

Role of Counseling in Promoting Student Mental Health and Well-being : A Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT: *Mental health and well-being of students have emerged as critical concerns within the contemporary education system. Increasing academic pressure, social expectations, digital exposure, family-related issues, and post-pandemic stress have significantly affected students' emotional and psychological health. In this context, counseling services play a vital role in supporting students' mental health, fostering emotional resilience, and promoting holistic development. This research paper examines the role of counseling in promoting student mental health and well-being, with special reference to the educational context. The study is based on secondary sources such as books, research journals, policy documents, and reports. The paper highlights the concept and objectives of counseling, major mental health challenges faced by students, the significance of school and educational counseling, and the role of teachers and counselors in addressing these challenges. It also discusses policy initiatives and institutional responsibilities in strengthening counseling services. The paper concludes that counseling is an essential component of student support systems and must be integrated systematically into educational institutions to ensure students' academic success, emotional stability, and overall well-being.*

KEY WORDS *Counseling, Mental Health, Student Well-being, Educational Counseling, Teacher Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely concerned with the intellectual development of learners but also with their emotional, social, and psychological growth. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that students' mental health is closely linked to their academic performance, behavior, and overall quality of life. Mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems are increasingly observed among students at different levels of education.

The competitive nature of education, pressure to perform academically, expectations from parents and society, and challenges related to identity formation have intensified mental health concerns among students. The situation became more prominent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted normal schooling, social interaction, and emotional security. In this scenario, counseling has gained importance as a professional service aimed at helping students cope with personal, emotional, social, and academic difficulties.

From the perspective of teacher education, understanding the role of counseling is essential, as teachers often serve as the first point of contact for students experiencing emotional distress. This paper attempts to analyze the role of counseling in promoting student mental health and well-being, emphasizing its relevance within the educational system and policy framework.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Subasree, R. (2003) performed a study involving 45 students to investigate the impact of career counseling on career choices, vocational maturity, and aspiration levels among students. The results of the study clearly underscored the necessity for career counseling at the secondary education level.

Hymavathi, B. (2004) carried out a longitudinal study focusing on adolescent students to assess the effects of counseling on their adjustments. The outcomes indicated that individual counseling is more effective in resolving academic and personal adjustment challenges, whereas group counseling is more advantageous for addressing interpersonal behavior issues.

John, J.C. (2012) conducted research with 320 students to evaluate the effectiveness of school counseling on the levels of examination anxiety among adolescents. The findings demonstrated a notable decrease in examination anxiety following the intervention program, signifying its overall efficacy.

Singh, M.P. (2017) examined the impact of counseling on depression and anxiety in adolescents. This study involved 400 adolescents aged 13-18 years from a co-educational English medium school in Jaipur city. The research results indicated that group counseling was effective in alleviating depression and anxiety among school-going adolescents.

P.C., R. (2021) sought to identify various issues prompting adolescents to seek school counseling and the effect of school counseling services on the psychological well-being of adolescent students in Kerala. The study revealed an enhancement in students' psychological well-being post-counseling, emphasizing the importance of providing counseling support to all students in need.

Preety (2024) aimed to investigate the advantages, applications, functions, and significance of counseling. This study was conducted with 50 students from the Government Higher Secondary School in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The findings indicated that guidance and counseling significantly alleviated exam anxiety and enhanced students' overall adjustment and personality traits.

3. CONCEPT OF COUNSELING

Counseling

According to Gustad, J. W. (1953), "Counseling, is a literacy- acquainted process, conducted in a simple, one- to- one social terrain, where the counselor, enjoying professional capability in applicable cerebral chops and knowledge, aims to help the customer through styles acclimatized to the customer's requirements and within the frame of the overall particular program. This is intended to help the customer learn how to apply similar understanding in relation to more easily defined and really perceived pretensions, eventually enabling the customer to come a happier and further productive member of society."

According to Patterson (1954), "Counseling is the process that involves an interpersonal relationship between a therapist and one or further guests, wherein the therapist utilizes cerebral styles predicated in methodical knowledge of mortal personality to enhance the internal health of the guests."

Counseling Grounded on the delineations of Counselling handed over, it can be concluded that-

Counseling is an ongoing process.

Counseling constitutes an interpersonal relationship between the counselor and the customer.

- The counselor facilitates the comforting process grounded on their training, experience, and cerebral principles.
- Counseling occurs in colorful settings, including home, academy, sanitarium, social and community centers, and recuperation installations.
- The nature of Counseling is experimental, preventative, and restorative, among other aspects.

Counseling is a professional and systematic process through which individuals are assisted in understanding themselves, their problems, and their environment in order to make informed decisions and lead a balanced life. In the educational context, counseling focuses on helping students deal with academic, personal, social, and emotional issues that affect their learning and development.

Educational counseling involves guidance and therapeutic support provided by trained counselors to promote students' mental health and adjustment. It is based on principles such as confidentiality, empathy, acceptance, and respect for individual differences. Counseling does not aim to impose solutions but helps students develop self-awareness, coping skills, and problem-solving abilities.

4. THE FEATURES OF COUNSELLING

According to Adamu (2014), counseling is described as a branch of psychology where practitioners support clients in enhancing their well-being, reducing distress, resolving crises, and boosting their capacity for creativity, innovation, and sound decision-making. It highlights the characteristics and attributes of counseling, such as the necessity for confidentiality. The issues faced by the student should remain solely between the counselor and the student. The information exchanged must be kept secret and confidential between the two parties.

Counseling is a process involving two individuals. The counseling interaction should exclusively occur between the counselor and the student, unless group counseling is being conducted.

Counseling is a private relationship. Matters discussed in counseling should remain confidential between the counselor and the student, without any involvement from third parties. No one should have access to the information shared between the two unless it is absolutely necessary.

Counseling is a reciprocal relationship between two individuals. It should be founded on mutual consent between the counselor and the student. There is no concept of compelling a student to engage in counseling. It is an agreement between a professionally trained counselor and a student who is seeking assistance.

Counseling takes place between a qualified and experienced individual known as a 'counselor' and a person facing challenges, referred to as a 'student'. The counseling process typically occurs when one party possesses greater knowledge and aids the other in addressing a problem.

Counseling does not entail providing direct advice. During counseling sessions, the counselor refrains from advising the student but instead presents various optional suggestions and recommendations tailored to the student's issue, enabling them to select from these alternatives.

Counseling is characterized by a non-hierarchical relationship. The counseling process is not influenced by the individual's status, rank, title, age, etc. Regardless of the student's intelligence, they cannot be compelled to engage in counseling.

5. SCOPE (AREAS) OF COUNSELING

The following outlines the various domains of counseling practice –

- Rehabilitation Centers
- Mental Health Facilities
- Residential Treatment Centers
- Work Environments
- Family Units
- Educational Institutions, among others.

6. COUNSELING IN EDUCATION

Education is a vital element of human existence, and the caliber of education that an individual acquires is essential in determining their future. Teachers serve as the primary facilitators of education within schools, and they hold a significant responsibility in ensuring that students receive a high-quality education. Nevertheless, teachers encounter various challenges in their efforts to deliver quality education to their students. One of the major challenges faced by teachers is the necessity to cater to the diverse needs of their students. The varied needs of students demand that teachers possess a range of skills, including counseling and guidance abilities. Guidance and counseling are essential elements of any educational framework. Guidance involves providing information, assistance, and support to individuals to aid

them in making informed choices about their lives. Conversely, counseling entails offering support, guidance, and advice to individuals to help them navigate personal, social, or psychological issues. Within schools, guidance and counseling are instrumental in assisting students to surmount personal, social, and academic obstacles that may impede their educational advancement.

7. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN COUNSELING

Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering both the academic success and overall well-being of their students. They assist students in recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, promote effective learning strategies, and guide them in making informed choices regarding their future. The participation of teachers in counseling services is both crucial and irrefutable. Given the significant amount of time they spend with students, teachers possess a deeper understanding of their issues and behaviors compared to others. They are frequently the first to detect signs of emotional distress, learning challenges, or behavioral problems. Consequently, they can identify students in need of assistance and provide appropriate guidance.

Additionally, teachers provide emotional support by cultivating an environment where students feel acknowledged and understood. In this capacity, they refer students to counselors for more specialized assistance, ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the counselor. Furthermore, teachers themselves serve as mentors by inspiring, guiding, and supplying essential support and resources to their

8. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS

Mental health refers to a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which individuals can realize their abilities, cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to society. Student well-being encompasses positive emotions, life satisfaction, resilience, and a sense of belonging within the educational environment.

Students today face multiple mental health challenges, including:

- Academic stress and examination anxiety
- Peer pressure and social comparison
- Family conflicts and parental expectations
- Identity and self-esteem issues
- Digital addiction and social media influence
- Emotional isolation and loneliness

If these issues are not addressed timely, they can lead to serious psychological problems, affecting students' academic achievement and personal growth. Counseling serves as an effective intervention to support students in managing these challenges.

9. ROLE OF COUNSELING IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

Counseling plays a multidimensional role in promoting student mental health and well-being. Its major contributions include:

Emotional Support

Counseling provides a safe and non-judgmental space for students to express their feelings and concerns.

Through empathetic listening and guidance, counselors help students reduce emotional distress and develop emotional regulation skills.

Stress and Anxiety Management

Students often experience stress due to academic workload and performance pressure. Counseling helps them learn stress-management techniques, time management skills, and relaxation strategies, thereby reducing anxiety levels.

Enhancing Self-esteem and Confidence

Counseling encourages self-exploration and self-acceptance. By recognizing their strengths and abilities, students develop a positive self-image and improved self-confidence.

Social and Interpersonal Development

Through counseling, students learn effective communication, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills. This contributes to healthier peer relationships and a positive school climate.

Academic Adjustment

Counselors assist students in addressing learning difficulties, setting realistic goals, and improving study habits. This support enhances academic engagement and motivation.

10. PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

School counselors are essential in promoting mental health awareness within the school community and beyond. By increasing awareness, diminishing stigma, and fostering understanding of mental health issues, school counselors contribute to the establishment of a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel secure in seeking help and support. Below is a comprehensive overview of how school counselors advocate for mental health awareness:

Informing Students: School counselors educate students on mental health topics through classroom lessons, workshops, and presentations. They address subjects such as stress management, anxiety, depression, self-care, resilience, and help-seeking behaviors. By enhancing students' knowledge and comprehension of mental health, school counselors empower them to identify signs of distress, seek assistance when necessary, and promote their own well-being.

Training School Personnel: School counselors offer training and professional development opportunities for school personnel on recognizing and addressing mental health concerns among students. They instruct teachers, administrators, and support staff on how to detect warning signs, provide support, and make suitable referrals to school counseling services or external resources.

Parent Education Initiatives School counselors arrange parent education programs and workshops to raise awareness of mental health issues and the resources available to support students and families. They share information on topics such as adolescent development, communication strategies, parenting skills, and accessing mental health services. By involving parents/guardians in the dialogue, school counselors help establish a supportive network of care for students both at home and in school.

Community Engagement and Collaborations School counselors work together with community organizations, mental health agencies, and other stakeholders to enhance mental health awareness and access to services. They take part in community events, health fairs,

11. COUNSELING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions play a crucial role in providing counseling services to students. School and college counseling programs are designed to address developmental needs at different stages of education. Counseling services may include individual counseling, group counseling, career counseling, and crisis intervention.

In schools, counseling helps students deal with behavioral issues, emotional problems, and adjustment difficulties. At the higher education level, counseling focuses on academic stress, career planning, mental health concerns, and personal development. Effective counselling programs contribute to a supportive learning environment and promote students' overall well-being

12. ROLE OF COUNSELORS

counselors share collective responsibility in promoting student mental health. Teachers, being in regular contact with students, can identify early signs of emotional distress such as withdrawal, aggression, or declining academic

performance. Although teachers are not trained therapists, they can provide basic emotional support and refer students to professional counselors when required.

Professional counselors, on the other hand, possess specialized training to address complex mental health issues. Collaboration between teachers, counselors, parents, and administrators is essential for creating an effective support system for students.

13. POLICY PERSPECTIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Educational policies increasingly recognize the importance of mental health and counseling services in institutions. National initiatives emphasize creating safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. The integration of counseling services within educational institutions reflects a commitment to holistic education and student well-being.

Institutions are responsible for appointing trained counselors, organizing mental health awareness programs, and ensuring confidentiality and accessibility of counselling services. Policy support is necessary to strengthen infrastructure, training, and monitoring of counseling programs

Community Engagement and Collaborations School counselors work together with community organizations, mental health agencies, and other stakeholders to enhance mental health awareness and access to services. They take part in community events, health fairs,

14. ADVANTAGES OF THE ACADEMY GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAM FOR SCHOLARS

Then are several benefits that comforting offers to scholars in educational institutions

- **Emotional Support-** academy comforting programs deliver emotional support to scholars who may be facing colorful issues similar as anxiety, depression, or stress. A counselor can help scholars in understanding and managing their feelings, as well as developing managing strategies for delicate situations.
- **Academic Success-** A academy counselor can prop scholars in enhancing their academic performance by setting areas where they bear fresh backing and furnishing coffers to support them. This may encompass training, study chops, time operation, and organizational strategies.
- **Career Development-** School counselors can help scholars in exploring their interests and strengths, offering guidance on career options and educational pathways that align with their bourns. They can also give information regarding vocational training programs, externships, and other openings that can help scholars acquire precious experience.
- **Social Chops-** School comforting programs can prop scholars in developing social chops and perfecting their connections with peers and grown-ups. Counselors can offer guidance on communication chops, conflict resolution, and cooperation, thereby helping scholars cultivates positive and healthy connections.
- **particular Growth-** Through comforting sessions, scholars can enhance their tone- mindfulness, make tone-regard, and learn to set and achieve particular pretensions. School counselors can also give guidance on decision-timber, problem- working, and adaptability, equipping scholars with the chops necessary to navigate life's challenges.
- Counseling prepares scholars to defy the challenges of the 21st century, encompassing academic, career, and particular/ social development.
- By linking educational programs to unborn success, comforting can help scholars fete the applicability of their studies.
- Career disquisition and development are supported through comforting services.

15. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING COUNSELLING SERVICES

Despite its importance, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of counseling services in educational institutions:

- Shortage of trained counselors
- Lack of awareness about mental health issues
- Social stigma associated with seeking counseling
- Limited institutional resources
- High student-counselor ratio

Addressing these challenges requires policy intervention, capacity building, and sensitization of stakeholders.

16.CONCLUSION

Counseling plays a significant role in promoting student mental health and well-being by addressing emotional, social, and academic challenges. It supports students in developing resilience, self-awareness, and coping skills essential for personal and academic success. In the present educational context, counseling is not a supplementary service but a fundamental component of holistic education. For teacher education programmed, understanding the role of counselling equips future educators with the sensitivity and skills required to support students' mental health. Strengthening counseling services through policy support, institutional commitment, and professional collaboration can contribute significantly to the creation of healthy and inclusive educational environments.

Furthermore, guidance and counseling are essential in fostering the mental and emotional well-being of children and students within educational institutions. Counselors assist students in recognizing and managing their emotions, dealing with stress and anxiety, and cultivating healthy relationships with peers, educators, and family members. By offering a secure and non-judgmental environment for students to articulate their feelings, counselors empower them to confront life's challenges and develop the resilience and coping mechanisms required for a successful and fulfilling future. In summary, counseling serve as invaluable resources in promoting the comprehensive development of students at school and family levels, enabling them to become confident, responsible, and well-adjusted members of society.

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