Research Paper

Attitude Towards Counselling at School among Students in Bangalore

Ms. Shreelakshmi G S[1], Mrs. Neha Cadabam[2], Dr. Anitha Bharathan[3]*

ABSTRACT

The study named "Attitude Towards Counselling at School among Students in Bangalore" is a comparative study conducted using a mixed research design using the Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPH) by Whittlesey V & peer reviewed questions about attitude towards counselors on 100 students from Bangalore in which 50 students have counselors at school and the other 50 do not. The samples were chosen using a simple random sampling method. Analysis was done using Jamovi Software for the t-test. The results shows that There is no significant difference between the attitude of students who have counselling at school and Students who don't have counselling at School towards counselling although there is a significant difference between the attitude of students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have counselling at School towards Counselors.

Keywords: *Attitude, Counselling, School Students, Bangalore*

The goal of education is not to overwhelm a child with knowledge. Simply said, it's to the best of one's capacity to improve the body and the mind.

Grandparents, uncles, aunts, and senior cousins who provided therapy to a previous child are no longer there. The child has no chance of coping with the daily shocks that they could have done so easily in the presence of the grandparents because they have been left with their parents and one or two siblings. At the event of a working mother, the child is left with outside support at home or in a daycare facility, which cannot serve the role that a joint family earlier on performed in a very subtle and suitable way. As a result of their loneliness, there is a potential that these kids will turn inward. The school counselor can recognise this and give them the same level of emotional safety.

They can be kept away from unpleasant ideas by the plan to otherwise keep him occupied in school activities. Unfortunately, many kids raised by single parents experience additional stress when they engage with their schoolmates. As more kids are being left with unreliable carers, the number of child abuse cases has increased as well.

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[1]Counselling Psychologist, Cadabams Group
[2]Executive Director & Psychologist, Cadabams Group
[3]Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Cadabams Group
*Corresponding Author

Because they have so little time to spend with their kids and are already under a lot of stress from their daily lives and their fast-paced lifestyles, parents frequently use the argument of "quality time" as an excuse.

Students start to establish their sense of competence and confidence as learners, as well as their academic self-concept, during their elementary school years. They start to form character values, as well as decision-making, communication, and life skills. The integration of education, preventive, and intervention services into all facets of a student's life can be accomplished through school counselling programmes.

Along with the social and psychological support the counselor offers, early identification of special needs and academic follow-up are also significant contributions. As a result, obstacles to learning are removed, allowing special educators to implement corrective actions.

Together with parents and teachers, school counselors must decide what steps should be made to address problems that are impeding students' ability to study.
Even though every teacher serves as a counselor for her pupils in addition to her other teaching and administrative duties, every school needs a dedicated counselor. We unquestionably require the nurturing hands of counselors to nurture our children from early years to senior secondary level in order to help them learn in a peaceful setting where they feel loved and encouraged to take a brave and fearless stride forward.

The New Education Policy (NEP), which was finally unveiled after 34 long years, has advanced significantly in this direction and is predicted to revolutionize the educational system. Some of the highlights of the New Education Policy, 2020 include allocating 6% of the GDP to education, the significance of vocational programmes, and the standardization of Indian Sign Language (ISL).

The human mind is capable of both emotional and logical thought. A kid experiences progressive stages of development from birth till adulthood, with environmental, genetic, social, and cultural influences all influencing how they think.

In many schools in affluent countries, parents are informed when pupils' psychological health has been checked on a regular basis. By doing this, the child's emotional requirements are met as well as their emotions.

If this were done, we would be able to handle children's difficulties and provide them with the proper guidance in our nation. Issues troubling kids might range from little ones like low grades or insufficient sleep to serious ones like domestic abuse, violence & trauma.

Children find it hard to express their feelings, but psychologists can tell by watching how a youngster behaves around their parents, teachers, and peers. More sophisticated feelings like assurance, hope, guilt, and pride become apparent as the infant grows. Teaching kids how to manage their emotions is crucial. Early detection of odd behavior by therapists or psychologists can help the youngster express their feelings in a healthy, constructive way.

Only with the enthusiastic participation and involvement of the schools will the government programme to develop and strengthen the mental health of the pupils be successful. Every

school must assume ownership at the state, district, sub-district, and block levels. A school curriculum that supports not only students' education but also psychological and personal development would be adopted as a result of school counselling.

For improved clarity, schools may host online workshops on the key points of the new education policy. The best outcomes would come from hiring a psychologist or counselor as a regular member of the faculty rather than a visiting faculty member since then students wouldn't have to wait until their next visit to talk about their problems.

In order to promote holistic development, the National Education Policy 2020 places a strong emphasis on students' mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, it teaches students traits and practical skills that promote their development, self-preservation, and sustainable growth. It aspires to provide a top-notch education to support India's economic growth. Maximum quality, equity, and honesty are the three main objectives of the new policy for the educational system, from elementary school through higher education.

The policy calls for changes in education at every level, from elementary school to higher education. NEP aspires to enhance the emphasis on improving teacher preparation, changing the current exam system, early childhood care, and reorganizing the educational regulatory environment.

Mental Health has become the new aesthetic and still hasn't been able to find a spot into school curriculums. Most schools today teach: Physical Health, Nutrition, and Sex Education while Mental Health is still at par and stigmatized to be a luxury topic.

School Mental Health programs are very slowly making their way into schools and lives of individuals of the future. It is still a scarcity as many schools still don't approve of the "need" for emphasis on mental health but propagate the importance of knowing the "algebra" as a lesson for life. While education is important, nothing comes before the wellbeing of the little individuals or any individual for that matter.

The numbers of children going unheard and overlooked about their mental health struggles have been increasing day by day and there are a zillion factors contributing to it, but the ignorance on the amount of light being shed on the topic is alarming. Suicide is one of the *leading causes of death in ages 10-25*, world-wide. In addition, most of the people who have committed suicide, have suffered from a mental illness.

In addition to his or her therapeutic and assessment responsibilities, the counselor frequently serves as a special educator, a remedial instructor, an invigilator, and an advocate. In India, guidance is frequently combined with school counselling, with assistance being provided for careers and vocations.

In both public and private schools, a school counselor also known as a guidance counselor plays a vital role. They offer academic, professional, and socioemotional support to students. Their responsibility is to mentor students and assist them in performing at their best academic and interpersonal levels. Counseling, either individual or group, is employed to make it happen. They also support parents and educators in addressing the specific requirements of the child.

By depriving students of the education of mental health, we deprive them of standing for themselves and struggle alone until they can't anymore. Without proper education and awareness, students won't' know how to:
- Identify the problem they're experiencing
- Identifying and acknowledging that there is an issue to start with
- Recognize their emotions, managing and expressing them
- Being open about the issues they are struggling with
- Look for help from professionals without feeling shame
- Help other peers with similar or other mental health problem
- Identify issues their loved ones are facing and get help to them

By introducing mental health issues, children start learning from a young age of "whats, whys and hows" of taking care of their mental health encouraging them to look out for one another and their loved ones. Through a consistent and effective mental health program.
- they'll learn about different mental health illnesses and conditions and risk factors of each
- they'll learn about therapy and how to treat their problem
- they'll be more ready to talk about it
- they'll acknowledge that they have a problem
- detecting the early signs of mental health issues
- spotting the meaningful changes in behavior
- acting at the first sign of a potential mental health problem

Children are facing significant highs in mental health related issues because there has been an invasion of social media and the standards of health, wealth, connections and physical appearance that comes with it. Due to the impact of social media children and teens nowadays are losing their mental health with prominent issues like

Low self-image, body issues, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and loneliness.

Apart from the social and environmental factors, school as an important developmental zone to children, has its own share of contribution towards building the emotional, social and cognitive growth and stiltedness in a child. Students feel the stress of the increased expectation in academic and extracurricular activities and the overall pressure to perform better and better. Students feel stressed out due to:
- Pressure from school and parents
- Peer pressure
- Bullying at school
- Strict and rigid teaching/ teachers
- Increased academic workload
- Pressure to have higher grades

While these issues are raising concern among the mental health professionals and World Health Organization (WHO), incorporating mental health in schools and educating children about and out of these concerns are crucial. Mental health not only addresses the issues and concerns but also promotes and cultivates:
- Self-love and Self Care
- System of values and morals

- Unconditional love, Kindness and Compassion
- Non judgmental outlook
- Talking about their insecurities openly
- Mindfulness and Gratitude

Starting small by introducing mental health related topics to hiring a qualified school counselor is a change inflicting step. A change cultivated in the younger generation will lead its way to making the new times valuable for the era of "LIT Mental Health".

Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention (PPI) are as important as any other aspect of growth and development that is brought into priority by young individuals. Children learning about the significance of good mental health evolve into mentally sound adults who do the same, indeed a step ahead for the future generation, creating a collaborative healthy- safe space.

The main goal of counselling at the school level is to meet the children's emotional, social, and behavioral needs. Additionally, to establish a welcoming and seamless environment in which to assist each of them in a variety of ways. Stressors and setbacks in the academic, personal, familial, and social domains regularly affect professional development during medical education.

School and life in general present a never-ending list of expectations and difficulties for many young people. Life can be challenging for kids, from trauma and learning challenges to bullying and course selection. To assist, a school counselor is available.

A school counselor's primary responsibility is to assist kids in developing socially, academically, and psychologically (Heled & Davidovitch, 2020; Popov & Spasenovic, 2020).

The scope of school counselling is broad, though. The school counselor might teach a first-grade class about social and emotional development one minute, and then work with the administrative team on a brand-new behavioral intervention programme for the entire school the next.

Since younger individuals are more likely than adults to suffer higher levels of stigma, and because early experiences with mental health can have an impact on help-seeking throughout one's lifetime, schools are crucial in tackling mental health-based stigma. Cultural views, knowledge of mental health, and the quantity and type of interaction people have with those who have mental health difficulties can all have an impact on how people regard mental health and how they react.

Since young people with mental health issues are more likely than adults to encounter higher levels of stigma and since early experiences with mental health can have an impact on help-seeking throughout life, schools are crucial in combating mental health-based stigma.

Even though school counselors occasionally work with pupils, there is only so much that they can do. Due to their numerous duties, school counselors are unable to provide every student the time they require for individual therapy. It's possible that many students are dealing with issues that require professional assistance and time set out just for them.

Although school counselors are permitted to meet with kids for individual counselling, it is advised that a maximum of six sessions be used before the student is transferred to a specialist who can spend more time on their issues. The final restriction address is when a school counselor feels accountable for all of the issues at the school. The school counselor's perception that all issues at the school fall under their purview is understandable given that they are there to assist pupils with their concerns. Overcommitting will eventually reduce their ability to be effective in other areas. Trying to address everything at once will wind up being more of a burden than anything else. A school counselor may be of great assistance, but they must understand when to take a back seat and refrain from getting involved. Burnout is a result of taking on too much responsibility and involvement. The school counselor is no longer useful and is not doing their duties if burnout occurs.

Need For Study
Since the review of literature suggests that there has been a limitation of resources available, it is important to study the attitude of the students towards school counselors as it was not studied before in India or Bangalore. As mental health is still stigmatized in India and the new NEP works towards inclusion of mental health curriculum, this research is required to contribute to the role of counselors at School and to understand the perception of the receiving end population.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Saxena (2022) conducted a study named "Indian Students' Attitude towards Guidance and Counseling" to measure the attitude of school students towards guidance and counseling and to find if age and gender are significant determinants of attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. An adaptive version of Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) was used which consists of 30 items. The study found that students had a positive attitude towards seeking guidance and counseling services. Gender and age did not play a significant role in attitude towards seeking guidance and counseling services.

Shetty (2016) conducted a study named **"Attitudes and Stigma towards seeking Professional Psychological Help"** among college going students. The study also aimed to explore the gender differences in attitudes and stigma toward seeking professional psychological help among college students with and without prior counseling experience. Quantitative data were analyzed using the t test and correlation method. The findings indicate that stigma has a significant inverse relationship with the attitudes towards seeking professional counseling among college students. The study also reveals that there is no significant gender difference in attitudes and stigma among help seekers and non-seekers.

Panicker (2019) conducted research on "Exploratory study of attitudes towards counselling among medical students in India" that explored the attitudes, barriers and perceived benefits of counselling services among 692 undergraduate medical students using the Counselling Need Assessment Questionnaire. It was found that 50% of the participants accepted that there was a need for counselling for both themselves as well as for friends and 75% also felt that that mild stress could be relieved with the help of counselling. The barriers that students faced for approaching counselling services as well as the perceived areas of benefits were also explored.

Chen (2020) conducted a study to understand "How Do Chinese International Students View Seeking Mental Health Services?" This study explored how Chinese international

students view seeking mental health services. One hundred and ten Chinese international students responded to the Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale--Short Form (ATSPPH-SF) and a demographic questionnaire. Results of the data analysis revealed no significant main effects of the demographic factors (gender, length of stay in the United States, and awareness of on-campus counseling services) on attitudes toward seeking mental health services. However, awareness of on-campus counseling services was found to be a mediating factor in the relationship between gender and students' mental health help-seeking attitudes.

Clough (2019) studied A Comparison of Mental Health Literacy, Attitudes, and Help-Seeking Intentions among Domestic and International Tertiary Students. The aim of this study was to examine psychological distress, mental health literacy (MHL), and help-seeking attitudes and intentions among a sample of domestic and international tertiary students. The sample comprised 357 domestic and international tertiary students. Participants completed an online questionnaire package, with measures relating to distress, MHL, help-seeking attitudes, and help-seeking intentions. International student status was predictive of lower scores on MHL, help-seeking attitudes, and help-seeking intentions for suicidal ideation. Student group was not predictive of help-seeking intentions for emotional problems or psychological distress, but international students had lower help-seeking intentions for suicidal ideation.

Davis-Bowman (2021) conducted a study about African American Child and Adolescent Academic Help-Seeking: A Scoping Review. To influence school achievement, researchers investigate student academic help-seeking. However, a growing population of students of color combined with the risk of poorer academic performance yields attention toward African American student academic help-seeking. In this review, 13 studies analyzed sampling characteristics, theoretical frameworks, and designing methodologies. Results illustrated that samples varied in terms of data collection, settings, participant characteristics, and research purpose. Also, frameworks differed with the majority of the studies referencing culture or motivation-informed theory. The methodology focused on quantitative measures of help-seeking behavior, attitude, and influencing variables. Qualitative measures showed African American students experienced help-seeking challenges, family involvement, and assumed responsibility for seeking help. Implications for research and practice are provided.

Kelly (1995) in Study of Self-concealment and attitudes toward counseling in university students the relations among self-concealment, attitudes toward seeking psychological help, and intentions to seek counseling were explored. Results revealed that even though self-concealment was associated with less favorable attitudes toward seeking help, it was also associated with greater intentions to seek counseling. In Study 2, high and low self-concealers ($N = 83$) read a description of counseling that either (a) indicated that counseling involves revealing highly personal information or (b) made no mention of such disclosure. Results revealed that in the former condition, high self-concealers were less favorable toward counseling than were low self-concealers, whereas in the latter condition, there was no significant difference between the 2 groups.

METHODOLOGY
Aim
To assess and compare the attitude of Students with and without Counselling at School towards Counselor and Counselling.

Objective
- To assess the attitude of students who have access to Counselling at School towards Counselling.
- To assess the attitude of students who have access to Counselling at School towards Counselor.
- To assess the attitude of students who don't have access to Counselling at School towards Counselling.
- To assess the attitude of students who don't have access to Counselling at School towards Counselor.
- To find the difference between the attitudes of students with and without Counselling at School towards Counselling.
- To find the difference between the attitudes of students with and without Counselling at School towards the Counselor.

Hypothesis
- H0 1: There is no significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselling.
- H0 2: There is no significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselors.

Operational Definition
- **School Counselling-** "Guidance offered at school or elsewhere to students, parents, and other caregivers that focuses on students' academic, personal, social, and career adjustment, development, and achievement".- APA Dictionary.
- **School Counselor-**"Counseling is offered by certified and licensed professionals/ Counselor at all educational levels, from elementary through college and professional school."- APA Dictionary.

Research Design
Mixed Research Design.

Sample
- **Sample Size:** 100 students- 50 students who have Counselling at School and 50 students who don't have Counselling at School.
- **Sampling method:** *Simple Random Sampling.*

Inclusion Criteria
- Students enrolled in any school.
- Students who have English as their medium of instruction.
- Students in grades 6 and above.
- Students who have access to school counselors.
- Students who don't have access to a school counselor.

Exclusion Criteria
- Students in and below grade 5.
- Students who have any other medium of learning than English.

- Students with diagnosed developmental disorders.

Tools Used
Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPH) by Whittlesey, V (2001).
The tool consists of 10 statements rated out of 4 options that best suit the participant, listed and scored as 0 = Disagree 1 = Partly disagree 2 = Partly agree 3 = Agree.
Scoring: Reverse score items 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10, then add up the ratings to get a sum. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards seeking professional help.

Procedure
As this is a mixed study the sample of 100 students will be chosen from schools across Bangalore using simple random sampling of 50 students from Schools that have Counselling and 50 from Schools that don't have Counselling and 50 from Schools that have Counselling services. The students are administered on the Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPH) to assess their attitude towards counseling. Followed by this will be a brief interview method of data collection where the sample will be asked questions regarding their attitude towards school counselors for 15 students from both the groups. The data will be analyzed to draw an empirical as well as qualitative output.

As the data will be collected from the two groups. The data from both categories will be compared using statistical analysis to find differences in attitude towards Counselling and Counselor.

Analysis
Independent sample t-test
Descriptive statistics

Software
Jamovi (Version 2.3)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to assess and compare the attitude of Students with and without Counselling at School towards Counselor and Counselling.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics
Descriptives

	Counselors at School	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Age	Has Counselors at School	50	13.18	1.55
	Does not have Counselor at School	50	13.22	1.36
Class	Has Counselors at School	50	7.93	1.66
	Does not have Counselor at School	50	8.06	1.54

The above table shows the Mean & Standard Deviation for age of students who have counselors at school which is **13.18 & 1.55** and for the classes are **7.93 & 1.66.** Mean & Standard Deviation for age of students who do not have counselors at school which is **13.22 & 1.36** and for the classes are **8.06 & 1.54** respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Variables
Descriptives

	Counselors at School	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Attitude towards Counselling	Has Counselors at School	50	20.0	3.77
	Does not have Counselor at School	50	18.7	4.64
Attitude towards Counselors	Has Counselors at School	50	14.7	2.85
	Does not have Counselor at School	50	11.1	4.43

The table shows the Mean & Standard Deviation for the variables, for the variable of attitude towards Counselling, the mean and standard deviation of students who have counselors at school are **20.0 & 3.77** and for the students who do not have counselors at school are **18.7 & 4.64**. Similarly, Mean & Standard Deviation on Attitude towards Counselor for students who have counselors at school are **14.7 & 2.85** and for students who do not have counselors at school are **11.1 & 4.43** respectively.

Table 3 shows the significant difference between students who have counselors at school and who do not have counselors at school about their attitude towards counselling.
Independent Samples T-Test

	Statistic	**df**	**p**
Attitude towards Counselling	1.66	107	0.101

The statistical difference between the attitude of students who have and don't have counselling at school towards the process of counselling is **0.101, p>0.05,** denoting there is a significant difference in the attitudes, which rejects the hypothesis that **"There is no significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselling."** which also reflects the study done by Saxena in 2022, named "Indian Students' Attitude towards Guidance and Counseling" which found that students had a positive attitude towards seeking guidance and counseling services and that gender and age did not play a significant role in attitude towards seeking guidance and counseling services.

Table 4 shows the significant difference between students who have counselors at school and who do not have counselors at school about their attitude towards counselors.
Independent Samples T-Test

	Statistic	**df**	**p**
Attitude towards Counselors	5.11	107	<.001

The statistical difference between the attitude of students who have and don't have counselling at school towards the process of counselling is **0.001, p<0.05,** denoting there is a significant difference between the attitudes, which rejects the hypothesis that **"There is no significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselors".** This supports the results published by Kelly in 1995 studying the Self-concealment and attitudes toward counseling in university students. Wherein Study 2, high and low self-concealers read a description of counseling that either (a) indicated that counseling involves revealing highly personal information or (b) made no mention of such disclosure. Results revealed that in the former condition, high self-concealers were less favorable toward counseling than were low self-concealers, whereas in the latter condition, there was no significant difference between

the 2 groups, which could be explained as a contributing factor for the difference in attitudes towards counselors.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Summary

The present study is aimed to understand the difference between the attitude of students with & without counselors at school towards counselling & counselor. The study was conducted on students of the age between 10-15 yrs or studying in grade 5th-10th. There was a limitation in the amount of studies being conducted in this field and the students who have access to counselors at school are still not a majority in number. While understanding the attitude of students towards counselling focuses more on the benefits and belief in the changes that comes out of it, the attitude towards counselors emphasizes on the ethics of counselling and of it being a safe space to work.

There has been scarce research on the comparison in studying the attitudes among students who have and do not have counselors at school.

The objective of the study was to find the difference between the attitudes of students with and without Counselling at School towards Counselling & to find the difference between the attitudes of students with and without Counselling at School towards the Counselor. The research design utilized in the study was Mixed- Research Design with a qualitative & quantitative approach. The sample in the study consists of 100 students within the age of 10-15 years. The sampling method used was Simple random sampling. The data was collected using google forms through Survey. The tools used in the study were Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPH) by Whittlesey, V (2001) and peer reviewed questions regarding attitude towards counselors.

The data collected was analyzed using *Jamovi* (Version 2.3). It was found through the analysis that there was no significant difference between the attitude of students who have and do not have counselors at school towards Counselling and there was no significant difference between the attitude of students who have and do not have counselors at school towards Counselors.

Conclusion

- There is no significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselling.
- There is a significant difference between the attitude of Students who have Counselling at School and Students who don't have Counselling at School towards Counselors, which further indicates that there is a directional hypothesis.

Limitations

The study has the following limitations:
- In this study only middle school and high school populations up to 10th are considered; thus, the finding may not apply to other age groups.
- The sample is from Bangalore and thus, the findings may not be true for the students from other states of India.
- This was based on a self- report questionnaire, so there might be response bias which cannot be ignored.

Scope of the Study
The results in the study provides an insight on the attitudes shared by school students in Bangalore about the process of counselling and counselors. A new, broader and mental health positive approach can be provided by the researchers further down the course, this can be used to psycho-educate regarding the mental health stigma around the nation. The directional hypothesis can be studied for further outcome on attitude towards counselors.

Implications
It can be a useful contribution to understand the current state of mental health in the metropolitan city of Bangalore. It also contributes to understanding the stigma surrounding mental health practices and its professionals at the school level of the Education System in the city. Since it was geographically limited, although the result can be generalized in the city of Bangalore it may not be used to generalize for the state or nation, so for further research, a larger population can be considered.

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