Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies on psycho-physiological problems - an explorative study

*Jayadevan. P.V. and **Dr.(prof.)C.Jayan

*Research scholar, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

**Research Supervisor, Prof.&Head(Retd.)University of Calicut, Kerala, India.

Abstract

This article reviews 25 studies on psychological counseling/psychotherapies and its efficacy/effect on problems that reported by clients or on the impacts on individuals in general. An individual is undergone counselling either to address specific problems like mild anxiety, depression, behavioural deviations etc. or to make overall changes in the individual to have a positive attitude and outlook of life to help lead a comfortable life. Even though the techniques or strategies adopted in counseling and psychotherapy may vary from cases to cases, there must be a positive outcome on the individual. Several studies have been conducted across the world to elucidate the effect of counseling. But, it is interesting to examine if there is any difference in the effect when the effect is compared with respect to the problems of the individual. There are certain specific problems as well as non specific general problems that can be dealt with counselling/psychotherapies. Effects of counselling on specific problems were compared with the effects of counselling on general problems (non specific)/impacts on the individual in general. The effect of counseling on mild physiological problems was also elucidated. Studies have shown that counseling and/psychotherapies have effects on specific problems as well as on general problems as a whole, but little effect on mild physiological problems. This study made an attempt to examine if counseling/psychotherapies have a higher degree of efficacy when dealing with the specific problems or vice versa, but reveals that there is no notable difference between the degrees of efficacy of counseling on specific problems and general problems. Also conclude that little effect on
physiological illness. The limitations of this study comparing the effectiveness of counseling and psychotherapies with respect to the problems are discussed and future research areas are also suggested.

**Keywords:** Counselling, psychotherapy, client, counsellors, efficacy, problems (specific and non-specific), well being

**INTRODUCTION**

Cases of Counselling and Psychotherapies and its effect or efficacy have been studied extensively. Mild and moderate psychological problems are being addressed with counseling and/ psychotherapies with different techniques alone and/ along with medication. In this review, cases where several techniques such as Rational Emotive Therapy, Group Counseling, Positive Therapy etc. were applied and proved effective were taken in to consideration. There were studies where specific techniques of Counselling and Psychotherapies had been applied to address mild and moderate, but specific psychological problems. Fam and Chen (2011) have studied the effect of Counselling on the Postpartum Depression in Asian mothers. In another similar study Nixon (2012) made efforts to test the efficacy and tolerability of cognitive processing therapy (CPT) for survivors of assault with Acute Stress Disorder/ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Farrell et al. (2010) in another study have explored the effect of Behavioral Family Counseling (BFC) and / Individual-Based Treatment (IBT) for Substance-dependent patients living with a family member other than a spouse. Dave (2011) also have studied the effect of Counselling support on Depression affected among the mothers of Mentally Challenged Children. Smita (2010) has also studied the effect of three treatment interventions (i.e. Medication alone, a combination of CBT-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy- and Medication as well as CBT alone) on moderate Depression. Sujeetha (2012) assessed the management of Stress, Behaviour Problems and Academic Problems in Adolescents through Positive Therapy. The effect of CBT(Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) on the youth anxiety was studied by Jónssona et al. (2015) while the effect of Counselling on the exam anxiety of school going students were extensively studied by John (2012). Researches were also conducted by Vyas (1988) and Patel (1973) separately to examine the effect of counselling therapy on the self esteem changes. Yet another study done by Pakma (2009) analysed the effect of Group Counselling on the Achievement Motivation Level Of The High School Low Achievers. Nahid (2008) in a different study assessed the effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) on the Conduct disorders like some emotional and behavioural problems in adolescent students. There were studies that analysed the effect of Counselling/Psychotherapy techniques on non-specific/general problems. Young et al. (2011) in an effort studied the
implications of Counselling in youth transition, a non-specific goal. Alzheimer Dementia Caregivers were undergone studies by Sayed et al.(2011) to assess the effect of Group Counselling on their Quality of Life. In another study Hofmanna et al.(2015) studied the implications of Integrative Counseling and short-term psychotherapy for students and their satisfaction with life and studies. Angelo et al. (2013) analysed the effect of Counselling in the Eating disorder psychopathology and consequent quality of life. Pro social behavior of young people were studied by Cheung and Ngai(2015) to analyse the difference between the post and pre Counselling. Karen et al. (2015) conducted studies on students with academic issues to examine the effect of counselling on it. Short-term effectiveness of Psychotherapy treatments(Positive Therapy) delivered at a university counseling service was studied by Monti et al. (2015). In another research Joseph(2005) studied Behavioural Problems in Children and effect of Behavioural Counselling. Rita( 2012) studied the effect of Positive Therapy on the General Wellbeing in Engineering College Students.

Several studies have examined the effect of Counselling and Psychotherapies on mild Physiological problems. Sabella et al. (2016) conducted studies on Women with epilepsy(WWE) in their reproductive years to examine the effect of Counselling on the frequency of epileptic attack. Roessler et al. (2011) examined the effect of Counselling on Patients With Polycystic Ovarial Syndrome (PCOS) to observe the changes in the symptoms of Poly Cystic Cyndrome. Older Adults with Type 2 Diabetes were also undergone studies by Nowlan et al.(2016) to examine the effect of Supportive Counseling on the type II diabetes. Sayed et al.(2011) made an effort to study the impact of Counseling on the dementia in patients along with their care givers.

It is curious to examine and explore these studies to compare and understand whether there is any notable difference in the effect or efficacy of Counselling/Psychotherapies with different techniques when applied to specific problems and to non-specific problems or to Physiological ailments. Hence, the study is labelled as 'Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies on psycho - physiological problems-an explorative study.'

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To explore the difference among the effects of Counselling and/ Psychotherapies on different Psycho-Physiological problems.
METHODS

Sample of study

Internet searches of the databases Google Scholar, Psyhe Info, Shodhganga, Shodhangotri and Science Direct were made to locate relevant and significant studies using the key word psychology, counselling, efficacy of counselling, effect of counselling, student counselling and family counselling. 25 relevant papers were selected considering the exclusion and inclusion criteria. We considered certain criteria for the selection of studies;

Exclusion and inclusion criteria

Studies conducted across the world between 2000-'15 were selected in which only mild and moderate psycho-physiological problems addressed with different techniques of Counseling and/Psychotherapies were taken in to account. The studies in which scientifically accepted Counseling/Psychotherapy techniques viz. Positive Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Cognitive Emotional Behavioural Therapy(CEBT), Dietary Counselling, Integrative Counseling, Behavioral Family Counseling(BFC), Individual-Based Behavioural Treatment (IBT), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Group Cognitive Behavioural Treatment(GCBT), Cognitive Behavioural Treatment(CBT), Group Counselling, Academic Time Management as a Counselling Strategy, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT),Positive Reappraisal and Cognitive Restructuring adopted alone were taken in to consideration. Research papers on the Counselling and/Psychotherapies to specific problems such as Postpartum Depression, Moderate Depression, Substance Abuse, Acute Stress Disorder Following Assault/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Generalized Anxiety, Disordered Eating, Exam Anxiety, Self esteem Changes, Achievement Motivation Level of Low Achievers, Academic Stress, Conduct disorders and its impact on the individual(efficacy) were included for analysis. The research papers analysing the result of Counselling and/Psychotherapies on general problems such as transition to adulthood as joint goal-directed action, Prosocial behavior of young people, Quality of Life of the Care Givers of Alzheimer Dementia, Binge Eating Disorder (BED),obesity and subsequent quality of life, General Academic issues, Behaviour and Academic problems of Adolescents in general, Behavioural problems in Children and General Well-being were also examined for this study. Further the studies analysing the effect of Counselling and/Psychotherapies on the physiological issues such as Women with epilepsy in their reproductive years, Physical Activity Of Patients With Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), Older Adults with Type 2 Diabetes and Dementia patients were also included.
Tools used
Thematic Analysis

Procedure
During thematic analysis, the selected papers were categorized into three groups: the studies in which Counselling and Psychotherapy techniques used to address certain specific Psychological problems, the studies in which Counselling and Psychotherapy techniques used to address General/non-specific Psychological problems and the studies in which Counselling and Psychotherapy techniques used to address mild physiological ailments as well.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
A) Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies for mild, but specific Psychological problems:
There were instances in which mild and specific psychological problems handled applying Counselling and Psychotherapeutic techniques. Fam and Chen(2011) applied Supportive Counselling on the individuals identified from a Post-Partum Depression and proved effective. They treated with antidepressants and counseling, or counseling alone and showed that majority of all depressed mothers with supportive counselling had remission of symptoms by 6 months with and without anti-depressants. Again, Depression among the mothers’ of Mentally Challenged Children was effectively handled by Bhairavi (2011) by administering Group Counselling to them. Smita(2010) has administered CBT-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy apart from two other treatment interventions (i.e. Medication alone, a combination of CBT-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy- and Medication) and proved significantly effective on moderate Depression. It was inferred that CBT either in combination with medication or when applied alone is more effective than medication alone in reducing the level of depression. In another two different instances, another specific psychological problem, anxiety (youth anxiety and exam anxiety) was effectively cured by separate group of researchers administering Counselling. Jonssona et al. applied CBT programme to reduce youth anxiety in Community centres and was proved fruitful. The measures of youth anxiety symptoms found to be reduced significantly in the group received CBT at community clinics and at University clinic even if lesser. Johnson (2012), administered Counselling among School going children with exam anxiety proving the effect of counseling in reducing the exam anxiety.

There are cases administering Counselling/Psychotherapies to the individuals of substance dependence, another category of specific psychological problem. O'Farrell
et al. administered intensive treatments consisting of either (a) Behavioral Family Counseling (BFC) plus Individual-Based Treatment (IBT) or IBT alone and patients got improved significantly. The results showed BFC was a promising method for retaining patients in treatment, increasing abstinence, and reducing substance use. Another striking result was that one targeted Self esteem changes through a process of Counselling. Vyas (1988) in his treatment schedule emphasized the result of consistent counseling therapy in improving the self esteem of individuals. Similarly, Sumitra (1973), administered counselling procedures to a group of individuals with low self esteem and could effectively enhance their self esteem.

Another specific problem addressed by administering Counselling and Psychotherapy was Acute Stress Disorder Following Assault or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Nixon(2012) tested on 30 individuals the efficacy of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for survivors of assault with Acute Stress Disorder and found effective and helped increase tolerability. He could also cure depression and negative trauma-related beliefs of the individual through the therapeutic process for 6 months. Another specific problem addressed by Counselling and Psychotherapists was Academic Stress Of Secondary Level Students. Shashi Banerjee and Shashi Soni(2011) administered Academic Time Management as a Counselling Strategy and relieved them of academic stress significantly. Similarly, the stress level of adolescents could be reduced through Positive Therapy by Sujeetha(2012), emphasising the effect of Counselling/Psychotherapy in specific problems.

Another specific problem considered in this study is the Achievement Motivation Level of High School Low Achievers. Pakma(2009) could increase the level of Achievement Motivation of 75 students through Group Counselling sessions. Conduct disorder in adolescent students was another specific problem taken in to account in this study. Nahid(2008) could successfully treat and reduce the conduct behaviour of individuals administering Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy(REBT) as a Counselling technique. The therapist could also reduce some emotional and behavioral problems co-morbid with conduct disorder like anxiety/depression, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, social problems, thought problems, rule breaking behavior and aggressive behaviour – all are specific in nature.

B] Efficacy of Counselling and/ Psychotherapies for non- specific/general Psychological problems:

There were evidences where non specific problems were effectively addressed administering Counselling and/Psychotherapy techniques. Young et al. (2011) through nonspecific individual counseling from schools and youth centers could exert positive effects on the prosocial behavior of young people. The weak to moderate positive effects of nonspecific individual counseling in a natural setting emphasised
Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies on psycho-physiological problems...

its effectiveness. Chau-kiu Cheung and Steven Sek-yum Ngai(2015) administered individual counseling sessions in schools and youth centers. The result showed significant positive effects on the prosocial behavior of young people after four and ten months.

There are instances of the change in Quality of Life in tune with the Counselling received. Caregivers of 25 Alzheimer’s dementia patients were given four weekly sessions of specially designed Group Counseling by Sayed et al.(2011). They showed improvement in their quality of life and developed better outlook on life. Again 315 students were given an individually tailored Psychotherapeutic Counseling based on the ABCDE-model of Integrative Counseling by Hofmannna et al.(2015). The results demonstrated that psychotherapeutic counseling according to the ABCDE model was effective in reducing severity of psychopathology and increasing satisfaction with life. Similarly, 189 obese adult patients with BED(Binge Eating Disorder) were treated by manualized therapy protocols by Angelo et al. (2013). Results supported the utility of combining EFT(Emotionally Focussed Therapy) and DC(Dietary Counselling) in the treatment of patients with BED and obesity, emphasizing the usefulness of techniques focused on cognitive emotional processing for changing eating disorder psychopathology and quality of life. These outcomes related not only to reductions in weight, but also to improvements in psychopathology.

There were cases indicating the impact of Counselling on the students with academic issues(general). McKenzie et al.(2015) proved Counselling clinically significant in helping them resolve their academic issues. Counselling was, also shown to result in reliable and clinically significant change in a high percentage of those experiencing additional difficulties. Positive Therapy had proved to be helpful for the adolescents to alter the level of stress by Monti et al.(2015). Low level of stress was found to be increasing the quality of life.

When 30 parental couples and their children with behavior problems were administered Behavioural Counselling by Joseph(2005), it was found to be an effective method for the treatment of behavioral problems in children. Notably significant modifications were found in the delinquent behavior among the problem children as a result of intervention through parents with training in behavioral management. Another remarkable instance showed that Anxiety and Depression was reduced drastically and General Well-being enhanced after Positive Therapy to a group of Engineering College students. Physiological, Emotional, Cognitive and Behavioural Symptoms of Anxiety among the Engineering Students had reduced drastically after the Positive Therapy administered by Rita(2012). All the above case studies proved the positive effect of Counselling and Psychotherapies on non specific psychological problems in individuals.
C) Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies for mild Physiological problems:

There were experiments and attempts to address mild physiological problems with Counselling and Psychotherapies. The observations in the studies where physiological ailments were focused were different. Sabella et al. administered counselling to Women With Epilepsy (WWE) in their reproductive years but, showed no significant difference of frequency of epileptic attack pre and post counseling sessions. Similarly, Group Counselling given to a group of patients with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) by Roessler et al. showed that high-intensity aerobic training in groups after or followed by group counselling sessions focusing on responsive relationships had beneficial effects on quality of life, the experience and interpretation of bodily pain and exercise behaviour. But, no recession in the other symptoms of Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome could be noticed. Another instance compared a single-session intervention of Positive Reappraisal to Cognitive Restructuring and Supportive Counselling to a group of Type II diabetics patients by Nowlan et al. The positive reappraisal intervention led to significantly increased positive reappraisal, coping and significantly higher positive emotion. However no effect on the type II diabetes was noticed. In another case where Caregivers who received the Group Counseling Sayed et al. Showed improving their Quality Of Life and general health significantly. This intervention also proved that Counseling did not affect the severity of dementia in patients, but had a significantly positive impact on cognition and behavior.

All the above case studies described under three categories declare emphatically that Counselling and Psychotherapy do significant effects on mild psychological problem whether it is specific or non specific. But, none of the cases showed any direct cure of physiological ailments. But it can be noted that certain psycho somatic problems are relieved as a result of recession of psychological problems. Eventhough, Counselling and Psychotherapy techniques do make positive results on psychological level had no impact on physiological ailments. Another strike point could be noted was that, certain specific problems addressed effectively through Counselling/Psychotherapy would indirectly reduce general problems of the client automatically and improve the quality of life and well being.

CONCLUSION:

Counselling and Psychotherapies are effective in specific as well as non specific/ general mild psychological problems, but in effective for physiological illness. There is no level of difference between the efficacy of counselling to specific problems to that of non specific problems.
**LIMITATION AND SUGGESTIONS**

All the papers selected were from the entire world population. Those Studies applied Counselling/Psychotherapy involving different techniques were included. Specific techniques could be compared for particular issue. The number of studies on physiological ailments and Counselling effectiveness were relatively lesser. The study could be done wide and extensively by taking more case studies. Here, in this study, papers involving different techniques in Counseling/Psychotherapies were taken in to consideration without any exclusion. The study could be also be conducted based on restricted techniques. The effect of counseling or psychotherapies on psychosomatic diseases could also be studied in addition to physiological illness.

**REFERENCES**


[20] Rita Rani Bhattacharjee (2012). Management of Anxiety, Depression and
Efficacy of Counselling and Psychotherapies on psycho-physiological problems


