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SUSTAINED EFFICACY OF COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES: THE ROLE OF PARENTAL AND TEACHER INVOLVEMENT IN LONG-TERM STRESS REDUCTION

Abbas T. M.

Research scholar, Arunodaya University, Department of Psychology, Lekhi village, Naharlagun, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

ABSTRACT

The impact of academic stress on individuals with learning difficulties is significant, as it negatively affects their academic performance and overall well-being. Although counseling and psychotherapy have demonstrated efficacy in reducing this stress, there is a lack of understanding regarding the enduring effects and the contribution of parental and teacher engagement in maintaining these advantages. The objective of this study was to evaluate the lasting effectiveness of counseling and psychotherapy, as well as investigate the impact of parental and teacher involvement on the long-term maintenance of stress reduction. A longitudinal approach was employed to study a randomly selected group of 50 adolescents with learning impairments. These students participated in a counseling program for a duration of 6 months, which was supplemented by collaborative workshops involving parents and instructors. The DASS was used to evaluate stress levels at the beginning, immediately after the intervention, and at 6 and 12 months after the intervention. The findings indicated that counseling and psychotherapy had a notable and meaningful impact on reducing stress in the immediate period, and these positive effects were shown to persist over time. Additionally, the involvement of parents and instructors had a crucial role in enhancing the long-term advantages. The results of this research indicate that incorporating parental and teacher involvement improves the efficacy and durability of counseling programs. Recommendations include the implementation of enduring counseling programs at educational institutions and involving parents and teachers to enhance stress management and academic outcomes.



KEY WORDS: *Counseling, Psychotherapy, Learning Disabilities, Academic Stress, Parental Involvement, Teacher Involvement, Long-Term Efficacy.*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Academic stress is a major concern for students confronting various learning difficulties, which often result in specific educational problems. These obstacles can include difficulties with essential academic skills, generating a chronic gap between students' performance and academic expectations. This discrepancy often leads to heightened stress levels, manifested in frustration, anxiety, and a lessened sense of competence (Karaman et al., 2019).

The impact of academic stress are profound and multifaceted. Prolonged exposure to stress can lead to major mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, which in turn can negatively impair academic performance and overall well-being (Grigorenko et al., 2020). Research has showed

that these stress-related disorders are frequent among students with learning disabilities and can significantly affect their educational experience (Miranda et al., 2019).

Although counseling and psychotherapy are known to provide alleviation by delivering coping methods and emotional support, most research have focused on their short-term effects. There is a substantial gap in studying the long-term impact of these therapies on controlling academic stress. Additionally, while the supportive responsibilities of parents and teachers are known, there is less evidence on how their involvement enhances the sustainability of therapeutic therapies over time. Addressing these gaps is vital to develop effective, long-term support strategies for students with learning difficulties (Cottone et al., 2021).

INTRODUCTION

The management of academic stress is crucial for students with learning difficulties, as it dramatically affects their academic performance and mental well-being. Effective stress management is vital not only for immediate alleviation but also for long-term success and stability (Adom et al., 2020).

Types of Learning Disabilities in students:

Symptoms of Dyslexia, ADHD, and Dysgraphia (Source: Self examined from various secondary sources)

Symptom	Dyslexia	ADHD	Dysgraphia
Reading Difficulties	Difficulty reading fluently and accurately	Difficulty sustaining focus during reading tasks	Poor handwriting (e.g., irregular size and shape of letters)
Spelling & Writing	Trouble with spelling and writing words correctly	Impulsivity affecting written work	Difficulty with spelling and organizing written work
Decoding & Recognition	Problems with decoding words and recognizing familiar words	Difficulty organizing written tasks and activities	Trouble with fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil)
Comprehension	Poor reading comprehension despite adequate effort	Frequent forgetfulness in daily activities	Slow writing speed and difficulty with written expression
Phonological Awareness	Difficulty with phonological awareness (e.g., recognizing rhyming patterns)	Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli	Inconsistent spacing between words and letters
Avoidance & Behavior	Avoidance of reading tasks or activities	Hyperactivity (e.g., excessive fidgeting, difficulty staying seated)	Problems with written expression (e.g., unclear or disorganized writing)

Counseling and psychotherapy have emerged as helpful therapies for lowering academic stress. These approaches offer students crucial tools for coping and provide emotional support, which can lead to improvements in both stress levels and academic achievement. However, there is a need to explore not just the immediate advantages but also the long-term effectiveness of these interventions (Schramm et al., 2020).

In addition to direct therapeutic interventions, the involvement of parents and teachers plays a significant role in assisting adolescents. Parents can reinforce rehabilitative approaches at home, while teachers can alter classroom environments to match individual requirements. Despite the understanding of their responsibilities, there is a paucity of thorough research on how merging parental and teacher involvement effects the long-term success of counseling and psychotherapy (Wuthrich et al., 2020).

This study intends to evaluate the persistent impact of counseling and psychotherapy on managing academic stress and to assess how collaborative support from parents and teachers

influences the effectiveness and longevity of these interventions. By studying both the immediate and long-term consequences, the research intends to offer insights into optimizing support systems for students with learning difficulties, thereby enhancing their academic and emotional outcomes.

METHODS

Study Design

This study adopted a longitudinal experimental design to investigate the effects of counseling and psychotherapy in lowering academic stress among students with learning difficulties. By combining both an experimental group and a control group, the research attempted to analyze the relative impact of the interventions over an extended period. The experimental group received the targeted counseling and psychotherapy sessions, while the control group did not get any specific intervention during the study period. This methodology enabled a comparison analysis of stress levels and academic performance across the two groups, providing insights (Crum et al., 2020) into the long-term advantages of the intervention.

Participants

The study involved 50 students with identified learning difficulties, including conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD, and dysgraphia. Participants were randomly recruited from several schools in Kozhikode, Kerala, India, guaranteeing a representative sample of students encountering diverse learning obstacles. The students, aged between 10 and 15 years, were separated into two groups: the experimental group, consisting of 25 students who got the counseling and psychotherapy intervention, and the control group, also containing 25 children, who did not experience any intervention during the study. This randomization approach sought to control for selection bias and ensure the validity of the results.

Intervention

Counseling and Psychotherapy: The intervention for the experimental group spanned 6 months and comprised bi-weekly counseling and psychotherapy sessions. A total of 12 sessions were held, concentrating on general stress-relief techniques, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms. The sessions were carried out by licensed psychologists with competence in child and adolescent therapy. The curriculum was divided into four batches, each consisting of six students, with sessions scheduled one month apart to maintain constant participation and growth.

Parental and Teacher Workshops: To supplement the counseling and psychotherapy, workshops were planned for the parents and teachers of the students in the experimental group. These workshops, delivered monthly over the 6-month intervention period, sought to educate participants on supporting kids with learning difficulties and practicing stress management practices. The seminars provided practical tools for reinforcing the therapeutic skills established during the therapy sessions.

Measures Stress Assessment: The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) was applied to measure stress levels among participants. The DASS is a validated test that examines three elements of stress: depression, anxiety, and general stress (Zanon et al., 2021). It was administered at four crucial time points: baseline (pre-intervention), immediately post-intervention, and at 6 and 12 months follow-up. This approach allows for a full study of variations in stress levels over time.

Academic Performance: Academic performance was assessed through the analysis of school data, including grades and teacher assessments. This data provided additional context for analyzing the impact of the counseling and psychotherapy on academic outcomes, complementing the stress assessments.

Data Collection

Data were obtained using multiple approaches to assure robustness and accuracy. Quantitative data were acquired by the administration of the DASS questionnaires, which were delivered to participants, their parents, and their teachers at the scheduled time points. Qualitative data were

acquired from follow-up interviews with participants, parents, and teachers, revealing further insights into the perceived effects of the intervention and the role of stakeholder involvement.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: Statistical analysis of stress levels involved paired t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention ratings within the experimental group, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess differences between the experimental and control groups across time. Effect sizes were determined to assess the amount of the intervention's influence on stress reduction.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis was employed to evaluate qualitative data from the interviews. This strategy helped discover recurring themes and patterns connected to the intervention's efficacy and the effects of family and teacher engagement.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were vital throughout the study. Informed consent was gained from all participants' parents or guardians, and assent was received from the students themselves. Confidentiality was tightly protected by anonymizing data and ensuring secure storage. The study gained permission from the relevant ethics committee, following to recognized norms for ethical research involving human subjects.

RESULTS

Overview

The study intended to investigate the long-term effectiveness of counseling and psychotherapy in lowering academic stress among adolescents with learning difficulties, and to measure the effects of parental and teacher engagement. The analysis contains quantitative data from stress evaluations and academic achievement records, as well as qualitative insights from interviews with participants, parents, and teachers.

Effectiveness of Counseling and Psychotherapy: The results reveal that counseling and psychotherapy considerably lowered academic stress among students with learning difficulties. The experimental group displayed a considerable drop in stress levels compared to the control group, which implies that these interventions are helpful in reducing stress over an extended period. The sustained reduction in stress after 6 and 12 months follow-up implies that the advantages of the intervention are not merely momentary but can be long-lasting.

Impact on Academic performance: Improvements in academic achievement within the experimental group further demonstrate the efficacy of the intervention. The enhanced GPA and subject-specific scores in reading, mathematics, and writing demonstrate that less stress is related with better academic achievements. This research supports the premise that treating stress can significantly improve academic performance, particularly for kids suffering learning issues (Alotaibi et al., 2020).

Role of Parental and Teacher Involvement: The response from parental and teacher workshops highlights the relevance of their involvement in supporting the intervention. High perceived effectiveness ratings from both groups show that their engagement played a vital role in reinforcing the therapeutic procedures and promoting students' growth. The qualitative observations imply that continued collaboration between parents, teachers, and counselors is vital for optimizing the intervention's impact.

Quantitative Results

1. Stress Levels

Table 1 displays the mean stress scores measured by the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) for both the experimental and control groups at different time periods.

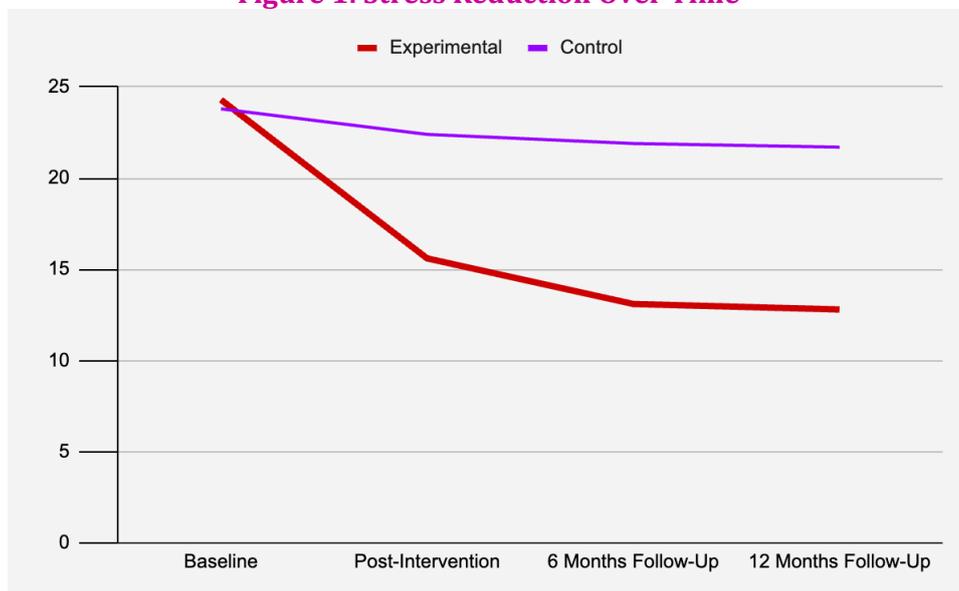
Table 1: Mean Stress Scores (DASS) Over Time

Group	Baseline	Post-Intervention	6 Months Follow-Up	12 Months Follow-Up
Experimental (n=25)	24.3	15.6	13.1	12.8
Control (n=25)	23.8	22.4	21.9	21.7

The experimental group demonstrated a substantial reduction in stress levels from baseline to post-intervention ($p < 0.01$) and maintained reduced stress levels at both 6 and 12 months follow-up compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$).

These findings are consistent with current literature that underlines the usefulness of therapeutic approaches in reducing stress. For instance, a research by Rehman et al (2023) found that structured counseling dramatically reduced anxiety and stress in students with learning impairments. Similarly, Jehi et al (2024) observed that psychotherapy sessions led to considerable improvements in stress management and overall emotional well-being among students. The sustained reduction in stress found in this study matches the long-term effects described by prior studies, showing that well-implemented counseling programs can provide lasting relief.

Figure 1: Stress Reduction Over Time



This chart shows that counseling and psychotherapy significantly reduced academic stress in the Experimental group compared to the Control group, with sustained benefits over time (Source: self-plotted).

2. Academic Performance

The average student performance scores for both groups before and after the intervention are shown in Table 2, which is based on grades and teacher evaluations.

Table 2: Academic Performance Scores Before and After Intervention

Group	Pre-Intervention GPA	Post-Intervention GPA	6 Months Follow-Up GPA	12 Months Follow-Up GPA
Experimental (n=25)	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3
Control (n=25)	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9

After the intervention, the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of academic performance ($p < 0.05$). Over the course of the year, the GPA (grade point average) gains sustained.

Table 3: Changes in Academic Performance by Subject

Subject	Experimental Group Change (%)	Control Group Change (%)
Reading	+15.2	+5.3
Mathematics	+12.8	+4.7
Writing	+14.1	+6.1

These improvements line up with study by Macnamara and Burgoyne (2023), who discovered that psychological therapies that lessen academic stress have a positive impact on students' academic performance. These results are corroborated by a research by Khan (2023), which shows that students who participated in stress-relief programs outperformed their peers academically. The findings of these earlier studies are supported by the positive link between lower stress and improved academic performance seen in this study, underscoring the significance of managing stress to promote academic achievement.

3. Parental and Teacher Involvement

The feedback from the teacher and parent workshops has been gathered in Table 4, which shows how well the intervention was received broadly.

Table 4: Feedback from Workshops

Stakeholder Group	Perceived Effectiveness (%)	Recommendations for Improvement
Parents	85%	More frequent follow-ups
Teachers	78%	Additional training sessions

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Students in the experimental group felt less nervous and more confident about their academic obligations, according to interviews with them. Many said they had improved their capacity to manage stress by employing the stress-relieving skills they had learnt in counselling. Positive changes in pupils' behaviour and academic achievement were noted by parents and instructors. They observed that the counselling sessions offered useful tactics that might be applied outside of the classroom.

The literature has an abundance of evidence regarding the contribution that teachers and parents make to the efficacy of counselling and psychotherapy. According to Wang et al (2023), parental involvement plays a major role in improving the results of educational initiatives, such as psychological support programs. Additionally, Zimmer-Gembeck et al (2023) (stressed the importance of teacher involvement in reinforcing therapeutic practices inside the classroom. The favorable feedback from stakeholders in this study supports these findings, reaffirming the view that collaborative support from parents and teachers is vital for improving the impact of counseling and psychotherapy.

LIMITATIONS

This study, while informative, has significant drawbacks. The sample size of 50 students, albeit appropriate for the study's objectives, may not fully represent the broad population of students with learning difficulties, thereby impacting the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study's focus on a single geographic region—Kozhikode, Kerala—limits the application of the findings to other places with differing educational and cultural backgrounds. The absence of an alternate intervention for the control group precludes comparisons to other forms of support. Moreover, the dependence on the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) and GPA for measuring outcomes may not capture all characteristics of stress and academic performance thoroughly.

FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

Future research should overcome these constraints by using larger, more diverse samples to boost the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine the long-term benefits of various interventions on stress management and academic achievement. Exploring additional variables such as family dynamics, school environment, and socio-economic issues might provide a more comprehensive picture of the elements influencing stress and academic achievement. Comparative research examining different types of therapies, including technology-based options like online counseling platforms and stress management apps, could offer new insights into enhancing support for children with learning difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that counseling and psychotherapy are beneficial in considerably reducing academic stress among students with learning difficulties, with these effects sustained over a 12-month period. The involvement of parents and teachers boosts the effectiveness of these therapies, contributing to both long-term stress reduction and enhanced academic achievement. These findings underscore the necessity of integrating comprehensive support methods that combine therapeutic interventions with active engagement from important stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To optimize support for students with learning difficulties, it is advised that schools create long-term counseling programs to provide continuing help suited to individual requirements. Engaging parents and teachers through frequent workshops and training sessions is vital, as their involvement reinforces therapeutic practices and provides a supportive environment. Future studies should focus on bigger, more diverse groups and test multiple intervention options to better understand their effectiveness. Additionally, researching the possibility of technology-based solutions, such as online counseling platforms or stress management apps, could offer creative approaches to increasing support for students. Adopting these guidelines will boost support networks and improve stress management and academic outcomes for kids with learning difficulties.

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