within modern theories, communication plays an essential role in sustaining cooperation (Holdevici, 2001; Cristea, 2003; Cuzneţov, 2014). Cooperative communication is characterised by openness, active listening, constructive feedback, and the clear expression of needs (Cosmovici & Iacob, 2008). Such a communicative style facilitates mutual understanding, emotional regulation, and the management of tensions that may arise during collaboration (Dafinoiu, 2002). In the absence of effective communication, cooperation becomes superficial and vulnerable to unresolved conflicts, tensions, and disengagement. Conversely, a positive communicative climate creates the necessary conditions for the development of trust, the clarification of goals, and the coordination of individual efforts (Cuzneţov, 2013).

One of the most influential theoretical models of cooperation emphasises the importance of social interdependence (Jigău, 2001). According to this perspective, interdependence can be positive, negative, or neutral, and it determines the ways in which individuals choose to collaborate (Goraş-Postică, 2012). Positive interdependence, in which each person's success contributes to the success of all, is associated with high levels of trust, mutual support, shared responsibility, and increased motivation (Guţu, 2003). In the other hand, negative interdependence leads

to competition, while the absence of interdependence generates individualism and a lack of coordination (Cristea, 2000). This model shows that the structure of relationships directly influences cooperative behaviours and that environments fostering positive interdependence facilitate authentic collaboration.

Another important model focuses on the role of communication in collaborative processes (Dryden & DiGiuseppe, 2003). From this perspective, communication is not viewed merely as the transmission of information but as an essential tool for organising relationships between individuals. Cooperative communication enables the adjustment of expectations, the clarification of intentions, the expression of emotions, and the reduction of misunderstandings (Dafinoiu, 2000). It plays a decisive role in maintaining group cohesion and preventing destructive conflicts. The key characteristics of such communication include openness, empathy, willingness to negotiate, and an orientation towards shared solutions (Holdevici, 2005).

By integrating these perspectives, cooperation may today be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, rooted in behaviours, cognitions, emotions, and social dynamics (Golu, 2002). It involves both visible actions and internal processes of adaptation, interpretation, and motivation (Dumitru, 2008). In this extended view, cooperation is not merely an external behaviour but a complex, fluid, and evolving process supported by both individual and contextual factors (Cucoş, 2006). The analysis of these elements highlights that sustainable and effective cooperation depends on a set of conditions such as clear communication, mutual trust, shared responsibility, and the capacity to manage differences (Cuzneţov, 2010).

Socio-cognitive approaches offer a complex perspective on cooperation, considering it to be influenced by the ways in which individuals perceive their own abilities, by the representations they hold of others, and by the realistic evaluation of shared goals (Golu, 2002; Dumitru, 2008). In this view, cooperation does not depend solely on external circumstances but also on the internal processes through which a person interprets the situation, anticipates their contribution, and regulates their behaviour. Central elements of these approaches include self-efficacy, self-regulation, and social learning, through which individuals observe, imitate, internalise, and adapt behavioural models according to the context (Gibson & Mitchell, 2007). Cooperation thus becomes a psychological process of continuous adjustment, in which the individual transcends personal differences, interpretative filters, and defensive tendencies in order to synchronise with

others (Goleman, 2001). Within this framework, authentic collaboration requires both cognitive competences and emotional flexibility, openness to change, and the capacity to make effective use of shared resources (Cosmovici & Iacob, 2008).

The affective and relational dimensions of cooperation occupy a central place in the specialist literature, being recognised as decisive factors in an individual's willingness to participate constructively in shared activities (Cuzneţov, 2013). Empathy, psychological safety, and trust are essential elements that facilitate openness, interpersonal closeness, and effective communication (Holdevici, 2005). When individuals feel understood, validated, and accepted, they become more inclined to contribute actively to the collective effort (Dafinoiu, 2002). Conversely, the absence of such conditions leads to withdrawal, defensive orientations, or even conflict, reducing the likelihood of authentic collaboration. Relationships characterised by suspicion, rigidity, and a lack of emotional support tend to inhibit cooperation and to generate distancing, even in contexts where the common goals are clearly defined (Cuzneţov, 2010).

Cooperation within educational and university contexts has attracted increasing interest, as the academic environment constitutes a privileged space for the formation and consolidation of the social and cognitive competences required for collaboration (Iucu, 2006; Guțu, 2003). Universities offer numerous situations in which cooperation naturally emerges, from interactions between students to group work, joint projects, collaborative learning, and relationships between students and teaching staff. In addition, psychological and academic counselling services represent an important setting in which cooperation is not only encouraged but also essential for the effectiveness of the intervention (Dandara, 2009; Dumitru-Tiron, 2005).

The benefits of cooperation in the university environment are manifold. These include the development of social skills, improved academic performance, reduced anxiety, the mobilisation of self-regulatory mechanisms, and increased motivation (Jigău, 2001; Goraş-Postică, 2012). Collaborative activities allow students to learn from one another, to clarify concepts more easily, to explore alternative perspectives, and to develop a flexible and adaptive way of thinking. Positive interactions enhance the sense of belonging, support adaptation to academic demands, and facilitate social integration (Cuzneţov, 2014).

More specifically, cooperation within the counselling process is built upon the quality of the relationship between counsellor and student. It relies on openness, mutual availability, clarity of communication, and the joint

definition of intervention goals (Gibson & Mitchell, 2007). A cooperative relationship fosters trust, reduces resistance, and strengthens motivation for change, thus enabling the exploration of personal, academic, or emotional difficulties within a safe space (Holdevici, 2001). Authentic cooperation in counselling requires active engagement from both parties and a willingness to work towards a shared direction oriented towards personal development and academic success (Dafinoiu, 2000).

Despite extensive research, several limitations in the literature justify the present study. First, most existing works examine cooperation either through a general psychological lens or through broad pedagogical frameworks, without focusing on the specificity of cooperation in university counselling. This represents a conceptual gap, as counselling entails particular relational, motivational, and emotional dynamics not fully addressed in the existing models. Second, while authors identify individual dimensions of cooperation (cognitive, affective, social, motivational), very few studies integrate these dimensions into a unified framework applicable to university counselling. Third, there remains a lack of systematic synthesis regarding how cooperation influences counselling effectiveness, academic adjustment, and decision-making autonomy. These gaps limit the capacity of current literature to inform counselling practice or institutional policies.

The need for the current study emerges precisely at the intersection of these gaps. By systematically analysing the evolution of the concept, identifying the dimensions relevant to counselling, and linking cooperation to the quality of interventions, this article provides an integrative perspective lacking in existing scholarship. It contributes both conceptual clarity and practical relevance, offering a comprehensive model for understanding cooperation in university counselling and supporting the development of tailored, evidence-informed counselling approaches.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study is based on a systematic theoretical analysis aimed at identifying, organising, and interpreting the fundamental dimensions of cooperation in the context of university counselling. The methodological process followed three major directions, directly linked to the findings corresponding to Q1–Q4: analysing the evolution of the concept, identifying the dimensions of cooperation, examining its influence on the counsellor–student relationship, and assessing the implications of an integrated model.

The first stage of the methodology consisted in collecting and selecting relevant theoretical materials using criteria such as conceptual relevance, definitional clarity, pertinence to the university setting, and usefulness for constructing an integrated framework of cooperation. Sources from psychology, pedagogy, educational counselling, interpersonal communication, and socio-emotional development were analysed. This stage provided the basis for addressing Q1 by comparing traditional and contemporary perspectives on cooperation.

The second stage involved the classification and conceptual coding of the selected materials. The content was organised thematically according to the dimensions identified as relevant to cooperation: cognitive, affective, social, motivational, and behavioural. This thematic analysis formed the foundation for the findings presented in Q2, highlighting how these dimensions manifest within the university counselling process.

In the third stage, the methodology focused on examining the relationships between cooperation and the dynamics of university counselling. The analysis employed a comparative approach to demonstrate how cooperation influences the quality of the counsellor–student relationship, engagement in the counselling process, and the effectiveness of interventions. This stage informed the findings for Q3 by integrating the mechanisms identified in the previous stage.

The fourth stage consisted of an integrated synthesis of the results obtained, with the aim of conceptualising a unified model of cooperation applicable to university counselling. In this phase, the identified dimensions were reorganised into a coherent framework, enabling the evaluation of the theoretical and practical implications of an integrated model. This stage substantiated the findings related to Q4 by offering a perspective applicable both to counselling interventions and to the development of institutional programmes.

The methodology followed a qualitative documentary-interpretive research design, appropriate for theoretical studies. The process included conceptual comparison, analysis of convergences and divergences between models, identification of common dimensions, and evaluation of their usefulness in the university context. Through this approach, the study provides a coherent analytical framework that explains the evolution of the concept of cooperation, its relevance for counselling, and its potential integration into an applicable model.

Overall, the adopted methodology enabled the generation of coherent and complementary findings, reflected in the responses to Q1-Q4, and contributed to shaping a well-articulated perspective on cooperation

within university counselling. The systematic literature review and thematic coding ensured the quality of interpretation and the relevance of the conclusions.

Results

Evolution of the concept of cooperation in pedagogical and psychological literature

The analysis of the specialist literature shows that the notion of cooperation has undergone significant development, reflecting wider transformations within the fields of pedagogy and psychology (Table 1). A first finding derived from the conceptual examination indicates that, in its early stages, cooperation was predominantly defined as an observable behaviour directed towards the attainment of a common goal. Traditional approaches focused on the coordination of actions, direct communication, and the clear delineation of roles within the group, treating cooperation as a structured and relatively stable activity that could be readily identified in educational interactions.

The findings further highlight that contemporary literature moves beyond this simplified interpretation, redefining cooperation as a complex internal process that integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. At present, cooperation is viewed as a dynamic mechanism of adjustment through which individuals negotiate their roles, align their objectives, manage their differences, and adapt their behaviour according to the context. The emergence of modern conceptions sheds light on the role of intrinsic motivation, shared responsibility, the interpretation of social situations, and self-regulation in generating authentic collaboration.

Another significant finding concerns the growing emphasis placed in recent literature on elements that are not directly observable, such as trust, psychological safety, empathy, and cognitive flexibility, all of which decisively shape the quality of the cooperative process. Cooperation is no longer understood solely as the product of coordinated actions, but as the outcome of internal psychological processes that may either facilitate or hinder effective interaction.

Table 1. Concept of cooperation evolved in pedagogical and psychological literature

Aspect analysed	Traditional perspective on cooperation	Contemporary perspective on cooperation	References
General definition	Visible behaviour aimed at achieving a common goal	A complex psychological, social, and relational process	Cerghit (2002); Cucoș (2006)
Main emphasis	Coordination of actions and direct communication	Intrinsic motivation, understanding shared goals, internal adjustments	Golu (2002); Dumitru (2008)
Structure of interactions	Clearly defined roles, well-delimited tasks	Role negotiation, flexibility, and contextual adaptation	Cristea (2003); Cuznețov (2014)
Mechanisms involved	Individual responsibility, explicit rules	Self-efficacy, self-regulation, cognitive interpretations of situations	Gibson & Mitchell (2007); Goleman (2001)
Relationship dynamics	Functional, task-oriented	Relational, based on trust, empathy, and psychological safety	Cuznețov (2013); Holdevici (2005)
Individual differences	Minimized for efficiency	Recognised, valued, and integrated into the process	Cosmovici & Iacob (2008)
Indicators of cooperation	Behavioural synchronisation	Trust, engagement, shared agreement, willingness to negotiate	Dafinoiu (2002); Cuznețov (2010)
General conception	Cooperation = joint action	Cooperation = internal process + external interaction	Dumitru (2008); Golu (2005)

Taken together, the findings indicate a clear shift in emphasis: from a perspective centred on behaviour and structure to one focused on psychological, relational, and motivational processes. This evolution reflects the conceptual maturation of the notion of cooperation within pedagogical and psychological literature and offers a more nuanced framework for analysing educational interactions and learning relationships.

Dimensions of cooperation relevant to the university counselling process

The analysis of the theoretical literature indicates that the process of university counselling is supported by a distinct set of cooperation dimensions that directly contribute to the effectiveness of educational and psychological interventions. The findings show that these dimensions are not merely auxiliary to the counselling process but constitute fundamental premises for building the counsellor-student relationship and achieving the desired outcomes (Table 2).

A first finding highlights that the *cognitive dimension* of cooperation plays an essential role in university counselling. This dimension involves the ways in which the student understands the objectives of counselling, clarifies their role in the process, and interprets the information and strategies discussed during the intervention. Effective cooperation requires the student's ability to reflect on their own needs, formulate realistic expectations, and integrate new information into their existing cognitive framework. Thus, the cognitive dimension facilitates learning, self-regulation, and informed decision-making.

The findings also emphasise the importance of the *affective dimension*, which includes elements such as trust, empathy, emotional safety, and openness in communication. This dimension supports the student's authentic engagement in the counselling relationship, reduces resistance, encourages emotional expression, and increases willingness to change. Without a strong affective component, cooperation remains superficial and does not allow for a genuine exploration of personal or academic difficulties.

Another major finding concerns the *social dimension* of cooperation. In university counselling, this manifests through the quality of interactions, the clarity of roles, reciprocity, shared responsibility, and the willingness of both counsellor and student to work towards jointly established goals. This dimension also encompasses mechanisms of interpersonal communication, which contribute to structuring the counselling process, clarifying needs, and formulating development plans.

The analysis further reveals the role of the *motivational dimension*. In the context of university counselling, cooperation depends largely on the student's motivation to participate actively, engage in tasks, and apply the recommendations received. Intrinsic motivation, the desire for personal development, interest in improving academic performance, and openness to support are factors that determine the quality of cooperation.

Another important result of the analysis is the identification of the *behavioural dimension* of cooperation, reflected in active participation in

sessions, undertaking tasks, adhering to established agreements, and implementing the strategies discussed. This dimension transforms cooperation from an internal disposition into concrete, observable action, which is necessary for progress and change.

Table 2. Dimensions of cooperation are relevant to the process of university counselling

Dimension of cooperation	Relevance for university counselling	References
Cognitive	Clarifies the understanding of counselling goals, supports self-reflection, helps the student interpret information accurately and make informed decisions.	Golu (2002); Dumitru (2008); Gibson & Mitchell (2007)
Affective	Sustains trust, emotional safety, and openness; reduces resistance and encourages the free expression of emotions and concerns.	Holdevici (2005); Cuznețov (2013); Dafinoiu (2002)
Social	Reflects the quality of the counsellor–student interaction, shared responsibility, effective communication, and collaboration in achieving goals.	Cosmovici & Iacob (2008); Cristea (2003); Cuznețov (2014)
Motivational	Determines the student's level of engagement, willingness to change, interest in academic progress, and openness to applying recommendations.	Goleman (2001); Guțu (2003); Jigău (2001)
Behavioural	Represents the concrete manifestation of cooperation: active participation, task commitment, respecting agreements, and implementing discussed strategies.	Cerghit (2002); Cucoș (2006); Dumitru-Tiron (2005)

Overall, the findings show that the university counselling process is influenced by at least five dimensions of cooperation: cognitive, affective, social, motivational, and behavioural. The interaction among these dimensions determines the quality of the counsellor-student relationship, the level of engagement in the process, and the effectiveness of interventions. Cooperation is thus a multidimensional phenomenon that develops gradually and provides coherence and consistency to the counselling process within the university environment.

Influence of cooperation on the counsellor–student relationship and on the effectiveness of interventions

The theoretical analysis highlights that the level of cooperation between counsellor and student directly influences both the quality of the counselling relationship and the effectiveness of educational and psychological interventions (Table 3). A first finding shows that stable cooperation creates the conditions necessary for forming a relationship based on trust, openness, and psychological safety. In the presence of a cooperative climate, the student feels accepted, understood, and valued, which increases their willingness to discuss sensitive issues and to explore academic, personal, or emotional difficulties.

Another important finding reveals that cooperation facilitates clarity of communication. When the counsellor and student collaborate actively, the objectives of the intervention become more clearly defined, expectations are articulated explicitly, and the student's needs are accurately identified. This clarity reduces ambiguities, limits frustration, and provides a structured framework for progress within the counselling process.

The results of the analysis also indicate that a high level of cooperation increases the student's engagement in the counselling process. The student becomes more receptive to feedback, more willing to undertake concrete tasks, and more motivated to apply the strategies discussed. Such active involvement accelerates the process of change and contributes to strengthening self-regulation skills and improving academic performance.

Another significant finding is that cooperation reduces resistance to change. When the student perceives the relationship with the counsellor as cooperative, tendencies towards avoidance, negativity, and behavioural rigidity decrease. The analysis highlights that, in the absence of cooperation, interventions tend to remain superficial and progress becomes slow or inconsistent.

The findings also indicate an influence on the effectiveness of interventions: cooperation enables the formulation of realistic, negotiated, and personalised plans, increasing the likelihood that the student will implement them in real-life situations. In addition, cooperation contributes to maintaining a positive dynamic during sessions, preventing blockages, latent conflicts, or emotional distancing.

Table 3. Influence of cooperation on the counsellor-student relationship and on interventions

Aspect	Influence of cooperation on the counsellor–student relationship and on interventions	References
Relational climate	Creates trust, psychological safety, openness, and a willingness to explore real issues.	Holdevici (2005); Cuzneţov (2013); Dafinoiu (2002)
Quality of communication	Clarifies goals, reduces ambiguities, facilitates the expression of needs, and aligns the expectations of both parties.	Gibson & Mitchell (2007); Cosmovici & Iacob (2008); Cristea (2003)
Student engagement	Increases receptiveness to feedback, commitment to tasks, and motivation to apply agreed strategies.	Dumitru (2008); Goleman (2001); Guţu (2003)
Resistance to change	Reduces avoidance tendencies, defensiveness, and behavioural rigidity, thus facilitating adaptation.	Holdevici (2001); Dafinoiu (2000); Golu (2005)
Effectiveness of interventions	Enables the formulation of realistic, personalised plans, improves the implementation of recommendations, and accelerates progress.	Dandara (2009); Dumitru-Tiron (2005); Cuzneţov (2014)
Session dynamics	Supports a consistent working pace, prevents blockages, and reduces the risk of tensions or latent conflicts.	Cerghit (2002); Cucoş (2006); Cuzneţov (2010)

Overall, the results show that the influence of cooperation on the counsellor–student relationship and on the effectiveness of interventions is profound and multidimensional. Cooperation facilitates effective communication, strengthens the counselling alliance, increases engagement, reduces resistance, and supports the successful implementation of the strategies discussed. Thus, cooperation represents a key predictor of the quality of the counselling process within the university environment.

Theoretical and practical implications of an integrated model of cooperation in university counselling

The analysis indicates that adopting an integrated model of cooperation in university counselling has significant implications at both theoretical and practical levels. A first finding shows that, theoretically, such a model offers a coherent explanatory framework that unifies the cognitive, affective, motivational, social, and behavioural dimensions of cooperation.

This theoretical integration allows for a more complete understanding of how cooperation is formed, maintained, and how it influences educational and psychological processes within universities. The model provides an interdisciplinary perspective, contributing to conceptual clarification, reducing terminological ambiguities, and fostering the development of a shared conceptual language among specialists.

Another important theoretical implication is that the integrated model facilitates the development of new hypotheses for future research, offering a solid foundation for empirical studies on cooperation in counselling. It enables the identification of relevant variables, such as level of engagement, relationship quality, motivation, communication strategies, or self-regulation and supports the rigorous structuring of future investigations.

At a practical level, the findings show that an integrated model of cooperation can optimise counselling interventions by providing counsellors with a clear tool for assessing and developing cooperation in their relationship with students. By incorporating all dimensions of cooperation, the model enables the creation of personalised interventions adapted to the student's needs and oriented towards both cognitive skill development and the strengthening of socio-emotional competences. In practice, the model offers guidelines for increasing motivation, improving communication, clarifying expectations, and enhancing active involvement in the counselling process.

Another significant practical implication is that an integrated model can contribute to the professionalisation of university counselling. It allows for the structuring of training programmes, the development of internal procedures, the standardisation of interventions, and the improvement of cooperation between counsellors, academic staff, and other institutional structures. Through the application of a coherent model, counselling services can become more effective, predictable, and better adapted to the diversity of the student population.

The analysis also highlights that implementing an integrated model facilitates the prevention of academic and emotional difficulties. By identifying early indicators of low cooperation, counsellors can intervene before issues escalate, thus supporting students' academic and personal progression. Moreover, the model encourages the development of sustainable counselling relationships based on trust, responsibility, and mutual participation.

Overall, the findings show that an integrated model of cooperation has major theoretical implications by consolidating and clarifying the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and significant practical implications

by improving the effectiveness of university counselling and further professionalising interventions. The model offers a comprehensive, adaptable, and applicable framework across various educational contexts, making it a valuable tool for optimising counselling activities.

Discussion

The findings of the present study offer an integrated and systematically articulated perspective on the concept of cooperation within the context of university counselling, confirming, nuancing, and extending the existing body of knowledge in pedagogical and psychological literature. Overall, the results align with the contemporary shift described by authors such as Cerghit (2002), Cucoş (2006), Dumitru (2008), and Gibson & Mitchell (2007), who emphasise the multidimensional nature of cooperation and its important role in sustaining effective educational and counselling processes. By highlighting the evolution of this concept from its classical definitions to more sophisticated theoretical formulations, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning successful interactions between counsellors and students.

The analysis of the evolution of the concept of cooperation (Q1) confirms the transition identified in the specialist literature from a behaviourist and structural understanding towards a more nuanced interpretation that integrates cognitive, affective, motivational, and relational elements. Early theoretical models, grounded in behavioural psychology, conceptualised cooperation primarily as a visible, observable set of coordinated actions directed towards a shared aim. These models placed strong emphasis on task distribution, role clarity, behavioural synchronisation, and adherence to group norms. The present study corroborates these historical interpretations, while also demonstrating that such a narrow view is no longer sufficient for explaining cooperation in modern educational or counselling environments.

Contemporary models propose that cooperation represents an internal system of self-regulation, cognitive processing, negotiation of roles, trust-building, and the interpretation of shared meanings. The findings of this study reinforce this shift by emphasising the internal psychological conditions that sustain collaboration, such as metacognitive reflection, emotional regulation, social meaning-making, and the capacity to negotiate expectations within a relational context. These mechanisms, described in the works of Golu (2002), Cuzneţov (2014), and Holdevici (2005), illustrate cooperation not as a static behavioural pattern but as a fluid, adaptive, and

context-dependent process. By observing these developments, the study highlights how cooperation has expanded into a multidimensional concept that incorporates individual differences, subjective perceptions, and socio-emotional competencies. This shift in conceptualisation has significant implications, as it underscores the importance of analysing cooperation through an interdisciplinary lens that includes cognitive psychology, affective science, social interaction theory, and educational counselling.

With regard to the dimensions of cooperation relevant to university counselling (Q2), the study identifies five interrelated components: cognitive, affective, social, motivational, and behavioural. Together, these dimensions form the foundation of effective counselling interactions. The cognitive dimension supports the student's ability to clarify the aims of the counselling process, reflect on their own thoughts and experiences, and interpret information accurately. These findings align with Dumitru's (2008) work, which stresses the centrality of metacognitive and reflective processes in educational contexts. In counselling, such clarity is indispensable for developing realistic goals, making informed decisions, and sustaining long-term academic engagement.

The affective dimension emerges as equally significant. Emotional safety, trust, openness, empathy, and psychological comfort create the relational environment necessary for meaningful cooperation between counsellor and student. This observation echoes the contributions of Cuzneţov (2013), who emphasises the relational and emotional conditions that enable personal development and adaptive functioning. Cooperative interaction is therefore not merely an exchange of information; it is a relational experience that enables the student to express concerns, fears, frustrations, and aspirations within a safe and supportive space. Such an environment fosters the emotional stability required for therapeutic progress.

The social dimension of cooperation centred on the quality of interpersonal communication, shared responsibility, and mutual involvement supports the findings of Cosmovici & Iacob (2008). Counselling interactions are inherently social encounters, and cooperation is deeply embedded in the communicative exchanges that take place. When communication is clear, authentic, and constructive, the counselling process gains coherence, continuity, and mutual understanding.

The motivational dimension is closely tied to the student's engagement, willingness to change, and commitment to personal development. The present findings resonate with Goleman's (2001) conceptualisation of motivation as a dynamic psychological force influencing

self-regulation, goal formation, and effortful behaviour. In the counselling context, cooperation serves as a catalyst for motivation: when students feel understood, supported, and actively involved, their intrinsic motivation strengthens, increasing their readiness to engage with the strategies proposed.

The behavioural dimension underscores the concrete manifestations of cooperation: participation, adherence to agreed plans, completion of tasks, and the application of recommendations. These observable behaviours demonstrate the student's active involvement and are consistent with behavioural indicators identified in pedagogical theory. Together, the five dimensions provide a comprehensive framework that captures the complex structure of cooperation in university counselling. Their convergence highlights the interdependence of mental processes, emotions, social interactions, motivational forces, and behavioural expressions in shaping the counselling experience.

In examining the impact of cooperation on the counsellor-student relationship (Q3), the study demonstrates that cooperation plays a central role in shaping the relational climate, the quality of communication, the student's engagement, adaptability, and the overall effectiveness of interventions. The cooperative relationship serves as the foundation upon which psychological safety, openness, and mutual trust are built. This reinforces the assertions of Gibson & Mitchell (2007), Dafinoiu (2000), and Holdevici (2005), who identify trust and empathy as fundamental components of successful counselling relationships. The findings further indicate that cooperation reduces resistance, decreases defensiveness, and enhances the student's readiness to explore sensitive personal or academic issues.

Moreover, cooperation facilitates the development of personalised and realistic intervention plans. When the counsellor and student work collaboratively, the strategies developed are more likely to reflect the student's needs, capacities, and goals, resulting in higher implementation rates and faster progress. The counsellor's ability to adapt their approach depends heavily on the quality of cooperation, which enables the identification of barriers, the negotiation of expectations, and the co-construction of intervention pathways.

Cooperation also shapes the dynamics of counselling sessions. A cooperative relationship sustains a consistent rhythm of work, prevents stagnation, and reduces the likelihood of latent conflict or disengagement. The presence of cooperation ensures that sessions remain productive, that goals remain aligned, and that both counsellor and student maintain focus

on the developmental process. In this sense, the findings show that cooperation functions as both a relational condition and an operational mechanism within university counselling. Its influence extends beyond communication and rapport-building, permeating cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioural processes.

The results can be cautiously extrapolated to international literature for several reasons:

- The identified dimensions of cooperation (cognitive, affective, social, motivational, behavioural) are universal in educational psychology, appearing in models from both European and Anglo-American traditions.
- The relational mechanisms highlighted: trust, communication, engagement, and self-regulation are supported by major global theories in counselling and pedagogy.
- The proposed framework aligns with internationally accepted counselling principles such as client-centred approaches, motivational models, and socio-constructivist theories.

However, the study should not be overgeneralised without considering cultural differences in counselling practices, student autonomy, educational structures, and institutional support systems. International comparative studies are recommended for confirming cross-cultural applicability.

The study provides several original contributions that may be of interest to an international readership:

It synthesises classical behaviour-centred definitions of cooperation with modern socio-cognitive and affective relational models, offering a structured framework applicable to higher education counselling.

While cooperation has been studied extensively in group dynamics and pedagogy, its direct operationalisation in university counselling remains underdeveloped in international research. The present study bridges this gap by specifying how cooperation influences trust, engagement, communication, resistance to change, and intervention outcomes.

The categorisation of cooperation into cognitive, affective, social, motivational, and behavioural dimensions provides a practical tool for counsellors, educators, and researchers.

The findings resonate with global concerns regarding university dropout, student engagement, academic anxiety, and the need for supportive counselling systems.

Limitations and future directions

The research presents several strengths that support its validity. The conceptual analysis is anchored in a wide range of pedagogical and psychological sources, spanning classical and contemporary perspectives, which ensures theoretical depth. The use of thematic organisation (Q1, Q2, Q3) further strengthens the internal coherence of the study.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged:

The analysis draws predominantly on Romanian and Eastern European authors. Although these sources are academically robust, their geographical concentration limits the cultural variability of the conclusions. Cooperation dynamics may vary in other educational contexts, especially where counselling systems differ structurally from those found in Europe.

The study is conceptual rather than empirical, focusing on theoretical synthesis. While this enables a comprehensive overview, it does not provide direct empirical evidence from student–counsellor interactions. Therefore, epistemological validity remains linked to the accuracy of the theoretical frameworks used.

Given the qualitative, literature-based approach:

- no experimental, observational, or statistical methods were applied,
- cross-validation with empirical data is limited,
- some conceptual interpretations may rely on the author's analytical positioning.

Future research should address these gaps using mixed methods, field studies, and longitudinal designs.

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