



## Trends of Counselling: A Comprehensive Overview

### KEYWORDS

Counselling, quality of life, trends, services

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**ABSTRACT** *The present paper reflects on the new roles, practices and trends in counselling. None of the civilization survived without advice and guidance; therefore it would be right to say that counselling has existed in one form or the other since time immemorial. It can be traced back to our ancient epic Bhagavad Gita which embodies the finest principles of counselling for people of all times and ages to the 21st century counselling which is seen catering to the imminent societal trends such as issues of ageing population, raising quality of life, incorporating neuroscience into counselling, emphasis on wellness assessment, strengths and life span development. Also positive psychology also has its roots in counselling. Thus, in today's era it has become imperative for counselling psychology to explore efficient and meaningful services in order to deal with plethora of upcoming issues.*

### Introduction

Pursuit of well-being is the basic right of every individual and should be the motive of everyone. It is said that mental health is a full and harmonious functioning of the whole personality which gives satisfaction to the person and is beneficial to the society. General well-being is a part of positive mental health (Longman, 1984). Thus, counselling aims to change client's behaviour by focussing on self clarification and self determination, thereby promoting well-being, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms and to reach high level of psychological and emotional fitness to increase resistance to both minor and major issues in life.

Illustration of counselling could be traced to way back to our archaic epic i.e. The 'Gita'. It clearly elucidates how Arjuna, whose mind was in great conflict, was helped by Lord Krishna. Krishna facilitated at overcoming the conflict through an insight into his own self. Arjuna's conflict was one of 'mine and thine', and was resolved through self-understanding and self-realisation. One has to act in accordance with one's 'Swadharma'. Humans should act in accordance with the demands of one's situation and one's duties in life.

### The Native Ways of Counselling

India, as one of the most ancient civilizations has a long history of help seeking behaviours. Sandhu, (2011) proposed major healing traditions in ancient India.

The Atharva Veda described good mental health as the restoration of equilibrium of the components of human personality called gunnas, Vatta, Pitta, and Kaph. The Traditional Healers are called Mantrawadis and Patris. These healers believed that people suffered because of misdeeds committed in their present or previous lives. The Law of Karma asserts that we must pay for our actions either in the present or in our next lives. Misdeeds are never forgiven.

Mantarwadis - Generally, Mantrawadis use their knowledge of the zodiac to treat their patients for mental problems and psychological distress through some potent mystical verses from Vedas, by blowing their breath on the holy threads, or by giving the patients a talisman to wear.

Patris - A Patri acts as a medium for a spirit who actually

conducts the therapeutic act. Generally, a Patri may induce a self-possession state for the master spirit through incense, dance or music and becomes his or her master's voice.

As per Clay, (2002) there is a trend toward incorporating Indian traditions into Western approaches to counselling in India. Broota & Sanghvi (1994) developed a relaxation technique which combines four yogic postures and repetition of a religious word such as 'shanty'. This process helps clients be more aware of their thoughts and has been effective in relieving symptoms of stress and depression. Nathawat & Kumar (1999) recommended that clients must attend yoga and meditation camps before entering mental health counselling. It is based on the assumption that doing so would increase positive emotions and decrease negative symptoms.

Also, visiting religious centers is commonly found for healing purposes in India (Raguram, Venkateswaran, Ramakrishna & Weiss, 2002) such as visiting "healing temple" in South India. Ranugram et al, 2002 found that clients who were initially diagnosed with mental issues had less severe psychopathological problems following their stay in the temple. In addition to specific healing powers of the temple, clients improved mental health stemmed from the temples supportive, non-threatening and reassuring environment.

As a part of the economic and social changes in India due to rapid industrialization and urbanization for last ten years or so, people are experiencing significant multiple stressors in their lives, caused by social and cultural upheaval. Some of these stressors are causing some very serious mental health concerns including, clinical depression, anxiety, mental stress, marital discords, domestic violence, and serious alcoholism and substance abuse problems. Thus, the factors stated above are certainly an awakening call for an advent of counselling as a distinct discipline and profession.

### Advent of a New Approach - Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychology is a relatively young discipline officially recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) as a distinct profession in 1994 (Corrie & Callahan, 2000). Counselling has been responsive to changing needs and emerging trends over the last decade as evidenced by shifts in client's needs and professional issues. It has been

recently cited as the third largest and fastest growing division of the BPS (British Psychological Society Division of Counselling Psychology, 2011). Counselling psychologists occupy various roles in a mounting range of settings like private practice, forensic settings, voluntary sector and charities (Hanley, Seffi, Cutts & Lennie, 2013). Although counselling is a humanistic discipline, it is not limited to the practice of humanistic therapies alone (Gillon, 2007), rather it's base- i.e. the humanistic value offers the discipline a direction of research and therapeutic approach (James, 2013). It employs various methods of therapeutic enquiry and practice in order to meet the clients' needs in a non-prescriptive manner (Cooper & McLeod, 2011).

It is vital to mention here that the aim of counselling is integrated by a new branch of psychology i.e. Positive Psychology. Since ages counsellors are commitment at fostering positive thoughts, identifying and utilization of strengths among clients (such as gratitude and forgiveness) has in a way influenced positive psychologists as they too today focus on integrating the basic premise of counselling into their reservoir (Harris, Thoresen & Lopez). Therefore, it can be said that positive psychology has its roots in counselling as well.

The ensuing section highlights on the prevalent and upcoming issues and challenges in counselling (Shallcross, 2012).

School bullying is a tough and painful experience for children and nowadays, internet bullying is on the rise. Simply posting a hurtful message, mean-spirited blog or compromising photo leads to experiences of hurt and humiliation. Such are the issues which were and are a matter of great concern regardless of age. In coming times, counselling could be seen focussing on relational development i.e. finding innovative ways to promote genuine concern for one's impact on others.

Counselling will need to move away from existing theories that focus on individuals, couples and families and instead embrace systemic theories that address social ills and foster healing on a global level. Multicultural and feminist approaches seem to hold the greatest potential for addressing these goals.

Further, another upcoming trend in counselling could be the incorporation of neuroscience into counselling practice i.e. the changes that take place in brain using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). It would demonstrate points of client/counsellor empathy as parallel to the movements on an fMRI. Thus, relationship and empathic understanding as being the heart of counselling process could be better understood. Thus, paving way towards the concepts of well-being and positive psychology in terms of how a strength-based approach builds new neural networks and reinforces positive emotions.

Another societal trend being witnessed is that due to advances in medical technology, people are living longer and so the aging population is growing. In future, theories would be required that respond to the needs of elders by addressing spiritual dimensions of living and existential issues such as isolation, meaning and death.

The future of counselling lies at raising the quality of life and providing mental health care globally which would impact almost every sphere of life such as education, careers, families, societies, healthy human development across the

life span, empathy, philanthropy and happiness.

Additional issues that counselling could serve people in general and the coming generations would include: Balancing life - Technology is changing the way we live and our expectations about the world. Accessibility of internet, i-phones keep us plugged in at all hours and many of us are multitasking most of the times and so face problems in managing life i.e. personal and professional both and Patience - Instant access to information fuels the need for instant gratification. It could impact one's goal setting, decision-making, career and life planning, and eventually relationships will all be affected. Cognitive-behavioral approaches will dominate the future of mental health care.

People in India attributed various mental health issues to evil spirits, evil eye or supernatural powers and prefer to go for magico-religious remedies (Bhasin, 2005). Keeping in mind the prevailing ethos, The National Mental Health Programme estimated that at least 30 million people in India are in a dire need of mental health services. Therefore, in light of the above stated viewpoints, it can be said that over time counselling has grown from mere simple healing to a full fledged profession. Counselling can help in numerous ways from considering life meaningful, holding a positive self-image to having a happy and optimistic outlook to having healthy relationship with others.

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