

EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM OF A KARACHI BASED ARMY PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to assess the effectiveness of the counselling program implemented at APS-COD, Karachi, Pakistan in 2008, which was an integrated and on-going process. The research sample comprised of 330 students of classes VIII, IX, X, parents who were involved in the implementation of counselling strategies and all the teachers from four sections i.e. Pre-school, Junior school, Middle school and Senior school. Survey method was used to gather data by using self-constructed questionnaire forms. Results indicate that school counseling program is effective for the teachers, students and parents. Both teachers and students are highly satisfied with the availability of the student counselor. Teachers found counseling services highly beneficial for the enhancement of class room management skills and improvement in communication skills whereas students find themselves more competent and confident in dealing with academic issues.

Education is considered as vital part of child's life as children spend most of their time in schools. This fascinating number of students is increasing day by day which has also raised the graph of school related problems. Furthermore, children are not only facing academic problems, but the dramatic increase in education related issues was also generated personal and social problems. Now a day there is a great emphasis to have school counsellors in schools in order to effectively provide guidance for the student's academic, personal and social crisis which interferes in a student's progress.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the United States felt a great need to address the student's needs. In order to fulfill this need, in 2001, "The No Child Left behind Act" came into action which laid the foundation of the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA).

ASCA established a framework National model for school counselling programs and according to this model Schools can:

- Establish the school counselling program as an integral component of the academic mission of the school.
- Ensure every student has equitable access to the school counselling program.
- Identify and deliver the knowledge and skills all students should acquire.
- Ensure that the school counselling program is comprehensive in design and is delivered systematically to all students.

The ASCA national model consisted of four integral and inter related elements including; foundation, delivery system, management system and accountability.

Foundation

Foundation is the basic statement or main body on which the whole program will run. This includes the basic beliefs, philosophy and mission of the program.

Delivery system

The next step will be to design the delivery system on the basis of set beliefs and the mission. The delivery system will determine which activities, interactions and methods will be used to achieve the foundation.

Management system

The next stage is to plan a comprehensive management system. The management system should include; agreements, advisory council, use of data and action plans. Agreements include yearly discussions with school counsellors, school personnel, administrators and teaching staff to design a comprehensive plan and ensure effective implementation of the delivery system to meet students' needs. Advisory council is also advised which should exist in the school counselling program to evaluate the program's effectiveness. As the counselling program will base on implementation of strategies and interventions, it possesses a large amount of data. This should be objectively analysed and used for the betterment of the student's functioning. Another important element of the management system is the efficiently designed action plan. An efficient action plan should have following areas to be addressed; (ASCA, 2003).

- (1) Competencies addressed
- (2) Description of the activity
- (3) Data driving the decision to address the competency
- (4) Timeline in which activity is to be completed
- (5) Who is responsible for delivery?
- (6) Means of evaluating student success
- (7) Expected results for students

The next step in making the counselling program effective and successful a counsellor should spend 80% of his/her time in direct contact with the students and related personnel to accomplish the targets formed at the delivery stage and should avoid non-counselling services. The school counsellor should then keep and maintain a record of the activities and make calendars.

Accountability

It is necessary for the school counsellor to evaluate the affectivity of the counselling program. This can be done by keeping the records of implemented strategies and observations and by examining the role of school counsellors so that it can be revised found productive.

Research indicates that there is a vital role of school guidance program in an education system. Gibson (2008) and Kauchak (2011) stated that “Guidance and counselling services prepare students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices” (Lunenburg, 2010). According to Lunenburg, aims of guidance and counselling are same as of education itself that is to facilitate students for reaching out and utilizing their full potentials (Lunenburg, 2010). A Furthermore experimental study showed that guidance and counselling in schools also helps students in reducing their problem behaviours (Verduyn, 1990).

In further elaboration of school counselling program’s effectiveness, researches indicate that a counsellor is helpful in providing guidance regarding personal, social, academic and career related issues (Rebecca, 2005). Researches proved that students who were helped by the counselling improved three times more than their fellows who did not receive counselling and guidance (Whiston & Quinby, 2009).

In order to measure the effectivity of the school counselling program one must evaluate the effectiveness of the counsellor. Literature review indicates that there is a strong relationship between student counsellor’s effectiveness, the success of the school counselling program and academic achievement of the student. Rebecca (2005) concluded that if counsellors have enough confidence, resources and a systematic plan of guidance program they become successful in creating positive change in student’s academic as well as personal areas.

Considering the above mentioned literature, Army Public School-COD Karachi designed a comprehensive and integrated counselling program aiming at facilitating the students to enhance their perception about the issues prevailing in the environment which may consequently affect their academic, social, and personal life. Their ability to exploit their potentials and

overcome the hurdles through counselling, awareness program, and intervention programs were brought into focus. The teachers were also guided through seminars and workshops to be more aware of the strategies to address students' needs in the areas of academic/ career guidance, personality grooming and catering to emotional issues. Likewise parents were also involved as one of the stake holders.

Method

Sample

79 teachers were included in the survey i.e. 16 from senior school, 27 from middle school, 18 from junior school and 18 from Pre School. 149 students of grade nine and matric were included in the survey. Teachers recently appointed were not included in the survey. Feedback of parents who were involved in the implementation of counselling strategies was also taken.

Materials

A self-constructed survey form was used to gather information from teachers and students. The survey questionnaire was based on 8 items and one broad category which represented overall satisfaction with the counselling services provided in the school.

The survey was based on following domains.

1. Satisfaction with the availability of student counsellor.
2. Satisfaction with services provided on the bases of assessed student needs.
3. Quality of awareness program and its impact on school environment.
4. Improvement in competency in dealing with classroom behaviours.
5. Improvement in communication skills.
6. Satisfaction regarding guidance provided for dealing students immediate problems in personal, social, career and educational development.
7. Impact of counselling in student's study habits.
8. Impact of counselling in student's achievement.

Procedure

The school counselling program was initiated in October 2008 at Army Public school-COD, Karachi, Pakistan and is continued to date. The survey was designed with the consent of the Principal of the school and participation of headmistress (H.Ms) of the four sections of the school i.e. Pre-School, Junior School, Middle School and Senior School. In order to obtain the results, percentages of teachers and students responses were calculated.

Results

Table 1

Teachers' Response on questionnaire for the satisfaction and effectiveness of counseling program.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
YES	68	51	37	52	31	36	52	60
NO	11	27	38	25	45	38	26	19
NO RESP.	0	1	4	2	3	5	1	0
YES%	86.07%	64.6%	46.8 %	65.8%	39.2%	45.6%	65.8%	76.0%
NO%	13.92%	34.1%	48.1 %	31.7%	57%	48.1%	32.9%	24.0%
NO RESP.	0	1.3%	5.1%	2.5%	3.8%	6.3%	1.3%	0

Figure A

Frequencies of teacher's responses on satisfaction of counselling program.

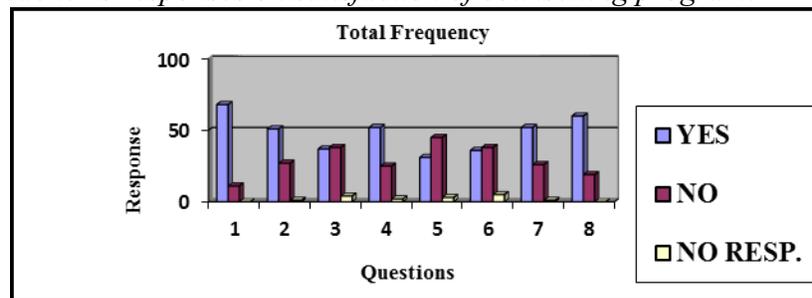


Table 2

Rating of the Counselling Service by Teachers

Category	Total	Percentage
Excellent	6	7.6%
V. Good	11	14%
Good	28	35.4%
Fair	26	33%
Unsatisfactory	6	7.6%

Figure B
Rating of the Counselling Service by Teachers.

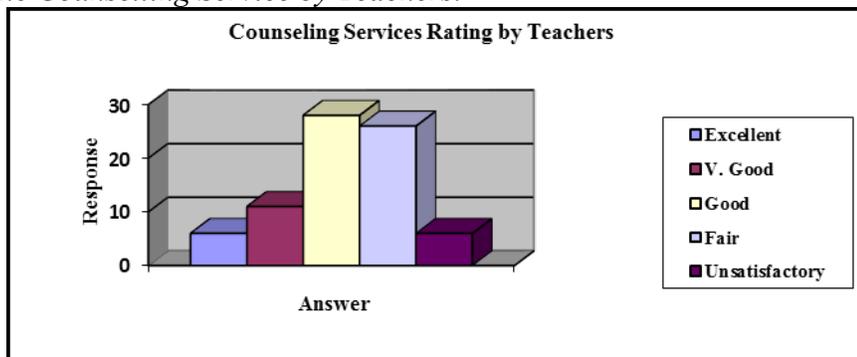


Table 3

Students' Responses on questionnaires for the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the counselling program.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
YES	122	82	98	101	102	102	84	104
NO	27	67	51	48	47	47	65	45
NO RESP.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YES%	81.9%	55.0%	65.8%	67.8%	68.5%	68.5%	56.4%	69.8%
NO%	18.1%	45.0%	34.2%	34.2%	31.5%	31.5%	43.6%	30.2%
NO RESP. %	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 3
Frequencies of students' responses on satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the counselling program.

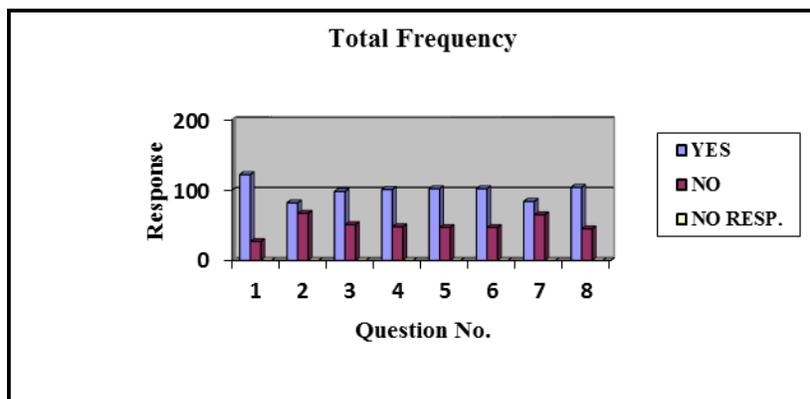


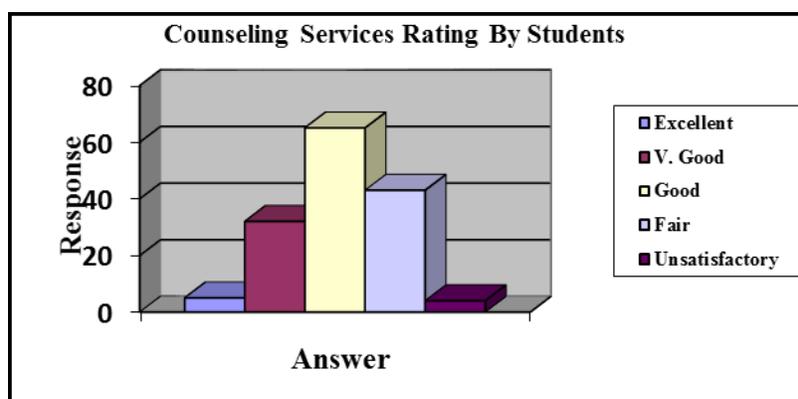
Table 4

Rating of the Counselling Service by Students.

Category	Total	Percentage
Excellent	5	3.3%
V. Good	32	21.5%
Good	65	43.6%
Fair	43	28.9%
Unsatisfactory	4	2.7%

Figure 4

Rating of the Counselling Service by students.



Discussion

This research was designed to assess current level of effectiveness of the school counselling program being implemented since the last three years. Results indicate that teachers and students showed fairly good responses regarding counselling services of the school.

Teachers showed satisfaction with availability of student counsellor, services provided on the basis of assessed student's needs, quality of awareness programs and their impact on school environment, improvement in competency in dealing with classroom behaviours and improvement in communication skills.

Whereas teachers did not show much satisfaction with guidance provided in handling with immediate problems which may consequently affect student's personal, social, career and educational development. They found that counselling did not have the desired impact on the study habits and academic achievement of the students.

Thorough analysis of results indicates that teachers are aware of the need of student counsellor and they agree that student counselling program is catering to assess student's needs.

Throughout counselling program since 2008 till date students are regularly observed by the student counsellor, principal, section heads and teachers. A student observed as having difficulties is referred to student counsellor. Types of problem areas include; behavioural, academic and both academic and behavioural. There is almost equal number of referred students in each category i.e. behavioural 34%, academic 32% and those who have both problems occupy 34% in the total population.

An interesting feature was displayed while analysing section wise results. Most of the students referred from pre-school and senior school were with behavioural problems however most of junior school students were referred for academic issues while middle school students have had both or mixed representation of problems. Teachers were also asked to rate counselling services in general. They were provided with 5 point liker scale to answer ranging from excellent to not satisfactory. Results showed that most teachers rated counselling program in very good, good and fair category. Only 7.6% teachers rated program as excellent. The ratio designates a satisfactory effectiveness of counselling program in terms of teachers' knowledge, awareness and development of their skills and competencies.

Further analysis of the students' responses also indicates greater satisfaction with the availability of student counsellor. Secondly, students found themselves more confident in tackling academic issues as well reported improvement in study habits via enhanced learning skills after receiving counselling and guidance on topics such as "Effective Learning Styles and Time Management", "Discipline among Students", "Healthy Development of Personality" , "Career Guidance Program", "Motivational lecture for the detainees" and many more. Statistics showed that students are satisfied with the guidance given for the assessed student's needs and quality of awareness programs offered. Students are also taking benefits from school counselling services for their immediate problems and feel satisfied with it.

Awareness programs were also offered to the parents of the students in the form of group lectures. Below is the feedback from results taken from the parent's feedback questionnaire about awareness program on the mental health day program

- 100% parents showed liking for the program on mental health
- 88.8% parents developed an understanding of stress
- 77.7% parents found management of stress practical in nature
- 33.3% parents reported that concept of emotional health was new for them while the rest had heard about it
- 77.7% parents agreed that emotional issues do affect our lives negatively
- 88.8% parents showed willingness to apply the suggested tips for improving emotional health
- 77.7% reported to find thinking styles of adolescents as informative
- 55.5% parents felt that they were using the correct form of handling with their children while the rest 44.4% felt the need of improving themselves
- 77.7% parents were able to make connections with various forms of tension and children's educational outcomes
- 100% parents want to have such program in future

On another awareness program 100% parents liked the lecture and they also found it 100% useful.

Conclusion and Recommendation.

To conclude the discussion it can be said that counselling and guidance program at APS-COD, Karachi has become firmly rooted and is considered now as an integrated part of school system by students, teachers and parents. Results also show that the counselling program has brought significant changes in the perception of the teachers who consider it as an effective means to improve school functioning related to students' academic growth, personality development and career planning. Whereas the acceptance of the teachers' skills, attitude and expertise through counselling program is most encouraging as they are the ones who are the change agents to make a difference in students' overall personality grooming and development. Besides this the program was reported as not very much effective to deal with immediate personal/social and academic needs of the students. In a nut shell, it indicates that counselling program should be continued for the positive and effective environment of the school and for the better future as well with improved strategies.

In terms of these findings it is recommended for future implications that;

- Counseling programs should be planned with appropriate time and designed strategies to meet the immediate needs of the students through responsive services.
- Teachers' training should be more focused on enhancing their abilities and competencies for effective guidance.

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