

Impact of Psychological Counselling on Subjective Wellbeing of University Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of psychological assistance provided by special mentors to the university students. The current study employs a survey for a sample of 200 female students from different academic majors and levels from Princess Norah Bint Abdulrahman University (PNU) in Riyadh. We apply a comparative analysis using SPSS 25 version. The findings revealed that there is a significant statistical difference in students' satisfaction before and after attending counselling sessions. Furthermore, it suggested that the factors that reported maximum deviation were: Lack of closeness ($t=11.546$) and lack of confidence ($t=11.445$) indicating a positive impact of counselling on students.

Keywords: Subjective well-being, University students, Counselling, mental health, satisfaction.

1. Introduction:

The most important function of modern education is to help the individuals to develop as a whole from the aspects of physical, social, psychological ways and to assist them as being raised as harmonious with society, happy and also productive individual. On ensuring this assistance, the role of teacher is vital. Also, teachers' subjective well-being levels contributes make this assistance more effectively.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a multidimensional concept that refers to individuals' levels of well-being, subjectively evaluated by their general satisfaction with their lives and important life domains, as well as their associated emotional states (Diener et al. 1999; Diener 2000; Diener and Ryan 2009). Mahanta and Aggarwal (2013) found that social support from friends and family affect the student satisfaction of PG university students. With a sample of 100 postgraduate students from the University, they showed how feeling of love, care for and supported by friends, family members and others can distinguish an important difference in their overall wellbeing, especially related to depression and anxiety marked by a significant difference for the perceived social assistance from friends. Research on happiness, which predominantly focuses on emotional states (e.g., positive affect, negative affect; see Diener et al. 1999; Ryan et al. 2008) can be conceptualized as falling under the global concept that is SWB.

Subjective well-being categorized as affective and cognitive component. Affective components (Diener and Emmons, 1985) consist of positive and negative emotion. Cognitive components (Andrews and Withey 1974) are also about the individuals' satisfaction on life (Diener and Larsen,

1993; Diener and Suh, 1997; Pavot et al., 1991; Schimmack, et al., 2002). “Life satisfaction refers to tendency to report satisfaction with various aspects of one’s life” (Robinson et al, 2003).

While SWB has been conceptualized as a transient as well as an enduring trait, studies on SWB, happiness, or quality of life have mainly focused on traits rather than on short-term fluctuations (Eid and Diener 2004). more specifically on students. The importance of studying SWB stems from its ability to predict important positive individual and relational consequences (i.e., marital quality, income, productivity, etc.; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). It has also been indicated that individuals who reported higher levels of SWB were more social, altruistic, and active. They also liked themselves and others more, had stronger immune systems, and had better conflict resolution skills (Larsen and Eid 2008).

Promoting individuals’ SWB therefore appears to be of central importance for a variety of consequences. In the context of higher education, SWB has also been associated with important outcomes such as educational aspirations, academic engagement, class attendance, educational track/choice of field of study, and academic achievement, and dropout (Chambel and Curral 2005; Cotton et al. 2002; Nickerson et al. 2011; Salmela-Aro and TuominenSoini 2010). Hence, promoting university students’ SWB is an important outcome in itself. Given these findings, it becomes important to better understand the variables that promote university students’ SWB.

As research by Tay and Diener (2011) demonstrated, individuals’ psychological needs are important sources of SWB. Our goal in this research was thus to examining the contribution of “need satisfying behaviours” from significant individuals to university students’ SWB. Psychological need satisfaction, and more specifically need satisfying behaviours, will be examined from the stance of self-determination theory

1.1. What is counselling?

Counselling is a way of helping people to solve their own emotional, social, personal or interpersonal problems. Counselling is not giving assistance, or solving your problems on behalf of you. In counselling counsellor looks into the problems with objective way. The counsellor demonstrates different dimension to understand the situation. He helps you to know your strengths and weaknesses without being judgemental. Counselling involves the exploration problems in an environment that is both supportive and objective. It also involves the identification of alternative courses of action that might solve a problem. Counsellor suggests strategies for managing and altering patterns of upsetting thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

1.2. Person-Centric approach:

Person centric approach is one that classifies groups of individuals who share approximate characteristics, using statistical techniques such as cluster analysis, mixture modelling, or latent class analysis. Such an approach is most suitable for research questions that aim at identifying groups of individuals and the factors (predictors, outcomes) associated with group membership. In the current study, a person-cantered approach would allow to identify groups of university students who perceived similar levels of autonomy support from parents, friends and the romantic partner and test in which cases SWB is highest. For instance, we could expect some students to perceive all sources as highly autonomy-supportive while another group would perceive all sources as providing little autonomy support. Still others could report that it is their parents that provide the most autonomy support. Using a person-cantered approach to study autonomy support from important sources will allow us to test if all or only a limited number of sources need to be autonomy supportive for students to report high SWB.

2. Measures

1. Life Satisfaction Scale

We assessed perceived autonomy support with the short form of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ; Williams and Deci 1996), which contains six items that can be adapted to specific learning environments such as a university. We formulated items to assess students' perceptions of the autonomy supportive behaviors of their parents (6 items), friends (6 items), and romantic partner (6 items). Participants had to indicate, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), the extent to which they agreed with each item. Examples of items include "With respect to my studies, I feel that my parents/friends/romantic partner provides me choices and options" and "With respect to my studies, I feel understood by my parents/friends/romantic partner". Cronbach alphas ranged from .84 (friends' autonomy support) to .89 (parental autonomy support).

2.2 Subjective Well-being

Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, has defined Subjective Well-being as "A person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life".

Mahanta and Aggarwal (2013) found that social support from friends and family affect the student satisfaction of postgraduate university students. Using a sample of 100 postgraduate students from the University, they showed how the feeling that students are loved, cared for and supported by friends, family members and others can distinguish an important difference in their overall wellbeing, especially related to depression and anxiety marked by a significant difference for the perceived social assistance from friends.

Williams et al. (2017) examined the predictors of positive well-being, negative mental health and cognitive function. Findings displayed that positive well-being can be predicted by positive personality, high social support and low stressors and low negative coping scores.

the concept of SWB according to Diener's conceptualization (Diener et al. 1999, Diener 2000), i.e. through emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction was conceptualized in the paper. Thus, in this research the French-Canadian version (Blais et al. 1989) of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985) to assess general satisfaction with one's life was used. This 5-item scale, scored on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), included items such as, "I am satisfied with my life". This scale has shown good reliability in past studies (e.g., Blais et al. 1989; Diener et al. 1985), as in this study ($\alpha = .88$).

3. Demographic and Control Variables

The questionnaire also included questions on gender, age, cohabiting status, and academic achievement (grade point average [GPA] and number of academic failures).

4. Rationale of the study

So much research has been conducted in the field of Social Well Being of college and school students. Also, comparative studies of the wellbeing of students who are in schools or in some UG or PG courses. But it has been seen in the recent times that due to some unseen factors students are facing some sorts of issues that they do not share with their friends and families resulting in hindering their growth. They are rather confused what to do or which direction to move on. So, counselling was provided to those students.

The objective of this research is to make a comparative study of the subjective wellbeing of the students before and after counselling sessions by Psychologists in their university.

5. Objectives and hypotheses:

Objectives 1: To examine the subjective well-being of students before and after the psychological counselling.

Objectives 2: To suggest the measures required for improving the SWB of students.

The predictable outcomes of the study are presented in the following hypotheses:

H_1^1 : There is a significant statistical difference in the students' satisfaction with life before and after psychological counselling.

H_1^2 : There is a significant statistical difference on the students' SWB before and after psychological counselling.

Research Design and Methodology:

5.1. Participants and procedures

To explore and achieve the research objectives, an electronic questionnaire was distributed among a sample of 200 female PNU students from different academic majors and levels and administered during the academic year 2020-2021. No missing values in response were registered. Five Likert Scale is used to test and evaluate formulated assumptions. Students responded to each element by indicating one of the following opinions: strongly disagree, disagree, Neutral (neither agree nor disagree), agree and strongly agree. All the questions are presented through two sections:

Section 1: Measure of satisfaction with life before and after counselling.

Section 2: Measure of SWB of university students before and after counselling.

A descriptive and inferential statistical examination, using SPSS Statistical Program Version 25, were implemented to analyze the collected data. In the analysis following successive statistical tests were used: (1) Frequencies and percentages, (2) Reliability Test, (3) Means, (4) Paired sample T-test and Correlation.

6. Results and discussions:

6.1. Statistical Analysis

Table no.1 Test of Reliability

Sections	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient	Number of items
Section-1: Measure of satisfaction with life before and after counselling.	0.821	5
Section-2: Measure of subjective well-being in particular before and after counselling.	0.862	40

Table no.1 displays the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which is implemented for each section and for the whole survey to test the reliability of the questions. Results show that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the subscales for the present study is good and equal respectively to 0.821 for life satisfaction measure. The Subjective Well Being questionnaire showed excellent reliability equivalent to 0.862 that showed a great consistency in calculating outcomes.

Students academic and demographic distribution are presented in table no.2. Almost all of the respondents are coming from scientific (65%) and humanity (24%) colleges, followed by healthy (8%) and technical (2.5%) disciplines. A similar distribution was found in a recent study done by Abdul Rahim and Mabrouk (2020) considering a different sample of students. The students sample are classified as follows, level (1) 22.5%, level (2) 15%, level (3) 27% and level (4) 35.5%. Around 90% of students affirm in their responses that their parent's educational level is secondary (25% for the father and 33% for the mother) and superior (68% for the father and 56% for the mother), which conform with the literature saying that highly educated parents are more likely to influence their children education process (Gratz et al., 2006). Furthermore, family structure like if parents are living together and children number may influence the student's motivation and academic performance (Farooq et al., 2011). 83% of responses stated that parents' marital status is married, 98% of the students are living in their family housing and 60 % of them with less than 5 members. As a matter of fact, growing up in different family structures has educational effects (Sun and Li, 2011).

Table no. 2: Descriptive Statistics
Section 1: Measure of satisfaction with life before & after counselling

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Before Counselling In most directions, my life is consistent with my goals.	.8250	200	1.1405	0.0806
	After Counselling /In most directions, my life is consistent with my goals.	3.5550	200	0.9061	0.0640
Pair 2	Before Counselling /The conditions of my life are excellent.	3.2350	200	1.1296	0.0798
	After Counselling The conditions of my life are excellent.	3.8550	200	0.8976	0.0634
Pair 3	Before Counselling /I am satisfied with my life.	3.3100	200	1.1621	0.0821
	After Counselling /I am satisfied with my life.	3.8550	200	1.0194	0.0720
Pair 4	Before Counselling/Until now, I have achieved the important things that I want in life.	2.6300	200	1.1487	0.0812
	After Counselling/Until now, I have achieved the important things that I want in life.	3.0800	200	1.0721	0.0758
Pair 5	Before Counselling/If I could restore my life I would not have changed anything.	2.8090	200	1.3024	0.0921
	After Counselling/If I could restore my life I would not have changed anything.	2.8550	200	1.3239	0.0936

Table no.2 shows the mean and standard deviation of students' satisfaction with their life before and after counselling. The overall mean of the construct measures the student's satisfaction with their life after counselling (3.453), of scale (Agree), it is higher than the students' satisfaction with their life before counselling (2.971) which is of scale (Neutral). The mean of each statement measures the satisfaction of students with their life in general after counselling is higher than that

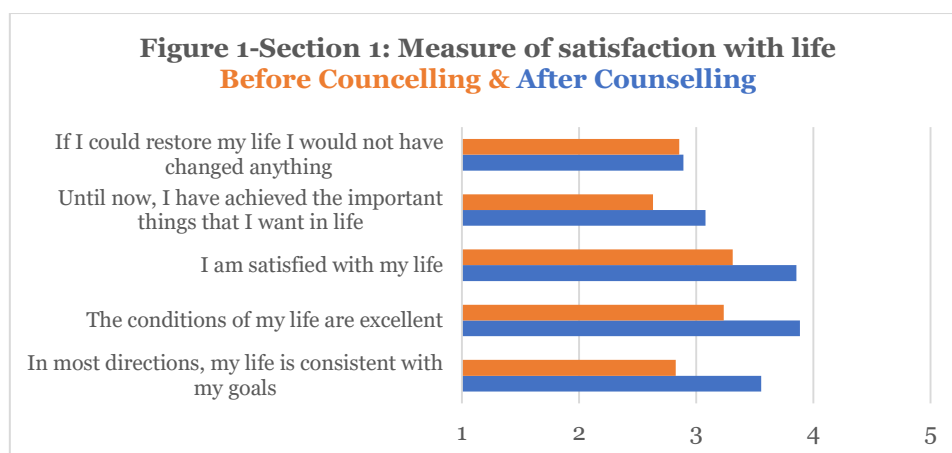
before counselling, except for the last statement which states if students could restore their life, would not have changed anything and remains the same, before and after counselling. These results reveal that female students believe that they were more satisfied with their life in general after counselling than before and indicate a clear increment in student's SWB after counselling. The Paired sample test is used to compare means of the students' satisfaction with life before and after counselling.

The results of analysis, Table no.3. show that there is significant statistical difference between the student's satisfaction with life before and after counselling, however p-value is less than 0.05. The correlation analysis reveals low correlation between the student's satisfaction with their life before and after counselling, the correlation coefficients range between (0.2-0.6). This result denotes a weak relation between what students believe about their satisfaction before and after counselling, hence all the correlation results are statistically significant. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis H_0^1 and accept the alternative hypothesis H_1^1 , which states there is significant statistical differences between the students' satisfaction before and after counselling. The result is in line with the expectation and the theory. As counsellors helps students to come out of problems, they are stuck in.

Table no. 3: Paired Samples Test and Correlations
Section 1: Measure of satisfaction with life before & after counselling

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation (Sig)
Pair 1	Before Counselling/In most directions, my life is consistent with my goals -							
	After Counselling/In most directions, my life is consistent with my goals.	0.7300	1.2184	0.0861	8.473	199	0.000	0.308 (0.000)
Pair 2	Before Counselling/The conditions of my life are excellent –							
	After Counselling /The conditions of my life are excellent.	0.6500	1.2551	0.0887	7.324	199	0.000	0.250 (0.000)
Pair 3	Before Counselling/I am satisfied with my life -							
	After Counselling /I am satisfied with my life.	0.5450	1.1682	0.0826	6.597	199	0.000	0.433 (0.000)
Pair 4	Before Counselling/Until now, I have achieved the important things that I want in life -							
	After Counselling/Until now, I have achieved the important things that I want in life.	0.4500	1.1766	0.0832	5.409	199	0.000	0.440 (0.000)

Before Counselling/If I could restore my life I would not have changed anything –								
Pair 5 After Counselling/If I could restore my life I would not have changed anything.	0.0350	1.1664	0.0824	0.424	199	0.672	0.606	(0.000)



I Strongly agree = 5; I agree = 4; Not sure =3, I do not agree =2; I Strongly Disagree =1

Table no. 4: Paired Samples Test and Correlations
Section 2: Measure of satisfaction with university life in particular before and after counselling

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation (Sig)
Pair 1	Before Counselling/ Life Interesting After Counselling / Life Interesting	0.4750	1.3145	0.0929	5.110	199	0.000	0.367 (0.000)
Pair 2	Before Counselling/fulfilment of expectations After Counselling/ fulfilment of expectations	0.8650	1.5026	0.1062	8.141	199	0.000	0.165 (0.019)
Pair 3	Before Counselling/ Congruence success – After Counselling/ Congruence success –	0.8700	1.4573	0.1030	8.443	199	0.000	0.277 (0.000)
Pair 4	Before Counselling/ Congruence accomplishments - After Counselling / Congruence accomplishments	0.5050	1.1946	0.0844	5.978	199	0.000	0.433 (0.000)
Pair 5	Before Counselling / life compared with past After Counselling / life compared with past	0.1800	1.3882	0.0981	1.834	199	0.068	0.480 (0.000)

Pair 6	Before Counselling / things in recent years – After Counselling / things in recent years –	1.0550	1.6077	0.1136	9.280	199	0.000	0.117 (0.098)
Pair 7	Before Counselling / confidence in unexpected situation- After Counselling / confidence in unexpected situation-	1.3550	1.6742	0.1183	11.446	199	0.000	-0.167 (0.018)
Pair 8	Before Counselling / confidence facing crisis After Counselling / confidence facing crisis	0.4400	1.2015	0.0849	5.179	199	0.000	0.312 (0.000)
Pair 9	Before Counselling/confidence coping future After Counselling/ confidence coping future	1.0400	1.4172	0.1002	10.378	199	0.000	0.347 (0.000)
Pair 10	Before Counselling / Belongingness- After Counselling/ Belongingness-	1.1300	1.4710	0.1040	10.864	199	0.000	0.134 (0.058)
Pair 11	Before Counselling / moments of intense happiness – After Counselling / moments of intense happiness –	0.7900	1.4444	0.1021	7.735	199	0.000	0.322 (0.000)
Pair 12	Before Counselling / help by relative – After Counselling help by relative –	0.5900	1.2688	0.0897	6.576	199	0.000	0.386 (0.000)
Pair 13	Before Counselling / Relationship After Counselling / Relationship	0.7000	1.1561	0.0817	8.562	199	0.000	0.560 (0.000)
Pair 14	Before Counselling / Belongingness mankind After Counselling / Belongingness mankind	0.2500	0.8839	0.0625	4.000	199	0.000	0.600 (0.000)
Pair 15	Before Counselling / help by friend in illness- After Counselling /help by friend in illness –	0.3650	1.1655	0.0824	4.429	199	0.000	0.517 (0.000)
Pair 16	Before Counselling/ Upset by unexpected things - After Counselling / Upset by unexpected things	0.4750	1.3145	0.0929	5.110	199	0.000	0.367 (0.000)
Pair 17	Before Counselling / Feeling said without reason - After Counselling / Feeling said without reason	0.8650	1.5026	0.1062	8.141	199	0.000	0.165 (0.019)
Pair 18	Before Counselling / Irritability - After Counselling / Irritability	0.8700	1.4573	0.1030	8.443	199	0.000	0.277 (0.000)
Pair 19	Before Counselling / Anxiety and tension - After Counselling / Anxiety and tension	0.5050	1.1946	0.0844	5.978	199	0.000	0.433 (0.000)
Pair 20	Before Counselling / Losing temper over minor things – After Counselling / Losing temper over minor things	0.1800	1.3882	0.0981	1.734	199	0.068	0.480 (0.000)
Pair 21	Before Counselling / Family- a source of help - After Counselling / Family- a source of help	0.5050	1.1946	0.0844	5.978	199	0.000	0.433 (0.000)

Pair 22	Before Counselling / Closeness with family - After Counselling / Closeness with family	0.4750	1.13145	0.0929	5.110	199	0.000	0/367 (0.000)
Pair 23	Before Counselling / Help by family in illness - After Counselling / Help by family in illness	0.5050	1.1946	0.0844	5.978	199	0.000	0.433 (0.000)
Pair 24	Before Counselling / Life – boring/interesting - After Counselling / Life – boring/interesting	0.8650	1.5026	1.1062	8.141	199	0.000	0.165 (t0.019)
Pair 25	Before Counselling / Worry about future - After Counselling / Worry about future	1.0550	1.6077	0.1136	9.280	199	0.000	0.117 (0.098)
Pair 26	Before Counselling / Life- useless - After Counselling / Life- useless	1.3550	1.6742	0.1183	11.446	199	0.000	-0.167 (0.018)
Pair 27	Before Counselling / Worry about relationship with spouse - After Counselling / Worry about relationship with spouse	0.4400	1.2015	0.0849	5.179	199	0.000	0.312 (0.000)
Pair 28	Before Counselling / Help by family in need - After Counselling / Help by family in need	1.0400	1.4172	0.1002	10.378	199	0.000	0.347 (0.000)
Pair 29	Before Counselling / Worry over relationship with children - After Counselling / Worry over relationship with children	1.1300	1.4710	0.1040	10.864	199	0.000	0.134 (0.058)
Pair 30	Before Counselling / Upset by minor things - After Counselling / Upset by minor things	0.7900	1.4444	0.1021	7.735	199	0.000	0.322 (0.000)
Pair 31	Before Counselling / Upset over criticism – After Counselling / Upset over criticism	0.5900	1.2688	0.0897	6.576	199	0.000	0.386 (0.000)
Pair 32	Before Counselling / Wish for more friends – After Counselling / Wish for more friends	0.7000	1.1561	0.0817	8.562	199	0.000	0.560 (0.000)
Pair 33	Before Counselling / Lack of close friends – After Counselling / Lack of close friends	0.2500	0.8839	0.0625	4.000	199	0.000	0.600 (0.000)
Pair 34	Before Counselling / Worry over health – After Counselling / Worry over health	0.3650	1.1655	0.0824	4.429	199	0.000	0.517 (0.000)
Pair 35	Before Counselling / Pains in parts of body - After Counselling / Pains in parts of body	0.7900	1.4444	0.1021	7.735	199	0.000	0.322 (0.000)

Pair 36	Before Counselling / Palpitations/pumping heart -After Counselling / Palpitations/pumping heart	0.5900	1.2688	0.0897	6.576	199	0.000	0.386 (0.000)
Pair 37	Before Counselling / Giddiness -After Counselling / Giddiness	0.7000	1.1561	0.0817	8.562	199	0.000	0.560 (0.000)
Pair 38	Before Counselling / Getting tired too early - After Counselling / Getting tired too early	0.2500	0.8839	0.0625	4.000	199	0.000	0.600 (0.000)
Pair 39	Before Counselling / Disturbed sleep – After Counselling / Disturbed sleep	0.3650	1.1655	0.0824	4.429	199	0.000	0.517 (0.000)
Pair 40	Before Counselling / Lack of close relationships After Counselling / Lack of close relationships	1.3550	1.6742	0.1183	11.546	199	0.000	-0.167 (0.018)

According to Paired sample test analysis in table no.4, that there is significant statistical difference between the Subjective Well Being of students before and after counselling, p-value of all the construct statements is less than 0.05. Depending on this result we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states there is a significant difference between the SWB of students before and after counselling.

Looking at the results it can be seen that Lack of closeness showed the maximum value of t (11.546) indicating that before counselling the students were not comfortable in sharing their problems but after counselling, they felt free to share it with others. The other factor which shows high value of t (11.445) is lack of confidence in unexpected situations stating that after counselling they got the courage to face the unexpected situations with confidence that they gained in counselling sessions.

Other factors that show the minimum deviations are Life compared with past ($t=1.834$), Loosing temper over minor things ($t=1.734$) indicating that they don't find any drastic difference when they compare their life with past before and after counselling, also the level of their temperament has not changed a lot when compared before and after. Remaining attributes of subjective well being showed average change.

Overall conclusion that could be drawn by looking at the results is that, the well being of the students significantly increased after the counselling sessions. Counselling had a positive impact on the mental health of the students giving them confidence and clear vision about their future prospects. They felt confident and motivated after attending the sessions.

7. Conclusion:

This could be interpreted that the subjective well-being of students of Saudi University (PNA) was higher after counselling than before and point out a clear upsurge in student's SWB after counselling which conform the recent researches.

Saudi universities felt the need for having counsellors for students and its impact on the mental health and well-being can be seen clearly. They provide huge support for students to learn through digital education, counselling and independent learning. (Al Youbi Abdulrahman et al., 2020). Despite all the efforts made by the Saudi ministry of education, the students affirm a decrease in their academic achievement.

Understanding Psychology of students is very difficult. Whether it is the case of how to exceed in their academic life as well as how to take care of their mental health, they always need mentors or

counsellors who can put their feet into their shoes and understand their problems so that the suggestive measures can be taken.

Further research can be conducted on effect of the counselling sessions for career guidance to the students so that they are able to choose the stream of their choice and can perform better. Also, this research was conducted on only female students, it can be done on both the genders and the results could be seen to judge whether there is a difference in SWB in males and female students.

8. Implications

Students universally suffer from emotional stress during their academics. Increased academic competitiveness, burdens to achieve higher grades, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and deprived career guidance are some of the stress-causing issues that students nowadays are facing.

Counselling sessions, are extremely effective at helping students navigate challenging circumstances.

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