

Counselling Needs of Engineering College Students

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Abstract

The counselling needs of 443 (195 f; 248 m) engineering students were assessed in this study along with a measure of academic performance and social-economic status (SES). Counselling needs are the needs/problems of the students for which they want to seek counselling in order to help cope with those problems. The Student Counselling Needs Questionnaire and Kuppaswamy's scale were administered on the sample to collect primary data. Secondary data, the academic performance was collected from the college records. The results showed significant differences between type of problem area, gender, SES and academic performance. The high levels of unmet counselling needs in the engineering students necessitate adoption of suitable counselling services in the colleges.

Keywords: Counselling needs, Engineering Students, Engineering Colleges, Problems, Unmet Needs

I. INTRODUCTION

India has the highest number of adolescent population. If the problems faced by the adolescents and their counselling needs are identified, then attempts at helping them overcome these problems can be initiated. This can then lead to adopting prevention strategies for stress and suicides (Vijaykumar, 2007) in this sensitive population. National bodies like the UGC, AICTE and others, made it mandatory for all higher educational institutions to recruit a fulltime counselling psychologist due to the increasing number of students enrolling themselves in higher education. But as of today only few institutions have a fulltime counsellor on the campus although the problems in the student population are on the rise. This study investigated the prevalence of counselling needs of college students encompassing several dimensions and covering various aspects of life.

A. Counselling Needs

Counselling needs are the needs/problems of the students for which they want to seek counselling in order to help cope with those problems (Suneetha, 2012). Unmet needs are those in which there is a felt need for counselling but it has not been met. So, that particular need/problem area is resolved and the individual is still stressed about it. Studies assessing counselling needs of adolescent college students revealed greater prevalence of problems related to alcoholism, childhood sexual abuse, physical or emotional abuse, depression, anxiety, panic, career uncertainty, procrastination, public speaking anxiety, fear of failure and others (e.g., Witchel, 1991; Gallagher, Galvin, & Kelleher, 1992; Bishop, Bauer, & Becker, 1998). Several researchers in India focused on adolescent college students of varying disciplines like medicine (Mayya and Roff, 2004; Rustagi, Taneja, Mishra & Ingle, 2011; Supe, 1998), engineering, arts & science (Kumar & Panchanatham, 2010; Ramya and Parthasarathy, 2009) which identified stress inducing problem areas and coping strategies.

During college years many students are confronted with academic, social and personal needs. These needs may shift with changes in age, experience, socioeconomic status, gender, race or ethnicity and social trends (Carney & Barak, 1976; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 1998). Therefore researchers urge for an accurate and regular assessment of college student needs (e.g., Gallagher, Galvin, & Kelleher, 1992; Sharma, Grover, Chaturvedi, 2008). Although few studies tried to focus on the problems of Indian adolescents (Carson, Chowdhury, Perry, & Pati, 1999; Garg, Narula, & Dhabarde, 2002; Aggarwal, Prabhu, Anand, & Kotwal, 2007) more direct research is needed to investigate the current problems of students for which they seek counselling. This study on prevalence of unmet counselling needs of engineering college students is an attempt in this direction.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to explore the counselling needs of the students of engineering colleges and to identify the prevalence of unmet counselling needs in different areas/dimensions. The study population is adolescents in the districts of Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram, two of the rapidly developing districts of Andhra Pradesh, India. Students were randomly selected based on the selection criteria; a) 1st or 2nd year professional college student of either medical, engineering or pharmacy, b) 17 to 19 years of age, and, c) willing to participate in the study.

Data was collected using both the Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. Primary data is collected directly from the students using standardized questionnaires. The secondary data was collected from the college records regarding the student's past academic performance. Primary data was collected by using the following tools:

A. Student Counselling Needs Questionnaire (SCNQ):

This questionnaire is specially designed for identifying the current problem situations of the college students (Suneetha, 2015). It covers academic issues, soft skills issues, personality issues, stress related issues, clinical (psychological) issues, family issues and health issues of the students. It also includes an option to list any other specific problems of the students. Apart from answering these 52 items the students are also given an option to list any other specific needs that were not mentioned. The questionnaire items are constructed on a 3-point scale: 1 – Not Needed; 2 – Somewhat Needed; 3 – Most Needed. The scores for ‘not needed’ it is ‘0’; for ‘somewhat needed’ it is ‘1’ and for ‘most needed’ it is ‘2’. The total score ranges from 0 to 104. The socio-economic data and recent educational performance was also collected.

Kuppuswami's Socio-Economic Status scale (Kuppuswamy, 1981) is widely used to measure the socio-economic status and is suitable for student population. In 2003 Mishra and Singh (2003) have suggested an economic revision of Kuppuswami's scale in order to account for the devaluation of rupee. More recently Kumar, Shekhar, Kumar & Kundu (2007) published the 2007 updating of the scale. The SES of a student is determined in terms of three variables viz., education, occupation and income of parents. The total number of engineering subjects who participated in this study were 443, out of which 195 are females and 248 are males. (The results of medical and pharmacy students are presented elsewhere).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The engineering students had counselling needs in all the areas. However, the highest need is in the Academic area with a mean of 15.38 (SD = 6.17), followed by Personality/ Adjustment (8.05; 3.78), Social (6.77; 3.91), Clinical (4.72; 3.05) and Family Dimensions (3.34; 2.59) respectively. The same trend is seen (See Table 1) in both females and males too. While males had higher need compared to females on Academic (15.74 vs 14.94), Social (7.19 vs 6.25), Family (3.67 vs 2.93) and Clinical needs (4.74 vs 4.71) females had slightly higher counselling need in Personality/ Adjustment dimension (8.06 vs 8.05).

Table - 1
Means and S.D of Engineering Male, Female and Total Sample

Type/Dimension	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Needs	Total	442	15.389	6.171
	Male	248	15.74	6.343
	Female	194	14.94	5.932
Personality/ Adjustment Needs	Total	442	8.0543	3.782
	Male	248	8.05	3.896
	Female	194	8.06	3.642
Social Needs	Total	442	6.7738	3.931
	Male	248	7.19	4.043
	Female	194	6.25	3.729
Family Needs	Total	442	3.3439	2.595
	Male	248	3.67	2.525
	Female	194	2.93	2.633
Clinical Needs	Total	442	4.724	3.056
	Male	248	4.74	2.983
	Female	194	4.71	3.156

Gender differences were reported by earlier researchers in the type of student counselling needs (e.g., Murphy & Archer, 1996). In this study too some difference were identified. It was found that males and females of the engineering discipline do not have any significant differences in counselling needs of the dimensions of Academic, Personality/Adjustment or Clinical (See Table 2). However, it was found that males have significantly more unmet needs in the dimensions of Social and Family. Both of these dimensions are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

Correlation analysis had revealed that students with higher academic performance needs. It could be because they are more interested to improve themselves on the academic dimension and they might be actively seek counselling to learn academic related skills unlike the low performers. However, it is evident that the engineering students lack necessary support even in academic related issues. These students also tend to have more needs on the Personality/Adjustment dimension (See Table 3). It has also been found that the younger students had higher counselling needs, especially on the Personality /Adjustment dimension while older students had more clinical needs. Family needs were higher for high SES students and also those with low academic performance.

Table – 2
Differences between Male & Female Students and Counselling Need Dimensions in Engineering Sample

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t
Academic Needs	Male	248	15.74	6.343	1.371
	Female	194	14.94	5.932	
Personality/Adjustment Needs	Male	248	8.05	3.896	0.012
	Female	194	8.06	3.642	
Social Needs	Male	248	7.19	4.043	2.529**
	Female	194	6.25	3.729	

Family Needs	Male	248	3.67	2.525	2.954**
	Female	194	2.93	2.633	
Clinical Needs	Male	248	4.74	2.983	0.107
	Female	194	4.71	3.156	

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$

Table – 3
Correlations between Age, SES and Unmet Counselling Needs of the sample

Dimension	AGE	SES	Academic Performance
Academic Needs	-0.057	-0.06	.129**
Personality/Adjustment Needs	-.117*	-0.092	.216**
Social Needs	-0.038	0.025	0.072
Family Needs	0.088	.170*	-.149**
Clinical Needs	.119*	0.127	-0.047

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$

IV. CONCLUSION

The high counselling needs of these varied dimensions of academic, personality, social, family and clinical needs, indicate that the engineering students have almost no available resources to overcome several of them or to at least help cope with them. Since some of the problems may not be completely resolved these students can be trained to cope with them. So it is extremely important to provide counselling and group education to respond to anxieties, fears, information gaps, stress, anger, aggression, depression, loneliness and related mental and emotional needs for the well-being of the students. The concerned authorities should take necessary remedial action by including psychological and counselling services in their campuses.

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