Relevance of teaching social psychology in the training of psychologists

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Abstract. This study aimed to determine social psychology's impact on future psychologists' training, considering students' performance during practical placements. The methodology included an analysis of the key features of the Social Psychology course, a comparison of the results of experimental and control groups after completing practical placements, a pedagogical experiment conducted with students in the clinics MindCare Clinic, Dobrobut, and Psychology Hub, as well as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. The study examined the teaching of Social Psychology at Mukachevo State University and assessed the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods. A pedagogical experiment was conducted with two groups of psychology students: the control group focused on studying documents and theoretical materials, whereas the experimental group actively applied practical methods, such as case studies, role-playing, and training sessions. The analysis of the obtained data indicated that students in the experimental group demonstrated a higher level of professional competence, enhanced communication skills, and the ability to work effectively in real social-psychological situations. The findings confirmed that the use of interactive methods in teaching social psychology contributes to better material retention, the development of practical skills, and an overall increase in students' professional readiness. A comparative analysis revealed that students in the experimental group exhibited greater success in applying theoretical knowledge in practice, particularly in areas such as employee motivation and the management of social interactions. A key factor in this was the provision of feedback from clinic supervisors and the use of modern technologies for communication between lecturers and students. The results obtained may be utilised in the development of new approaches to teaching social psychology, particularly the integration of motivational systems into the learning process

Keywords: specialist training; critical thinking; modern technologies; practical tasks; skills enhancement

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Introduction

Social psychology plays a pivotal role in the training of future psychologists, as it facilitates an understanding of the mechanisms of human interaction within society, the influence of social factors on behaviour, and decision-making. It not only equips professionals with the necessary knowledge to work with individuals and groups but also fosters the development of critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and communication skills, which are essential for successful professional practice. A significant number of researchers have explored this topic, highlighting various perspectives. T. Kolomiiets *et al.* (2023) investigated innovative technologies in the professional training of psychologists in European Union countries and the potential for their adaptation in Ukraine. They analysed contemporary educational approaches, including the use of digital technologies, interactive teaching methods, dual education, and practice-oriented programmes employed in European universities, and outlined the prospects for their implementation in the education system. The research by O. Didenko *et al.* (2024) addressed the issue of training future psychologists who meet the demands of the labour market in wartime and post-war conditions. They examined the challenges faced by the education system during wartime, including insufficient resource provision, the psychological state of students and lecturers, the necessity to adapt curricula to crisis conditions, and the implementation of distance learning, and proposed ways to improve educational programmes following contemporary requirements.

Furthermore, V. Panok (2024) explored the challenges of professional training for psychologists within the context of the development of Ukrainian psychology in the 21st century. The author analyses contemporary challenges and trends in psychological education and proposes directions for its improvement in response to societal demands. He identified issues in the professional training of psychologists, including the inadequacy of educational programmes to meet contemporary challenges, insufficient practical training for students, a low level of interdisciplinary integration, and the need to update the content of education in line with societal demands. L. Rudenko & N. Bidiuk (2020) examined the problems of professional training for psychologists in higher education institutions. They investigated the main difficulties associated with the development of competencies in future specialists and substantiated the necessity of updating curricula per contemporary requirements.

In his book, R. Biswas-Diener (2024) explored the foundations of social psychology, including theories, methods, and the application of social psychological principles in the study of interpersonal relationships, attitudes, and social norms. D. Campbell & A. Reiman (2022) considered how public opinion perceives the realism and implications of social psychological research, and discussed the challenges facing contemporary social psychology. P. Chen *et al.* (2022) evaluated the real-world effectiveness of social psychological interventions transferred from controlled settings to classrooms. They focused on examining how these interventions can be effectively implemented in the educational process and what outcomes they produce in real-world learning environments. The results of the study demonstrated that social psychological methods, when applied in classrooms, are capable of improving interpersonal interactions among students, enhancing levels of emotional support, and reducing stress levels within groups.

One of the key challenges in higher education is the utilisation of new technologies to enhance the learning process, and in this context, H. Crompton *et al.* (2020) explored the psychological foundations of new technologies for teaching and learning in higher education, specifically examining the role of technology in student motivation and the improvement of the learning process. S. Dunsmuir *et al.* (2023) conducted research on the pre-qualification training of educational psychology consultants in the United Kingdom, focusing on the quality and effectiveness of this

training. A persistent issue in education is addressing inequalities, and M. Easterbrook & I. Hadden (2020) investigated the potential of social psychology in overcoming educational inequalities, emphasising identity and learning contexts.

The preparation of psychologists and educators for working with diverse social groups requires in-depth theoretical knowledge. M. Eronen & L. Bringmann (2021) discussed the crisis of theories in psychology and the pathways for the development of social psychology, particularly in the context of educational interventions. N. Grunberg *et al.* (2021) applied classical principles of social psychology to improve the performance of medical teams, which also has relevance for psychology in educational settings. There are gaps in the research on the impact of technologies on different types of future psychologists, considering their psychological characteristics. Additionally, the influence of socio-psychological theories on creative disciplines, cultural differences in the perception of social processes, the impact of social context on the motivation of students with diverse social experiences, and the adaptation of socio-psychological interventions to real-world learning environments have not been sufficiently studied.

This study aimed to examine the role of social psychology in the training of future psychologists, specifically through the analysis of student performance during practical activities. The objectives of the study were to assess the impact of interactive teaching methods on the level of material comprehension in social psychology among students, the influence of individualised learning approaches on the development of professional skills in future psychologists, and develop recommendations for improving social psychology curricula in universities, considering the needs of students and the demands of contemporary professional practice.

Materials and Methods

The study analysed the teaching of the Social Psychology course for future psychologists at Mukachevo State University. Specifically, the features of the course structure, its stages, the development of competencies, and the incorporation of interactive methods were examined. Two groups of future psychologists participated in the pedagogical experiment: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group consisted of 30 participants. The control group also had 30 participants. The sample was representative, as participants were selected based on criteria that considered academic level. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis from among students studying social psychology, with consideration given to practical activities. The study was conducted in 2024, from March to June, with stages of data collection and analysis of results. The research was conducted at several psychological centres and consultancy practices where students undertook practical placements, namely the psychological centre MindCare Clinic, the specialised psychotherapy centre Dobrobut, and the consultancy centre Psychology Hub, where diverse approaches to staff motivation were practically demonstrated. These centres were selected due to their specialisation in various areas of psychological assistance, including crisis counselling, psychotherapy, rehabilitation after traumatic events, work with children and adolescents, family counselling, and support for individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as their utilisation of contemporary psychotherapy methods, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, Gestalt therapy, existential therapy, and neuro-linguistic programming techniques. These institutions provided students with the opportunity to gain practical skills in interacting with patients and colleagues, analysing real-world situations, and applying knowledge of social psychology in the areas of motivation and management. The study was conducted in several stages: the selection of centres; the division of future psychologists into two groups (control and experimental); data collection (evaluation of the importance of key motivational factors on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents minimal importance and 10 represents maximum importance); and the analysis

of results (the obtained data were analysed to determine the effectiveness of the implemented motivational system).

During their practical training, students in the control group focused on studying clinical reports, consultation protocols, and therapeutic intervention plans related to socio-psychological activities in the clinics. Students in the experimental group worked according to a developed programme titled Development of Socio-Communicative Competencies of Future Psychologists: Interactive Methods and Practical Approaches.

This programme included participation in communication skills development workshops, social interaction simulations, and role-playing exercises aimed at conflict resolution and group dynamics management. A key component of the programme was the students' completion of case studies based on real-world situations encountered in the clinics. The study employed data collection through questionnaires (Table 1). The provisions of the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (2018) were adhered to throughout the research.

Table 1. *Examples of questions included in the questionnaire*

No.	Questions
1	How easy do you find it to complete tasks related to social psychology?
2	Which aspects of studying social psychology do you find easiest? (e.g., theoretical knowledge, practical skills, analysis of social processes, etc.)
3	Do you feel that your ability to complete tasks in social psychology improves over time? (Yes/No)
4	Which teaching methods in social psychology do you find most understandable and easy to learn? (e.g., lectures, discussions, case studies, role-playing, etc.)
5	How do you rate your ability to apply the knowledge gained from social psychology in practice? (Rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = cannot do at all, 10 = can do without difficulty)

Source: compiled by the author

$M \pm SD$ represents the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). The p-value indicated the statistical significance of differences between groups. A $p < 0.05$ indicated that the difference was statistically significant. A $p < 0.01$ indicated high statistical significance. Through student questionnaires during their practical placements, lecturers were able to provide feedback to students as needed. Feedback was provided via the Viber messenger application. Feedback was also gathered (in oral format with lecturers who assessed the effectiveness of teaching methods such as role-playing and group discussions) from clinic supervisors, which helped to create an accurate picture of which aspects of the social psychology curricula worked best and which required improvement. To reduce the subjectivity of feedback from lecturers and clinic supervisors, the following methods were employed:

➤ categorisation of feedback by key aspects (effectiveness of methods, development of skills);
➤ analysis of specific examples of the impact of methods on students during practical placements;
➤ contextualisation of feedback, taking into account the specifics of the clinics and student groups.

They evaluated students on a 10-point scale according to several criteria, namely the level of communication skills, the ability to resolve conflicts, the ability to work in diverse social groups, and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations. This process allowed students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to identify areas for further development. Based on the feedback, statistics were compiled, indicating the level of success in the academic and professional development of

student-future psychologists. Comparing the obtained results with student expectations helped to assess the effectiveness of existing teaching methodologies and identify potential areas for their improvement to enhance the level of training for future psychologists.

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing programmes, including the methods, principles, and student activities incorporated within them, the teaching of social psychology, as well as the potential opportunities and threats affecting the learning process. A theoretical model for the training of future psychologists was created, and recommendations were developed for the integration of motivational systems into the social psychology curriculum in universities.

Results

The content of the social psychology course and its significance in the training of psychologists

The social psychology course is a component of the curriculum for students majoring in psychology, particularly at Mukachevo State University. This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the fundamental principles of social psychology, as well as to develop their practical skills for analysing and applying psychological knowledge in real-world contexts (Yamchuk, 2024). An important element of the course is its emphasis on the development of critical thinking, which enables students to evaluate social phenomena from various perspectives and apply theoretical knowledge to solve practical problems. Critical thinking in students is developed through the analysis of social situations, the discussion of conflicting viewpoints, and the evaluation of different approaches to problem-solving, which contributes to the formation of argumentation skills, informed decision-making, and information analysis. For instance, one exercise is "Analysis of a Social Conflict", where students are asked to consider a real or simulated situation (e.g., a conflict between employees in an

organisation due to uneven distribution of workload). They must identify the causes of the conflict, propose several options for its resolution, and justify the selection of the best strategy. Another task is "Debates on a Socially Significant Topic". Students are divided into two groups and prepare arguments for and against regarding, for example, the impact of artificial intelligence on the labour market or the ethics of advertising aimed at children. This helps them evaluate information from different perspectives, analyse sources, and develop public speaking skills. Such tasks allow students not only to formulate their own judgments but also to identify potential weaknesses in arguments, which contributes to more informed decision-making in their professional activities.

The course programme includes the study of both classical and contemporary approaches to social psychology. Classical approaches to social psychology encompass theories such as Bandura's social learning theory and Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, which focus on the influence of social factors on behaviour. Modern approaches emphasise the integration of neuropsychological aspects, emotional intelligence, and the role of social media in shaping group identities and behaviour. A key theme is the examination of the impact of social context on individual behaviour, including the role of groups, authorities, social networks, and cultural aspects. Students study various models of social influence, such as conformity, obedience, and identification, and consider how social and cultural factors shape individual behaviour. Significant attention is also paid to the study of social stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, as well as methods for overcoming them in contemporary society.

The social psychology course emphasises the development of students' communication and interpersonal skills, which are essential for effective professional practice as a psychologist. To achieve this, various teaching methods are employed, including role-playing, group discussions, and practical training sessions. Role-playing is used to simulate real-world social situations, where

students can practise communication skills, make decisions, and analyse the behaviour of others. For example, the role-playing exercise "Negotiations in a Conflict Situation" allows students to practise mediation and conflict management skills. One group of students acts as company managers negotiating with employees on working conditions, while another group represents the employees' interests. This helps students understand the processes of social interaction, develop active listening skills, and practise reasoned communication. Group discussions allow students to discuss social phenomena, ask questions, and express their opinions, which fosters the development of critical thinking. For example, during the discussion "The Impact of Social Media on Youth SelfEsteem", students analyse how social platforms influence the formation of personal identity, comparing scientific research and their own experiences. Another group discussion, "Stereotypes and Prejudices in Contemporary Society", is aimed at discussing the mechanisms of social stereotype formation and exploring ways to overcome them in the professional practice of a psychologist. Practical training sessions on conflict management or emotional intelligence allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, bringing them closer to professional practice. For instance, in the training session "Developing Empathy in Psychological Counselling", students perform exercises on recognising emotions from non-verbal cues and learn effective techniques for supportive listening. Also, the training session "Psychological Resilience in Working with Crisis Clients" is practised, where participants learn to manage their own emotional state when communicating with clients in stressful situations.

Students had the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, developing skills in working in groups, resolving conflicts, and interacting with people from diverse social contexts. In addition to theoretical knowledge, the course is also focused on the development of practical skills in the field of psychology. Students have the

opportunity to analyse social phenomena (such as the dynamics of group interaction, the formation of stereotypes, interpersonal conflicts, and social isolation) using social psychological research methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, and experimental studies. They gain experience in conducting scientific research, developing research plans, and analysing the results obtained. This allows students not only to better understand social processes but also to develop critical thinking skills and a scientific approach to solving social problems.

The social psychology course at Mukachevo State University also includes the study of important social phenomena such as leadership, social groups, manipulation, intercultural communication, and the impact of mass media on society. In the teaching of social psychology, interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing, case studies, group discussions, and simulations of real-world social situations, facilitate active student engagement in the learning process and are used most frequently, as they allow for an increased level of material comprehension among students. Interactive methods are aimed at active student participation in the learning process, which allows not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of practical skills necessary for their future professional practice. In particular, case study technology involves the consideration of specific life or professional situations, which allows students to analyse social phenomena, identify their causes, and propose solutions. Within the framework of teaching social psychology, this could be the analysis of group conflicts, mechanisms of social influence, or the processes of stereotype formation.

Another effective technology is role-playing, which allows students to experience themselves in the role of participants in various social processes, such as negotiations, conflict resolution, or leadership in a group. Participation in such games allows students to better understand theoretical concepts, such as the dynamics of group interaction or social roles, and to gain practical

experience in simulating real-world situations. For example, during the role-playing game "Leadership Strategies in a Team", students distribute the roles of manager, mediator, and executor in a group task, after which they analyse which management style was most effective. The method of group discussions allows students to express their own opinions, discuss different approaches to the analysis of social phenomena, and share their experiences. For example, during the discussion of the topic "Social Responsibility and Ethics of a Psychologist", students analyse real ethical dilemmas that may arise in professional practice and propose possible solutions. Group discussions contribute to the development of critical thinking, the ability to argue one's position, and the ability to work in a team.

In addition, project-based learning technology is important in the teaching of social psychology. It involves students completing complex tasks that combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills. For example, students might be asked to conduct research on social prejudices in a particular social group, using survey and interview methods, and then present the results in the form of a presentation or report. This approach allows students not only to assimilate theoretical material but also to gain experience in applying social psychological research methods in real-world settings. The use of digital technologies, such as interactive platforms like Kahoot, Mentimeter, or Padlet, also significantly increases the level of material comprehension. With these tools, lecturers can conduct surveys, and tests, or visualise complex concepts in a userfriendly format. For example, using Mentimeter, students can respond to questions in real-time or participate in creating collective mind maps, which promotes interactivity and a better understanding of the material. In particular, these tools allow students to be actively involved in the process, increasing their motivation and engagement. Using Kahoot for tests and surveys helps to make knowledge assessment more engaging and competitive, which stimulates students to better assimilate the material. In Padlet, interactive walls can be created for collaborative work, where students can leave notes, share ideas, upload files, and comment on classmates' posts, which promotes collective learning and knowledge exchange.

The role of practical training in clinics and psychological centres

Practical activity is a necessary stage in the development of real-world knowledge, skills, and abilities in future psychologists, which they acquire within the social psychology course. Theoretical knowledge is important, but it does not provide a complete understanding and mastery of professional competencies, which can only be fully acquired in the process of practical work. Applying theoretical concepts in real-world settings allows students to practise skills in solving specific psychological tasks, and develop the ability to interact effectively with diverse social groups and individuals, which is necessary for future professional practice. In clinics such as MindCare Clinic, the specialised psychotherapy centre Dobrobut, and the consultancy centre Psychology Hub, students had the opportunity to directly apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. In practice, students worked with real clients, applying the knowledge they had acquired to conduct consultations, and helping clients resolve personal problems and conflicts. They also performed therapeutic tasks, including working with emotional and behavioural disorders, and conducted analytical activities, assessing social processes and interpersonal interactions in the context of psychotherapy.

In each of these centres, students were provided with an individualised programme for the development of professional skills, which included active participation in group sessions, patient interviewing, and the application of psychotherapeutic techniques. At MindCare Clinic, students worked with psychotherapists, conducting preliminary assessments of patients' conditions and assisting in the planning of further treatment.

They studied the fundamentals of cognitive-behavioural therapy, developing their skills to work with patients who had anxiety and depressive disorders. At the specialised psychotherapy centre Dobrobut, students had the opportunity to conduct short-term psychological consultations, work with diverse social groups and attempt to apply various approaches to resolving issues of stress or interpersonal conflicts. The consultancy centre Psychology Hub became a platform for the development of interpersonal communication and counselling skills, where students learned to analyse clients' psychological states, prioritise treatment, and maintain a positive atmosphere during consultations. This experience allowed students to evaluate various methods of working with clients and adapt them to individual needs, thereby developing professional skills in real-world settings.

A key aspect of effective learning in the experimental group was the use of an individualised approach, which included student self-assessment, feedback from lecturers, and personalised recommendations from clinic supervisors. This approach facilitated material comprehension and the development of specific professional skills necessary for future work in the socio-psychological field. Students in the experimental group regularly conducted self-assessments of their skills and knowledge. For example, after each training session or role-playing exercise, they completed reflective questionnaires, evaluating their own successes and difficulties in communicating with patients, managing conflicts, and analysing social situations. This allowed them to become aware of their own strengths and areas for further development. One student noted in their self-assessment that they found it difficult to manage group dynamics during conflict mediation between patients. Based on this analysis, lecturers developed individualised exercises for them to develop leadership qualities and group process management skills, which

helped them better prepare for future professional practice. They evaluated students' actions during simulations of social situations and real clinical cases, providing detailed recommendations for improving skills. For example, during a simulation of a crisis consultation, a student was unable to react quickly to the emotional state of a patient who was in distress. The lecturer drew attention to this aspect and suggested that she work further on methods of emotional regulation in stressful situations. Several weeks after a series of training sessions, her results improved, demonstrating the effectiveness of the personalised approach. In addition to lecturer evaluations, students received recommendations from the clinic supervisors where they completed their practical placements. This allowed them to adapt their learning to the real-world needs of the professional environment. In particular, one student, who demonstrated strong analytical skills during the analysis of social case studies, received a personalised recommendation to focus on developing counselling skills. They were offered additional tasks that included individual work with patients, which allowed them to better develop skills in effective communication and counselling.

Thus, in comparison to traditional university teaching methods, where students typically work with theoretical material and tests, practical placements in clinics allowed them to acquire deeper professional skills based on real-world social interactions. Interactive teaching methods in the experimental group significantly increased the effectiveness of knowledge acquisition and the development of professional competencies, such as communication, conflict management, and social situation analysis, which are extremely important for the future work of psychologists. To objectively assess the level of material comprehension, students' average scores before and after the implementation of interactive methods were analysed (Table 2).

__Table 2.__ Level of material acquisition in the experimental and control groups before and after practical placements

Indicators	Before practical placements		After practical placements	
	Control group	Experimental group	Control group	Experimental group
Average score in social psychology (on a 10-point scale)	6.1	6.2	6.8	8.4
Self-assessment of communication competence (on a 10-point scale)	5.8	5.9	6.3	8.7
Ability to apply knowledge in practice (on a 10-point scale)	5.4	5.6	6.1	8.9

__*Source:*__ *compiled by the author*

A comparative analysis of the learning outcomes of students in the control and experimental groups reveals a significant difference in the impact of traditional and interactive teaching methods on the level of material comprehension, the development of communication competence, and the ability to apply knowledge in practice. In the control group, where teaching was conducted using traditional methods, specifically through the analysis of documents, familiarisation with methodological recommendations, protocols, and examination records, students demonstrated only a slight improvement in their knowledge and skills. The average score in the discipline increased by 0.7 points, indicating gradual assimilation of theoretical knowledge. Students' communication competence increased by only 0.5 points, which is explained by insufficient engagement in realworld social interactions during the learning process. The ability to apply the acquired knowledge in practice improved by 0.7 points, indicating a limited level of practical experience, as the main focus was on working with documents rather than directly with social situations.

Overall, the results of the control group demonstrate that traditional teaching methods contribute to the development of a theoretical foundation, however, they do not provide sufficient practical training for students, which may affect their professional readiness to work in real-world settings. In contrast, students in the experimental group, who were taught using a programme that included interactive methods, such as role-playing, communication training, social situation simulations, and case studies, demonstrated significantly higher results. The average score in the discipline increased by 2.2 points, indicating a deeper comprehension of the material due to active engagement in the learning process. Communication competence increased by 2.8 points, demonstrating the effectiveness of interactive methods in developing skills in communication, negotiation, and group dynamics management. The most significant improvement was observed in students' ability to apply knowledge in practice – this indicator increased by 3.3 points. This result is due to the fact that interactive methods allowed students to directly interact with real or simulated social situations, resolve conflicts, analyse social processes, and make informed decisions within a professional context.

To evaluate their own development during their practical placements, students conducted selfassessments of their knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through the practical application of social psychology, as presented in Table 3. Self-assessment facilitated reflection, which helped students adapt their approaches and improve professional skills, particularly in the analysis of social processes and interaction in clinical settings. Furthermore, the results of the selfassessments allowed mentors and lecturers to provide individualised feedback, which helped to adjust the learning process and provide additional support where needed. Feedback from lecturers was aimed at helping students address

the difficulties they encountered when completing tasks, providing individual recommendations and strategies for improving results. Lecturers also adjusted teaching methods based on which one's students found most understandable and effective, to optimise the learning process. In addition, they provided support in applying theoretical knowledge in practice, helping students develop the professional skills necessary for real-world practice.

Table 3. *Survey results of the experimental and traditional groups based on questionnaire questions*

Criterion	Experimental group (M ± SD)	Traditional group (M ± SD)	p-value
Ease of task completion (rating from 1 to 10)	8.0 ± 1.2	6.0 ± 1.5	p < 0.05
Easiest aspects of learning (most frequent response)	Practical skills and social process analysis	Theoretical knowledge (e.g., basic social psychology concepts)	-
Improvement in task performance ability (most frequent response)	Yes (due to constant application in practice)	Yes (due to repetition of theoretical material)	-
Most understandable teaching methods (most frequent response)	Role plays, case studies, discussions	Lectures, traditional seminars	-
Ability to apply knowledge in practice (rating from 1 to 10)	9.0 ± 1.1	6.0 ± 1.3	p < 0.01

Source: *compiled by the author*

The research results indicate significant differences in the perception of the learning process between students in the experimental and traditional groups. One of the key indicators was the ease of task completion: students in the experimental group rated this criterion on average at 8.0 points (± 1.2), while in the traditional group, this indicator was 6.0 points (± 1.5). The statistically significant difference (p < 0.05) indicates that interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing, case studies, and discussions, help students better understand the material and complete tasks with less difficulty. Regarding the easiest aspects of learning, students in the experimental group noted practical skills and the analysis of social processes, while in the traditional group, preference was given to the assimilation of theoretical knowledge. This aligns with the teaching methods in both groups: in the former, interactive approaches were actively used, which contributed to the development of practical competencies; in the latter, lectures and seminars provided a thorough understanding of theoretical foundations.

The study also found that in both groups, students noted an improvement in their ability to complete tasks, but the mechanisms of this improvement differed. In the experimental group, this was explained by the constant practical application of knowledge, while in the traditional group, students performed tasks better due to the repetition of theoretical material. The most understandable teaching methods for the experimental group were role-playing, case studies, and discussions, which allowed them to actively interact and apply the acquired knowledge in simulated situations. In contrast, students in the traditional group preferred lectures and seminars, which corresponded to a more classic learning format focused on assimilating information through listening and note-taking. A significant difference was observed in the ability to apply knowledge in practice. The average score for this criterion in the experimental group was 9.0 points (± 1.1), and in the traditional group, it was 6.0 points (± 1.3). The statistically significant difference (p < 0.01) confirms that interactive teaching methods significantly better promote the development of practical skills and help students more confidently use the acquired knowledge in real-world settings. Students in the experimental group not only completed tasks more easily but also better assimilated the material, especially in

applied aspects. The statistically significant differences obtained highlighted the importance of implementing interactive methods in the learning process to increase its effectiveness and practical orientation.

Based on feedback from the supervisors of three clinics, an analysis was conducted that included evaluating students on several key criteria: level of communication skills, ability to resolve conflicts, ability to work in diverse social groups, and ability to apply theoretical knowledge in realworld situations. Clinic supervisors evaluated each student on a scale from 1 to 10, providing detailed information about the strengths and weaknesses of the interns. A comparison of these results with students' expectations, who rated their ability to apply knowledge in practice at 7 out of 10, indicates the need for longer practical training. This leads to the conclusion that although students successfully grasped the fundamentals of social psychology, they need more time to develop skills in the practical application of the acquired knowledge in real-world situations, as confirmed by the SWOT analysis in Table 4.
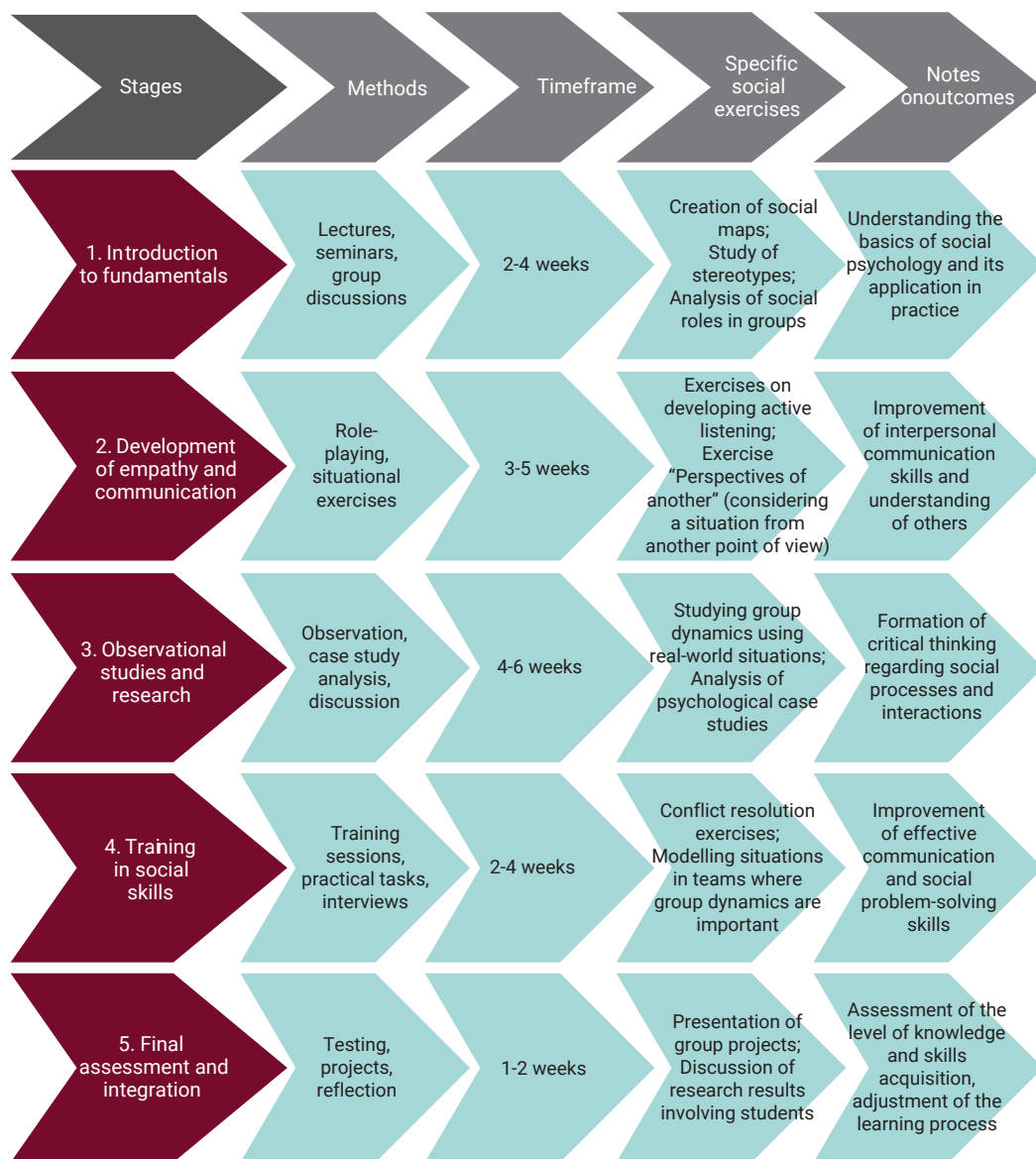
Table 4. SWOT analysis of the social psychology teaching programme

Strengths	Weaknesses
Development of communication skills (average score 7.7/10)	Difficulties in applying theoretical knowledge in practice (average score 6/10)
Working in social groups	Limited integration of theory and practice
Use of interactive methods (role-playing, case studies)	A limited number of practical sessions
Opportunities	**Threats**
Expansion of practical sessions (real-world cases, clinical practice)	Rapidly changing professional requirements
Implementation of new teaching methods (modern technologies)	Low student motivation for practical work
Expansion of cooperation with clinics	Insufficient clinical placement opportunities

Source: *compiled by the author*

The SWOT analysis of the social psychology teaching programme revealed several key aspects that influenced the effectiveness of the learning process. Strengths included the development of students' communication skills and the use of interactive methods, which positively affected practical training. However, weaknesses were also identified, including insufficient application of theoretical knowledge in real-world settings and a limited number of practical sessions, which required improvement. Opportunities for improvement included expanding clinical practice and integrating new teaching methods, while threats such as rapidly changing professional requirements and limited access to clinical placements could complicate students' preparation for real-world practice.

To improve the training of future psychologists, a model was created (Fig. 1) that will be oriented towards the development of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This model should take into account not only the academic aspect of learning but also socio-psychological training, integration with real-world situations, and the development of critical thinking. Figure 1 presents a diagram of the stages of teaching social psychology, which includes five key stages. Each of them includes specific teaching methods, timeframes, socially oriented exercises, and expected outcomes. This structure facilitates the assimilation of material and the development of practical skills in the field of social psychology.

Stages	Methods	Timeframe	Specific social exercises	Notes onoutcomes
1. Introduction to fundamentals	Lectures, seminars, group discussions	2-4 weeks	Creation of social maps; Study of stereotypes; Analysis of social roles in groups	Understanding the basics of social psychology and its application in practice
2. Development of empathy and communication	Role-playing, situational exercises	3-5 weeks	Exercises on developing active listening; Exercise "Perspectives of another" (considering a situation from another point of view)	Improvement of interpersonal communication skills and understanding of others
3. Observational studies and research	Observation, case study analysis, discussion	4-6 weeks	Studying group dynamics using real-world situations; Analysis of psychological case studies	Formation of critical thinking regarding social processes and interactions
4. Training in social skills	Training sessions, practical tasks, interviews	2-4 weeks	Conflict resolution exercises; Modelling situations in teams where group dynamics are important	Improvement of effective communication and social problem-solving skills
5. Final assessment and integration	Testing, projects, reflection	1-2 weeks	Presentation of group projects; Discussion of research results involving students	Assessment of the level of knowledge and skills acquisition, adjustment of the learning process

Figure 1. *Stages of teaching social psychology*
Source: *compiled by the author*

**Recommendations for improving
the teaching of social psychology in universities**
It is important to highlight recommendations that yield results in conjunction with the use of a theoretical model. The most important aspect of social psychology for future psychologists is the integration of the learning process with real-world practical experience, which can be gained through university collaboration with clinics, psychological centres, and other institutions that provide psycho-social assistance. To improve the training of future psychologists, it is important to establish close cooperation with specific clinics and psychological centres. For

example, universities can collaborate with mental health clinics, such as the Kyiv city centre for social, psychological, professional and labour rehabilitation Askold, which will provide students with the opportunity to complete practical placements, observe the work of professionals, and participate in real psychotherapeutic processes. Universities can also create joint projects with organisations such as the Coordination Centre for Mental Health, where students will gain experience working with diverse groups of clients, which will help integrate theoretical knowledge into practical activities. This provides students with the opportunity to gain practical experience working with real clients under the supervision of experienced specialists. For example, students can complete practical placements in mental health clinics, where they will have the opportunity not only to observe the work of professionals but also to participate in conducting psychodiagnostic research, psychotherapy sessions, and patient consultations. In addition, it is important to organise joint training sessions and seminars with practising psychologists, where students can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that will help them confidently begin their professional practice after graduation. This allows students to learn about the latest trends and innovative methods in psychology, which will help them remain competitive in the job market.

In addition to practical training, it is also important to integrate motivational systems into the social psychology curriculum to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process. This will allow students to better understand not only the theoretical aspects of the discipline but also to develop intrinsic motivation for learning and professional development. One effective way to implement motivational systems is to introduce elements of gamification, where students receive certain rewards for achievements in learning, for example, in the form of additional points, certificates, or the opportunity to complete practical placements with highly qualified specialists. It is also worth applying methods of individualised

learning, allowing students to choose topics for research, and participation in practical sessions, or training. This approach allows students to be motivated to actively participate in the learning process and promotes the development of their creative potential and interest in the profession. For example, project work can be introduced, where students independently explore specific issues of social psychology and then present their results as research papers or practical recommendations for real organisations.

Thus, to improve the training of future psychologists, it is necessary to organise university collaboration with clinics and psychological centres that provide students with the opportunity to gain practical skills. One way to achieve this is to create practical training programmes where students can work with real-world cases. This will allow them to understand how social psychology knowledge is applied in practice. It is also important to implement psychotherapeutic training sessions and integrate project work based in real organisations, where students can work on research related to social problems, mental health, or intercultural communication. In addition, to improve the effectiveness of learning, it is necessary to develop motivational systems, including elements of gamification and individualised learning programmes, which will promote the development of students' creative potential and their active participation in the learning process. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical skills, comprehensive training for future psychologists can be ensured, meeting the demands of the modern job market and societal needs.

Discussion

The teaching of social psychology in the training of psychologists is an important element that provides students with an understanding of social processes and interpersonal relationships, which is necessary for work in any psychological practice. As noted by Y. Liu *et al.* (2024), emotional engagement and psychological capital are important factors for learning and academic

achievement, especially in blended learning environments. These aspects confirm the importance of social psychology as a foundation for developing motivation and self-awareness in students, which are necessary for further professional practice. The study by L. Peretiatko & M. Teslenko (2022) explores the psychological prerequisites for the development of professional self-identity in future psychologists, emphasising the crucial role of their motivational sphere and the identification of effective psychological and pedagogical conditions for its formation. Analysing the research of M. London *et al.* (2023), which emphasised the importance of developing self-awareness and interpersonal skills, it can be noted that social psychology plays an important role in the formation of these qualities in future psychologists. These skills help students to interact effectively with other people in a professional environment, which is an integral part of psychological practice. Furthermore, this was consistent with the findings of J. Garcia & G. Cohen (2013), who analysed how social psychology can improve student-teacher interactions. They note that the application of social psychology principles in the learning process contributes to creating a more favourable educational environment based on trust and mutual understanding. The research also confirmed that the use of interactive teaching methods improves students' communication skills and promotes their more active participation in the learning process.

M. Mampane (2023) in their research emphasised the role of social psychology in the training of teachers and psychologists in South Africa. This approach can be extrapolated to other regions where social psychology contributes to the formation of the necessary professional qualities for working with students, as well as for understanding and resolving social and emotional problems in educational institutions. This correlates with the current study, as the relevance of teaching social psychology in the training of psychologists is a key factor in their professional effectiveness. The importance of social psychology for

understanding human behaviour in groups is also highlighted by S. Plous *et al.* (2020). They noted that studying social psychology allows students to better understand the mechanisms of group behaviour and effectively apply this knowledge in practice. They also emphasised the need to develop empathy and the ability to resolve conflicts, which are key for a psychologist's work in any environment. This confirms the thesis about the importance of socio-psychological training for future specialists, which is also the subject of this research. Since social psychology helps future psychologists better understand social processes related to interpersonal interactions, this is emphasised in the research by A. Mehrad *et al.* (2023). The authors noted that knowledge of social psychology allows for effective interaction with people in various social contexts, which is important for a psychologist's development. Thus, their research, like the current one, confirms the need to integrate sociopsychological disciplines into the curricula for training psychologists.

The research by A. Sullivan *et al.* (2023) emphasised the necessity of social psychology for developing inclusive practices in schools. This is particularly important for the training of psychologists, as social psychology helps to understand how social and cultural factors influence people's behaviour and mental health. Knowledge of social psychology enables future specialists to work effectively with children with special educational needs, contributing to the creation of a favourable learning environment. This aligns with the current study, as the relevance of teaching social psychology in the training of psychologists directly affects their ability to ensure inclusivity and support for various categories of clients. In the article of A. Uskul *et al.* (2024), it is emphasised that social psychology is necessary for understanding intercultural processes. In the context of globalisation and multiculturalism, this knowledge becomes critically important for psychologists who work in multicultural environments and must consider social and cultural factors in their work with clients. This is

particularly relevant for psychologists who are involved in the adaptation of migrants, the resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts, and the development of intercultural communication. This approach is also confirmed by the current study, as social psychology helps to develop the professional skills necessary for effective interaction with representatives of different cultural groups. S. Power *et al.* (2023) emphasised the importance of social psychology for the development of social justice and equality. They stressed that social psychologists play a key role in overcoming discrimination, inequality, and social isolation. This fully corresponds to the current requirements for the training of psychologists, as they must possess knowledge that helps in solving social problems both at the level of individual psychotherapy and in the field of social assistance and community work. This study also confirms the need to integrate social psychology into professional training programmes, as it forms in future psychologists the competencies that promote social equality, mutual understanding, and effective conflict resolution.

The importance of social psychology for mental health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was investigated by V. Saladino *et al.* (2020) and T. Liang (2022). They emphasised that social factors, such as isolation and stress, have a significant impact on people's mental health. Knowledge of social psychology allows psychologists to understand these processes and develop support methods for people in crisis situations. The study of W. Mischel (1996) also emphasised the influence of social factors on individual behaviour, which is important for psychologists in various areas of practice. Social psychology helps psychologists to better understand how social contexts shape individual behaviour and, accordingly, to apply this knowledge in the process of counselling and therapy. C. Steinebach (2020) and P. Peterson *et al.* (2022) noted the importance of social psychology for the development of critical thinking and professional skills in psychologists. This helps students not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to gain practical skills

necessary for effective work with people in various social contexts, which is important for a psychologist's further career.

Considering the importance of social psychology for supporting people in complex social situations, E. Treichler *et al.* (2020) noted that it is important for the formation of effective training sessions and programmes that promote the development of social skills in psychologists. This makes it possible not only to theoretically but also practically prepare students for work with clients, providing them with the necessary skills of interaction, empathy, and constructive conflict resolution. This approach is extremely important for the training of modern psychologists, as it allows them to work effectively in various social contexts. The research also confirms this, as the relevance of teaching social psychology lies not only in the transmission of knowledge but also in the development of practical competencies for future professional practice. Understanding social processes and effectively solving social problems are an integral part of the training of psychologists, as confirmed by the research of G. Velez & S. Power (2024), J. Jost (2024), and S. Kozimov (2024). They pointed to the need to include social psychology in curricula to develop interpersonal communication skills, which are critical for psychologists working in conditions of social change. Social psychology allows students to better understand group processes, mechanisms of social influence, and the adaptation of the individual to changes in society. This aligns with the current study, as the training of psychologists must take into account modern challenges, including working with clients in situations of social instability, crisis conditions, and cultural transformation.

Conclusions

The study confirmed the importance of studying social psychology, which is one of the most important disciplines for future psychologists, as it helps to better understand social processes, interpersonal interactions, and the influence

of the social environment on human behaviour. Studying the fundamentals of social psychology allowed students to understand the mechanisms of group dynamics, stereotypes, prejudices, and interactions between people in various social contexts. During their practical placements, students interned at three clinics and centres: Mind-Care Clinic, the specialised psychotherapy centre Dobrobut, and the advisory centre Psychology Hub. In each of these institutions, students gained practical skills by working with real patients under the supervision of experienced psychologists and psychotherapists. The practical placements in these institutions allowed students not only to observe the work of specialists but also to participate in conducting psychodiagnostic assessments, consultations, and therapeutic sessions. However, the results of the practical placements showed that most students experienced some difficulties in direct communication with patients due to insufficient experience in real-world settings. Analysing the results obtained, it was found that the main problem is the insufficient number of practical sessions for students in the learning process. Most of them felt some uncertainty in working with real clients, as the lack of practice complicates adaptation to real-world conditions.

The results of the survey of the experimental and traditional groups showed significant differences in learning effectiveness, confirming the importance of practical methods in the training of future psychologists. The experimental group,

which actively used interactive teaching methods such as role-playing, case studies, and discussions, received higher scores for ease of task completion (8 points) and ability to apply knowledge in practice (9 points). This indicates that a practical approach helps students to better understand and apply knowledge in real-world situations. The traditional group, which focused on theoretical lectures and seminars, showed lower results: the score for ease of task completion was 6 points, and the ability to apply knowledge was 6 points, indicating difficulties in the absence of practical experience.

Thus, the results obtained demonstrate that the integration of practical methods into the learning process is necessary for the training of future psychologists. Recommendations for improving the social psychology course programme were developed, taking into account the results of the study. Prospects for further research include studying the impact of social and cultural factors on the perception of psychological teaching methods.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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Актуальність викладання соціальної психології у процесі підготовки психологів

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Анотація. Метою дослідження було визначити вплив соціальної психології у підготовці майбутніх психологів, враховуючи результати студентів під час проходження практики. Методологія включала аналіз особливостей навчального курсу «Соціальна психологія», порівняння результатів експериментальної та контрольної груп після проходження практики, педагогічний експеримент студентів у клініках «MindCare», «Dobrobut», «Psychology Hub», а також проведення Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats аналізу. У ході дослідження було проаналізовано викладання курсу «Соціальна психологія» в Мукачівському державному університеті та оцінено ефективність інтерактивних методів навчання. Було проведено педагогічний експеримент із двома групами студентів-психологів: контрольна група зосереджувалася на вивченні документів і теоретичних матеріалів, тоді як експериментальна група активно використовувала практичні методи, такі як кейс-стаді, рольові ігри та тренінги. Аналіз отриманих даних засвідчив, що студенти експериментальної групи продемонстрували вищий рівень сформованих професійних компетентностей, кращі комунікативні навички та здатність ефективно працювати у реальних соціально-психологічних ситуаціях. Результати дослідження підтвердили, що застосування інтерактивних методів у викладанні соціальної психології сприяє покращенню засвоєння матеріалу, розвитку практичних навичок та підвищенню професійної готовності студентів. Порівняльний аналіз показав, що студенти експериментальної групи мали вищу успішність у застосуванні теоретичних знань на практиці, зокрема у сфері мотивації персоналу та управління соціальними взаємодіями. Важливу роль у цьому відіграло отримання зворотного зв'язку від керівників клінік та використання сучасних технологій для комунікації між викладачами та студентами. Отримані результати можуть бути використані для розробки нових підходів до викладання соціальної психології, зокрема, інтеграції мотиваційних систем у навчальний процес

Ключові слова: підготовка фахівців; критичне мислення; новітні технології; практичні завдання; покращення навичок

МУКАЧІВСЬКИЙ ДЕРЖАВНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ