

Effectiveness of student-oriented counselling on behavior, attitude and academic performance of first year professional undergraduate students

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ABSTRACT

Introduction and Aim: Student oriented counselling is given for the purpose of improving well-being, alleviating distress and enhancing coping skills. It focuses to facilitate student achievement, improve behaviour, attitude, attendance, academic performance and to take decisions for their future. The present study is done to assess and compare classroom behavior, attitude towards college and academics and academic performance of first year professional undergraduate students before and after counselling intervention.

Materials and Methods: An experimental pre-test, post-test, control group design was framed for present study. As per simple random sampling 150 students were taken for study group with counselling intervention and 150 students for control group without counselling intervention to investigate the effect of Student Counselling on student class room behaviour, attitude towards college & academics and academic performance of first year professional undergraduate students. A structured questionnaire was administered for both the groups after one month of college entry, internal marks were collected and one to one personal counselling was given to study group for eight months whereas the control group was withheld. After eight months, post-test was given for both the groups and internal marks were collected.

Results: The collected data was analysed using SPSS software version ± 23.0 . The independent 't' test results revealed that, in study group there was statistically significant difference after counselling i.e., post-test, in mean score of class room behaviour ($t = 4.684$ at $p = 0.0001$), attitude towards college and academics ($t = 7.266$ at $p = 0.0001$), student problems affecting academics ($t = 10.097$ at $p = 0.0001$) and academic performance ($t = 11.013$ at $p = 0.0001$) among students comparable to pre-test as compared to control group.

Conclusion: The student oriented counselling showed improved positive classroom behaviour, attitude towards college and academics and improved academic performance in scoring good marks in examinations.

Keywords: Student counselling; behavior; attitude; academic performance; professional undergraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

There are many issues commonly experienced by students in college that can some time pose major challenges to study, play, socializing and living i.e., anxiety, stress, home sickness, difficulty in adjustment to new college environment, ragging from fellow seniors, language difficulty etc. Transition from school/college to university can be extremely challenging, for both the student and academic staff involved in teaching the new cohort. This transition has been identified as a major cause of anxiety amongst first-year university students (1). Failure to successfully manage such transition may result in significant distress, poor academic performance, and increased drop-out rates (2). It is notable that the transition to university may be particularly difficult for mature students with families, for students who are the first generation to go to university, and for students who come from ethnic minorities that are underrepresented in a student population (3). Student

misbehaviours such as disruptive talking, chronic avoidance of work, clowning, interfering with teaching activities, harassing classmates, verbal insults, rudeness to teacher, defiance, and hostility (4), ranging from infrequent to frequent, mild to severe, is a thorny issue in everyday classroom. Teachers usually reported that these disturbing behaviours in the classroom are intolerable (5) and stress-provoking (6), and they had to spend a great deal of time and energy to manage the classroom (7, 8). Stress is interpreted as a more general term that describes the effects of psychosocial and environmental factors on physical or mental well-being (9). Mental stress in psychiatric disease and in daily life contributes to oxidative stress in the body (10). The adjustment difficulties of college students have been an emerging issue. Many studies have proved that the adjustment difficulties like appetite disturbance, concentration problems and depression are most evident in freshmen (11). Medical education

is inherently stressful and demanding. Overwhelming burden of information leaves a minimal opportunity for the student to relax and recreate. Stress and depression have been consistently linked to mental and physical health effects (12). An optimal level of stress enhances learning while excess of stress can cause health problems. This results in reduction of students' self-esteem and affects their academic achievement. A high level of stress may have negative effect on cognitive functioning and learning of students in medical school (13). The young student population is vulnerable to stress of higher professional education due to competitive environment. Comparing stress between medical and non-medical students shows that medical students perceive higher stress (14, 15). If left unattended, any level of stress can lead to sleeping disorders, burnout, drop out etc. The objectives of this study were to determine the effectiveness of student oriented counselling on student classroom behaviour, attitude towards college and academics and academic performance of first year professional undergraduate students namely Allied Health Science, B.Sc. (Nursing) and MBBS.

METHODOLOGY

The design for the study was experimental pre-test, post-test control group design framed to investigate the effect of student counselling on student class room behaviour, attitude towards college and academics and academic performance. The sample of

the study (n=300) consisted of (n=150) 1st year MBBS, BSc nursing, BSc allied science students in study group and (n=150) first year MBBS, BSc Nursing, BSc Allied Science students in control group from Chennai. The tool consisted of part -1 demographic data, part -2 structured questionnaire to assess the student classroom behavior, attitude towards college and academics and student problems affecting academics. Content validity of the questionnaire was obtained from experts. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested by using test-retest reliability method ($r=0.7$).

Counselling Session

The fresher students in both study group and control group were assessed with a structured questionnaire after one month of college entry. Four sessions of counselling were given to students in study group. The counselling sessions were based on their personal problems and the academic difficulties in their studies so that their situations could be improved. The students were allowed to express their problems and full confidentiality was assured to them. We offered encouragement and solutions to their problems and promised to support them whenever they wanted. Depending upon the problems, the students were continuously supported, trained for their academic success. Students in control group were withheld from counselling. Finally, after 8 months post-test was given to both the groups.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic variables among first year professional undergraduate students (n=300)

Demographic variables		Control group (n=150)		Study group (n=150)		X2 p Value
		n	%	n	%	
Age	16-18 years	73	48.6	98	65.4	8.32 0.001**
	19-21 years	56	37.4	33	22	
	22-24 years	21	14	19	12.6	
Sex	Male	60	40	56	37.3	7.12 0.001**
	Female	90	60	94	62.7	
Native	Tamil Nadu	109	72.7	98	65.3	11.741 0.0001***
	Other state	41	27.3	52	34.7	
Family income per month	10000-20000 (Low)	31	20.7	28	18.7	8.63 0.0001***
	20001-30000 (Middle)	85	56.7	79	52.7	
	>30000 (High)	34	22.7	43	28.7	
Medium of study in school	English	87	58	94	62.7	8.24 0.0001***
	Tamil	42	28	34	22.7	
	Others	21	14	22	14.7	
Education background of the family	Educated	95	63.3	96	64	15.63 0.0001***
	Uneducated	55	36.7	54	36	
Place of education	Rural	65	43.3	74	49.3	6.22 0.0001***
	Urban	85	56.7	76	50.7	
Type of family	Joint	43	28.7	40	26.7	6.82 0.0001***
	Nuclear	91	60.7	90	60.0	
	Single parent	16	10.7	20	13.3	

NS- Not significant; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 1: Among 300 students selected for study i.e., 150 in study group and 150 in control group, 98(65.4%) were among the age category of 16-18 years in study group and 73 (48.6%) in control group. With regard to sex, the majority were females 94(62.7%) in study group and 90(60%) in control category. 109 (72.2%) were from Tamil Nadu in control group and 98 (65.3%) from Tamil Nadu in study category. With regard to family income 85 (56.7%) fall in middle class in control group and 79

(52.7%) middle class in study group. Concerning to medium of study 94(62.7%) were from English medium in study group and 87 (58%) from English medium in control category. Regarding families' educational background 96 (64%) in study group and 95 (63.3%) from control group were educated. 85(56.7%) in control group were from urban educational background. With regard to type of family 91(60.7%) in control group and 90(60.0%) from study group were from nuclear family.

Table 2: Comparison of mean score of student classroom behavior among first year professional undergraduate students

Test	Study group		Control group		Mean difference	't' value / p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Pre test	6.76	3.42	6.52	3.06	0.220	0.640/0.523 ^{NS}
Post test	9.95	2.71	8.39	3.05	2.667	4.684/0.0001***

NS- Not significant; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2 demonstrates the comparison of mean score of classroom behaviour among first year professional undergraduate students between the study and the control group during pre-test and post-test. The pre-test mean score of behaviour was 6.76 with SD 3.42 in the study group and 6.52 with SD 3.06 in the control group with mean difference of 0.220. The results of the independent 't' test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean

score of behaviour as shown by independent 't' value 0.640 at p = 0.523. The post-test mean score of behaviour was 9.95 with SD 2.71 in the study group and 8.39 with SD 3.05 in the control group with mean difference of 0.220. The independent 't' test results revealed that there is statistically significant difference in mean score of behaviour as shown by independent 't' value 4.684 at p = 0.0001.

Table 3: Comparison of mean score of attitudes towards college and academics among first year professional undergraduate students

Test	Study Group		Control Group		Mean Difference	't' value / p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Pre Test	28.09	11.163	26.79	10.287	1.293	1.043/0.298 ^{NS}
Post Test	36.63	10.240	27.99	10.370	8.647	7.266/0.0001***

NS- Not significant; *p<0.05 ; **p<0.01 ; ***p<0.001

Table 3 demonstrates the comparison of mean score of attitudes towards college and academics among the first year professional undergraduate students between the study and the control group during pre-test and post-test. The pre-test mean score of attitude was 28.09 with SD 11.163 in the study group and 26.79 with SD 10.287 in the control group with mean difference of 1.293. The independent t test results revealed that there was no statistically significant

difference in mean score of attitude as showed by independent t value 1.043 at p = 0.298. The post-test mean score of attitude was 36.63 with SD 10.240 in the study group and 27.99 with SD 10.370 in the control group with mean difference of 8.647. The independent 't' test results revealed that there is statistically significant difference in mean score of attitude as shown by independent 't' value 7.266 at p = 0.0001.

Table 4: Comparison of mean score of student problems affecting academics among first year professional undergraduate students

Test	Study Group		Control Group		Mean Difference	't' value / p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Pre Test	95.18	29.418	97.33	30.682	2.140	0.617/0.538 ^{NS}
Post Test	59.10	27.703	94.45	32.728	35.347	10.097/0.0001***

NS- Not significant; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4 demonstrates the comparison of mean score of student problems affecting academics among the first year professional undergraduate students between the study and the control group during pre-test and post-test. The pre-test mean score of student problems was 95.18 with SD 29.418 in the study

group and 97.33 with SD 30.682 in the control group with mean difference of 2.140. The independent t test results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean score of student problems as showed by independent t value 0.617 at p = 0.538. The post-test mean score of student

problems was 59.10 with SD 27.70 in the study group and 94.45 with SD 32.728 in the control group with mean difference of 35.347. The independent t test results revealed that there is statistically

significant difference in mean score of student problems as shown by independent 't' value 10.097 at $p = 0.0001$.

Table 5: Comparison of mean score of academic performance among first year professional undergraduate students

Test	Study Group		Control Group		Mean Difference	't' value / p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Pre Test	51.52	9.85	52.11	10.15	7.96	7.753/0.000*
Post Test	59.47	7.82	63.65	7.8	11.54	11.013/0.000*

NS- Not significant; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5 demonstrates the comparison of mean score of academic performance among the first year professional undergraduate students between the study and the control group during pre-test and post-test. The pre-test mean score of academic performance was 51.52 with SD 9.85 in the study group and 52.11 with SD 10.15 in the control group with mean difference of 7.96. The independent t test results revealed that there was statistically significant difference in mean score of academic performance as showed by independent 't' value 7.753 at $p = 0.0001$. The post-test mean score of academic performance was 59.47 with SD 7.82 in the study group and 63.65 with SD 7.8 in the control group with mean difference of 11.54. The independent 't' test results revealed that there was statistically significant difference in mean score of academic performance as shown by independent 't' value 11.013 at $p = 0.0001$.

DISCUSSION

The student oriented counselling support students directly in their academic life to foster, promote, and increase interpersonal competencies and academic achievement. The Counselling believes that sound education involves the overall development of the student. This includes the social, emotional, intellectual and physical aspects of students' lives.

In the present study comparison of mean score of students' classroom behavior between study and control group during pretest, had no statistically significant difference $p = 0.523$ level and homogeneity between the groups was maintained. In post-test the mean score of study group was 9.95 with a mean difference of 2.667 from control group 8.39 which was statistically significant with $P = 0.0001$ compared to control group which proved that student counselling had a positive impact in improving classroom behaviour. It is also supported by an earlier study done at Kenya that showed effectiveness of guidance and counselling in managing student behaviour established that there was a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.503$ between guidance and counselling and the management of student behaviour (16). The findings agree with an earlier study that individual attention is useful addressing student behaviour (17). Additionally, another study also confirms that guidance and counselling services

are instrumental in academic performance, self-understanding and career choice (18).

The comparison of mean score of student attitude towards college and academics study and control group during pre-test had no statistically significant difference $p = 0.298$ level and homogeneity between the groups was maintained. However post-test conformed the statistically significant difference in the level of attitude towards college and academics between the study group and control group during post-test ($P = 0.0001$). This shows the change of attitude among students towards college and academics who underwent counselling. The current study results were accordance with an earlier study, which revealed that guidance and counselling enhances self-esteem among the learners. The learners acquire evaluative aspect of their self-concept, which makes them value themselves. Guidance and counselling develops positive self-image and makes the learners feel that their teachers accommodate them and listen to them. Moreover, the use of guidance and counselling to mould learners has made them develop positive attitude towards that particular alternative corrective measure (19).

The comparison of mean score of students' problems affecting academics among study and control group during pre-test results revealed that in pretest the groups had no statistically significant difference at $p = 0.538$ hence homogeneity in between groups was maintained. However, post-test conformed that the problems faced by students in study group was gradually decreased compared to control group at ($p = 0.0001$). The study revealed that counselling helped students in understanding themselves and adjusting to the new transition in their lives. Our study correlates with a study which states that students who completed a course of counselling show significantly greater improvement from depression and anxiety than those students who drop out or have an unplanned therapy ending (effect size 1.03, 0.85, respectively). That study stated that the stage at which students drop out the therapy is important than those students dropping out of therapy before the third stage are the most vulnerable to the above problems (20). This was according to practitioner pre- and post-therapy severity ratings of depression and anxiety.

Findings of our study states that there was a good improvement in academic performance of students who underwent counselling sessions compared to students who did not attend counselling at ($P=0.0001$). The current study results were in accordance with another study, which revealed that the stakeholders felt that guidance and counselling programme was effective in varying degrees in boosting secondary school students' personal, career and academic competencies (21).

CONCLUSION

The individual counselling had a positive influence on the academic performances. The results of our study showed that the student oriented counselling improved positive classroom behaviour, good attitude towards college and academics and academic performance by scoring good marks in examinations.

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