

Assessing the Effectiveness of Psychological Counselling in Educational Settings: A Literature Review

Xianze Zhu

Veritas Collegiate Academy, Shanghai Campus, Yindu Road, Shanghai, China

xianzezhu@outlook.com

Keywords: School counselling, psychological conditions, teaching experience

Abstract: Nowadays, the phenomenon of high pressure on students has become the focus of social concern. Once the pressure on young people reaches a critical level, it is easy for them to have a breakdown, which in turn affects their mental health and, worse still, causes them to engage in radical behaviours. Therefore, how to solve the psychological problems of adolescents has gradually attracted the attention of family education and school education. In terms of school education, school counselling services are an important part of ensuring the mental health of students. However, not all school counselling services are effective for students. Some students may need further psychological guidance, which means that school counsellors cannot meet all their needs. The article is mainly built on the discussion of some researches and some factors that may influence the effectiveness of school counselling, including the previous teaching experience of counsellors, ethical issues, the qualification of counsellors, and the socioeconomic status of school. Meanwhile, the assessment of school counselling should be thoroughly tested, in order to achieve a higher accuracy and efficacy of school counselling.

1. Introduction

Students at school may encounter some psychological well-being issues. Most of the time, without special training or adequate experiences, it is rather challenging for children and their parents to cope with these conditions by themselves. Therefore, positive interventions are needed. School counsellors appeared to help children with their academic dilemma, life harshness and some social problems. However, not all counselling at school is effective on students. There are some students who may need further mental instructions, meaning that school counsellors cannot satisfy all their needs. Moreover, counselling outcome is related to many factors such as ethical issues, the qualification of counsellors, and the socioeconomic status of schools.

2. School Counselling

2.1. The Concept of School Counselling

The document margins must be the following: School counselling first showed up at late 1800s, most of which played role in vocational education. The duty for school counselors continuously changed from the decision-making assistance, students' psychological growth, individualized counselling for students with special needs to a system of counselling program [1]. Today, counselors work includes drugs supervision, comforting the tempers of irate parents, giving aid and comfort to battered and neglected children [2].

2.2. Assessment Methods for Students Psychological Conditions

The assessments for students' psychological health conditions should consider the definition of mental well-being concept [3]. In the assessment of diagnosis, it usually includes identifying symptoms and problems, creating a mental health treatment plan, decision-making, and promoting positive change. There are some methods we use to diagnose: observation and note taken by the counselor or doctor watching and listening, interviews with a client's family, checklists, rating

scales, questionnaires, and standardized tests. Standardized tests include fixed instructions for administering, taking, and recording answers whose scores are compared to others in the same age group.

2.3. Categories of Different Factors Influencing School Counselling

There are many factors influencing the effectiveness of school counselling. According to the report from some school counsellors, they considered teaching experience was important for providing qualified counselling or they might meet more challenges in the first years of their school counselling [4].

3. Researches of School Counselling

3.1. Prior Teaching Experience

There are some states in the USA that set teaching experience as a prerequisite for school counselling certification. These states include Alabama, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and the District of Columbia. The states required counselling applicants for at least a 2-year teaching experience before receiving school counselor certifications [4]. One contention is that counselors without classroom teaching experience may not be as effective or comfortable in conducting classroom guidance. When surveyed, 75% of school counselors interviewed believed prior teaching experience to be unnecessary and deficits could be remedied through school counselor training programs. The remaining 25% viewed prior teaching experience as vital to successful school counselling.

3.2. Methods of Research

3.2.1. Participants

Research published web-based surveys to ASCAs regional representatives. Participants included interned counsellors, both with and without teaching experience. Ultimately 308 school counsellors were included; Participants who did not complete demographic questions, such as years of teaching experience and school counselling experience, were not included. Of the 308 respondents, 42 were male (13.3%) and 266 (86.6%) female and age ranged from 24 to 70 years, with an average of 46. School counsellors received supervision on an average of 1.38 hours per month (SD = 0.80). Currently, 94 (35.5%) school counsellors work in elementary schools, 71 (26.8%) in middle schools, and 100 (32.5%) in high school settings. The remaining 43 (13.9%) indicated they worked in private or alternate settings with a variety of grade levels.

3.2.2. Results and Evaluation

The survey was composed of 17 items and measured by a 5-point Likert scale, with a range of 1 to 5, with 1 = very poor and 5 = very strong.

The author concluded that the relationship between effectiveness and teaching experience was not statistically significant. Also, the influence of school counselling experience alone was significant to the perceived effectiveness of school counsellors.

A major variation in state requirements is to have prior teaching experience. Moreover, school counsellors do not differ in their perceived effectiveness based on prior teaching experience. In conclusion, teaching experience may be a benefit, but not a necessity.

Moyer, M. S. et.al examined the relation between prior teaching experience and the effectiveness of School Counseling. The result revealed that the reason why teaching experience is not highly related to the effectiveness might be causes of students' psychological problems were not academic. However, my discussion is that there are still some mental dilemmas resulting from different aspects, such as bad family conditions, living environment, and poverty. All the above still account for a high proportion of causes of psychological issues. Moreover, these counsellors worked in the elementary schools. Children at elementary schools are still too young and too naive to observe and treat their mental well-being, so the results or the improvement of behaviour of students can be

extreme and dramatic. This undermines the reliability of research.

4. The Influence of Ethical Issues on School Counselling

There are many conditions in school counselling, some of which are really serious, such as suicidal and self-injuring events. There is a hot debate that whether school counsellors should tell the supervisors and teachers of students who are doing self-harming events, because, in some cases, some students want to have a completely private and isolated relationship with school counsellors. There are some reasons that result into these conditions, such as lacking mutual trust in a family, or fragile bond caused by unequal power between teachers, who should have given support and security to students, and teenagers. Students with self-injuring situation often accompanies the tendency to suicide. Thus, during the counselling, if school counsellors found that students have the possibility to suicide or injure themselves, serious conditions may show up after they informing their parents. Several statuses could occur: students were dragged into an intense sense of insecurity because of the relationship of trust broken, causing some extreme behaviour of students such as suicide, other negative actions, or thoughts; Parents tried to interfere students, while because of lacking experience, their actions stimulated students, contributing to unexpected results. Students who do not show obvious negative behaviour start refusing to communicate or creating emotional bond with school counsellors, which forces the relationships of counselling to cease. The solutions to prevent or eliminate the severity of such consequences are raising parents' awareness of psychological well-being, informing students the rules of counselling in advance, and training the expertise of school counsellors. The administration of these solutions will be achieved by the effort of relevant organizations, schools, school counsellors, and parents.

About the effectiveness of school counselling on academic performance, the paper studied how to promote students' academic achievement both academically and statistically, especially for boys in elementary schools [5]. Scientists also find evidence that counsellors reduce the misbehaviour of both boys and girls by roughly 20% and 29%, respectively. Moreover, results indicate that counsellors appear to be an effective way of improving academic achievement, relative to other education inputs, such as additional teachers to reduce class size. This suggests that hiring counsellors may be an effective alternative to other education policies aimed at increasing academic achievement.

In the case above, we can see school counsellors benefit students academically. However, the effectiveness of school counselling on those in middle schools and high schools is still waiting to be determined according to other cases. Students in middle schools and high schools meet many problems than we imagined such as academic problems, career decisions, family issues, and relationships, etc. These are more serious than elementary school students could encounter. Moreover, students in high school are prepared to receive college education or start to get into the society, but in fact that most of them lack the experience to work out with these difficulties, which could lead them into helplessness. That is why psychological counselling is really important in such conditions. However, this research lacks the discussion and observation towards middle school and high school students.

5. The Effectiveness of Prevention towards Psychological Disorders by School Counselling

The need for a prevention of students' mental disorders is increasing. It is really expected for making some efforts to cease mental issues to occur instead of curing them after students showing some symptom. According to the essay [6], there is growing need in America. Numbers of children and adolescents meet difficulties in coping with the developmental issues. Americas youth, about 12% to 22%, of under age 18 are in need of mental health services [7]. An estimation shows that 7.5 million children and adolescents are struggling in more than one mental disorders [8]. Additionally, the personal suffering experienced by children with emotional or behavioural problems and their families, mental health disorders also have a tremendous cost to society. According to the National Advisory Mental Health Council, in 1990 mental illness cost the United States an estimated 74.9

billion dollars [7].

6. Discussion

School counsellors design and deliver school counselling programs that improve student outcomes. They lead, advocate and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school counselling program to the schools' academic mission and school improvement plan. They uphold the ethical and professional standards of ASCA and promote the development of the school counselling program based on the following areas of the ASCA National Model: define, deliver, manage and assess.

School counsellors create school counselling programs based on three sets of standards that define the profession. These standards help school counsellors develop, implement and assess their school counselling program to improve student outcomes. Student Standards – ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviours for Student Success Professional Standards – n ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counsellors ASCA School Counsellor Professional Standards & Competencies.

To be delivered effectively, the school counselling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. School counsellors use program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counselling program that gets results. Program focus on beliefs, vision statement, mission statement Program Planning, School Data Summary, annual student outcome goals, action plans, classroom and group, closing the gap, lesson Plans, annual administrative conference, use of time, annual/ weekly calendars, and Advisory Council.

To be delivered effectively, the school counselling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. School counsellors use program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counselling program that gets results. Program focus on beliefs, vision statement, mission statement Program Planning, School Data Summary, annual student outcome goals, action plans, classroom and group, closing the gap, lesson Plans, annual administrative conference, use of time, annual/ weekly calendars, and Advisory Council

To achieve the best results for students, school counsellors regularly assess their program to determine its effectiveness in helping all students succeed to inform improvements to their school counselling program design and delivery, and show how students are different as a result of the school counselling program. School counsellors also self-assess their own mindsets and behaviours to inform their professional development and annually participate in a school counsellor performance appraisal with a qualified administrator. The ASCA National Model provides the following tools to guide assessment and appraisal.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, although many schools set the previous teaching experience as the prerequisite of a counsellor, based on my research and survey, and considering what most students consult to a counsellor are not academic problems, the key findings I have taken from the literature is that there is no significant statistical relationship between effectiveness of school counselling and teaching experience, which means other factors may have impact on students' mental well-being and academic performance. The main factor I talked about in the paper is ethical issue. I found that if counsellors could build the trust between students, it may significantly increase the effectiveness of counselling and reduce the misbehaviour of teenagers. In addition, considering the growing need of prevention of student mental disorders, school counsellors seem to be a good way to deal with the problem. First of all, school counsellors should set up programs beneficial to students, and well-managed. Secondly, they should hold optimistic activities on a regular basis, giving more opportunities to students to be exposed on a wholesome environment. What's more, counsellors also should assess their work to improve the effectiveness of counselling and to give more support to students. However, I did not do the questionnaire, and my research lack the direct data to evidence what I resulted from the literature review.

References

- [1] Paisley, P. O. and Borders, L. D. (1995) School Counseling: An Evolving Specialty. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74(2), 150-153. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/219008799?accountid=14604>
- [2] Dahir, C. A., Cinotti, D. A. and Feirsen, R. (2019) Beyond Compliance: Assessing Administrators Commitment to Comprehensive School Counseling. *Sage Journals*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/0192636519830769>
- [3] Eganov, A.V., Erlikh, V. V. and Bykov, V. S. (2013) Screening Test For Express Assessment Of Students Mental Health. *International Journal of Applied and Fundamental Research*, 2, 1–3. www.science-sd.com/455-24385
- [4] Moyer, M. S. and Yu, K. (2012) Factors Influencing School Counselors Perceived Effectiveness. *Journal of School Counseling*, 10(6), 2-19.
- [5] Carrell, S. E. and Hoekstra, M. (2014) Are School Counselors an Effective Education Input? *Economics Letters*, 125, 66-69.
- [6] Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C., Ph Brian, D. and Bumbarger, B.K. (2000) Preventing Mental Health Disorders in School-Age Children: A Review of the Effectiveness of Prevention Programs. Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- [7] National Advisory Mental Health Council. (1990) National Plan for Research on Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders (DHHS Publication No. 90-1683). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- [8] U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assistance. (1986) Children's Mental Health: Problems and Services (NTIS order #PB87-207486). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office.