



A Study on Counselling Services in the Schools of Urban Field Practice Area, Raja Rajeswari Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru

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KEYWORDS

High school students; Teachers; Counseling services; Psychosocial problems.

ABSTRACT:

Background: Adolescence is a critical period characterized by significant behavioral, psychological, and social changes. During this time, adolescents strive to develop their individuality while facing numerous challenges related to physical growth and emotional-psychological needs. Given that adolescents spend a substantial amount of time in school, providing services such as counseling may help address many of these issues. **Objectives:** The study aimed to observe the availability of counseling facilities in schools within the urban field practice area of RajaRajeswari Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru. Additionally, it sought to assess the awareness among schoolteachers regarding mental illness in students and to evaluate the prevalence of psychosocial problems among high school students. **Methods:** A descriptive study was conducted in schools located in the urban field practice area, involving 400 high school students and 90 teachers. Data were collected using a pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The chi-square test was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. **Results:** The study found that three schools provided counselors, only one school had a dedicated counseling room, and four schools offered workshops or life skills classes for students. Among the high school students, 17.5% scored ≥ 30 on the Pediatric Symptom Checklist for Youth, indicating psychosocial problems. Additionally, 97.77% of teachers demonstrated adequate awareness of mental illness among students. A statistically significant association was observed between mothers' occupation and psychosocial problems in high school students. **Conclusion:** This study revealed that only one school provided a dedicated counseling room, and 17.5% of high school students were found to be suffering from psychosocial problems. Therefore, it is recommended that health education on mental illness be provided to both parents and teachers. Schools should also offer essential counseling services to help students address their problems and achieve success in both academic and personal life.

Introduction

Counseling is a service designed to help an individual to analyze himself/herself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment. The ultimate objective of guidance and counseling is to help the child to become what he is capable of becoming.¹ School counselors foster educational equity, access, and academic success in a rigorous curriculum to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers. Even schoolteachers can play the part of a counselor as they have undergone adequate training as per the B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) syllabus. Thus, they have an opportunity to assure and improve mental health and well-being of their students. They can help

students to achieve realistic and contextual frames of growing up during adolescence and also face cultural and social differences, impact of economic changes and urbanization, impact of media and during difficult circumstances.

WHO defines adolescence as the period of life between the ages of 10 to 19 years.² Adolescence is a period of immense behavioral, psychological, social changes and challenges. The adolescents struggle to develop their individuality while still conforming to societal norms and face a number of challenges with regard to their physical growth, emotional-psychological need, sexual and reproductive health. In India, adolescents constitute 21.4% of the population, comprising one fifth of the total



population.³ The psychosocial problems include both the under-controlled, externalizing or behavioral problems such as conduct disorders, educational difficulties, substance abuse, hyperactivity, etc., and the over-controlled, internalizing or emotional problems like anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies etc. Many adolescents today fall a prey to these psychosocial problems.⁴

Counseling services were considered as follows: the counselor assists students in their academic, career, social, and personal development and helps them follow the path to success.⁵ School counselor is qualified and trained in school counseling with qualifications and skills to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs. Usually, they possess one or more of these qualifications, earned through full-time or part-time study.

Rapid industrialization and urbanization have led to more parents being employed and living in nuclear families, leaving them with less time to care for their children. This situation has contributed to a rise in psychosocial and psychiatric problems among students, who often struggle to navigate challenging situations on their own. Against this background, the aim of the present study was to observe the counseling facilities available in schools within the urban field practice area of RajaRajeswari Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru. It also sought to assess the level of awareness among schoolteachers regarding psychosocial problems faced by students in this region. Additionally, the study aimed to evaluate the prevalence and nature of psychosocial issues among high school students in the same area.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive study was conducted in all the schools within the Urban Field Practice area of RajaRajeswari Medical College and Hospital, Bengaluru. The study population included high school students and teachers from these schools, and the study was conducted from December 2017 to November 2018. To assess the availability of counseling services, a checklist was employed based on the guidelines provided by the Department of Education, the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program, and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). A semi-structured and pretested questionnaire was used to interview the study subjects, which included both high school students and teachers.

For the observation of counseling facilities, a complete enumeration of all schools was performed. The sample size for assessing psychosocial problems among high school students was calculated using a prevalence rate of 22%, as observed in an Indian study conducted by Roy et al.⁶ on the prevalence of psychosocial problems among high school students in Delhi. Considering an allowable error of 19% of the prevalence rate and a 95% confidence interval, the sample size was calculated using the formula $n = 4pq / L^2$, where n is the sample size, p is the prevalence, q is $100-p$, and L is the allowable error. This resulted in a sample size of 395 students. To assess the awareness among teachers regarding mental illness in students, a complete enumeration of all teachers in the schools within the Urban Field Practice area was also conducted.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee (IEC). Assent from students and consent from teachers were also obtained before conducting the study. Each school was visited three times to ensure coverage of all study subjects, including those not present during the first and second visits. Counseling facilities in each school were assessed using a checklist based on NCERT guidelines and the School Mental Health Program. The principal or head of the respective school served as the informant for assessing the availability of counseling services.

The Pediatric Symptom Checklist for Youths (PSC-Y) was used to assess psychosocial problems among high school students. The PSC-Y is designed for students aged 11 to 17 years and includes 35 close-ended questions with response options of "never," "sometimes," and "often," scored as 0, 1, and 2, respectively. The total score ranges from 0 to 70, with a score of 30 or higher indicating that the youth is at risk of mental health problems and requires further evaluation. A total of 400 high school students were selected using a probability proportional to size sampling method (Table 1), and the students were proportionally represented by class (8th, 9th, 10th) within each school. Simple random sampling (lottery method) was used to select students from each class.

Teachers' awareness of psychosocial problems among students was assessed using a questionnaire prepared by referring to previous similar studies. The questionnaire included general information about the teachers and 12 close-ended questions related to mental illness among students. The responses were scored, with each correct



response receiving 1 point and incorrect responses receiving 0 points. Teachers who scored 6 or more points were considered to have adequate awareness, while those who scored less were considered to have inadequate awareness regarding mental illness among students. A score of 9 or higher was considered indicative of good awareness. A total of 400 high school students and 90 teachers participated in the study.

Statistical analysis: All the collected data was compiled and entered into a Microsoft Excel worksheet. Descriptive statistics were employed to present the data, with qualitative variables expressed as frequencies and percentages, and quantitative variables as means and standard deviations. Appropriate tests of significance, such as Chi-Square tests, along with univariate and multivariate analyses, were conducted as necessary. The data were then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software, version 21.0.

Results

The results showed that three schools provided counselors for students, but only one school had a dedicated counseling room for this purpose. Four schools offered workshops or life skills classes to students, and none of the schools conducted psychological tests to assess students' psychological problems. It was also noted that six schools had computers for counseling purposes. Among the 400 high school students who participated in the study, 195 (49%) were girls and 205 (51%) were boys.

The majority of high school students belonged to the age groups of 15 years (44.75%) and 14 years (25.5%), followed by 16 years. Table 2 reveals that 70 (17.5%) out of 400 high school students scored 30 or higher on the Pediatric Symptom Checklist for Youth, indicating the need for further evaluation. The remaining 330 students scored below 30. Additionally, 82 (20.5%) students' mothers were employed, while 318 (79.5%) were homemakers. Univariate analysis demonstrated a statistically significant association between mothers' occupation (working mothers) and psychosocial problems among high school students. However, no statistically significant association was found between gender and psychosocial problems. Table 3 indicates that most teachers were in the 31 to 40-year age group, accounting for 34 (38%), followed by the 41 to 50-year age group (34%) and the 51 to 60-year age group (18%). Table 3 shows that 97.77% of teachers had adequate awareness of mental illness among students. Table 4 indicates that most

schoolteachers were female, with 75 (83.34%) being female and 15 (16.6%) being male. The majority of teachers had 0-5 years (27.77%) and 6-10 years (27.77%) of teaching experience, followed by 21-25 years and 16-20 years. There was no statistically significant difference in awareness of mental illness in students based on factors such as teachers' qualifications, age, teaching experience, or gender. In this study it was observed that there was statistically significant difference only between Psychosocial problem among High School students and occupation of mothers (working mothers) and but not with any other factors like gender and age of High school students.

Discussion

In this study it was observed that out of 7 Schools only 1 school has separate Counselling room which is in contrast to a study conducted by Parijat Chakrabarty in Secondary Schools of Guwahati which showed that out of 10 Secondary Schools 5 of them had a Guidance cell where Counselling Services were provided. NCERT recommends providing a counsellor and psychological tests at Schools but in this study, it was observed that only 3 school had counsellors available at Schools and none of the Schools had tests to assess students psychological problem.⁷ The District Mental health program under National Mental Health program recommends providing counsellor at Schools but only 3 Schools in this study had a counsellor at school.⁸

In this study it was observed that schoolboys were more in number compared to girls which is similar to a study conducted by Faizi et al.⁹ which showed schoolboys (50.34%) were more in number compared to girls. In this study it was observed that most of the study participants belonged to the 14-15years age group (70.5%) which is in contrast to the study conducted by Thapa et al. which showed 46.12%. This study showed that the problem of psychosocial problems among school going students is 17.5% which is similar to the study conducted by Shankar et al.¹⁰ which showed 15.2% of school students have psychosocial problems by using pediatric symptomatic checklist for youth. It is similar to the study conducted by Timalisina et al. which is 12.9%.¹¹ This study showed that number of High School students with mothers working away from home were 20.5% which is in contrast to the study conducted by Koirala et al.¹² showed that 50% of adolescents had mothers working away from home, and is also in contrast to the study conducted by Seenivasan et



al. which showed that number of adolescents with working mother were 52.8%.

In this study it was observed that most of School Teachers belonged to age group 31-40years which is 40%, is almost similar to a study conducted by Prabhu et al. which showed that 48.4% of School Teachers belonged to 31-40years of age group, is also similar to the study conducted by Bhanwara et al.¹³ which is 45% but is in contrast to the study conducted by Venkataraman et al. which showed that 29% of school Teachers belonged to 31-40years age group.¹⁴ In this study it was observed that there were a greater number of Female School Teachers Participants than Male School Teachers which is 83.34% which is similar to the study conducted by Bhanwara et al. which showed 86.66%,¹³ which is almost similar to the study conducted by Prabhu et al. which is 76.3% and is almost similar to study conducted by Parikh et al. which was 77.5%.¹⁵ In this study it was observed that most of the Teachers has B.Ed. degree which is 45% which is similar to the study conducted by Bhanwara et al.¹³ which is 40% which is in contrast to the study conducted by Venkataraman et al. in which 18.7% of Teachers were having B.Ed. degree.¹⁴ In this study it was observed 15.5% of School Teachers has 11-15years and 21-25 years of teaching experience which is in contrast to the study conducted by Bhanwara et al.¹³ in which majority of Teachers has 1-5 years of teaching experience and is also contract to a study conducted by Parikh et al. in which most of Teachers had 1-10years of teaching experience which is 44.2%.¹⁵ In this study it was observed that 97% of School Teachers have satisfactory awareness regarding Psychosocial problems among Students which is similar to the study conducted by Bhanwara et al. which is 93.34% of Teachers have average awareness but is in contrast to study conducted by Parikh et al. in which 76% of Teachers scored above average in Questionnaire administered.¹⁵ In this study it was observed that there is almost equal number of boys and girls of High Schools have Psychosocial problems which is almost similar to the study conducted by Faizi et al.⁹ In this study it was observed that High school students with mothers working away from home showed more Psychosocial problems when compared to students with mothers working at home which is similar to the study conducted by Koirala.P et al.¹²

Conclusion

In this study, only one school provided a dedicated counseling room, while three schools had counselors available on campus, and four other schools conducted workshops or life skills classes for the students. None of the schools administered psychological tests to assess students' psychological issues. The study found that 17.5% of high school students were experiencing psychosocial problems. The majority of teachers (97.77%) demonstrated adequate awareness of these issues among students. The employment status of mothers was found to have a statistically significant association with psychosocial problems in high school students. Therefore, it is imperative for schools to offer necessary counseling services to help students address their challenges and succeed both academically and personally. Additionally, health education should be provided to parents and teachers on the psychosocial problems commonly observed in this age group.

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Table 1: High school students selected as per probability proportional to size sampling

Name of the school	Total students	Number of the students
New Horizon	130	46
Carmel	160	58
JSS	100	36
BET Convent	200	71
Mount Carmel	180	64
Ashwini	200	71
Sri Rajarajeswari Vidya Shale	150	54
Total	1120	400

Table 2: Psychosocial problems among high school students with mother's occupation, gender, and age of students

Comparison of PSC-Y	Number	Mean	SD	Z-test	P-value
Mothers occupation					
Home makers	318	22.04	7.82	2.15	0.031
Working mothers	82	24.40	9.10		
Gender					
Male	205	22.50	8.13	0.09	0.92
Female	195	22.58	8.07		
Age					



<16	299	22.50	8.13	0.181	0.85
≥16	101	22.67	8.15		

Table 3: Distribution of schoolteachers according to age and awareness of mental illness among school students (n=90)

	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Age (in years)		
21-30	9	10
31-40	34	38
41-50	30	34
51-60	16	18
Scores on Awareness of Mental illness among School students		
≥6	88	97.77
<6	02	2.33

Table 4: Awareness among Teachers on Mental illness in students with qualification, age, gender, years of teaching of Teachers (n=90)

Awareness on Mental illness	Number	Mean	SD	Z-test	P-value
Qualification					
Masters	9	8.66	1.15	0.091	0.927
Bachelors	54	8.62	1.61		
Bachelors	54	8.62	1.61	0.765	0.444
Others	27	8.85	1.07		
Age (in years)					
<35	26	8.76	1.44	0.27	0.787
≥35	64	8.67	1.42		
Years of Teaching					
<15	57	8.75	1.26	0.445	0.656
≥15	33	8.60	1.68		
Gender					
Female	75	8.72	1.47	0.34	0.734
Male	15	8.60	1.20		