



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A STUDY OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY COUNSELLORS TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In today's fast paced world students face numerous changes and stress that can negatively impact their mental health and well-being. Students experience a range of feelings, including tension, confusion, and hopelessness at times. These emotions can lead to a number of issues, including stress, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, promoting emotional well-being in schools is very crucial for the overall development and success of students. The role of counsellors in promoting Emotional well-being in schools cannot be overstated. This study aims to explore the strategies adopted by counsellors to support students in promoting their Emotional Well-being. The sample of 52 Counsellors working in Schools of Directorate of Education was used to collect the data through questionnaire, interview and observation schedule. The results of the study shed light on the importance of holistic approach in promoting Emotional Well-being and the role of counsellors play in creating supporting school environment. The results also showed that counsellors use the combination of individual and group counselling, career counselling, counselling related to child sexual abuse, drug abuse, bullying etc. Additionally, they also encourage open communication to promote a positive school environment and work with teachers and parents to support students.

Index terms: Emotional well-being, overall Development, stress, anxiety, depression, counselling

Introduction

One of the keys to a happy existence is having a healthy emotional balance. People who are emotionally robust and steady tend to view many events similarly. Extreme circumstances do not have an impact on people. Some people are equally capable of maintaining composure in difficult circumstances as they are in straightforward ones. They would find it much simpler to confront any difficulties since they would feel more in control of and rigid about their emotions. Continuous happiness is not a requirement for emotional well-being. This shows that if one is conscious of their emotions, then no matter how negative the emotions are, one can handle them. WHO (2011) explained emotional well-being as a state wherein every individual could realize his/her potential to cope with day-to-day stresses of life productively and could contribute to society. This definition of WHO clearly stated that emotions could handle various situations in life. There is a strong connection between emotional wellness and mental health. Emotionally balanced people have control over their

ideas, feelings, and actions. The difficulties of life are manageable for them. They can see things in a larger context and recover from failures. They have confidence in their relationship and themselves. Life challenges provides them an opportunity to use their coping skills which ultimately strengthen their personality.

The education of young children and adolescents is crucial since they will make up the adult generation in the future. Keeping an eye on what they are learning and how they are understanding it is crucial. Adolescence is a period of vibrant energy and focused on life skill development interventions that bring attention to increasing the emotional and general well-being of adolescents and direct them towards achieving happiness, satisfaction, and success (**Muraleedharan et al. ,2021**). Children's mental wellbeing and personality development can be greatly aided by their school. With the motive that students can learn more and develop into better individuals, schools should construct their instructional strategies and practices around learning. To obtain the purest essence, the learning process must be expanded. In order to help students improve their well-being in a healthy way, school counsellors play a vital role. However, it's as necessary to understand the techniques they employ in the classroom. A review of the literature reveals that school counsellors perform tasks and activities that are both diagnostic and therapeutic, such as psychosocial assessments of children for learning disabilities, counselling with children, parents, peers, and teachers, career guidance, and sensitivity training for promoting emotional well-being. When combined, all of these would be beneficial to the students.

The world is changing rapidly, and so are the mind set and behavior of people who are facing challenges in adopting themselves in this dynamic time. One needs to rigorously work hard to make lives well, but this hustle puts much pressure on the well-being somewhere. This fast-paced life may burden people emotionally. Consequently, they may feel tense, hopeless, and confused. Furthermore, this can cause many problems like stress, anxiety, and depression. Here comes the role of the counsellor to help students deal with the stressors. Counsellors are advisors. They guide in dealing with several problems and try to solve dilemmas by giving the best possible advice. They help students accomplish mental wellness by listening to them and supporting them psychologically and emotionally. They also help students improve their coping and communication abilities, which encourage them to feel confident, boost their self-esteem, and help reduce their stress. Counsellors give all the essential tips to live life smoothly.

School counseling is frequently conflated with guidance provided for careers and vocations in India. In Indian schools today, both counseling and guidance are required (**Kodad and Kazi, 2014**). A Counsellor refers to a person who is concerned with the profession of advising on various things such as academic matters, vocational issues, and personal relationships. Counsellors can assist pupils in navigating complex thoughts, feelings, and issues. As pointed out by **Sinha (2006)**, the school counselors' responsibility extends beyond students and includes parents of students seeking assistance with concerns for which they may be responsible. **Gustad (1953)** explained counselling as a lifelong learning-oriented process in which an individual learns in one to one social environment. Also, a competent professional counsellor assists the client with the help of appropriate psychological skills and knowledge of counselling. It is also noteworthy that school counsellors have a variety of roles to perform compared to those in other settings. Psychological assistance can be offered to students through counseling, allowing them to explore, comprehend, and overcome present challenges that give them discomfort and confusion. School counsellors can assist students in providing knowledge on cyberbullying and social media trolling by exposing them to digital media and online classes.

Gysbers (2004) asserts that it is clear that certain adolescent students in secondary schools face youth violence, peer pressure, experiment with drugs, and engage in sex while parents and teachers still expect them to perform well in the classroom. Students' academic careers and education are negatively impacted by these competing ideas and issues to the point where some students decide to leave school. Dropping out of school is seen to be a contributing factor to more serious issues down the road, such as prostitution, drug misuse, murderous crimes, and unemployment. Adolescent students in secondary schools around the world nowadays confront more social, personal, and academic issues at school and at home than ever before, according to **Mutie & Ndambuki (2003)**. Ineffective Guidance and Counseling Services in the Current School System Precipitate Unprecedented Rise in Crime Wave, Violence Among Students, Fuels Cultism, Wrong Career Choices, and Wrong Subject Combinations (**Nwachukwa,2007**). A study determined the

relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem and suggested that adolescents with emotional immaturity should be diagnosed and various emotional management techniques to enhance self-esteem need to be implemented (Kaur & Maheshwari, 2015). Furthermore, in order to offer adolescents effective preventive interventions that will promote emotional well-being, educators and counsellors must be aware of the factors that can contribute to poor mental health. However, several school-based programmes have shown promise in addressing some of the most important worries regarding wrath. Kumar (2021) focused on the need for a School Mental Health Program (SMHP) exerted that every single child in school must be regulated under this SMHP program. A person's ability to function physically, psychologically, and socially is significantly and frequently permanently impacted by early intervention for a variety of issues. Additionally, it boosts the price of medical, social, and criminal justice services, reduces productivity, lowers kids' academic performance, and ultimately fixes the primary issue with their wellbeing. With proper guidance and counseling services, students could build healthy psychological and emotional well-being that would help as a defense mechanism. But it is very important to identify the strategies counsellors use and how effective they are to address various problems of day-to-day life.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to explore the counseling strategies used by Counsellors to promote emotional well-being in adolescents.

Methodology of the study

The researcher used survey research method to collect data from Counsellors working in schools of Directorate of Education. The population for the study was the Counsellors of the Schools in Directorate of Education. The sample comprised 52 Counsellors working in senior secondary schools of Directorate of Education.

Tools and Techniques

The triangulation method was used to collect data from the population with the following tools:

- Questionnaire for School Counsellors to identify strategies for promoting Emotional Well-Being
- Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for School Counsellors
- Observations of School Counsellors

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Following are the detail description of the responses collected from different tools:

1. Questionnaire for Counsellors to identify strategies to address EWB

On the basis of data collected, different strategies were identified:

- **Dealing with students:** 25% of counsellors feel it is necessary to ensure confidentiality, 23.08% feel it is necessary to connect with them, 25% feel it is important to listen to their problems, and 26.92% feel that it is important to motivate them to find solutions of their problems.
- **Dealing with teachers and Parents:** The issues taken up by counsellors to counsel teachers and parents are- Student-Teacher and Child-Parent relationship issues (23.08%), Student's academic performance (26.92%), student's attitude and social behavior (26.92%), and student's relationship with another girl or boy (23.08%).
- **Dealing during classroom talks:** 33.33% respondents feel that the issues taken during classroom talks should be highlighted in the syllabus and must have some relevance to a student's daily life. 25.64% feel that issues should be related to students' problems or related to the social and current situation. 15.38% feel that issues must be demanded by the school and society. The majority of counsellors agreed that they prefer to take up topics that are prescribed in their given syllabus from the EVGB.

- **Dealing with Substance abuse:** 21.15% of Counsellors believe that it is important to counsel the student and inform their parents about it. Some Counsellors prefer to ask the parents to take the child to experts (23.08%), maintain a history of the child and provide adequate measures (30.77%), and counsel students before referring them to hospitals (25%).
- **Dealing with Bullying:** 23.08% explain the concepts during classroom discussions with appropriate examples and interact with the students if they have witnessed any situation of bullying. 26.92% of counsellors prefer to orient the entire school including the teachers in the morning assembly to make students learn the seriousness of bullying, and 26.92% of school counsellors plan to organize some activities for students like role play, poster making, essay competition, group discussions, etc. and make them aware about the concept.
- **Dealing with Safety issues:** 21.15% of counsellors agreed that they would prefer to show students related videos of how to be safe and explain important points by quoting contemporary scenarios. Counsellors find it more convenient to explain the concepts during classroom discussions with examples. 32.69% of school counsellors prefer to orient the school in the morning assembly by addressing the school students collectively. 25% of school counsellors believed that organizing some activities for students and making them aware of the concept would be a better option
- **Dealing with menstrual Hygiene:** 26.92% of school counsellors agreed to make both girls and boys aware of the biological process of menstruation together, 23.08% of counsellors reported that they would take selected topics of menstruation and discuss them with both girls and boys and more personal and specific topics with girls separately, and 30.77% counsellors reported that in co-ed schools they would prefer to take only those topics which could be understood by both boys and girls.
- **Dealing with relationship issues:** 30.77% of school counsellors agreed to deal with relationship issues by asking students to prioritize their work and its importance in life, and 51.92% of counsellors feel that it is important to teach students about the drawbacks of being in a relationship and how it will affect their personal growth.
- **Dealing with Stress:** To deal with stress, 71.15% of counsellors suggest some stress management strategies like meditation, physical exercises, etc.
- **Dealing with Personality Development:** 51.93% of counsellors prefer to guide students about the importance of being presentable in society, 32.69% of counsellors agreed that taking personality development workshops with students could boost their motivation to learn better to modify his/her personality, and 15.38% of counsellors prefer to guide students about the importance of believing in themselves and being confident.
- **Dealing with Anger Management:** To manage anger, 82.69% of counsellors prefer to use meditation techniques to relax the mind and channel the energy into some productive work. The three major strategies are calm, inhibit, and express.
- **Dealing with Time Management:** 11.54% of counsellors gave importance to time management strategies i.e., setting a timetable and planning their activities accordingly to manage stress. 82.69% of school counsellors found that mindfulness activities such as meditation, yoga, good sleep, etc. are very essential components not only for coping with stress but also for the overall development of the child.
- **Dealing with Career Counselling:** Counsellors provide career counseling to students by using Google search (25%), based on information that counsellors have (23.08%), information available in newspapers and government websites (30.77%), and any government-sponsored site (21.15%).

2. Interview Schedule of School counsellors/EVGCs: Semi-structured interview schedule was conducted with 10 School Counsellors.

S. No.	Questions	Responses
1.	Have you attended any counseling-related training or refresher courses while you were employed or before you started at the school?	100% of School Counsellors reported that they have attended training after joining the Department.
2.	What are the different types of Counselling services you provide to students in school? And how?	Counsellors highlighted the services: Educational, Vocational, Emotional, Mental Health, Personal development areas, and Social areas.
3.	Do you believe the time you devote to counseling is enough? If not, please provide your opinion.	More than 75% of Counsellors are not satisfied with the time they devote to Counselling.
4.	How do you deal with issues related to the Emotional well-being of students?	Conducting awareness programs, class talks, workshops, innovative activities, individual as well as group counseling, video screening, assembly talks, etc.
5.	Would you advise any adjustments or improvements to the surroundings at your workplace, keeping in mind the breadth of your responsibilities?	Most of the Counsellors agreed that awareness about the importance of Counselling services should be done in Schools for HOS, Teachers, Parents, and Students.

Item 1. Training or Refresher courses: When asked whether the EVGCs have received any training or any induction program before start working in school, 100% of them have agreed that department had organized five days' induction training to orient them about school functioning. During that training EVGCs were trained to deal with different for e.g. cases of substance abuse need to be reported in a proper case study format along with intimating child's parents and HOS of the school. School Counsellors/EVGCs also reported that each district conduct interaction program and annual meeting of all the EVGCs to update them about latest innovations in School curriculum related to counselling. Also, orientation and execution of new programs like CGCC (Career Guidance and Career

Counselling), SMILE etc. Orientation and refreshing session on how to use and conduct any psychological test along with scoring and interpretation of data is also done during training or meetings held under the experts of the field.

Item 2. Types of Counselling: During interview sessions, EVGCs reported that although the work documented is related to Educational and Vocational counselling, but they cover all the concerned issues of students. They assist and guide the students for their better well-being. According to them, they provide Educational counselling that includes how to improve concentration power, how to manage time, club favorite with a less favorite subject, how to study better with better study habits, the importance of education etc., career counselling for orienting students about the world of careers. EVGCs conduct psychological testing to assess three important aspects required to decide the best career option for the student: Personality, Ability, and Interest. After this assessment, career counselling sessions are conducted by counsellors on one on one basis, issues related to students' mental health like stress, depression, anger, time, concentration, motivation, etc. are taken up to create awareness among students. Other issues which ultimately affect the child psychologically as well as physically are oriented by Counsellors for the students like bullying, substance abuse, suicidal tendency, depression, school dropout, women safety, child sexual abuse, menstrual hygiene, harassment, etc.

Item 3. Time for Counselling: 75% of EVGCs have reported that due to various reasons they are not able to provide sufficient time for individual counselling. Due to administrative and academic constraints such as arrangement periods or absentees, teaching subjects to classes, invigilation duties, giving charge of any duty, class teacher charge, number of periods, result preparation, etc. enable them to perform their duties as a School counsellor.

Item 4. Strategies to deal with Emotional Well-being: School Counsellors reported that emotional well-being of students usually get affected because of various factors including stress, anxiety, lack of support, low self-esteem, inability to get adjusted in immediate social environment, poor academic performance, etc. In order to address these issues they follow proper strategies like orientation and awareness, class talks sessions to address the concepts in a small group as well as in assembly to address the entire school, organizing workshops, short audio-video movies, inviting experts to talk about certain topics and individual counselling sessions for one-to-one interaction with students as every child face different issues and need individual guidance.

Item 5. Suggestions to improve counselling process: School Counsellors/EVGCs suggested that one school should have full time one Counsellor, for better connection with students, teachers and administration, there should be School Counsellors at two levels: TGT and PGT so number of vacancies should be increased. Constraints related to number of classes, availability of resources and other duties given by school head should be minimized and to upgrade the Counselling skills, trainings and seminars should be organized on regular interval of time.

3. Observations of school counsellors

During observations made during the morning assemblies to get a more detailed view of the strategies used by counsellors it was observed that most of the time counsellors interact with students and tried to get responses on the issue delivered. In the morning assembly counsellors take up topics that are irrespective of the age group of different class students. For example, the topic of 'Substance Abuse' and issues related to it should be delivered in different ways to address different age groups but in morning assembly, counsellors use a common strategy for all age groups. Although, not a clear picture was presented by the school counsellors during an explanation about their duties, services, and availability even then, counsellors tried to connect with students with appropriate examples to strengthen the topic details. Also, Counsellors encouraged students to come forward and motivate them to speak against wrong and support right. But there are certain loopholes and strategies that were observed as less effective. Many students were less concerned about the topic delivered and indulged in their own talks. Also, the way the counsellor was delivering the topic was not subjective to different age groups and a standardized pattern was followed.

Conclusion

Emotional Well-being is crucial aspect of students' overall development and it's the responsibility of schools and counsellors to support and enhance it. Effective strategies include creating a supportive environment, incorporating mindfulness and self-care practices, using person centered approach and providing educational resources. By implementing these strategies schools and counsellors can create a positive and nurturing environment that encourages students to maintain their emotional health and well-being. The goal of guidance and counseling in schools is to help students improve their academic performance, strengthen their conflict resolution skills, encourage positive study attitudes and behavior, and reduce school dropouts. Through pre-service and in-service induction training, EVGB, NCERT, and SCERT offer broad instructions to School Counsellors/EVGCs, which aids them in designing the services in accordance with the needs of the schools or special directives provided to them by the school authorities. Counsellors address almost all the aspects which hinder the emotional well-being of students and also make them aware of different topics like substance abuse, child sexual abuse, the POCSO act, child rights, bullying, safety, etc.

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