

Short Communication

Counselling Needs of Secondary School Students and Their Learning Disorders

Alphonsa Diana Haokip ^{a,*}, Tayum Saroh^a

^aDepartment of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh-791112, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Abstract: The holistic development of a child is attainable in an environment conducive for teaching and learning and Barrell M.(2009) emphasized that the counselling needs of middle students can be addressed through counselling services and constructive learning strategies and methods. Thus, help and support can be availed to the students along their educational journey for their personal, emotional, and psychological growth. The educational setting inclusive of teachers, counsellors, and parents should ensure that holistic education is provided to the students as they undertake their academic endeavours. The learners of secondary schools consist of adolescents who are naive and vulnerable. They need backing to combat the complex challenges of modern life and cope with their pressing academic demands. Rathe (2014) opines that they are possessed by anxiety, mood swings, and intensity of feelings that adversely affect their learning. The present investigation focuses on the counselling needs of secondary students and their learning disorders that have adverse effects on their behaviour and academic performance (Mghweno,2015). This study highlights the need for considering the present educational scenario and the plight of traumatic experiences borne by the students. By exploring the current literature, it analyses studies conducted in India and abroad regarding the importance of establishing student counselling at secondary schools. The findings of the present study revealed how counselling can be instrumental to improve the learning styles of the students and the benefits they could reap from it. Further, the study unfolds the ways and means to tackle learning disorders of the students through counselling.

Keywords: Counselling, Learning Disorders, Secondary School Students.

I. Introduction

Counselling is a very important programme in schools, being the process by which students are given counsel on how to handle emotional conflicts and personal problems in their daily life. It serves as a means of offering students support when they face problems that impact their performance and in dealings with others. Counselling programme is therefore aimed at assisting students to harmonize their talents, interests, and values, thus enabling them to develop their potential fully. Since secondary school students consist, adolescents Robert and Elizabeth (1983) asserts that they are teenagers who are under constant anxiety, pressure, and helplessness and need counselling to assist them in their stages of development and adjustment to school life. Unlike yesteryears, students of today encounter problems that are more complicated like divorce, single parents, and violence at home.

Review of Related Literature

Abdul Azeez V P, D.V.(2015) conducted a study to identify the counselling needs of higher secondary school students. From the study, it was evident that secondary students need help to tackle the problems they encounter in their search for understanding, belongingness, and security that perturbed them psychologically. **Davis M.**

*Corresponding Author: sr.alphonsahapkip@gmail.com

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Gatua, A.C.(2015) investigated how guidance and counselling impacted the modification of behaviour in the social and emotional adjustment for the secondary students. The findings of the study showed that availing counselling to secondary students improves their social and emotional adjustment and modifies their behaviour.

Dr.Felicia Modo, D.K.(2013) investigated how counselling services improved the coping strategies of secondary school adolescents thereby improving their academic performance.

Brenna M. Wernersbach, S.L.(2014) discovered that students enrolled in study skills courses were able to identify their academic weaknesses through inputs, personal counselling, and feedback. The assistance provided through various study tips and skills gave them an awareness of their pitfalls and helped them to progress in their learning. **Chand, D. S.(2013, July)** carried out a study on 200 secondary schools to discover the method of study adopted by the students of both government and private schools and those students coming from atomic and joint families. The finding uncovered that secondary school students need guidance and counselling and lacked systematic study skills. **Spatola, A.B.(2008)** examined the effect of a study skills programme. The study found significant improvement in their learning methods in five weeks of the intervention.

II. Objectives of the Study

Coming to school Secondary School Students face problems related to discipline and bullying. Based on these emerging issues of indiscipline, bullying, drug, and violence are on the rise. According to Chandra (2005), the need for counselling in modern times has increased because of the multiplicity of problems that individuals have to face in the various domains of life. Rapid changes in every aspect of living cause many strains and stress and, in the process, Secondary School Students struggle for adjustment and existence (Heyden, 2011). Hence, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To intervene in the lives of secondary school students through counselling.
2. To address their psychological needs
3. To enhance school discipline,

To deliver them from the clutches of their learning disorders that impacts their academic life.

Counselling Need for Secondary School Students

The first education commission, known as the Modular Commission (1952-53), recognized the importance of proper guidance for students as part of education. The Education Commission (1964-66) expanded the scope of guidance services beyond educational and vocational guidance. A budding journalist of Asia Pacific Journal of Research, Viji K. Ramakrishnan, in September 2013, counselling should be provided from elementary to higher secondary school stage given the needs and learning disorders of students,

Psychiatrists say a rising number of students under constant stress suffer from traumatic disorders related to fear. These include fear of assignment deadlines, fear of tests and examinations, and fear of failure. The constant fear drains their health, affects their sleep, and causes learning disorders. They lose self-confidence and begin to look for ways to escape from these clutches. The 'Times of India' on 15 July 2016, reported that "India has the most adolescent school dropouts". The statistics of suicide cases of secondary students in recent years are alarming and call for serious attention.

Learning Disorders

Dr.Prabhu (2015) states that among the various problems of young pupils in schools, educational problems top the highest. Students often encounter difficulties in understanding what is taught in the classrooms because of which there are poor achievers, high achievers, creative and gifted, and students with a low level of motivation. Thus, counselling would facilitate understanding one's strengths, limitations and avail the resources to meet the challenges. To be competent and successful demands consistent hard work in which some students are overwhelmed with the pressing needs of academic requirements due to their learning disabilities. A Learning disorder is that which inhibits a learner's capability to progress in learning. The common learning disorders are those that affect reading, written expressions, and math of which Dyslexia is the most prominent one. The others are:

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) - their main problem is paying attention and continuing a task;

Dyscalculia – these have problems with all leanings related to math

Dysgraphia – is concerned with writing disabilities;

Processing Deficits – as the name suggests are processing deficits.

Dyslexia is one of the most common learning difficulties in students associated with processing information that is language-based and persists throughout life. Dyslexia students are very talented in multiple ways (Rose, 2009). They have spatial awareness, problem-solving skills, and creative abilities and outshine their counterparts in oral performance. Yet, they are often misjudged as sluggish or inattentive on account of their short-term memory, sequencing, and coordination problems that affect their learning in spite of their hard work. This learning disorder hampers their reading comprehension and fluency in spelling impeding their academic performance. Consequently, they are disorganized frustrated, and lack self-confidence. However, with timely assistance and the right instruction, there is no limit for achievement for students with learning disorders (Deshler, 2014).

Causes of Learning Disorders in Secondary students

The learning of the secondary students is perturbed by many factors due to their age, growth, and development physically, mentally, psychologically, and emotionally. Rapid changes in their body with the onset of puberty make them conscious of their body image. Their emotional instability and mood swings, attention-seeking, and feelings of insecurity divert their attention from learning. Behavioural changes of attraction towards the opposite sex, exposure to modern technologies, tendency to conform to the passing-fads and trendy fashion in the name of modernity, and influence of peers lead them to neglect their studies. Peer pressures persuade them to yield to bad habits of smoking, substance abuse, addiction to movies and unhealthy relationships topple their academic performance (Gongola.S, 2017)

Students have a hectic schedule as they hop from home to school and to tuition centres with little time to rest and relax. In the midst of these, many of them develop eating disorders conscious of their weight and appearance which prevents them from getting the nutrition they need. According to a 2015 report by WHO, 1.3 million adolescents died due to health issues. The stress of parental expectations, lengthy and complex syllabus, academic pressures, and bullying in varied forms keep in constant anxiety that it hampers their ability to concentrate in their studies and advance in their academic achievement.

Study Skills and Learning Disorders

Study skills are strategies that are applied to learning. They are generally critical to success in school, considered essential for acquiring good grades. Devine (1987) describes a range of effective study skills for the process of organizing, assimilating new information, retaining the information, concentration techniques as well as efficient note-taking. These are practical techniques and they can be learned and applied in a short time. It means approaching the study with the right attitude, like selecting the right environment to minimize distractions and set a realistic schedule. To be successful in school requires that students must first learn these skills, practice them and develop effective study habits to be successful (Diseth, 2003).

Devine (1987) describes that effective study skills function as critical tools for learning, acquiring, recording, organizing, remembering, and using the information obtained. It refers to the student's knowledge of appropriate study methods and the ability to manage time to face academic demands (Credé, 2008). Bhatnagar and Gupta (1999) advocated the need to assist the pupils with good study habits to progress in their learning. Guidance and Counselling guidelines for states by NCERT (2015) assert the current need for guidance and counselling to address societal changes and educational problems due to which school drop-out, sex abuse, bullying, and suicidal tendencies are on the rise.

III. Techniques to Enhance Learning

Chand (2013) considers study habits as a systematic method of studying. The present society is competitive and a good study habit is all the more required for students than it was before to face academic

challenges. Ramamurti (1993) rightly stressed that in spite of possessing good intelligence, the absence of study techniques and skills hamper learning. Hence, the following are study habits will be adopted by the students.

- a) **Study techniques:** Probably most students do not progress in their study because are they not aware of study techniques. Some of them have odd study patterns. (Hills and Ballow,2000) realizing students' deficiency recommended that they need to cultivate study techniques to enhance their learning
- b) **Note-taking:** This skill can be encouraged for students to make a note of a few points even from their regular lessons in the classroom in short, clear, and logical order.
- c) **Revision techniques:** It's a great challenge for students to remember all they have studied. Therefore, revision techniques like Home Work involving personal practice have a strong footing that can improve memory.
- d) **Organization strategies:** students can be guided to be organized academically to fulfil the demands of their studies all by themselves and become self-managing learners. It is beneficial for them to break classwork and homework assignments into sub-tasks with efficient time management.
- e) **Stress management:** Stress is defined as a response to the demand that is placed upon you. As a student, it is very important to manage it. Some of the ways to manage stress are: Study in advance, sleep well, have breakfast on time, be punctual, and think positive thoughts.
- f) **Create Mind Map:** One of the modern techniques of effective study and test-taking is Mind Map. Unlike the traditional outline method which lists items in a sequence, a mind map places the main topic in the centre of the page with sub-topics and supporting details branching off from it. This is an easy method to learn any subject however tough it may be. It is handy and helps in quick revision at any time.

Suitable Support Strategies

- Individualized instruction with sufficient freedom and guidance
- Immediate and continuous reinforcement in the form of praise and reward
- Learning with the help of visual materials Eg: Pictures of Numbers,
- Use a multi-sensory approach with concrete, simple and clear instructions
- A conducive learning environment where the child feels secure and protected

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the discussions in this study, we can conclude that since the dual-income system is becoming the trend of the day, parents are preoccupied to keep the family going. Thus, children are left to themselves with no one to share their woes and pangs and get timely guidance and support mentally and emotionally. Added to that the learning of the secondary students is influenced by media, peer pressure, addiction to modern gadgets, intake of junk food, imbalance sleep patterns that affect their health and learning styles. These problems cause disorders in their learning, affecting their concentration and focus in their day-to-day schedule of learning as well as their

academic performance. Therefore, secondary students of the present times are in dire of counselling to assist them and equipped them in their journey of learning.

V. Educational Implications

- a. This study will be beneficial to the teachers to understand the range of problems students go through and be empathetic to them.
- b. Teachers will be aware of their role as counsellors, identify the problems of the students and refer them to professional counsellors if need be.
- c. It will help teachers to modify their lesson plan and classroom transaction based on individual differences and the diverse learning styles of the students.
- d. It will assist secondary students to modify their faulty study habits.
- e. Students can be more focused and devote equal time to different subjects.
- f. Educational managers will be motivated to stabilize counselling programmes in secondary schools.
- g. Parents will be aware of the importance and advantages of counselling services provided in educational institutions and encourage their wards to avail such services.
- h. It will help academicians and curriculum developers to include counselling in the curriculum.

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