

## A sociological study on counselling services in pre-university colleges

B. Sumana<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Counselling is as old as the society itself. No civilization can remain buoyant and can move ahead without good guidance, mental health and spiritual help. In contemporary present-day life, counselling is seen in different aspects and sphere. It is considered as a vital part of the educational curriculum. This paper focuses on the study and scenario of the profession of counselling in educational institutions in India. Objectives- To analyse the counselling services in the Pre-university colleges. To study the awareness level of the services of counselling among the students. Sample - Sample consisted of 300 students selected from 30 Pre-university colleges of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. The age group of the sample was 16 to 18 years, the adolescents. Structured questionnaire was the adopted tool to collect primary data from the sample. Results- Only 4 colleges out of the sample 30 colleges had counselling facilities available to address the needs of the students, and they are self-financed colleges or private institutions. Among the sample none of the Government nor the Government aided colleges had provision for counselling facilities to their students. Conclusion: Counselling facilities from professional counsellors are not available in most of our educational institutions. To address the various psychological, emotional needs of the present-day youth and their well-being trained counsellors and counselling facilities can act as an effective balm in nurturing the students of our country in a more effective and balanced way.

**Keywords:** *Counselling, Adolescents, Pre-university students.*

In a family set up we see, parents counselling their children on different issues, doctors counselling their patients, lawyers counselling their clients, the teachers counselling their students and so on. Counselling is a major aspect that has been implied in areas such as business, management, managing relationships, health management, and education. Informal counselling is hence a part and parcel of any culture, where experienced members guide the young in moving ahead with life. Counselling in a formal and professional setting in general can be understood and defined in many ways.

According to Merle Mohlsen (1956), "Counselling is accepting, trusting, and having safe relationship in which clients learn to discuss openly what worries and upsets them, to define

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<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Sociology, Government First Grade College, Hiriadka, Udupi District, Karnataka, India.  
*\*Responding Author*

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## A sociological study on counselling services in pre-university colleges

precise behavior goals, to acquire the essential social skill, and to develop the courage and self-confidence to implement desired new behaviors.” Shertzer Stone (1976) have defined counselling as a learning process in which individuals learn about themselves, their interpersonal relationships and behaviors that advance their personal development. Hahn and Maclean (1955) define counselling as a “process which takes place in a one-to-one relationship between an individual beset by problems with which he cannot cope alone and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties.”

*The above definitions reveal the following major elements of counselling.*

1. Counselling involves interaction among two individuals, one who is seeking help, referred to as the counsellee and the other, a professional trained person, the counsellor who can help the counsellee.
2. Counselling involves a relationship of mutual trust and respect between the counsellee and the counsellor.
3. Counselling is more concerned to produce change in the individual that will enable him to extricate himself from his concerned problems.

The apathy of the vocation of counselling in most of the Indian schools is surprisingly shocking. Many of the reputed and well-established schools in India are accepting the importance of this vocation for the overall well-being of their students at a very slow pace. But the condition of students enrolled in majority of the Government school’s country wide, services with respect to availing counselling session is far from reach. Despite engrossed with various shortcomings that are unique to most of the Government run schools and colleges in India, the students also have to bear with the plethora of other problems such as shortage of teachers, insufficient infrastructure facilities. There is a general tendency of intermixing the services of counsellors and teachers in most of the schools. The teachers are expected to serve as counsellors in handling deviant behaviors among students. But in reality, though both the vocations contribute to the overall development of the pupil, there are differences in the skills and techniques used both by the teacher and the counsellor (Kakkar 2015, Educational Psychology, pp 163-165). These aspects indicate that both teaching and counselling are vital aspects of the educational process and are aimed at helping students toward maximum growth so that they may operate effectively in a social and democratic society. Inter mixing the role may create a role conflict in performing the roles of the respective vocations.

Colleges and educational institutions in India are becoming more and more commercialized than goal oriented (Sahni, 2005). Hence guidance and counselling related activities, which is concerned for the wellbeing of the student’s mental health is badly neglected and is in its embryonic stage (Shetty, 1996). In Indian educational institutions, academic performance or vocational guidance is given more prominence rather than student wellbeing and their mental health. This has led to an increased number of college students who have neglected their academic pursuits and interests without able to balance their mental turmoil’s and wellbeing. (Janetius, Mini & Chellathurai, 2011).

The Hindu, in its report dated 23.04.2014 has stated that a majority of private schools in the national capital region have allegedly been violating the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) guidelines on a mandatory provision for appointing full time counsellors. According to the report, only a meagre three per cent of around 3,200 private schools in the Delhi-NCR regions, which charge a hefty fee, have counsellors to help students cope with

## **A sociological study on counselling services in pre-university colleges**

exam stress apart from providing career guidance. Abdul Mabood, the founder director of Non- Governmental Organization 'Snehi' which owns the credit of running a counselling helpline since 1996 has reported that his team has received almost 3,000 distress calls during examination period and nearly 24 cases had indicated suicidal tendencies.

Harris (2013) in his research report on International school-based counselling, India has been listed along with other countries where school-based counselling is not considered mandatory. It is generally seen that counselling was provided only in secondary schools and its prevalence is absent in primary sections, with only some of the private schools having counsellors to aid the students.

Qualitative explorative study conducted in Tamilnadu identifies various mental health problems faced by the students in the institutes of higher education (Janetius and Mini 2015). The study reveals that in 96% of the 32 colleges from 32 administrative districts of the state, counselling services were not available and very few colleges had functional counselling services. In the 04% of the available counselling services that were available in colleges, it was integrated with some other departments or entrusted with one or the other faculty member as a matter of convenience and formality. The major hindrances that were observed in giving counselling services to the students were that,

1. There were no exclusive counselling department or trained teachers to offer these services to the students with proper intervention and experience.
2. There are no qualified fulltime counsellors to understand the dynamics of the adolescent and to address their issues with care and confidentiality.

The study concludes mentioning that college students are in a critical transition period moving from adolescence to adulthood, where they face a lot of adjustment issues, academic problems, personal development concerns and interpersonal conflicts. The research concludes with the statement that the current educational system fails to meet the demanding psychological and developmental needs of our adolescents, which has led to various behavioural problems and mental health concerns.

Research conducted by Panja and De (2015) on assessing the current scenario of higher secondary schools towards guidance and counselling in schools of West Bengal indicates that an insignificant of 8% of the schools were equipped with both the facility of guidance and counselling. Majority of the sample schools (92%) had no facility for both. The research has suggested that the Government and Private Educational Institutions have the scope to take sufficient measures to run guidance and counselling facilities in all schools.

According to M. Rajagopal (2013), in many Indian schools, counselling sessions are just held to convince parents or the students that he or she needs to change school because of their child's poor performance. Referral to a counsellor is generally used as a threat to students with bad behaviour. This impedes the improvement in behaviour or the development of personality in a student due to the wrong perception instilled in the student's mind regarding counselling services.

Recruitment of counsellors in schools and colleges are not given a priority requirement in our country. An exploratory cross-sectional study on the availability of school counsellors conducted by the research team of AIISH, Mysore, revealed the expected and actual on-site work activities in a sample of national and international high schools located in Karnataka. Content analysis showed that counsellors want to focus on student problems and issues,

## A sociological study on counselling services in pre-university colleges

while parents and teachers want them to undertake academic advising, student discipline, conflict resolution, crisis intervention, career choice and guidance. The school administration and students expect them to liaise, handle admissions and conduct staff enrichment programs. They prefer counsellors who give low priority for advocacy, equity and child rights or community issues. (Venkatesan and Shyam2015). In totality, the wide disparities exist between the ascribed, expected and actual roles of school counsellors in Indian school settings.

Ali, M M (2013) in his research paper entitled 'The Emerging Needs of School Social Workers' states that among various professionals in educational institutions, the counsellor's role is an important one. In the findings, he has mentioned that counselling practices in schools have not been in consistent and regular level. It is confined to the isolated experiments carried out in schools independently or in collaboration with other Non-Governmental Organisations. The research concludes that the education department in India has not given due importance to the field and much needs to be done in this regard.

In view of the analysis of the above literature, it is quite evident that counselling services are still not included as a priority service in the educational. The research is hence a sociological study to examine the scenario of counselling services in educational institutions in India.

### Objectives

- To analyse the counselling services in the Pre-university colleges.
- To study the awareness level of counselling services among the students.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Sample

The present study was conducted to examine the awareness levels of counselling services. The study was conducted in the seven taluks of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. The students pursuing their studies in the Pre-university colleges of the district were considered in particular, keeping in mind their transition phase from high school education to higher education. The district is renowned for its academic institutions and high literacy rate. In this study a total sample of 300 students across 30 Pre-university colleges were considered. Age group of the sample was 16 to 18 years. 61% were male students and 39% were female students. They included students studying in the arts stream (22%), commerce stream (47%), and science stream (31%). Sampling was done based on random and convenient sampling technique giving due representation to gender, school locale and type of management.

**Tools:** Questionnaire was the tool that was used to collect the primary data. Interviews were conducted with the counsellors, teachers and the students for supplementary information. The design adopted is explanatory type.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

*Table 1: Colleges type selected for study*

Total number of colleges selected for sample study	Pre-university Government Colleges	Pre-university Aided Colleges	Private/Self-financed /unaided colleges
30	10	11	09
100%	33%	37%	30%

**Table 2: Pre-university Colleges with Counselling Services for their Students**

Total colleges under sample	Colleges with professional counselling services	Colleges without any professional counselling services
30	04	26
100%	13.33%	86.66%

**Table 3: Awareness levels of students about the counselling facilities in Pre-university Colleges.**

Total number of students under sample	Students who are aware of counselling facilities in educational institutions	Students who are not aware of counselling facilities in educational institutions
300	180	120
100%	60%	40%

The above table shows the descriptive statistics related to the counselling services that are available in Pre-university colleges and the awareness level of the vocation of counselling services among the students. Out of 30 colleges selected in the sample, 10 were Government managed colleges, 11 were aided colleges that are partly financed by the State Government and the remaining 09 colleges were self-financed or privately managed or owned colleges. As the table 2 depicts, only four out of the sample 30 colleges had counselling facilities available to address the needs of the students, and they are self-financed colleges or private institutions. Among the sample none of the Government nor the Government aided colleges had provision for counselling facilities to their students. Among the 09 private colleges, only 4 had the provision for counselling facilities.

Table 3 which represents the data with regard to the awareness of counselling services among the students of Pre-university college students depicts that 60% of the sample students are aware of the counselling services as a vocation and its impact in solving and dealing adolescent issues. 40 percent of the sample were not aware of counselling services and its utility in general.

## CONCLUSION

- There is a moderate level of awareness about the profession of counselling and counsellors among the Pre-university students of Dakshina Kannada district.
- Professional counselling services are not available in the Government and aided Pre-university colleges. But few of the private colleges have implemented the services of counsellors in their educational institutions.

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## A sociological study on counselling services in pre-university colleges

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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