

Guidance and Counseling as a Means of Positive Adjustment of Secondary School Students

Bulti Chakraborty¹ and Dr. Moumita Karmakar²

¹ Ph.D. Scholar, Faculty of Education, ICFAI University Tripura,

² Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, ICFAI University Tripura,

Abstract

Secondary school is a time of crucial development, as young people experience rapid physical, emotional, social and educational changes. During this time period, students face academic stress, emotional instability, peer pressure, parental expectations, ambiguity of future career and difficulty in adjusting to school environment. Such problems can impact academic performance, interpersonal relationships, mental health and overall personality development. This paper examines the role of guidance and counseling in the positive adjustment of secondary school students. The emphasis is on educational, emotional, social and home adjustment, career guidance, life-skills education, stress management and preventive counseling. The paper also discusses the role of school counselors, teachers and parents in the identification of adjustment problems and provision of appropriate support. Guidance and counseling is viewed as not only remedial services but also as preventive and developmental processes which can enhance self-awareness, coping skills, decision making, interpersonal competence and resilience. The paper concludes that the school counseling program that comprises academic, emotional, social, career and family related support is important to facilitate positive adjustment and holistic development among secondary school students.

Keywords: counseling, adjustment, guidance, students of secondary school, adolescents, school counseling.

1. Introduction

Education is not only about academic success but it is also about the emotional, social, psychological and personality development of the students. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to adjustment problems, as adolescence is a period of rapid developmental change and mounting expectations.

Students at this stage may experience academic stress, parental expectations, peer pressure, career uncertainty, emotional instability and difficulties in adjusting to school rules and relations. These challenges can adversely affect behavior, academic performance, self-esteem and mental health.

Hence guidance and counseling become vital components of a holistic secondary school education. They can help learners to know themselves, develop coping skills, make appropriate decisions and adapt better to school, family and society.

2. Counseling and Guidance Concept

Guidance is a systematic process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their environment so that they may make appropriate educational, vocational, personal and social decisions. It is developmental and ongoing, and seeks to solve present problems and to prevent future ones.

Counseling is a helping process. Counseling is more individualized and intensive. It offers students the chance to talk about personal, emotional, educational or social issues in a climate of trust, understanding, respect and confidentiality.

Counseling, individual and group, can be helpful in schools. Individual counseling provides students with a confidential setting in which to discuss personal problems. Group counseling can help students with similar problems share experiences, learn from each other, and develop interpersonal skills.

3. Adjustment of Secondary School Students

Adjustment is a continuous process by which the individuals try to develop a satisfactory relationship between their needs and the demands of their environment. In general, a well-adjusted student can control emotions, sustain healthy relationships, satisfy academic demands, and deal with challenges in a positive way.

Educational adjustment refers to the ability of a student to cope with academic work, classroom situations, school expectation and examination. Emotional adjustment is the capability to understand, handle, and express emotions

in a suitable manner. Social adjustment is the ability to develop satisfactory relationships with peers, teachers, and other members of society. Home adjustment implies the ability to form satisfactory relations with parents and other family members.

Problems in any of these areas can lead to stress and can impact other areas of student development.

4. Major problems of adaptation

Secondary school students have a number of related adjustment problems. Some of the common problems are pressure of academics. Students may face problems with exams, homework, competition, study habits, concentration and fear of failure. Emotional problems may be anxiety, frustration, loneliness, anger, low self-image and difficulty in coping with changing emotions. Students may also experience social problems concerning peer pressure, bullying, rejection, communication problems, and the need to be accepted. Family conditions can also affect students' adjustment. Emotional stress can also be caused by parental conflict, high expectations, poor communication, financial trouble, neglect, or too much control. Contemporary issues such as overuse of digital technology, cyberbullying, social comparison and social change may also present additional challenges to student adjustment.

5. Guidance and Counseling in Positive Adjustment

Guidance and counseling can be a very useful tool in preventing and reducing adjustment difficulties. Educational support can help learners develop useful study habits, time management skills, goal-setting strategies, and exam preparation techniques. Emotional counseling helps students talk about their fears, frustrations and concerns, while building self-confidence, emotional awareness and healthy coping skills. Social counseling helps students learn to communicate, show empathy, work together, lead and resolve conflicts. Group counseling and peer-support activities can be especially helpful for students who are feeling lonely, rejected or having difficulty getting on with others.

Career guidance is also important as secondary school students often feel uncertain about the subject choices, higher education and career choices. Career counseling can help learners understand their interests, skills and opportunities and make more realistic educational and occupational decisions.

6. Developmental and Preventive Counseling

Counseling should not be confined to students with serious problems. The prevention approach aims to decrease the chances of the problems escalating. Schools can provide preventive programs in life skills, stress management, emotional awareness, anti-bullying education, school orientation, career awareness, value education, mental-health awareness.

A developmental approach develops students' confidence, communication, decision making, leadership and self-awareness. It makes counseling a routine part of student development rather than a crisis intervention service.

7. Stress Management, Life Skills & Peer Relationships

Life skills education is most strongly associated with successful adjustment. Key skills include communication, decision making, problem solving, self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships and management of stress. Students who have learned better life skills are better able to deal with the academic demands and social pressures. Peer relations are especially salient in adolescence. Good friendships can provide us with emotional support, companionship and a sense of belonging. Poor academic behaviors, aggression, exclusion and other adjustment problems can be caused by negative peer influence. Schools can promote positive peer interaction through group counseling, peer support programs, cooperative activities and anti-bullying initiatives.

8. School Counselor Role

School counselors are critical personnel in identifying and addressing students' developmental and adjustment needs. Individual counseling, group counseling, career guidance, academic support, crisis intervention, stress management training, consultation with teachers, collaboration with parents, and referral to specialist services when needed.

Qualified counselors should provide a safe and confidential environment for students to discuss concerns, identify strengths and weaknesses, develop solutions, and get help with school and personal problems.

9. Role of Teachers and Parents

Guidance and counseling cannot be effective by the counselor alone. Teachers have daily contact with students and are often the first adults to notice changes in a student's academic performance, attendance, behavior, or social interactions. Basic counseling awareness can help teachers to identify students who may be in need of additional support and to make appropriate referrals. Parents also play a role in students' emotional and social development. Overly controlling, critical or neglectful parenting can result in emotional difficulties while open communication, encouragement and realistic expectations can help the adjustment process. Therefore, joint efforts of parents, teachers and counselors are an important foundation for healthy development of students.

10. Implications for the Secondary Schools

Guidance and counseling services should be integrated into secondary education. The school should have organized counseling services with trained personnel and adequate resources. The counseling programs should address needs concerning academic, emotional, social, career and family.

Schools should have preventative programs rather than waiting for students to get into serious trouble. Early identification and support can be helped by regular needs assessment, classroom observation, counseling, career programs, life-skills activities and parent involvement. Also, institutional and policy support is necessary for successful implementation.

11. Suggested Model for School Counseling

A possible model for practical counseling might be:

Diagnosis of Adjustment Disorders



Assessment of the Guidance and Counseling Needs of Students



Academic, Emotional, Social & Career Guidance



Life Skills Development and Coping



Parents, Teachers and Counselors Working Together



positive student adjustment

This framework recognizes that adjustment problems must first be identified and understood before appropriate counseling intervention is provided.

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