

The Need of Counselling services in schools and colleges : A pathway to students Mental health and well- being.

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression and so many psychological issues among students highlights the urgent need for counselling services in educational institutions. Schools and colleges are not only centres of academic growth but also environments that shape students' social, emotional and psychological development i.e. Holistic development. Counselling services in schools and colleges serve as a structured intervention that promotes psychological health, strengthens coping mechanism and guides students in decision making and career planning, thereby enhancing mental health and overall well-being. This article discusses the significance of counselling services, the challenges faced in implementing them, and how they act as a pathway to students' holistic development.

Key Words: Counselling Services, Schools, Colleges, Students, Mental Health and well-being.

Introduction :

Education in the 21st century is characterized by intense academic competition, changing learning patterns, financial pressures, and evolving career demands. While students strive for academic excellence, they are increasingly vulnerable to stress, burnout and mental health challenges. (Eisenberg, Hunt and Speer, 2013). Studies indicate that more than one-third of students in higher education experience anxiety, depression & academic fatigue (Mehrotra,2020). At the school level, issues such as exam fear, peer pressure, identity crisis, and family expectations contribute to psychological distress. These challenges, if unaddressed, affect students' concentration, motivation, and academic achievement. Counselling services, when integrated into schools and colleges, provide preventive as well as remedial measures to safeguard students' mental health. They act as a bridge between emotional well-being and academic success.

Review of related literature

Jaisoory.T.S. (2021) analyzed the study on the title A case for college mental health services in India. The paper concluded that mental health issues are prevalent among college students and if left unaddressed lead to long term negative personal, social, academic and occupational outcomes.

Seema mehrotra (2020) conducted study on the title Indian higher education and youth, mental health; challenges and opportunities. the paper shown that in low resource context, the utilization and mobilization of existing support structure in education institutions can enhance feasibility, receptivity ,scalability and sustainability of promotive programs of youth.

R.P.Auerbach, J.Alonso.W.G.Axinn, P.Cuijpers, D.P.Ebert, J.G.Green, I.Hwang,R.C.Kessler, And Mortier.P, (2016) conducted study on the title Mental health disorders among college students in the world health organization. The results shown that mental disorder common among college students, have onsets that mostly occur prior to college entry, in case of pre -matriculation disorders are associated with college attribution ,and are typically untreated. Detection and effective treatment of these disorders early in the college career might reduce attrition and improve educational and psychological functioning.

Sibanath Deb, Esben Strodl and Jiandong Sun (2015) investigated study on the title Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among Indian high school students. The results showed Academic stress is a serious issue which affects nearly two thirds of senior high school students in koikata. Potential methods for combating the challenges of academic pressure are suggested.

Priti Arun and B.S.Chavan (2009) conducted study on the title strss and suicidal ideas among school going adolescents in chandigarh. The results shown that there was a significant correlation between students perception of life as a burden and class they were studying, mother's working status, psychological problems and problems students experienced in relation to study peers, future and planning and with parents. The study concluded that students with academic problems and unsupportive environment at home perceived life as a burden and had higher rates of suicidal ideations.

Statement of the problem

Student in schools and colleges today face multiple pressures including academy overload, parental expectations, peer competitions, social isolation financial constants and uncertainties about career choices. This often result in anxiety, depression low self -esteem and even suicidal tendencies (Deb.et.al, 2015; Arun and Chavan 2009). Despite the growing prevalence of psychological distress among young learners, counselling services remain under developed in many educational institutions ,particularly in India(Mehrotra 2020, jaisoorya, 2021). while the NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic education and mental will being the actual implementation of structured counselling facilities in schools and colleges inconsistent This gap rises a critical problem that and effective counselling services can be integrated into the education system to ensure students' mental health and well -being and overall development.

Significance of the study

The significance of the study lies for several reasons. for students ,it emphasizes the role of counselling in reducing academic stress ,improving the emotional regulation and promoting holistic well - being. Further for teachers and institutions it highlights counselling as the tool to create supportive learning environment, reduce dropout rates and enhance academic performance .To the policymakers, it provides evidence of the urgent need to institutionalized counselling services in line with NEP 2020 for promoting student will being. Finally to the society ,it underscores counselling as a pathway to building resilient emotionally strong and socially responsible citizens. The study contributes to the discourse on mental health in education and suggest actionable ways to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to examine the concept, types of counselling in the context of schools and colleges Identify the academic, emotional, social, career related needs that counselling

can address among students .To address the role of counselling in promoting students' mental health and overall well-being. Recommend strategies for effective implementation of counselling services in schools and colleges.

Research methodology

This study is based on secondary sources of data such as articles, books, journals, research papers, websites and other resources.

Counselling

Concept of counselling

The primary goal of education is to ensure the holistic development and balanced adjust of an individual on all areas of life. So, that individuals can make meaningful contributions to society. therefore, guidance and counselling are vital tools for fostering self-realization and overall growth. Counselling is built on empathy, respect and acceptance of the clients potential to live a genuine ability to listen actively, show concern, and offer genuine care. Since counselling is a psychological process, it involves continues interaction between two or more people engaged in purposeful behavior.

The key elements of counselling include,

1. a face-to-face interaction between counsellor and client.
2. Assistance to the individual in resolving personal problems.
3. Service provided by a professionally trained person.
4. Its recognition as a vital technique within the broader process of guidance.

Definitions of counselling

Webster's dictionary:

"Consultation, mental interchange of opinions, deliberating together".

Wren:

Counselling is a dynamic and purposeful relationship between two people who approach a mutually defined problem with mutual aim is to provide an opportunity to work towards a more satisfying and resourceful way of living.

Robinson:

"The term counselling covers all types of two person situations in which one person, the client is helped to adjust more effectively to himself and his environment."

American Counselling Association (ACA, 2010)

Counselling is a professional relationship that empower diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.

British Association of Counselling (1986)

Counselling is the skilled and principled use of relationships which develop self-knowledge, emotional acceptance, and growth, and personal resources. The overall aim is to provide an oppurtunity to work towards a more satisfying and resourceful way of living.

Types of Counselling

In the context of schools and colleges, the following types are most relevant:

1. Educational counselling

It focuses on academic-related issues. It helps students in study skills, time management, exam preparation and adjustment to school & college environment. This counselling supports learners in developing healthy learning attitudes and reducing academic stress.

2. Vocational /career counselling

Vocational counselling assists students in making career decisions based on interest, aptitude and abilities. It reduces career confusion and prepares students for the world of work.

3. Personal / Emotional Counselling

It deals with emotional, psychological, and personal adjustment problems. Addresses issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, or identity crisis. It provides space for emotional expression.

4. Social Counselling.

Social counselling helps students to develop interpersonal skills, communication abilities, and conflict resolution strategies. It is useful in addressing problems like peer pressure, bullying, social isolation, or hostel adjustment. It promotes empathy, co-operation, and healthy social behavior.

5. Rehabilitation Counselling

This type of counselling supports individuals facing physical, emotional, or social challenges due to disability, trauma, or special needs. It helps them to integrate into academic and social life with confidence. Also works closely with special education and medical professionals if required.

6. Mental Health Counselling.

This counselling focuses on psychological well-being, stress management, and coping with mental health concerns.

7. Group Counselling.

It is conducted with a group of students who share similar issues (e.g., exam stress, adjustment problems, etc.).

8.Individual Counselling.

Face-to-face interaction between counsellor and student. It provides personalized support and confidentiality as well as remedial measures to safeguard students' mental health. They act as a bridge between emotional well-being and academic success.

Principles of Counselling

1. Acceptance.
2. Respect for the individual.
3. Permissiveness.
4. Learning.
5. Thinking with client.
6. Helping the child to solve the problem.
7. Competence in interpreting and using information.
8. Competence in placement and follow-up service.
9. Competence in evaluating the counselling service itself.

Need for Counselling Services

1. Addressing Academic Stress.

Students face immense stress, pressure due to heavy workloads, performance expectations and fear of failure. Counselling helps them to develop study skills, time management, coping strategies (Deb. et. al. 2015).

2. Supporting Emotional and Mental Health.

Adolescence and young adulthood bring emotional transitions, relationships, challenges, and self-identity struggles. Counselling offers a safe space for expression, reducing risks of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Green & Chavez, 2009).

3. Career Guidance and Decision-making.

Confusion about future careers is a major source of stress. Trained counsellors guide students in exploring their interests, aptitudes, and career opportunities.

4. Enhancing Social Adjustment.

Many students, particularly in higher education, struggle with social isolation and adjustment to hostel or campus life. Counselling facilitates interpersonal skills, peer support, and healthy social relationships.

5. Fostering Resilience and Coping Skills.

Through interventions such as mindfulness, stress reduction programs, and life skills training, counselling equips students with resilience to face academic and personal challenges (Conley, Durlak& Dickson, 2015).

Challenges in Providing Counselling Services.

Counselling services in Indian schools and colleges face several barriers:

➤ **Stigma around Mental Health.**

Seeking counselling is often perceived as a weakness (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010).

➤ **Lack of infrastructure.**

Many institutions do not employ trained counsellors or psychologists (Janodiya, 2021).

➤ **Policy and funding gaps.**

Mental health initiatives are often underfunded.

➤ **Limited awareness.**

Students and faculty may not recognize symptoms of mental distress or available support.

Mental Health.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) defined mental health as "a state of well being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to the community."

Understanding Mental Health Challenges in Educational Settings.

- Academic environments, while fostering growth, can also be sources of significant stress.
- Students often face academic pressure, social adjustments, financial burdens, and career anxieties.
- These factors, if not addressed within a supportive framework, can lead to increased rates of anxiety, depression, burnout and other mental health concerns.

Well-being as a broader concept.

Well-being refers to the overall quality of life and life satisfaction, encompassing physical, social, emotional, and mental health.

Stress factors among students:

- Increased workload.
- Hostel issues.
- Financial issues.
- Improper time management.
- Institutional regulations.
- Exam results.
- Changes in teaching & learning.
- Difficulties in learning.

- Class competition / fear of failure.

Policy support and the role of NEP 2020

The national education policy [NEP 2020]emphasizes holistic education and well-being.it mandates trained counsellor's, reduced exam stress,teacher training in socio-emotional learning and safe campus environments. By embedding counselling into the educational framework, NEP 2020 envisions schools and colleges as spaces of both intellectual and emotional growth. It recognizes that fostering mental health and well-being is an important as academic achievement. Institutions worldwide are also adopting peer support programs, mental healthy literacy, and digital counselling services to promote well-being among students.

Conclusion

Counsellingis no longer an optional services but a necessity in schools and colleges .it provides students with the tools to manage academic stress, emotional challenges, and career confusion while promoting resilience, well-being and holistic development. Despite challenges such as stigma and lack of resources, the benefits of counselling outweigh its limitations. By implementing structured counselling services, supported by policy frameworks like NEP 2020 ,Educational not only institutions can ensure success but also lead mentally healthy and fulfilling lives.

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