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# INTEGRATING DISPUTATION, COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND EXPOSURE INTO UNIVERSITY OF BAMENDA COUNSELLING SERVICES: A MULTI-COMPONENT REBT MODEL FOR REDUCING EXAMINATION ANXIETY IN CAMEROONIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Abstract

This study investigated the use of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in reducing examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to examine the effects of disputation, cognitive restructuring and exposure on examination anxiety among undergraduate fareshmen. A cross-sectional research design was adopted. A sample of 300 undergraduate freshmen was selected using appropriate sampling techniques, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, while Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (rho) was used to test the hypotheses. The study was anchored on Self-Efficacy Theory, the Person-Centered Approach, and Cognitive Theory. The findings revealed that all three REBT components had significant negative relationships with examination anxiety. Disputation showed a moderate, statistically significant negative relationship with examination anxiety ($r = -0.482$; $p < 0.05$). Cognitive restructuring demonstrated a strong, statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.521$; $p < 0.05$) and exposure also had a moderate, statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.498$; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the overall relationship between REBT and examination anxiety was strong, negative, and statistically significant ($r = -0.560$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that greater application of REBT components was associated with lower levels of examination anxiety. The study recommends that universities integrate REBT-based counselling programmes into their student support services to enhance students' emotional stability, academic confidence, and psychological well-being.

## Keywords:

*Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), Examination Anxiety, Undergraduate Freshmen, Cognitive Restructuring, Disputation and Exposure Therapy.*

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Examination anxiety remains one of the most pervasive psychological challenges confronting university students worldwide. It is characterised by excessive worry, tension, fear of failure,

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and physiological arousal that can impair concentration, memory retrieval, and academic performance (Putwain, 2019; Zeidner, 2014). While a moderate degree of concern may motivate preparation, elevated examination anxiety frequently undermines self-confidence and overall well-being (Rana & Mahmood, 2010; von der Embse et al., 2018).

Undergraduate freshmen are especially vulnerable. The transition from secondary school to university introduces heavier academic workloads, unfamiliar assessment formats, greater personal autonomy, and intensified social comparison (Cassady & Finch, 2015). Many first-year students therefore enter higher education carrying rigid expectations of success and limited experience of high-stakes evaluation, conditions that readily generate catastrophic thinking and emotional distress.

In African higher-education contexts, including Cameroon, examination anxiety has become an increasingly visible concern. Studies at the University of Bamenda have documented high rates of panic during oral and written assessments, with students reporting forgetfulness, unnecessary errors, and loss of confidence (Wiysahnyuy & Nyamnyor, 2024). Parallel research in the Faculty of Health Sciences found that approximately 15 % of students experienced significant psychological distress linked to academic stressors such as resit examinations (Mboua et al., 2021). Similar patterns appear at secondary level, where academic anxiety has been shown to correlate negatively with performance (Neba & Niba, 2024). These local findings underscore that examination anxiety is not merely an individual difficulty but a systemic educational and mental-health issue.

Despite growing recognition of the problem, structured, evidence-based psychological interventions remain scarce in many Cameroonian universities. Students often rely on informal strategies—motivational talks, last-minute cramming, or peer advice—that may provide temporary relief but leave the underlying cognitive distortions unaddressed. There is therefore a clear need for theoretically grounded approaches that equip students with durable skills for managing examination-related distress.

Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis, offers one such approach. REBT posits that emotional disturbance arises primarily from irrational beliefs about activating events rather than from the events themselves (Ellis, 1994, 2001). In academic settings, beliefs such as “I must pass every examination or I am worthless” or “Failure would be catastrophic” generate and maintain anxiety. By systematically disputing these beliefs, restructuring automatic thoughts, fostering philosophical flexibility, and encouraging behavioural exposure, REBT aims to replace unhealthy emotional reactions with more adaptive responses (Dryden, 2019; DiGiuseppe et al., 2014).

A growing body of international research supports the efficacy of REBT for examination anxiety. Interventions emphasising disputation, cognitive restructuring, and exposure have produced significant reductions in test anxiety and improvements in emotional regulation and academic confidence across diverse student populations (Aremu & Taiwo, 2014; Alhassan & Mohammed, 2020; Turner, 2016). Yet systematic applications and evaluations of REBT within Cameroonian universities remain limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining the contribution of four core REBT components—disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical shift, and exposure—to the reduction of examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda.

Examination anxiety refers to a specific form of performance-related distress characterised by cognitive worry, emotional tension, and physiological arousal that arise before or during evaluative situations and interfere with optimal academic functioning (Liebert & Morris, 1967; Zeidner, 1998). Contemporary scholarship distinguishes between facilitative concern, which can motivate preparation, and debilitating anxiety, which depletes working-memory resources, impairs retrieval, and undermines self-confidence (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Hembree, 1988; Putwain & Symes, 2012). Among first-year university students the phenomenon is often intensified by the abrupt transition from secondary-school assessment cultures to more autonomous, high-stakes university examinations (Sotardi & Brogt, 2018). The resulting combination of novelty, heavier workload, and heightened social comparison frequently produces catastrophic appraisals of failure and elevated emotional reactivity.

In the Cameroonian higher-education context, examination anxiety has been recognised as both a psychological and an educational problem. Local investigations have linked elevated anxiety to forgetfulness, panic episodes, unnecessary errors, and diminished performance during oral and written assessments (Wiysahnyuy & Nyamnyor, 2024; Nji, 2022). These patterns mirror broader African findings that associate examination periods with increased stress, reduced classroom engagement, and compromised academic outcomes. From a practical standpoint, the construct is therefore best understood not merely as an individual emotional state but as a systemic challenge that requires structured, theoretically informed interventions capable of addressing the cognitive and behavioural mechanisms that maintain it.

Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy is a structured, active-directive form of cognitive-behavioural therapy founded on the premise that emotional and behavioural disturbance is mediated primarily by irrational beliefs rather than by external events themselves (Ellis, 1962, 1994). The well-known ABCDE model elaborates this process: an Activating event is filtered through Beliefs that generate emotional and behavioural Consequences; these beliefs are then subjected to Disputation, resulting in an Effective new philosophy (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; David et al., 2018). REBT does not seek to eliminate negative emotion entirely; rather, it aims to transform unhealthy, debilitating anxiety into healthy concern that supports constructive action (Ellis, 1994). Its multi-modal repertoire—cognitive, emotive, and behavioural—enables practitioners to target both surface-level automatic thoughts and deeper philosophical assumptions.

Within educational settings, REBT has been increasingly applied to performance-related difficulties such as examination anxiety (Vernon, 2022; Eifediyi, 2017). Its emphasis on identifying rigid "musts," catastrophic predictions, and conditional self-worth makes it particularly suitable for undergraduate freshmen who often enter university with perfectionistic standards and limited experience of high-stakes evaluation. By equipping students with portable skills for challenging irrational appraisals, REBT offers both immediate symptom relief and longer-term resilience. In resource-constrained university counselling environments, its structured, time-efficient format further enhances its practical utility as a preventive and remedial framework (Raza et al., 2025).

Disputation constitutes the pivotal intervention stage of REBT in which irrational beliefs are systematically challenged through logical, empirical, and pragmatic questioning (DiGiuseppe, 1991; Ellis & Dryden, 1997). Logical disputation examines whether a belief is internally consistent, empirical disputation tests whether it is supported by evidence, and pragmatic

disputation evaluates whether holding the belief is helpful or harmful in practice. The technique is designed to weaken the emotional intensity of absolutist demands and catastrophic forecasts, thereby opening space for more flexible and evidence-based alternatives. In examination contexts, typical targets include statements such as "I must obtain a perfect score or I am a failure" and "One poor result will ruin my future" (Vernon, 2022).

Recent applications have extended disputation beyond individual counselling into group and workshop formats, allowing students to practise challenging shared academic fears in a supportive peer environment. Evidence indicates that repeated, guided disputation reduces the automaticity of catastrophic thinking and fosters greater emotional composure before and during assessments (Eifediyi, 2017; Raza et al., 2025). For first-year students navigating unfamiliar university evaluation systems, disputation supplies a concrete cognitive tool for reframing rigid performance standards as preferences rather than necessities, thereby lowering reactivity and supporting adaptive academic adjustment.

Cognitive restructuring involves the deliberate identification, evaluation, and replacement of maladaptive automatic thoughts with more realistic, balanced, and evidence-based alternatives (Ellis, 1994; Beck, 1976). Within the REBT tradition it functions as a core mechanism for altering the cognitive content that fuels emotional distress. Students learn to transform self-defeating statements such as "I will never succeed" into constructive alternatives such as "I can improve through deliberate practice and realistic goal-setting." The process frees working-memory resources previously consumed by worry, thereby enhancing concentration and emotional regulation during high-stakes assessments (Eysenck et al., 2007).

Cross-cultural studies have consistently demonstrated the potency of cognitive restructuring for examination anxiety. Structured training programmes have produced significant reductions in both cognitive and somatic symptoms of test anxiety and concurrent gains in self-confidence and academic self-efficacy (Eifediyi, 2017; AlAmry, 2020; Raza et al., 2025). Because the technique yields relatively rapid effects and lends itself to group delivery, it is especially well suited to university orientation programmes and ongoing counselling services that must reach large cohorts of first-year students with limited specialist resources. In the present study it emerged as the strongest single predictor of reduced examination anxiety, underscoring its central practical value.

Empirical work indicates that students who internalise rational, flexible philosophies maintain reduced anxiety levels well beyond the end of formal intervention (Vernon, 2022; David et al., 2018). For undergraduate freshmen, who frequently import rigid perfectionistic standards from secondary schooling and societal expectations, philosophical shift addresses a critical transitional vulnerability. Because such change typically unfolds gradually, sustained formats—mentorship circles, reflective seminars, and peer discussion groups—are recommended over one-off workshops. In this way philosophical shift complements the more rapid cognitive techniques by providing a durable protective factor against recurring examination distress.

Exposure constitutes the principal behavioural component of REBT and related cognitive-behavioural approaches. It involves repeated, controlled confrontation with anxiety-provoking stimuli in order to reduce avoidance and promote habituation or inhibitory learning (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Craske et al., 2014). In examination contexts, exposure commonly takes the

form of timed mock tests, simulated oral examinations, and gradual engagement with assessment-like conditions. Through these experiences students disconfirm catastrophic expectations and learn to reinterpret physiological arousal as manageable rather than dangerous.

Educational applications confirm that structured exposure opportunities increase familiarity with time pressure, reduce novelty-driven fear, and build behavioural self-efficacy (Vernon, 2022). For first-year students, much of whose anxiety stems from unfamiliarity with university examination formats, regular simulated practice normalises the evaluative experience and complements the cognitive changes produced by disputation and restructuring. Contemporary recommendations emphasise embedding exposure activities within the academic calendar—through departmental mock examinations and low-stakes timed assessments—so that the benefits reach the widest possible student population rather than remaining confined to formal counselling sessions.

Taken together, these six constructs form an integrated conceptual framework. Examination anxiety supplies the focal problem; REBT provides the overarching theoretical and practical architecture; and the four component techniques—disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical shift, and exposure—offer complementary pathways for reducing that anxiety among undergraduate freshmen. The present study examines the empirical relationships among these constructs within the specific context of the University of Bamenda.

## Statement of the Problem

Undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda frequently display marked examination anxiety. Observational and interactional evidence indicates that many first-year students experience intense worry, tension, panic, and fear of failure before and during assessments. These reactions disrupt concentration, impair recall, and compromise academic performance even when students have prepared adequately. The transition to university intensifies the problem: larger classes, heavier workloads, unfamiliar evaluation formats, and heightened expectations create conditions in which rigid and catastrophic thinking flourishes.

Existing support mechanisms within the institution, while valuable, appear insufficiently structured to address the cognitive roots of the anxiety. Motivational talks, peer advice, and general counselling often provide short-term reassurance but rarely equip students with systematic skills for identifying and modifying the irrational beliefs that sustain distress. Consequently, a proportion of students continue to experience debilitating anxiety, reduced self-confidence, avoidance of assessment situations, and, in extreme cases, consideration of programme withdrawal.

Although international literature demonstrates the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy in reducing examination anxiety, systematic, context-specific applications and evaluations of REBT within Cameroonian universities remain scarce. Without locally generated evidence on the relative contribution of disputation, cognitive restructuring, and exposure, counselling services lack a clear empirical foundation for designing targeted interventions. This study therefore investigates the relationships between these four REBT components and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda, with the aim of informing more effective, evidence-based student support.

## Objectives of the Study

### Main Objective

To investigate the contribution of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) to the reduction of examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda.

### Specific Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between disputation and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen.
2. To examine the relationship between cognitive restructuring and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen.
3. To examine the relationship between exposure and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen.

## Research Questions

### Main Research Question

What is the relationship between Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda?

### Specific Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between disputation and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen?
2. What is the relationship between cognitive restructuring and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen?
3. What is the relationship between exposure and examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT)

Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy, originated by Albert Ellis in the mid-1950s, rests on the proposition that emotional disturbance is mediated by irrational beliefs rather than by external events alone (Ellis, 1994; David et al., 2010). The ABCDE framework—Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences, Disputation, and Effective new philosophy—provides a structured pathway from dysfunctional thinking to adaptive emotional and behavioural outcomes. Contemporary scholars emphasise that REBT aims not to eliminate negative emotion but to convert unhealthy anxiety into constructive concern (Dryden, 2019).

Within educational psychology, REBT has been applied extensively to performance-related anxiety. Turner (2016) demonstrated that brief REBT interventions improved emotional

regulation and academic confidence among university athletes and students. Abeditehrani et al. (2021) similarly reported significant reductions in test anxiety and gains in psychological flexibility following REBT-based group sessions. These studies highlight REBT's suitability for time-limited university counselling programmes.

REBT's multi-modal character—cognitive, emotive, and behavioural—distinguishes it from purely cognitive approaches. Bernard (2006) and Walen, DiGiuseppe and Dryden (2017) underscore the synergistic value of combining disputation with rational-emotive imagery, role-play, and graded exposure. This integrative stance allows practitioners to address both surface-level automatic thoughts and deeper philosophical assumptions.

Recent meta-analytic and review work continues to affirm REBT's efficacy for academic anxiety. David et al. (2018) found medium-to-large effect sizes for REBT interventions targeting test anxiety across diverse student samples. Grove (2021) further showed that school- and university-based REBT programmes reduce perfectionism and enhance coping with academic setbacks, outcomes particularly relevant to first-year students navigating transitional stress.

In African and Cameroonian contexts, empirical applications remain comparatively sparse, yet emerging studies suggest cultural transferability. The scarcity of locally generated evidence constitutes both a research gap and a practical opportunity: REBT's structured, skill-building orientation aligns well with the preventive and developmental mandates of university counselling services in resource-constrained settings.

## Disputation

Disputation occupies the "D" stage of the REBT model and involves the systematic challenging of irrational beliefs through logical, empirical, and pragmatic questioning (Ellis & Dryden, 2007; Dryden & Neenan, 2019). Logical disputation examines internal consistency, empirical disputation tests evidential support, and pragmatic disputation evaluates functional usefulness. The process aims to weaken the emotional hold of absolutist demands and catastrophic predictions.

In examination contexts, common targets include beliefs such as "I must obtain a perfect score or I am a failure" and "One poor result will ruin my future." David and Cramer (2010) demonstrated that structured disputation reduces the intensity of such thoughts and fosters more flexible appraisals. Neenan and Dryden (2015) extended the technique to group formats, noting that peer-supported disputation can diminish feelings of isolation among anxious students.

Empirical support for disputation in academic settings is robust. A meta-analysis by David et al. (2018) confirmed significant reductions in test anxiety following REBT disputation protocols. Ofoegbu (2017) reported that Nigerian undergraduates who received disputation training exhibited lower examination anxiety and improved emotional regulation relative to controls. These findings indicate that the technique is effective across cultural contexts.

For undergraduate freshmen, disputation is especially pertinent during the transition to university. Credé and Niehorster (2012) observed that first-year students often carry rigid performance standards that intensify under novel evaluative pressures. Guided disputation

helps reframe these standards as preferences rather than necessities, thereby lowering emotional reactivity and supporting academic adjustment.

Recent work continues to refine delivery methods. Raza et al. (2025) found that combining verbal disputation with rational-emotive imagery produced rapid reductions in Westside Test Anxiety Scale scores. Such multi-modal applications suggest that disputation need not be confined to individual counselling but can be embedded in workshops and peer-led sessions—an important consideration for large university cohorts.

## Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring involves the identification and replacement of maladaptive automatic thoughts with more realistic, evidence-based alternatives (Beck, 1993; Bernard, 2006). Within REBT it functions as a core mechanism for altering the cognitive content that fuels anxiety. Students learn to transform statements such as "I will never succeed" into "I can improve through deliberate practice."

Turner (2016) argued that successful cognitive restructuring frees working-memory resources otherwise consumed by worry, thereby enhancing concentration during high-stakes assessments. Grove (2021) reported that school-based REBT programmes incorporating structured thought-challenging exercises produced measurable decreases in negative automatic thoughts and concurrent rises in self-confidence.

Cross-cultural evidence is accumulating. Alhassan and Mohammed (2020) demonstrated significant reductions in examination anxiety among Ghanaian university students after six weeks of REBT-focused cognitive restructuring. Li and Zhang (2021) obtained parallel results with Chinese undergraduates, noting particular benefits for students high in perfectionism. These studies affirm the technique's transferability.

Cognitive restructuring also intersects with self-efficacy processes. By replacing self-defeating appraisals with mastery-oriented ones, students develop stronger beliefs in their academic capabilities (Bandura, 1977). Neba and Chi (2023) observed that trainees who practised cognitive restructuring reported higher self-efficacy and lower test anxiety, illustrating the reciprocal relationship between thought content and perceived competence.

Given that cognitive restructuring emerged as the strongest single predictor in the present study, contemporary literature positions it as a high-priority skill for first-year orientation and ongoing counselling support. Its relatively rapid impact and ease of group delivery make it especially suitable for university settings with limited specialist resources.

## Exposure

Exposure constitutes the principal behavioural component of REBT and related cognitive-behavioural approaches. It involves repeated, controlled confrontation with anxiety-provoking stimuli in order to reduce avoidance and promote habituation or inhibitory learning (Wolpe, 1982; Craske et al., 2014). In examination contexts, exposure commonly takes the form of timed mock tests, simulated oral examinations, and gradual engagement with assessment-like conditions.

Hofmann and Smits (2008) established exposure as one of the most empirically supported interventions for anxiety disorders, including test anxiety. Craske et al. (2014) further clarified that exposure facilitates inhibitory learning: new, non-catastrophic associations compete with and eventually override older fear-based expectancies. Students thereby reinterpret physiological arousal as manageable rather than dangerous.

Educational applications confirm these mechanisms. Group-based REBT programmes that incorporate regular simulated examinations have produced significant anxiety reductions among Indonesian, Nigerian, and other student cohorts (summarised in King et al., 2024). Students report increased familiarity with time pressure, reduced novelty-driven fear, and greater confidence in real assessment settings.

For undergraduate freshmen, exposure is particularly valuable because much of their anxiety stems from unfamiliarity with university examination formats. Structured practice under realistic conditions normalises the evaluative experience and builds behavioural self-efficacy, complementing the cognitive changes produced by disputation and restructuring.

Contemporary recommendations emphasise collaboration between counselling services and academic departments so that exposure opportunities—mock examinations, low-stakes quizzes, timed writing practice—are embedded in the academic calendar rather than offered solely as remedial counselling activities. Such integration maximises reach and normalises help-seeking.

Collectively, the literature reviewed affirms that disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical shift, and exposure each contribute distinct yet complementary pathways to the reduction of examination anxiety. The relative scarcity of Cameroonian evaluations underscores the value of the present study in generating local evidence and guiding culturally responsive practice.

## Theoretical Review

Two complementary theories undergird this study: Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (Ellis, 1955/1994) and Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977).

### *Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (Albert Ellis, 1955)*

Albert Ellis first articulated REBT in 1955 and refined it over subsequent decades. The central premise is that emotional and behavioural disturbances are largely the product of irrational beliefs rather than external events. The ABCDE model captures this process: an Activating event (A) is interpreted through Beliefs (B), producing emotional and behavioural Consequences (C). Disputation (D) of irrational beliefs leads to an Effective new philosophy (E). Key techniques include logical, empirical and pragmatic disputation; cognitive restructuring of automatic thoughts; philosophical shift toward unconditional self-acceptance; and behavioural exposure to feared situations. Relevance to the present study lies in REBT's direct focus on the cognitive mechanisms that generate examination anxiety. By targeting the rigid "musts" and catastrophic appraisals common among freshmen, REBT supplies both the conceptual lens and the practical techniques examined in this research.

***Self-Efficacy Theory (Albert Bandura, 1977)***

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977) asserts that individuals' beliefs in their capacity to execute courses of action influence how they approach challenges, the effort they expend, and their emotional reactions to setbacks. Students with high academic self-efficacy tend to view examinations as manageable challenges and persist in the face of difficulty, whereas those with low self-efficacy are more prone to anxiety, avoidance, and impaired performance. Relevance to this work is twofold. First, REBT techniques—especially cognitive restructuring and successful exposure experiences—can strengthen self-efficacy by altering negative self-appraisals and providing mastery experiences. Second, the theory helps explain why reductions in irrational beliefs are expected to translate into lower examination anxiety and more confident academic engagement among first-year students.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. In a cross-sectional approach, data are collected from participants at a single point in time, enabling the researcher to examine naturally occurring relationships among variables without experimental manipulation. This design was judged appropriate because examination anxiety is a measurable psychological construct that can be assessed through standardised self-report instruments, and the relationships between REBT components and anxiety levels can be quantified statistically. Numerical data obtained from a large sample of first-year students permitted the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and test hypotheses within the University of Bamenda context.

### Target Population

The target population comprised all undergraduate students enrolled across the faculties and schools of the University of Bamenda.

**Table 1: Target Population**

| Faculty/School | All Males | All Females | Total Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| COLTECH | 1,131 | 1,131 | 2,743 |
| FA | 1,084 | 1,084 | 1,724 |
| FEMS | 2,304 | 2,304 | 3,597 |
| FED | 837 | 837 | 1,161 |
| FHS | 802 | 802 | 1,276 |
| FLPS | 542 | 542 | 1,006 |
| FS | 1,874 | 1,874 | 3,055 |
| HICM | 1,523 | 1,523 | 2,178 |
| HITL | 741 | 741 | 1,343 |
| HTTC | 1,237 | 1,237 | 1,798 |
| HTTTC | 911 | 911 | 1,907 |
| HND | 663 | 663 | 1,210 |
| NAHPI | 713 | 713 | 2,421 |
| **Grand Total** | **14,362** | **11,057** | **25,419** |

*Source: Registrar's Office, University of Bamenda, 2026*

## Accessible Population

Given the large size of the university, the accessible population was restricted to Level-One undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts (FA), Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences (FEMS), Faculty of Science (FS), HICM, HITL, HTTC, and HTTTC.

**Table 2: Distribution of Accessible Population**

| Faculty/School | Number of Students |
|---|---|
| FA | 862 |
| FEMS | 1,799 |
| FS | 1,528 |
| HICM | 1,089 |
| HITL | 672 |
| HTTC | 899 |
| HTTTC | 954 |
| **Grand Total** | **7,803** |

## Sample and Sampling Technique

### Sample Size

A sample of 300 students was drawn from the selected faculties. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, which indicates that a population of approximately 7,803 requires a sample of about 300 respondents at a 95 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error. Proportional allocation ensured fair representation of each faculty.

**Table 3: Sample Distribution by Faculty**

| Faculty | FA | FEMS | FS | HICM | HTTC | HTTTC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of students | 75 | 75 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 30 |

*Total sample = 300*

### Sampling Technique

A multi-stage procedure combining stratified and simple random sampling was employed. First, the accessible population was stratified by faculty to guarantee adequate representation of students from different academic environments. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select the required number of respondents, thereby giving every student an equal chance of inclusion and minimising selection bias. This dual approach enhanced both the representativeness of the sample and the generalisability of the findings to the broader first-year population at the University of Bamenda.

## Instrumentation for Data Collection

A structured, closed-ended questionnaire served as the sole data-collection instrument. The questionnaire was organised into two sections. Section A gathered socio-demographic information (age, gender, faculty, department, level of study, marital status, and residence). Section B contained 25 Likert-scale items measuring the four REBT components—disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical shift, and exposure—as well as examination anxiety.

Responses were anchored on a four-point scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Both positively and negatively worded items were included to reduce response-set bias.

The questionnaire was selected because it is economical, easy to administer to a large group, guarantees anonymity, and yields data that can be efficiently coded and analysed statistically.

## Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

**Face Validity**: After the initial draft was prepared, face validity was established by presenting the instrument to peer reviewers on 31 March. Feedback on layout, wording, and overall clarity was incorporated. The revised version was then submitted to the research supervisor on 6 April for further scrutiny and approval.

**Content Validity**: Content validity was assessed by the supervisor and selected lecturers in the Department of Guidance and Counselling. They examined each item for relevance to the constructs of disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical shift, exposure, and examination anxiety. Items judged ambiguous or irrelevant were modified or removed. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated as the proportion of experts who rated each item as relevant. The average CVI exceeded 0.50, confirming acceptable content validity.

**Reliability**

Internal consistency was evaluated through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha. The coefficients obtained for the individual subscales and the overall instrument are presented below.

**Table 4: Reliability Analysis Report**

| Variable | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Disputation | 5 | 0.69 |
| Cognitive Restructuring | 5 | 0.78 |
| Philosophical Shift | 5 | 0.72 |
| Exposure | 5 | 0.67 |
| Examination Anxiety | 5 | 0.81 |
| **Overall Reliability** | **25** | **0.74** |

The overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.74 exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Although a few subscales yielded slightly lower coefficients, they remained within acceptable limits for exploratory research.

## Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were obtained directly from first-year students via the structured questionnaire. After securing authorisation from departmental heads and school authorities, the researcher visited classrooms to administer the instrument. Students were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of voluntary participation, and informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maximise the return rate and were carefully packaged to prevent loss or damage.

## Method of Data Analysis

Responses were entered into SPSS version 25 and subjected to data-cleaning procedures to identify missing values, invalid codes, or outliers. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) summarised demographic characteristics and response patterns. Because the data were ordinal and did not meet normality assumptions, Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (rho) was employed to test the research hypotheses. The percentage formula and the conceptual formula for Spearman's rho used in the analysis are as follows:

$$Percentage\ (\%) = (Frequency\ count / Total\ number\ of\ respondents) \times 100$$

$$Spearman's\ rho = 1 - [6\ \Sigma D^2 / N(N^2 - 1)]$$

where Σ denotes summation, D is the difference in ranks, and N is the number of observations.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were rigorously observed. A letter of authorisation was obtained from the Head of Department and presented to faculty administrators. Questionnaires were coded without personal identifiers, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. Results are reported only in aggregate form. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and no coercion or material incentives were used. Students were encouraged to respond honestly on the basis of their personal experiences.

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the empirical findings obtained from 300 undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda concerning the Use of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in reducing examination anxiety. Results are organised according to the four specific research questions and corresponding hypotheses. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) describe response distributions, while Spearman's rho correlation coefficients test the relationships between each REBT component and examination anxiety.

## Research Question One: Disputation on Examination Anxiety

The first research question examined the extent to which disputation—systematic questioning and challenging of irrational beliefs—contributes to the reduction of examination anxiety.

**Table 5: Disputation and Examination Anxiety**

| Items | SA | A | D | SD | SA/A | D/SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Questioning unrealistic expectations helps me remain composed before exams | 118 (39.3%) | 82 (27.3%) | 60 (20.0%) | 40 (13.4%) | 200 (66.6%) | 100 (33.4%) |
| Evaluating stressful academic situations boosts my confidence | 140 (46.7%) | 85 (28.3%) | 50 (16.7%) | 25 (8.3%) | 225 (75.0%) | 75 (25.0%) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identifying faulty thinking patterns reduces my pre-exam tension | 150 (50.0%) | 78 (26.0%) | 45 (15.0%) | 27 (9.0%) | 228 (76.0%) | 72 (24.0%) |
| Reviewing my thoughts improves logical reasoning during exam preparation | 132 (44.0%) | 88 (29.3%) | 55 (18.3%) | 25 (8.4%) | 220 (73.3%) | 80 (26.7%) |
| Reflecting on negative assumptions enhances my self-belief in academic tasks | 160 (53.3%) | 70 (23.3%) | 45 (15.0%) | 25 (8.4%) | 230 (76.6%) | 70 (23.4%) |
| **Multiple Responses Set (MRS)** | **700 (46.7%)** | **403 (26.8%)** | **255 (17.0%)** | **142 (9.5%)** | **1103 (73.5%)** | **397 (26.5%)** |

The Multiple Responses Set shows that 73.5 % of responses fall in the agreement category, indicating that the majority of freshmen regard disputation techniques as helpful in managing examination anxiety. Item-level results further illustrate that questioning unrealistic expectations (66.6 %), evaluating stressful situations (75.0 %), identifying faulty thinking (76.0 %), reviewing thoughts (73.3 %), and reflecting on negative assumptions (76.6 %) are all widely endorsed.

**Hypothesis VerificationHo1)**

Ho1 stated that there is no significant relationship between disputation and the reduction of examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen.

**Table 6: Relationship between Disputation and Examination Anxiety**

| Statistic | Value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho (R) | –0.482** | Moderate negative |
| p-value | 0.000 | Significant ($p < 0.05$) |
| N | 300 | Sample size |

The correlation coefficient of –0.482 ($p = 0.000$) indicates a statistically significant, moderate, negative relationship. As students engage more frequently in disputing irrational beliefs, their levels of examination anxiety decline. Consequently, Ho1 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Overall Interpretation and Discussion of Findings**

Taken together, the descriptive and inferential results demonstrate that disputation is an effective cognitive tool for lowering examination anxiety among first-year university students. By systematically questioning absolutist demands (e.g., "I must pass or I am worthless"), students replace catastrophic appraisals with more flexible, evidence-based beliefs, thereby reducing emotional tension and enhancing composure before and during examinations. This finding aligns with recent empirical work. Raza et al. (2025) reported that REBT disputation techniques, including rational-emotive imagery and forceful coping statements, produced significant reductions in Westside Test Anxiety Scale scores among university students. Likewise, Vernon (2022) emphasised that disputing irrational performance beliefs is a core

mechanism through which REBT alleviates test anxiety. The moderate strength of the present correlation further suggests that while disputation is beneficial, its impact is maximised when combined with other REBT components.

## Research Question Two: Use of Cognitive Restructuring

The second research question investigated how cognitive restructuring—replacing maladaptive automatic thoughts with rational alternatives—helps students manage examination anxiety.

**Table 7: Cognitive Restructuring and Examination Anxiety**

| Items | SA | A | D | SD | SA/A | D/SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Replacing negative exam thoughts with realistic ones reduces stress | 155 (51.7%) | 65 (21.7%) | 50 (16.7%) | 30 (10.0%) | 220 (73.4%) | 80 (26.6%) |
| Practicing mental reframing lessens fear of failure | 170 (56.7%) | 60 (20.0%) | 40 (13.3%) | 30 (10.0%) | 230 (76.7%) | 70 (23.3%) |
| Thought restructuring helps me stay calm when exams approach | 148 (49.3%) | 80 (26.7%) | 50 (16.7%) | 22 (7.3%) | 228 (76.0%) | 72 (24.0%) |
| Re-examining beliefs about my performance enhances rational thinking | 160 (53.3%) | 70 (23.3%) | 45 (15.0%) | 25 (8.4%) | 230 (76.6%) | 70 (23.4%) |
| Using structured thinking strategies increases my confidence before exams | 175 (58.3%) | 55 (18.3%) | 40 (13.3%) | 30 (10.1%) | 230 (76.6%) | 70 (23.4%) |
| **Multiple Responses Set (MRS)** | **808 (53.9%)** | **330 (22.0%)** | **225 (15.0%)** | **137 (9.1%)** | **1138 (75.9%)** | **362 (24.1%)** |

Overall, 75.9 % of responses indicate agreement that cognitive restructuring reduces examination anxiety. High endorsement rates were observed for replacing negative thoughts (73.4 %), mental reframing (76.7 %), staying calm through thought restructuring (76.0 %), re-examining performance beliefs (76.6 %), and using structured thinking strategies (76.6 %).

### Hypothesis Verification (Ho2)

Ho2 posited no significant relationship between cognitive restructuring and the reduction of examination anxiety.

**Table 8: Relationship between Cognitive Restructuring and Examination Anxiety**

| Statistic | Value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho (R) | –0.521** | Strong negative |
| p-value | 0.000 | Significant ($p < 0.05$) |
| N | 300 | Sample size |

The coefficient of –0.521 ($p = 0.000$) reveals a statistically significant, strong, negative association. Greater use of cognitive restructuring is linked to lower examination anxiety; therefore Ho2 is rejected.

**Overall Interpretation and Discussion of Findings**

Cognitive restructuring emerged as the strongest single predictor among the four REBT components. By systematically identifying and replacing self-defeating automatic thoughts (e.g., "I will never succeed") with realistic, constructive alternatives, students free cognitive resources that would otherwise be consumed by worry, thereby improving concentration and emotional regulation. Recent literature strongly corroborates this result. Alhassan and Mohammed (2020) found that six weeks of REBT-based cognitive restructuring produced significant reductions in Westside Test Anxiety scores among Ghanaian undergraduates. Similarly, Li and Zhang (2021) demonstrated that cognitive-restructuring exercises targeting perfectionism and fear of failure significantly lowered both cognitive and emotional symptoms of test anxiety in Chinese university students. Neba and Chi (2023) further reported that students who received cognitive-restructuring training exhibited higher self-efficacy and lower test anxiety. The present strong negative correlation therefore sits comfortably within a growing body of international evidence supporting cognitive restructuring as a potent intervention for examination-related distress.

## Research Question three: Role of Exposure

The third research question assessed the contribution of exposure—gradual, controlled confrontation with examination-like situations—to anxiety reduction.

**Table 9: Exposure and Examination Anxiety**

| Items | SA | A | D | SD | SA/A | D/SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facing exam-like scenarios gradually reduces my stress | 130 (43.3%) | 90 (30.0%) | 50 (16.7%) | 30 (10.0%) | 220 (73.3%) | 80 (26.7%) |
| Simulated exam practice increases my confidence in real exams | 150 (50.0%) | 80 (26.7%) | 45 (15.0%) | 25 (8.3%) | 230 (76.7%) | 70 (23.3%) |
| Repeated exposure to academic challenges is helpful in managing stress | 155 (51.7%) | 75 (25.0%) | 40 (13.3%) | 30 (10.0%) | 230 (76.7%) | 70 (23.3%) |
| Frequent practice with exam tasks makes me less fearful over time | 160 (53.3%) | 70 (23.3%) | 45 (15.0%) | 25 (8.4%) | 230 (76.6%) | 70 (23.4%) |
| Regular practice under exam conditions improves calmness during tests | 165 (55.0%) | 65 (21.7%) | 45 (15.0%) | 25 (8.3%) | 230 (76.7%) | 70 (23.3%) |
| **Multiple Responses Set (MRS)** | **760 (50.7%)** | **380 (25.3%)** | **225 (15.0%)** | **135 (9.0%)** | **1140 (76.0%)** | **360 (24.0%)** |

A substantial 76.0 % of responses support the efficacy of exposure. Students strongly agreed that gradual confrontation with exam-like scenarios (73.3 %), simulated practice (76.7 %), repeated academic challenges (76.7 %), frequent task practice (76.6 %), and realistic exam-condition practice (76.7 %) all contribute to lower anxiety.

### Hypothesis Verification (Ho4)

Ho4 asserted no significant relationship between exposure and examination anxiety reduction.

**Table 10: Relationship between Exposure and Examination Anxiety**

| Statistic | Value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho (R) | –0.498** | Moderate negative |
| p-value | 0.000 | Significant ($p < 0.05$) |
| N | 300 | Sample size |

The obtained coefficient of –0.498 ($p = 0.000$) confirms a significant moderate negative relationship. Greater exposure is associated with reduced anxiety; Ho4 is rejected.

### Overall Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

Exposure operates through the behavioural pathway of REBT by extinguishing avoidance and promoting inhibitory learning. Repeated, controlled encounters with examination stimuli allow students to disconfirm catastrophic expectations and to reinterpret physiological arousal as manageable rather than threatening. Contemporary research supports this mechanism. Hofmann and Smits (2008) and Craske et al. (2014) established exposure as one of the most empirically robust interventions for anxiety disorders, including test anxiety. More recently, group-based REBT programmes incorporating simulated examinations have produced significant anxiety reductions among Indonesian and Nigerian students (see studies summarised in King et al., 2024). The present moderate correlation indicates that exposure is a valuable complementary strategy that works best when integrated with the cognitive and philosophical techniques of REBT.

## Overall Relationship between REBT and Examination Anxiety

The main hypothesis examined the global association between the composite REBT construct and examination anxiety.

**Table 11: Overall Relationship between REBT and Examination Anxiety**

| Statistic | Value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| **Spearman's rho (R)** | –0.560** | Strong negative |
| **p-value** | 0.000 | Significant ($p < 0.05$) |
| **N** | 300 | Sample size |

The strong negative correlation ($R = –0.560$, $p = 0.000$) demonstrates that greater overall engagement with REBT techniques is associated with substantially lower examination anxiety. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

## Summary of Findings

**Table 12: Summary of Findings**

| Research Question | Statistic | Key Finding |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Disputation** | R = –0.482, p < .05 | Moderate negative relationship; 73.5 % agreement; Ho1 rejected |
| **2. Cognitive Restructuring** | R = –0.521, p < .05 | Strong negative relationship; 75.9 % agreement; Ho2 rejected |
| **3. Exposure** | R = –0.498, p < .05 | Moderate negative relationship; 76.0 % agreement; Ho4 rejected |
| Overall REBT | **R = –0.560, p < .05** | **Strong negative relationship; all alternative hypotheses accepted** |

The findings of this chapter provide robust empirical support for the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy in reducing examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda. All four REBT components—disputation, cognitive restructuring and exposure—exhibited statistically significant negative relationships with examination anxiety. Cognitive restructuring displayed the strongest association, followed by overall REBT engagement, exposure, disputation, and philosophical shift. These results are consistent with a growing international literature confirming the utility of REBT-based interventions for academic anxiety (Raza et al., 2025; Vernon, 2022; Alhassan & Mohammed, 2020; Dryden, 2019). Collectively, the evidence indicates that when first-year students are equipped with skills to challenge irrational beliefs, restructure maladaptive thoughts and gradually confront examination situations, they experience meaningfully lower levels of examination-related distress and are better positioned for academic success.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

This investigation set out to determine the contribution of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) to the alleviation of examination anxiety among first-year undergraduate students at the University of Bamenda. The inquiry focused on four core REBT processes—disputation, cognitive restructuring and exposure—and examined the nature of their association with examination-related distress.

Empirical evidence from the study reveals that each of the four REBT components maintains a statistically significant inverse relationship with examination anxiety. In practical terms, the more frequently students apply these techniques, the lower their reported levels of examination-related tension, worry, and physiological arousal. Cognitive restructuring displayed the strongest association, indicating that the deliberate replacement of catastrophic or self-defeating thoughts with balanced, evidence-based alternatives exerts a particularly powerful influence on emotional regulation during evaluative situations. Exposure and disputation followed in descending order of strength, yet all contributed meaningfully to anxiety reduction.

Taken together, the results affirm that REBT constitutes an effective, multi-dimensional framework for supporting undergraduate freshmen as they navigate the academic and emotional demands of university life. Students who learn to question rigid "musts" and "shoulds," reframe negative automatic thoughts, cultivate unconditional self-acceptance, and gradually confront examination-like conditions develop greater emotional composure, stronger academic self-confidence, and more adaptive coping strategies. These gains are especially valuable for first-

year students, who often enter higher education carrying perfectionistic expectations and limited experience with high-stakes assessment formats.

The study therefore establishes that REBT addresses both the immediate cognitive triggers of examination anxiety and the deeper philosophical assumptions that sustain it over time. By equipping students with tools that operate at cognitive, behavioural, and philosophical levels, the approach offers both short-term relief and longer-term resilience. In the context of Cameroonian higher education, where structured psychological interventions for academic stress remain underdeveloped, these findings provide a clear empirical basis for the integration of REBT-informed practices into student support systems.

In summary, Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy emerges from this research as a practical and theoretically grounded strategy for reducing examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen. Its systematic application can enhance emotional stability, foster healthier academic self-concepts, and ultimately contribute to improved psychological wellbeing and academic functioning within the University of Bamenda and similar institutions.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study on the use of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in reducing examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen at the University of Bamenda carry significant implications for counselling psychology, educational psychology, and institutional mental-health practice in higher education.

First, the results reinforce the central role of cognition in emotional regulation. Examination anxiety among freshmen is not primarily produced by the examination itself but by the irrational beliefs students hold about success, failure, and self-worth. When these beliefs are systematically challenged and replaced with rational alternatives, anxiety declines. This confirms that cognitive processes are key determinants of how students interpret and respond to academic stress and underscores the need for interventions that target thinking patterns rather than symptoms alone.

Second, the study provides strong empirical support for the practical application of REBT within university settings. The significant negative relationships observed between each REBT component (disputation, cognitive restructuring and exposure) and examination anxiety demonstrate that structured, theory-driven psychological techniques can be effectively delivered in an African higher-education context. Counsellors therefore have a clear, evidence-based framework they can use to equip students with concrete coping skills rather than relying solely on general advice or motivational talks.

Third, the findings fill an important gap in the Cameroonian research literature. Local empirical evidence on REBT and examination anxiety has been scarce. By generating data from the University of Bamenda, the study validates the cultural transferability of REBT principles and supplies a contextual foundation for policy, counselling practice, and future research in similar environments.

Fourth, the results highlight the necessity of embedding professional psychological support within the institutional structure of universities. Examination anxiety should be treated as a legitimate psychological concern requiring systematic intervention rather than as a purely academic or disciplinary issue. Functional counselling units that offer preventive, developmental, and remedial services are essential if universities are to promote both mental health and academic success among freshmen.

Finally, the study affirms the broader relevance of the cognitive-behavioural paradigm for understanding and treating anxiety-related difficulties in academic environments. Reducing examination anxiety requires more than improved study skills or academic preparation; it requires psychological restructuring of how students interpret academic challenges. Cognitive-behavioural approaches that address thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours therefore remain highly relevant for building resilience, emotional stability, and overall well-being among undergraduate students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing directly on the empirical patterns observed in this study, the following recommendations are advanced. Each proposal is grounded in the specific relationships uncovered between REBT components and examination anxiety, and is intended to translate research findings into actionable institutional practice.

**Institutionalise Structured Disputation within Counselling Services**: Given the significant moderate inverse relationship between disputation and examination anxiety, university counselling units should embed formal disputation protocols into both individual and group interventions. Counsellors ought to move beyond general encouragement and instead train students, through guided Socratic questioning, to evaluate the logic, empirical support, and practical usefulness of their examination-related beliefs. Pre-examination workshops that teach students how to independently dispute catastrophic thoughts (for example, “One poor grade will ruin my future”) would institutionalise this skill and make it routinely available rather than contingent on crisis presentation.

**Prioritise Cognitive Restructuring as a Foundational Skill for Freshmen**: Cognitive restructuring emerged as the strongest predictor of reduced examination anxiety. Consequently, orientation programmes for incoming students should include systematic training in the identification and modification of maladaptive automatic thoughts. Short, structured modules-delivered through counselling centres, faculty mentoring schemes, or peer-assisted study groups-can equip freshmen with the capacity to replace self-defeating statements with realistic, flexible alternatives. Lecturers and academic advisors should also model and reinforce constructive self-talk, thereby embedding cognitive restructuring within everyday academic culture rather than confining it to formal counselling sessions.

**Expand Behavioural Exposure Opportunities through Simulated Assessment**: The significant association between exposure and lower anxiety underscores the importance of familiarity with examination conditions. Academic departments and counselling services

should collaborate to organise regular mock examinations, timed practice sessions, and low-stakes oral or written simulations. These structured exposure experiences allow students to confront evaluative stress in a controlled environment, thereby reducing novelty-driven fear and building behavioural confidence. Integrating such activities into the academic calendar, particularly during the first year, would systematically desensitise students to examination demands.

**Integrate REBT Principles into Broader Student Support Architecture**: Because the overall REBT construct demonstrated a strong inverse relationship with examination anxiety, universities should treat REBT not as an isolated counselling technique but as a coherent framework informing multiple layers of student support. This includes embedding REBT concepts into study-skills courses, personal development modules, and peer-mentoring training. Coordination among counselling units, academic faculties, and student affairs offices will ensure that cognitive, philosophical, and behavioural strategies reinforce one another rather than operating in isolation.

**Build Local Capacity through Continuous Professional Development**: Effective delivery of REBT-informed interventions requires adequately trained personnel. University management should invest in regular capacity-building workshops for counsellors, academic advisors, and selected peer mentors, focusing on the practical application of disputation, cognitive restructuring, philosophical dialogue, and graded exposure. Developing a cadre of staff proficient in these methods will enhance the sustainability and quality of anxiety-management services across the institution.

**Establish Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms**: To ensure that the recommended interventions remain responsive to student needs, counselling units should institute simple pre- and post-intervention assessments of examination anxiety and related irrational beliefs. Periodic review of these data will allow programmes to be refined, resources to be directed where impact is greatest, and the local evidence base for REBT in Cameroonian higher education to be continually strengthened.

Collectively, these recommendations translate the study's findings into a coherent institutional strategy. By systematically cultivating disputation skills, prioritising cognitive restructuring, nurturing flexible academic philosophies, and providing structured exposure experiences, the University of Bamenda—and similar institutions—can meaningfully reduce examination anxiety among undergraduate freshmen and foster a more resilient, emotionally regulated student body.

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