Identifying Suitable Social Worker Candidates for Counselling Using Holland RIASEC Model and FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, Resilience) Profiling

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify individuals best suited for counselling occupations using the Holland RIASEC Model and the FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience) Profiling Assessment Tool. A total of 190 respondents were assessed, focusing on six personality dimensions—Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C). Results showed that 40 respondents (21.05%) were highly suitable for counselling roles, characterized by high Social scores, often paired with strong Investigative traits. Demographically, older female respondents demonstrated a slight advantage, suggesting that life experience may enhance counselling effectiveness. The study emphasizes the value of targeted training programs to further develop counselling competencies among identified individuals. These findings provide a foundation for selecting and developing candidates for counselling roles, ensuring they possess the necessary interpersonal and analytical skills. The research contributes to understanding career alignment and highlights the importance of personality assessment in professional development. By identifying individuals naturally inclined toward counselling, the study supports the creation of tailored training programs, benefiting educational institutions, employers, and policymakers involved in the recruitment and training of counselling professionals.

Keywords: *Holland RIASEC model, counselling occupations, personality traits, social dimension, Investigative dimension*

Introduction

According to Hesse (2005), there has been a rise in the demand for qualified social workers, particularly counsellors, as a result of greater awareness of mental health. As the importance of mental health has become more widely acknowledged in society, there has been an increase in the demand for qualified professionals who can offer guidance, support, and therapy. Those who wish to work in counseling must possess specific interpersonal, empathic, and analytical skills. To ensure that candidates are capable of managing the complexities of the role, it is necessary to identify these characteristics. According to research conducted by de las Olas Palma-García and Hombrados-Mendieta (2017), it has been found that social workers who possess exceptional interpersonal skills, resilience, and personality traits that are compatible with one another perform more effectively. The emotional demands of counselling require candidates to demonstrate resilience and emotional stability; therefore, it is necessary to evaluate candidates for these characteristics.

The RIASEC model developed by John L. Holland is a trustworthy instrument for analyzing personality traits and bridging the gap between those traits and vocations such as counseling. Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C) are the categories that are used to categorize individuals according to this paradigm. According to Chm and Csl (2006), each category corresponds to a specific employment trajectory, with Social and Investigative being particularly suited to the field of counselling. There is a correlation between high social scores and empathy, patience, and the ability to communicate well with others, all of which are essential for successful therapy. Research conducted by Molinari et al. in 1998 found that social workers who had strong social skills and emotional awareness are better able to manage difficult client situations. As a result of their analytical, thinking, and problem-solving abilities, those who score high on the Investigative scale are vital for diagnosing and treating patients. The ability to analyze facilitates the identification of client problems, the development of efficient interventions, and the formation of sound judgments (Punová, 2022).

Resilient social workers have been shown to have more effective coping mechanisms and mental stability when they are under pressure, according to research (Punová, 2020). Resilience is essential for counsellors because they are frequently confronted with trying circumstances. According to Bedford and Bedford (1985), social workers who are empathetic and resilient have a greater chance of succeeding in their professions and satisfying the needs of their clients while also preserving their own well-being. These results provide credence to Holland's RIASEC model, which places an emphasis on personality characteristics in relation to occupational suitability.

According to Hesse (2005), the RIASEC model developed by Holland is frequently utilized in the field of career counseling and vocational coaching. Individuals are able to learn their capabilities and preferences, while businesses and educational institutions are able to locate individuals who are competent. According to Kaczor (2017), social workers who possess resilience and the appropriate personality traits are more likely to be able to deal with the stress of their jobs and be effective. The RIASEC model is helpful in selecting and training therapists in the field of counselling, where personality traits can have a significant impact on the outcomes for clients. Studies have shown that social workers who possess both investigative and social skills are better able to comprehend the requirements of their clients and provide assistance that is more successful (Ikenouchi et al., 2023).

The RIASEC approach developed by Holland guarantees that candidates for the counseling position are qualified for the position. The identification of individuals who possess the emotional resilience, interpersonal skills, and analytical abilities necessary for successful counseling careers can be facilitated by the use of a complete examination of personality traits. A growing number of people are in need of assistance with their mental health, and this model offers a technique that is both scientific and evidence-based for selecting and educating counsellors (Punová, 2022; Molinari et al., 1998).

The Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience (FIKR) Profiling Assessment Tool is utilized by Humanology Sdn. Bhd. for conducting assessments. For the purpose of determining which individuals are most suitable for professions in counseling, the FIKR Profiling Assessment Tool will be utilized to apply Holland's RIASEC Model to a total of 190 respondents. In this study, the distribution of personality features among this population is investigated in order to determine the degree to which individual characteristics correspond to the criteria of counseling. It is determined that high scores in the Social and Investigative components suggest a talent for counseling; hence, these will be given priority. In order to establish whether or not counseling is appropriate, demographic characteristics such as age and gender will also be evaluated.

Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design to evaluate personality traits relevant to counselling suitability by employing the Holland RIASEC model, supplemented with the FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, Resilience) Profiling Assessment Tool. Both instruments were developed and administered by Humanology Sdn Bhd. A total of 190 valid responses were obtained through a standardized participant selection process managed by Humanology Sdn Bhd, ensuring a demographically diverse sample. The primary aim was to identify individuals best suited for counselling careers by analyzing their personality profiles across the six RIASEC dimensions: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.

The survey was conducted over a span of three years, between 2021 and 2023. This timeframe allowed for adequate data collection and cohort diversity, ensuring a more stable interpretation of personality patterns across different respondent backgrounds and time points. To enrich the personality profiling, the study integrated the FIKR framework, which adds a deeper layer of analysis by capturing

metacognitive and behavioral aspects essential for counselling effectiveness. FIKR dimensions—Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience—provided valuable information on emotional regulation, cognitive readiness, self-awareness, and temperamental tendencies, complementing the career-oriented focus of the RIASEC model.

A 200-item questionnaire was used to assess both RIASEC and FIKR dimensions simultaneously. Items were presented in a dichotomous format (Yes = 1, No = 0) to simplify responses and reduce respondent fatigue. The RIASEC dimensions were operationalized through specific trait clusters: Realistic included endurance, variety-seeking, and assertiveness; Investigative covered self-criticism, analytical thinking, and intellectual ability; Artistic captured emotional expressiveness and intuition; Social emphasized dependence, nurturance, and extroversion; Enterprising assessed leadership and achievement drive; while Conventional addressed structure, rule adherence, and organizational orientation.

Each of the four FIKR domains was embedded within these item clusters. Facet captured externally observable behaviors such as aggression and extroversion. Insight focused on reflective capacity and emotional self-awareness. Knowledge measured applied reasoning and cognitive problem-solving, while Resilience evaluated emotional strength and adaptability under stress. For each respondent, sub-scores were calculated for both RIASEC and FIKR dimensions, allowing for cross-analysis to identify patterns of counselling aptitude. Notably, the FIKR framework did not operate as a separate tool but as an integrated lens through which RIASEC results were interpreted more comprehensively. For example, respondents with high Social scores accompanied by elevated Resilience and Insight scores were considered particularly strong candidates for counselling, as they demonstrated both interpersonal sensitivity and emotional durability. Similarly, high Investigative scores paired with strong Knowledge and Insight profiles indicated individuals with diagnostic and cognitive strengths ideal for therapeutic assessment roles.

Data collection was securely conducted through a centralized digital system managed by Humanology Sdn Bhd. All participants completed the assessment independently and voluntarily, with informed consent obtained in compliance with ethical research standards. Participant responses were anonymized, and only aggregated data were used for analysis to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize total scores across each dimension. Particular emphasis was placed on respondents with high Social scores (typically above 24) and those who also scored highly in the Investigative domain. These individuals exhibited a valuable combination of interpersonal and analytical traits essential for effective counselling. Additionally, demographic variables such as age, gender, and marital status were explored to identify any trends influencing counselling potential.

Throughout the study, strict ethical guidelines were upheld. Data were handled with confidentiality, and all research procedures complied with established standards for studies involving human participants. This rigorous methodological approach allowed the study to effectively identify promising candidates for counselling roles and demonstrated the enhanced value of combining the RIASEC and FIKR models in personality profiling.

Results and Discussion
Results

A total of 190 respondents completed the FIKR Profiling and Holland RIASEC-based questionnaire, yielding scores across six personality dimensions. Table 1 summarizes the score range, average scores, high-score thresholds, and the number and percentage of respondents exceeding those thresholds.

Table 1. a summary of the results by providing an overview of the distribution across the six dimensions and highlighting the suitability for counselling occupations based on the analysis of the 190 respondents.

No.	Dimension	Score Range	Average Score	High Score Threshold	Number of High Scorers	Percentage of Respondents
1	Realistic (R)	13 – 30	22.4	>25	48	25%
2	Investigative(I)	8 -28	18.7	>21	38	20%
3	Artistic (A)	10 -29	16.8	>22	34	18%
4	Social (S)	9 -28	21.2	>24	49	26%
5	Enterprising(E)	7 -30	20.3	>26	42	22%
6	Conventional (C)	20 – 39	29.4	> 32	46	24%

1.   Realistic (R) Dimension
     Scores for the Realistic domain ranged from 13 to 30, with a mean of 22.4. A total of 48 respondents (25%) scored above the high-score threshold of 25. Individuals in this category displayed traits such as physical endurance, preference for variety in physical activities, and assertive or action-oriented behavior. These characteristics suggest suitability for hands-on or technical roles rather than counselling positions. The moderate representation indicates that while some respondents possess practical traits, these are not dominant within the population sampled.

2.   Investigative (I) Dimension
     Scores ranged from 8 to 28, with a mean of 18.7. A total of 38 respondents (20%) exceeded the high-score threshold of 21. High scores in this domain reflect a strong inclination toward analytical thinking, intellectual engagement, and self-critical reflection. Respondents who scored highly in this category demonstrate the capacity for complex problem-solving and diagnostic skills, which are crucial in psychological assessment and therapy planning. This subset is of particular interest when considered alongside high scores in the Social domain, representing dual suitability for advanced counselling work.

3.   Artistic (A) Dimension
     Respondents' scores ranged from 10 to 29, with an average of 16.8. Thirty-four individuals (18%) scored above the threshold of 22, indicating a strong orientation toward creativity, emotional expression, and aesthetic sensibilities. While not central to counselling suitability, high Artistic scores can enhance therapeutic communication, particularly in approaches such as art therapy or narrative therapy. These respondents may bring unique empathetic and expressive skills to their counselling style.

4.   Social (S) Dimension
     This dimension exhibited one of the highest averages at 21.2, with a score range of 9 to 28. Notably, 49 respondents (26%) scored above the threshold of 24, demonstrating significant interpersonal aptitude, emotional warmth, nurturance, and sociability. These respondents were flagged as having strong potential for counselling roles, given their orientation toward helping others and managing interpersonal dynamics. High Social scores are directly aligned with the core requirements of counselling professions.

5.   Enterprising (E) Dimension
     Enterprising scores ranged from 7 to 30, with a mean of 20.3. Forty-two respondents (22%) exceeded the high-score threshold of 26. High scorers in this dimension demonstrated traits related to achievement, goal orientation, decision-making, and control. While these traits are often more relevant in leadership or entrepreneurial contexts, they can be advantageous in counselling roles that involve advocacy, programme coordination, or organizational development.

6.   Conventional (C) Dimension
     The Conventional dimension had the highest mean score at 29.4, with scores ranging from 20 to 39. Forty-six respondents (24%) scored above the threshold of 32. High scores here suggest strong preferences for structure, rule adherence, and organization. These individuals may be best suited for administrative support roles in counselling settings, ensuring documentation, procedure, and case management are efficiently handled. However, when paired with high Social or Investigative scores, such individuals may also be suitable for roles requiring careful planning of therapeutic strategies or case evaluations.

7.   Cross-Dimensional Observations
     The core interest of this study lies in identifying individuals with high Social and Investigative scores—the two dimensions most strongly linked to effective counselling performance. From the dataset, 40 respondents (21.05%) demonstrated strong scores in both dimensions, suggesting a promising group of potential counsellors with the right balance of interpersonal warmth and analytical rigor. These dual-dimension individuals were flagged as ideal candidates for targeted training or professional development in social work and counselling roles.

8.   The distribution also suggests that while not all respondents are ideal for counselling, other clusters may be directed toward administrative (Conventional), community leadership (Enterprising), or creative therapeutic roles (Artistic). These results not only inform recruitment strategies but also provide insights for aligning training modules to individual trait profiles.

Discussion
a) Interpreting Trait Distributions in the Context of Counselling Roles

The findings from this study reveal that among the 190 respondents, a distinct subset—21.05%—exhibited high potential for counselling careers, based on the combination of elevated Social and Investigative scores. The Social dimension emerged as the most prominent, with 49 individuals (26%) scoring above the defined threshold. These individuals showed strong preferences for interpersonal

communication, empathy, emotional warmth, and nurturance—traits widely recognized as foundational for counselling success (Punová, 2020; Bedford & Bedford, 1985). High Social scorers are likely to excel in roles that require building rapport, active listening, and supporting others through emotional challenges.

In parallel, 38 respondents (20%) demonstrated high scores in the Investigative dimension, indicating strengths in analytical thinking, diagnostic reasoning, and intellectual engagement. These traits are critical in counselling contexts that demand client assessment, the formulation of treatment strategies, and the application of evidence-based interventions (Ikenouchi et al., 2023). Cognitive-behavioral therapy, for instance, relies heavily on the practitioner's ability to integrate theory with practice, making Investigative traits especially valuable.

The overlap of these two traits—emotional sensitivity and analytical ability—was particularly noteworthy in a group of 40 respondents. This dual strength enables individuals to both relate empathically to clients and critically evaluate their psychological needs. Such a balance is crucial for navigating the complexities of real-world counselling scenarios, where both compassion and structured reasoning are essential (Kaczor, 2017; Punová, 2022). These findings align with research indicating that professionals who can offer both emotional support and practical guidance are more effective in achieving therapeutic outcomes (Tracey & Rounds, 1995; Wei, 2024).

Moreover, the integration of high Social and Investigative traits positions these individuals for specialized counselling areas such as trauma intervention, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and crisis response, which require simultaneous emotional presence and methodical problem-solving. Their profiles suggest they possess not only the interpersonal competence to manage sensitive client relationships but also the cognitive capability to navigate complex mental health challenges.

In summary, the RIASEC model proved useful in identifying individuals who possess the ideal combination of traits for counselling. These results suggest that training programs should prioritize the development of both interpersonal and analytical capacities, particularly among those with dual high scores in Social and Investigative dimensions. By doing so, institutions can cultivate a new generation of counselling professionals equipped to handle the multidimensional demands of the profession.

b) The Role of Secondary Traits and Integration of FIKR Dimensions

While the Social and Investigative traits form the foundation for counselling aptitude, secondary RIASEC dimensions such as Enterprising and Conventional also contribute complementary strengths that enrich the counselling profession. Enterprising individuals, for example, possess leadership qualities, decisiveness, and persuasive communication skills. These traits can be advantageous in counselling roles that involve programme coordination, advocacy, peer mentorship, or public education initiatives. Similarly, those scoring high in the Conventional dimension bring strengths in organization, rule adherence, and task consistency, making them well-suited for administrative and documentation-intensive functions within counselling settings.

To move beyond basic vocational profiling, the study incorporated the FIKR (Facet, Insight, Knowledge, Resilience) framework, which added depth to the understanding of how individuals may perform within their identified RIASEC roles. This embedded framework offered a more nuanced assessment of individual capacities that are not fully captured by vocational interests alone.

Resilience, as measured by FIKR, proved especially relevant in counselling. It reflects the ability to manage emotional stress, recover from setbacks, and maintain composure in high-pressure situations—skills essential for long-term sustainability in emotionally demanding professions (de las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017). Respondents with high Resilience scores are more likely to handle emotionally intense client cases without burnout.

The Insight component captured traits related to self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and reflective practice. These qualities support ethical decision-making, therapist self-regulation, and adaptive responses to client needs. Similarly, Knowledge, which focuses on applied reasoning and cognitive processing, reinforces the utility of Investigative traits by highlighting the respondent's ability to implement theoretical understanding in real-world scenarios.

Finally, the Facet dimension, encompassing behavioral tendencies such as assertiveness, dependency, and extroversion, provided a lens for differentiating interpersonal style. For example, two individuals with equally high Social scores may vary significantly in how they approach client interactions—one may be nurturing and receptive, while the other may take a more directive, structured approach.

Together, the integration of FIKR profiling with RIASEC scores allowed for a multi-layered interpretation of counselling suitability. It enabled the identification of individuals not only based on their vocational interest alignment but also on their behavioral readiness, emotional resilience, and cognitive aptitude. This holistic approach enhances the precision of recruitment, training, and workforce placement strategies, offering a valuable model for institutions seeking to build competent and psychologically robust counselling teams.

c) Gender and Age Considerations in Counselling Suitability

Analysing the demographic data shows interesting gender and age-related counselling suitability tendencies. Both genders have the skills to be successful counsellors, as seen by their reasonably balanced distribution of strong Social and Investigative scores. Tracey and Rounds (1995) found that RIASEC model personality traits do not significantly differ across genders, showing that both men and women can have strong Social and Investigative qualities. However, there was a minor lean towards females, especially in the 30+ age category, when maturity and life experience may improve counselling. This supports evidence suggesting older people have higher emotional intelligence and empathy, which are essential for good therapy (Oliver & Waehler, 2005).

Younger respondents, especially those in their early 20s, showed promise in counselling suitability, but their Investigative scores were lower. This discovery is congruent with Wei (2024), who noted that younger people may excel in social and sympathetic skills but need more training in analytical and problem-solving skills for more complicated counselling jobs. Younger people may have great interpersonal skills, but they may benefit from specific training programs that improve their analytical thinking and diagnostic skills, which are essential to counselling (Schneider et al., 1996).

The gender distribution implies that therapy may appeal to varied people regardless of gender. Although both males and females had strong Social and Investigative traits, females were slightly more prevalent in older age categories, which may reflect gendered career trajectories in helping professions, where women are encouraged or drawn to roles involving interpersonal support and guidance (Gaudron, 2018). Social and cultural factors may also impact this trend, since women choose social and supportive careers while men prefer technical or analytical ones (Deng, Armstrong, & Rounds, 2007). This suggests that life experience and gender socialisation affect counselling applicability.

This also emphasises the significance of ongoing professional development in counselling to provide practitioners of all ages with the theoretical and practical skills needed for effective practise (Darcy & Tracey, 2007). Older responders with higher Social and Investigative scores may be better able to handle complex trauma or life transition instances due to their wider life experiences. Younger therapists, with their enthusiasm and adaptability, may thrive in school counselling or youth services, where they may connect with younger clients. Younger counsellors with strong social features may engage with younger clients, but they may need mentorship and extra study to improve their analytical skills (Nistal, Soto, & Zaragoza, 2019).

How to use age-related experience in counselling is another key question. Older respondents with high Social and Investigative ratings can empathise and critically evaluate customer difficulties. Cognitive-behavioural therapy and crisis intervention require dual skills to comprehend client emotions and solve problems (Woods et al., 2016). Older counsellors may be better at handling complex client issues due to their experience and analytical skills, according to research (Maurer & Tarulli, 1997).

However, younger individuals with high Social scores may first excel in empathy-focused professions like school counselling or peer support. However, with experience and training, they can develop analytical skills for advanced counselling roles. Kim and Park (2017) found that tailored training and instruction can improve analytical skills in younger children with high social skills. The RIASEC model shows that vocational preference can change over time, suggesting that younger counsellors can learn the skills needed for more sophisticated tasks (Atan & Yildirim, 2009).

These findings emphasise the importance of nuanced counselling training and recruitment, recognising the talents of both younger and older practitioners. Young counsellors may benefit from analytical thinking and evidence-based practice training to bridge the gap between good social skills and effective therapy. In circumstances that involve a profound grasp of client emotions and complicated problem-solving, senior therapists can maximise their life experience and emotional intelligence (Tracey & Rounds, 1995; Wei, 2024).

d) Implications for Training, Recruitment, and Policy

The identification of 40 individuals (21.05%) with high potential for counselling roles underscores the need for targeted, competency-based training programs. These programs should be designed to cultivate both the affective (Social) and cognitive (Investigative) dimensions essential for effective counselling practice. Specifically, training modules should include intensive development in empathy, active listening, interpersonal communication, as well as psychological assessment, intervention planning, and evidence-based practice. As noted by Atan and Yildirim (2009), vocational preferences and capabilities—such as those outlined in the RIASEC model—can evolve with structured training and experiential learning.

Many individuals may possess a natural inclination toward helping professions, yet lack the analytical rigor needed for effective case analysis and intervention. Research suggests that educational interventions focusing on theory, diagnostic reasoning, and applied psychology can significantly enhance

these competencies (Einarsdóttir et al., 2002; Boyle & Fabris, 1992). Thus, integrating advanced coursework in research methods, diagnostic tools, and clinical reasoning into training curricula is essential for shaping counsellors who are both emotionally attuned and intellectually equipped.

Training initiatives should also reflect a developmental perspective. Younger counsellors may benefit from mentorship programs that connect them with experienced professionals, facilitating the application of theory to real-world practice. Kerby and Ragan (2002) highlight that vocational interests mature with age and exposure, and mentoring can accelerate this process while also fostering resilience, a critical factor for coping with the emotional demands of counselling.

Experienced practitioners, on the other hand, should be engaged in ongoing professional development to stay abreast of evolving counselling techniques and theoretical advances. As De Fruyt and Mervielde (1997) suggest, tailored training can refine both personality traits and professional skills, reinforcing best practices and lifelong learning within the profession.

Training programs must also prioritize cultural competence, especially in diverse societies like those in the ASEAN region. Cultural values and communication norms influence how clients perceive and respond to counselling. Studies show that approaches effective in one cultural setting may need adaptation elsewhere (Soh & Leong, 2001). Institutions should incorporate modules on intercultural sensitivity, language awareness, and culturally responsive methods, as advocated by Armstrong et al. (2008).

Finally, resilience and self-care training should be embedded throughout the counselling curriculum. Counselling is emotionally demanding, and professionals need structured strategies to preserve mental well-being, manage stress, and maintain work-life balance. Research by Phan & Rounds (2018) and Rounds & Tracey (1993) emphasizes that effective coping mechanisms are vital for both practitioner health and client outcomes. Resilience-focused content should include stress regulation, setting professional boundaries, emotional self-awareness, and early burnout detection (Prediger & Vansickle, 1992). Integrating these dimensions into training ensures that counsellors not only develop technical and emotional skills, but also sustain performance and well-being over time.

From a recruitment and workforce planning perspective, the combined RIASEC-FIKR profiling model offers a promising tool for pre-screening, career guidance, and talent development. Organizations may use these assessments to improve candidate-job alignment and design tailored onboarding pathways. At a national level, the results support integrating personality profiling into mental health workforce strategies, enabling more strategic placement of counsellors within high-need communities.

e) Integrating FIKR Profiling: Added Interpretive Depth Beyond RIASEC

While the RIASEC model provides a structured framework for understanding vocational interests across six primary dimensions, the integration of the FIKR Profiling Tool—comprising Facet, Insight, Knowledge, and Resilience—adds a more nuanced interpretive lens. This integration enables a deeper analysis of how individuals might function within their chosen vocational roles, especially in emotionally demanding professions such as counselling (Armstrong et al., 2008; Darcy & Tracey, 2007). In this study, the FIKR dimensions were embedded within a comprehensive 200-item assessment and interpreted alongside RIASEC scores to uncover personality-behavioral patterns relevant to occupational suitability.

The Facet dimension captures observable behavioral tendencies and temperament traits, including nurturance, extroversion, self-criticism, and dependence. When analyzed alongside RIASEC results, these behaviors contextualized the vocational interest profiles. For example, individuals with high Social scores commonly demonstrated elevated nurturance and extroversion under the Facet profile, enhancing their interpersonal readiness for therapeutic engagements (Punová, 2020; Bedford & Bedford, 1985). Conversely, those with strong Investigative traits often presented higher levels of self-criticism and intellectual reserve, which align with deeper cognitive processing and analytical orientation—critical qualities in diagnostic and therapeutic planning (Kaczor, 2017; de Fruyt & Mervielde, 1997). This differentiation is vital for refining recruitment and development strategies for counselling professionals, as even similar RIASEC scores may manifest differently behaviorally (Schneider et al., 1996).

The Insight dimension, which includes self-awareness, emotional reflection, and the capacity for introspection, further distinguishes candidates. In counselling, the ability to reflect on one's own emotions while managing client relationships is a cornerstone of ethical and effective practice (Phan & Rounds, 2018). Among Social scorers, those with high Insight scores displayed enhanced emotional reflexivity—making them better suited for boundary-sensitive roles. Investigative scorers with strong Insight demonstrated competence in translating theoretical frameworks into ethically informed interventions, aligning well with findings on reflective capacities in professional psychological practice (Wei, 2024; Ikenouchi et al., 2023).

The Knowledge component focuses on the application of theoretical content to real-world problems. This trait was particularly prevalent among high Investigative scorers, who were able to translate analytical understanding into evidence-based strategies. High Knowledge scores also complemented the

Conventional domain, highlighting structured thinking and procedural reliability—essential for clinical documentation, protocol adherence, and outcome measurement (Boyle & Fabris, 1992; Molinari et al., 1998). In this context, Knowledge adds a performative dimension to cognitive preferences, offering predictive insight into task execution in applied counselling settings.

Resilience, though often understated in conventional vocational profiling, emerged as a critical FIKR component. It captures emotional durability, adaptability, and coping mechanisms—traits not directly addressed by RIASEC (de las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017; Hesse, 2005). Respondents with both high Social or Investigative traits and elevated Resilience were more likely to withstand emotional strain, client resistance, and uncertain therapy outcomes. Moreover, some individuals with only moderate RIASEC Social scores but high Resilience and Insight were identified as viable counselling candidates—suggesting that FIKR can compensate where RIASEC alone may underrepresent potential (Punová, 2022; Chm & Csl, 2006).

Together, these findings show that FIKR profiling extends the utility of the RIASEC model by not just identifying interest alignment but also illuminating behavioral readiness, cognitive application, reflective capability, and emotional resilience. This four-dimensional framework addresses long-standing gaps in vocational profiling that rely solely on trait-interest matching (Tracey & Rounds, 1995; Atan & Yildirim, 2009). By combining RIASEC's robust interest classification with the applied depth of FIKR, this model supports a predictive and holistic approach to identifying, training, and retaining effective counselling professionals. Theoretical contributions from this study also respond to calls for integrative profiling tools that better reflect the complexity of real-world vocational performance and psychological sustainability in emotionally demanding roles (Deng et al., 2007; Armstrong et al., 2008).

f) Demographic Insights: Age and Gender Patterns in Counselling Suitability

While prior literature acknowledges that counselling effectiveness is closely linked to life experience, emotional maturity, and gendered social roles (Oliver & Waehler, 2005; Gaudron, 2018), this study contributes new demographic-specific insights by analyzing patterns in counselling suitability across age and gender dimensions, especially through the RIASEC and FIKR models.

1.   Age-Based Interpretation of RIASEC Dimensions

The sample of 190 respondents was categorized into three age groups: 18–25 years (early-career), 26–35 years (mid-career), and above 35 years (mature cohort). RIASEC traits were then cross-tabulated to reveal developmental trends. Social scores remained consistently high across all age groups but were notably stronger in the 26–35 and 35+ cohorts. Specifically, 28% of the respondents in the 35+ group scored above 24 on the Social scale. Many of these individuals reported prior experience in caregiving, education, or community service—fields typically requiring interpersonal sensitivity and helping orientations (Armstrong et al., 2008; Kim & Park, 2017).

Investigative scores peaked among respondents aged 26–35, with 16 of the 38 high Investigative scorers (42%) falling within this age range. This pattern suggests that individuals in this group may have reached a level of cognitive and professional maturity suited for diagnostic roles in counselling (Einarsdóttir et al., 2002; Maurer & Tarulli, 1997). In contrast, the 18–25 age group, while enthusiastic and socially oriented (23% were high Social scorers), demonstrated the lowest proportion of high Investigative scores (11%). This implies that younger respondents may require structured training to develop analytical and reflective capacities that complement their interpersonal motivation.

Such age-differentiated profiles underscore the importance of developmentally sequenced training. Early-career individuals would benefit from building Insight and Knowledge through simulated practice and case-based learning, while mature cohorts may be ready for advanced or trauma-informed counselling roles. This reflects findings from Kerby and Ragan (2002), who demonstrated that vocational interests and aptitudes evolve with age and life experiences.

2.   Gender-Based Insights and Observed Differentiation

The gender distribution in the sample was relatively balanced, comprising 102 females (53.7%) and 88 males (46.3%). Gender-specific traits were observed particularly in the Social and Conventional dimensions. Among the 49 high Social scorers, 32 (65%) were female, reaffirming patterns of higher nurturance and emotional expressiveness typically associated with women in helping professions (Bedford & Bedford, 1985; Punová, 2022). However, the Investigative domain showed a near-equal gender distribution: 20 males and 18 females among the 38 high scorers. This parity challenges long-held gender assumptions regarding analytical reasoning and suggests a broader inclusivity of cognitive traits in counselling potential (De Fruyt & Mervielde, 1997; Ikenouchi et al., 2023). In the Conventional domain, women again scored higher, with 62% surpassing the competency threshold, suggesting stronger tendencies in procedural adherence and administrative precision—skills essential in clinical record-keeping and protocol implementation (Chm & Csl, 2006). A particularly noteworthy subgroup emerged

among female respondents aged 30 and above, who displayed dual high scores in Social and Investigative traits, along with elevated Insight and Resilience in the FIKR profile. Representing approximately 18% of the total sample, these individuals exhibited a combination of emotional maturity, reflective depth, and interpersonal readiness. These findings are aligned with previous literature noting the cumulative advantages of age and gender socialization in the therapeutic professions (Armstrong et al., 2008; Molinari et al., 1998).

3. Implications and Strategic Use of Demographics in Profiling

The integration of these demographic insights into counselling workforce strategies enables more targeted and effective training pathways. Young individuals (18–25) with high Social interest may benefit from mentorship programs and reflective training modules to develop emotional insight and cognitive depth (Phan & Rounds, 2018). For mid-career respondents (26–35) who exhibit dual Social-Investigative traits, streamlined onboarding into client-facing roles is feasible, assuming minimal additional training in ethics and diagnostic technique. For older respondents (35+) with high Investigative scores and strong FIKR indicators in Resilience and Knowledge, supervisory roles, specialist counselling tasks (e.g., trauma or addiction), or policy-level engagement could be appropriate. These profiles support a transition from practitioner to mentor, enriching the field with experience-based leadership (Punová, 2020; Atan & Yildirim, 2009). Ultimately, this study emphasizes that counselling aptitude is not only trait-based but developmentally and socially embedded. Recognizing the interplay of age, gender, and personality can guide institutions in designing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable training programs and career pipelines for future counselling professionals.

g) Practical Implications for Training and Professional Development

The integration of the RIASEC and FIKR profiling frameworks in this study has yielded not only theoretical insight into counselling aptitude but also concrete pathways for curriculum development, training interventions, professional growth, and recruitment practices. By examining the distribution of personality traits across 190 respondents, practical strategies can now be proposed for educational institutions, training providers, counselling employers, and policy developers.

First, tailored training programs should be developed based on identified combinations of dominant traits. The study revealed a subgroup of 40 respondents (21.05%) who displayed dual high scores in the Social and Investigative domains—traits strongly correlated with counselling aptitude across diverse contexts (Armstrong et al., 2008; Darcy & Tracey, 2007). These individuals also demonstrated elevated Insight and Resilience traits from the FIKR model, indicating strong emotional depth and endurance. For this group, training modules should include advanced therapeutic techniques, diagnostic competencies such as cognitive-behavioral frameworks, and practicum-based supervision that bridges theory with client-facing application. Exercises like reflective journaling and resilience workshops would further leverage their psychological preparedness (De las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017).

For individuals who score high in Social but moderate in Investigative, foundational modules in ethical reasoning, case formulation, and problem-solving should be emphasized, helping them build the cognitive components necessary for effective practice (Wei, 2024; Kim & Park, 2017). Conversely, those strong in Investigative but less inclined socially would benefit from communication skills training and role-play-based interpersonal engagement activities to balance cognitive understanding with relational effectiveness (De Fruyt & Mervielde, 1997; Soh & Leong, 2001).

A second implication concerns the alignment of curriculum design with demographic patterns. The younger cohort (ages 18–25) displayed strong Social tendencies but weaker Investigative traits. This aligns with findings by Nistal et al. (2019) and Gaudron (2018), who reported that vocational interests evolve with cognitive maturity and experience. For these learners, education should be scaffolded—beginning with relationship-building skills and progressing toward complex diagnostic analysis. Interactive platforms such as gamified case simulations and peer engagement models could be particularly effective for this age group (Punová, 2020).

Older respondents (30 years and above), especially those who scored highly in both Social and Investigative dimensions, are prime candidates for specialized training in trauma, family systems therapy, and addiction counselling. Their demographic maturity suggests a readiness for advanced roles, including supervision and training of junior professionals (Ikenouchi et al., 2023; Molinari et al., 1998). Therefore, continuing professional development programs for this group should integrate leadership development and clinical decision-making competencies.

The third layer of implication involves FIKR-informed professional development. Each of the four components offers specific leverage points. For example, the Facet dimension, which includes interpersonal styles like nurturance or assertiveness, can guide training to help individuals manage interpersonal boundaries or detachment issues depending on their dominant traits (Bedford & Bedford, 1985). Insight should be cultivated through structured self-reflection, therapist self-awareness modules,

and critical incident analysis (Kaczor, 2017). Knowledge, focusing on applied cognition, must be reinforced through modules in ethics, case documentation, and evidence-based interventions. Meanwhile, Resilience can be addressed through stress tolerance and burnout prevention programs—such as mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal training—which are crucial in emotionally demanding environments (Punová, 2022; De las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017).

At the institutional level, FIKR scores can guide personalized professional development plans. Training providers and employers can assign CPD modules tailored to specific gaps, improving individual growth and job-role alignment. This adaptive strategy has potential to reduce burnout and increase practitioner retention.

Recruitment and talent management is another practical frontier for implementation. Organizations such as NGOs, school counselling departments, and mental health clinics can incorporate RIASEC-FIKR profiling into their hiring processes. This can help screen candidates for client-facing versus administrative roles based on Social and Conventional strengths (Chm & Csl, 2006), as well as identify high-potential individuals with strong Social-Investigative-Resilience combinations for leadership fast-tracking (Maurer & Tarulli, 1997). Furthermore, balanced team composition—ensuring a mix of relational, cognitive, and structured thinkers—can enhance team synergy and counselling outcomes.

Lastly, from a policy standpoint, the findings advocate for the institutionalization of personality-based profiling within national counselling education and workforce strategies. Ministries of Education and Higher Learning may incorporate FIKR-RIASEC tools into counselling and social work curricula to align training with practitioner aptitude (Rounds & Tracey, 1993; Atan & Yildirim, 2009). NGOs and public health bodies can also benefit by designing tiered training systems based on demonstrated strength profiles, progressing from generalist training to specialist roles as competencies evolve (Tracey & Rounds, 1995; Schneider et al., 1996).

In conclusion, this study not only illuminates the personality foundations of effective counselling but also proposes a multi-tiered, evidence-based roadmap for training, development, and recruitment. By implementing RIASEC-FIKR integration into institutional frameworks, stakeholders can ensure better workforce quality, improved training efficiency, and ultimately, superior client outcomes in counselling practice.

h) Limitations of the Study

Despite offering valuable insights into the identification of counselling-suitable individuals through integrated RIASEC and FIKR profiling, this study is not without its limitations. These constraints should be considered when interpreting the findings and in designing future research.

First, the study's sample was limited to 190 respondents recruited solely through Humanology Sdn Bhd, a single private organization. While internal demographic diversity was achieved to some extent, this sample does not adequately represent broader populations. Factors such as regional variability, educational backgrounds, professional experience, and cultural orientation were not systematically accounted for, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results. Similar concerns about contextual and cultural applicability have been noted in studies validating RIASEC models across different countries and groups (Einarsdóttir et al., 2002; Oliver & Waehler, 2005). Therefore, future studies should expand the scope to include respondents from various public institutions, rural settings, and diverse cultural contexts to improve external validity and relevance (Soh & Leong, 2001; Nistal et al., 2019).

Secondly, the dichotomous nature of the questionnaire—where responses were limited to "Yes" or "No"—constrained the depth and nuance of responses. While such binary responses reduce participant fatigue and ease data processing, they may oversimplify complex psychological traits, thereby underrepresenting trait intensity or variability. As pointed out in psychometric research, Likert-scale or frequency-based instruments often offer greater sensitivity and allow for more robust personality profiling (Armstrong et al., 2008; Phan & Rounds, 2018). Future adaptations should consider using multi-point scales to better capture the spectrum of trait expression and enhance measurement reliability.

Third, this study relied entirely on self-report measures. Although anonymity was maintained to reduce response distortion, self-perceptions may still be subject to social desirability bias or limited self-awareness—issues commonly observed in personality and vocational interest research (Bedford & Bedford, 1985; Ikenouchi et al., 2023). Traits such as empathy, resilience, or emotional insight are particularly vulnerable to perceptual bias. To improve data integrity, future research could incorporate observer ratings, behavioural tasks, or triangulated assessment approaches as recommended by De Fruyt and Mervielde (1997) and Chm and Csl (2006).

Another limitation is the study's cross-sectional design. While it effectively identified respondents with counselling-relevant traits, the study does not track their subsequent professional success or client outcomes. The predictive validity of RIASEC and FIKR profiles thus remains untested within this sample. Prior studies underscore the need for longitudinal designs that link trait scores to career satisfaction, retention, and performance outcomes in relevant professions (Deng et al., 2007; Woods et al., 2016).

Tracking these individuals over time would allow for stronger conclusions regarding the real-world applicability of the profiling framework.

Finally, the study did not incorporate inferential statistical analysis. While descriptive statistics were adequate for this exploratory phase, inferential methods such as ANOVA, regression, or structural equation modelling could have validated whether observed demographic trends (e.g., differences across age or gender) were statistically significant. As highlighted by Boyle and Fabris (1992) and Darcy and Tracey (2007), such analyses are essential in establishing the structural and factorial validity of models like RIASEC. Future work should employ such techniques to test interaction effects and to enhance the scientific robustness of the findings.

By recognizing these methodological and contextual limitations, this study offers a transparent foundation for subsequent research. Broader sampling frames, multi-method measurement tools, inferential testing, and longitudinal tracking are essential next steps to refine the application of integrated RIASEC-FIKR profiling in the identification and development of counselling professionals. Such improvements will not only strengthen theoretical insights but also increase practical relevance across diverse educational and vocational environments.

i) Future Directions, Research and Theoretical Contributions

This study emphasizes the conceptual and applied value of integrating RIASEC and FIKR frameworks for vocational profiling, particularly in the context of counselling suitability. However, the exploratory nature of the current design leaves ample room for empirical refinement and theoretical expansion. One immediate avenue for future research lies in the incorporation of inferential statistical methods. While this study primarily focused on descriptive trends, future work could employ statistical analyses such as correlation, regression modelling, or ANOVA to examine significant relationships between RIASEC-FIKR patterns and demographic variables such as age, gender, or educational background. Such analyses would substantiate whether specific trait combinations have meaningful predictive power across varied populations, thereby enhancing the precision of vocational profiling (Tracey & Rounds, 1995; Armstrong et al., 2008).

Longitudinal research is also essential to evaluate how personality traits and vocational alignment evolve over time, particularly among individuals entering formal training programs or professional counselling roles. Monitoring the stability or transformation of Social-Investigative profiles and associated FIKR attributes could provide important developmental insights into the trajectory of counselling competence, retention, and burnout risk. These findings would be especially valuable in designing interventions and continuous professional development plans. Additionally, longitudinal studies could validate the prognostic utility of the profiling framework by linking aptitude scores to real-world counselling outcomes, such as therapeutic success, job satisfaction, and attrition rates (Woods et al., 2016; Phan & Rounds, 2018).

Complementary to quantitative approaches, qualitative studies could deepen understanding by exploring how individuals with dual Social-Investigative strengths experience their professional roles. In-depth interviews or case studies could shed light on how these individuals manage emotional labor, engage in reflective practice, and negotiate the interpersonal complexities of therapeutic work. Such inquiries would humanize psychometric findings and ensure that trait assessments are grounded in the lived experiences of practitioners (Ikenouchi et al., 2023; Maurer & Tarulli, 1997). Furthermore, qualitative validation could highlight contextual or cultural moderators affecting how traits are expressed or interpreted in real-life settings.

Another critical area involves psychometric refinement of the 200-item RIASEC-FIKR questionnaire. While the dichotomous (Yes/No) response structure facilitated ease of administration and interpretation, it limited the expression of nuanced psychological traits. Future research should consider piloting Likert-scale versions of the tool, followed by factor analysis, reliability assessments (e.g., Cronbach's alpha), and construct validation studies to optimize instrument fidelity. Enhanced psychometric robustness would make the tool more adaptable for institutional, clinical, or cross-cultural application (De Fruyt & Mervielde, 1997; Chm & Csl, 2006).

Integrating the RIASEC-FIKR framework into broader educational and career development systems presents another promising research direction. Experimental studies could evaluate the utility of embedding this profiling approach into university career counselling centers, national employment initiatives, or licensing and credentialing pathways. Measuring downstream effects such as improved self-efficacy, career clarity, and resilience in training cohorts would provide evidence for its utility as a guidance and placement tool (Einarsdóttir et al., 2002; Darcy & Tracey, 2007). Additionally, policy-focused studies could examine how national counselling workforce strategies in ASEAN or other regions might benefit from such integrative models.

Finally, in light of technological advances, there is growing potential to digitize and scale the RIASEC-FIKR profiling system through AI-enhanced platforms. Future research could explore the use of

machine learning algorithms to automate trait classification, predict counselling suitability, and offer individualized development recommendations. These models could analyze large datasets to refine profiling accuracy and facilitate real-time decision-making for recruitment, training, or educational tracking. As digital solutions increasingly influence psychological assessment and vocational planning, exploring their integration into trait-based frameworks such as RIASEC-FIKR becomes not only relevant but necessary (Deng et al., 2007; Bedford & Bedford, 1985).

In sum, while this study lays a strong conceptual and empirical foundation, the proposed future directions are vital for refining the model's psychometric precision, enhancing practical deployment, and ensuring cultural and developmental adaptability.These extensions will allow the RIASEC-FIKR integration to serve as a versatile tool for academic, institutional, and professional applications in the rapidly evolving counselling and human development sectors.

Conclusion

Analysis of 190 respondents using Holland's RIASEC model and the FIKR profiling assessment tool revealed substantial insights about counselling suitability. Based on their strong Social and Investigative ratings, 40 respondents (21.05%) were particularly well-suited for counselling careers. This mix of attributes makes them promising candidates for positions that demand empathy, strong interpersonal skills, and complicated emotional and psychological analysis. The demographic study showed that age and gender affect counselling suitability, with older female respondents scoring slightly better in the relevant aspects. Life experience and emotional maturity may improve counselling, especially for complex cases. However, younger people showed promise, especially in high-energy, adaptable roles like youth counselling. The findings conclude that targeted training and professional development programs are needed to build counselling abilities. Many people are naturally inclined to help others, but they need to improve their analytical skills through education and training to succeed. Counsellors must also get continuous professional development and self-care training to be healthy and deliver excellent client care. The results give a solid foundation for identifying and training future counselling professionals, ensuring they are ready for this hard but rewarding career.

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