

# Role of Psycho Social Services in Adolescent Communication

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### Abstract

The social development of adolescents is best considered in the contexts in which it occurs; that is, relating to peers, family, school, work, and community and it involves specific health and developmental needs and rights. Thus the period warrants mechanism to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships, acquire attributes and develop abilities that will be important for enjoying life. The present study, conducted using a mixed methodology that involves survey research and focus group interview, seeks to identify the effectiveness of Psycho Social Services, a government of Kerala initiative in schools in the state. Primarily the project aims at counselling to students to ensure their mental health and wellbeing, personality development and emotional balance. How effective is PSS in interpersonal communication among adolescents, adolescent- parent communication adolescent- teacher communication and adolescents' group communication is the fundamental questions tried to be answered in this study.

### Keywords

Adolescent Communication, Counselling, Personality Development, Interpersonal Communication, Parental Communication

### Communication during Adolescence

During adolescence individual reaches maturity influencing their cognitive potential, affecting their communication, there comes the sophistication and effectiveness for communication skills. Adolescents go through changes in social interactions and cognitive development which can influence their way of communication. During this period, adolescences tend to communicate less with their parents and more with their friends. When discussions are initiated in different channels of communication, attitude and predispositions are the key factors that drive the individual to discuss their feelings. This also shows that the trait in interpersonal communication which is built on throughout development. The end of this adolescent stage is the basis for communication in the adult stage.

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### **Parent-Children Communication**

Relationships between parents and their children are greatly improved when there is effective communication taking place. In general, if communication between parents and their children is good, then their relationships are good as well. Children learn how to communicate by watching their parents. If parents communicate openly and effectively, chances are that their children will, too. Children begin to form ideas and beliefs about themselves based on how their parents communicate with them. When parents communicate effectively with their children, they are showing them respect. Children then begin to feel that they are heard and understood by their parents, which is a boost to self-esteem. On the other hand, communication between parents and children that is ineffective or negative can lead children to believe that they are unimportant, unheard, or misunderstood. Such children may also come to see their parents as unhelpful and untrustworthy. Effective parent-child communication is depends upon:

- How they are communicating each other?
- What they are communicating each other?
- Are there any benefits for the mutual parties?

Parents who communicate effectively with their children are more likely to have children who are willing to do what they are told. Such children know what to expect from their parents, and once children know what is expected of them, they are more likely to live up to these expectations. They are also more likely to feel secure in their position in the family, and are thus more likely to be cooperative.

### **Peer Group Communication**

A peer group is a social group of people who share similar interest like age, background, or social status. The members of this group are likely to influence a person's beliefs and behaviour. Thus it is important for socialization. Positive peer group communication is able to provide gender roles, unity, collectivism in behaviours etc. Generally schools are the cultivators of effective peer relationships among the children.

Peer influence or pressure is where an individual feels indirectly pushed into changing behaviour to get in touch with their peers. Taking up smoking and underage drinking some of the visible examples of this peer influence. In spite of the often negative peer pressure can be used positively to encouraging studies, or not to engage in activities such as smoking, drinking or abuses of any kind. Adolescence is a period characterized by experimentation, and adolescents typically spend a lot of time with their peers in social contexts. Teenagers compel each other to go along with certain beliefs or behaviours. Studies have shown that there must take instant care and healthy communication environment to gain a better understanding about the effects of peer pressure. This will allow parents and teachers to handle and understand their children in a better way.

### **Teacher-Student Communication**

Effective teaching depends on to a great extend on the communication skills, knowledge and experience of the teacher. They function many roles in the teaching and learning process. A teacher needs to act as a mentor of his/her students. The person must able to coordinate all the children's activities contribute effective knowledge and skills. More over the person need to satisfy the student's expectation about studies and career. The functions of a teacher- student relationship is to persuade the children to take up challenges,

communicate well with children who come from different backgrounds regarding their personal as well as academic situations. It will make the children to be more attached to the teacher and their by improve their academic performance. Positive teacher- student communication will help to understand the children's academic-non-academic abilities.

### **Group Communication**

The term group communication refers to the messages that are exchanged among a group included with diverse members. These messages can be verbal or nonverbal, which are important to groups because it is through the exchange of messages that group members participate, maintain the group identity, determine goals, motivate participation, and do the many things that keep the group intact. Friendship circles, work teams, committees, and sports teams are all examples of groups.

Individuals belong to many types of groups. The quality of people's everyday lives depends in important ways on the groups to which they belong. Much of the work and many of the decisions that shape the world depend on the actions that groups take. Groups are important because they influence the way in which people experience and understand the world. During adolescence, children tend to make group relations which determine their interests and tastes later. The study of group communication helps further the understanding of how groups function in influencing individuals and society.

### **Communication and Personality Development of Adolescents**

Helping the child on their various stages of emotional and personality development is a complex and difficult task. Renowned psychologist Carl Rogers (1951) emphasized how childhood experiences affect personality development. Many psychologists believe that there are certain critical periods in personality development i.e. periods when the adolescents will be more sensitive to certain environmental factors. Most experts believe that adolescent's experiences in the family are important for his or her personality development, although not exactly as described by Erikson's (1963) stages. Child Development Index has identified nine traits that may contribute to a child's personality development being challenging or difficult:

- Activity level (how active the child is generally)
- Distractibility (degree of concentration and paying attention when the child is not particularly interested)
- Intensity (how loud the child is)
- Regularity (the predictability of biological functions like appetite and sleep)
- Sensory threshold (how sensitive the child is to physical stimuli: touch, taste, smell, sound, light)
- Approach/withdrawal (characteristic responses of a child to a new situation or to strangers)
- Adaptability (how easily the child adapts to transitions and changes such as switching to a new activity)
- Persistence (stubbornness, inability to give up)
- Mood (tendency to react to the world primarily in a positive or negative way)

These traits are enduring personality characteristics that are neither good nor bad. Early on, parents, peers, teachers can work with the adolescent's temperamental traits rather than oppose them. Later, as the child grows up positive guidance can help them to adapt to his or her own world.

### **Interventions in Adolescent Age**

Adolescence is a period of intense and rapid development and is characterised by numerous developmental tasks including gaining new and more mature relationships with others, achieving masculine or feminine social role and achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults. When adolescent development is successful, the result is a biologically mature individual equipped with the capacity to form close relationships and the cognitive and psychological resources to face the challenges of adult life (Hazen, Schlozman & Beresin, 2008). For some young people this period is particularly difficult because of the presence of family and community risk factors such as parental mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse or neglect that predispose them to poor developmental outcomes.

### **Counselling as an Intervention**

Counselling interventions have been defined as a unique interrelationship between a client and a counsellor. It aims to create a change and a growth in three main areas:

- Personal development,
- Social adjustment
- Professional development.

The aim to facilitate clients to progress in exploration process has been greatly based on the concept that through connecting with vital healthy cores and by changing feelings, thoughts and behaviour in an individual way, the client can progress in the healing process and to fulfil his or her human potential. Based on the nature and application it has various levels such as career counselling, family counselling, individual counselling, group counselling, crisis interventions (Situations where a person is making suicidal threats, experiencing threat, witnessing homicide or suicide, or experiencing personal loss causes personal trauma) etc.

### **Psycho Social Services (PSS) as a Counselling Intervention**

Psycho Social Services is a school based health clinic and counselling programme launched by the Directorate of Social Justice in government schools of Kerala. It is the only one of its kind in the country – a government school based counselling programme covering more than hundreds of schools in all districts in the state, addressing the psycho social needs of adolescent children led by a team of female counsellors with post graduate qualification in Social work or Psychology. It is being implemented in selected schools under ICDS project area through ICDS network. Health checkups and related activities are part of PSS and it is implemented in co-ordination with other departments such as Health, Education and Local self Government Institutions of each district. Today PSS caters 666 schools across Kerala. District wise officers were appointed to look after the proper functioning of the programme.

The origin of PSS traces back to *Kisori Sakthi Yojana* introduced by the Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, New Delhi. It was the first initiative to provide assistance to the adolescent girl children in an Indian perspective. It

was implemented in 2006 and the programmes and activities carried out under the scheme include the empowerment through *anganawadi* adolescent clubs, conducting health checkups, life skill education and vocational training for adolescent girls. Adolescent girls clubs in the ICDS network and an effort made to ensure all adolescent girls become its members. These clubs meet at least once a month and have elected leaders. The KSY have an expenditure of Rs. 1.10 lakhs sanctioned for each of its projects. Later it was taken over by the Kerala state government and implemented as PSS for benefiting both adolescent girls and boys. Social Welfare department introduced it during 2008-2009 as an adolescent clinic/counselling programme. The centrally sponsored scheme targeted girls in the age group of 11 to 18 years with the objective of improving their health as well as psycho social needs, and visualizes the combined efforts of social welfare, health and education departments. Primarily the school based counselling scheme was introduced in 163 selected government schools and aided girl's high school and higher secondary schools covering all 14 districts of Kerala. These were under the control limit of respective district ICDS project officer, Social Welfare Department, Kerala. Consistent with the guidelines, SWD appointed postgraduate counsellors with MSW/MA psychology qualifications in these 163 schools. Their orientation and training programmes were carried out by Loyola Extension Services, Loyola College of Social Sciences, and Thiruvananthapuram. The key activities of counsellors in these 163 schools include:

- Counselling
- Conducting summer classes
- Parental education
- Health checkups and related activities

The objectives of PSS include:

- Provide support and resources to students at all levels, to their families, and communities as well as educators.
- Facilitate the educational, personal, social, emotional and career development of students in schools and the community.
- Provide opportunities to develop knowledge and an appreciation of themselves and others.
- Opportunities to develop relationship skills, ethical standards and sense of responsibility.
- Opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop educational goals suited to their needs, interests, and abilities.
- Provide information which would enable them to make decisions about life and career opportunities
- Access to remedial and crisis interventions and referrals.
- To lay foundation for proper psychological and social development of adolescent children
- To equip them to improve and upgrade their home-based and vocational skill

- Promote their overall development, including awareness about their health (reproductive and sexual), personal hygiene, nutrition, family welfare and management.
- To take all measure as to facilitate their marrying only after attaining the age of 18 years
- To gain a better understanding of their environment related social issues and the impact on their lives
- To encourage adolescent children to initiate various activities to be productive and useful members of the society.

Activities under the club includes health and family life education, Charter meetings on topics like reproductive health, pregnancy, child birth, contraceptive, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and AIDs, handled by experts, teenage clinics, leadership training and career guidance etc.

These are performed with the support of Health, Education and Local Self Government Institutions. Later the programme was extended to 251 schools under state plan scheme as Psycho Social Services to adolescent Girls in 2009-10 by understanding its importance among adolescent children without any gender biases. Presently each district conduct more than 50 Psycho Social Services in their schools effectively under the administration of ICDS and observation of SWD.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to understand the role of Psycho Social Services, a counselling communication programme implemented by Government of Kerala, in enhancing communication effectiveness among the adolescent children in schools, focusing on the role of this project in interpersonal communication among adolescents, adolescent- parent communication adolescent- teacher communication and adolescents' group communication

### **Method & Analysis**

Data was collected using a questionnaire which was administered among students from three schools: GVHSS Vellanad (Thiruvananthapuram), GHSS Kalamassery (Eranakulam) and GHSS Malur (Kannur). Patterns of use and counselee-counsellor communication status were analysed with the demographic factors to understand their association with PSS. And also the study evaluates the level communication with the status of communication to understand the communication effectiveness of adolescent's various domains of communication. 270 students participated in the survey which was conducted with proper consent of the authorities and with the help of counselors and the gender distribution of the sample is almost equal with a simple majority (50.7%) of male students. The raw data processed with the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS employing Pearson Chi-Square test and one way ANOVA to determine the significance of relationship between or among the variables. In addition to this, focus group interview was also conducted to elicit perspectives of the counsellors towards various facets of PSS.

### **Usage Pattern of PSS**

This section identifies how the children are using Psycho Social Counselling programme for their adolescent period of development. It analyses the frequency of

attendance, frequency of visiting the counsellor for personal advices and active participation of the children in the PSS counselling programme. The variables tested here with the school, gender and class to understand whether it will have any influence on the PSS counselling programme. The three schools taken from the three districts are comparing with each other to identify how the usage pattern of PSS influenced each.

There are slight variations in the distribution of class wise analysis of the data. 9<sup>th</sup> standard students constituted majority of responses (33.7%) comparing with other classes. The probability value (0.00) is highly significant in the case of school wise analysis and thus the results indicated that school has a role in the usage pattern of PSS by school children. 152 students out of 270 samples attend the counsellor often. And also it is visible that a vast majority of girls (60.2) and boys (52.6) are the users of PSS counselling programme. In the gender wise categorization there are fewer females and majority (32.8) of males attending the PSS counselling programme rarely. And thus the gender difference of the counselling programme is statistically significant (p value .039). Gender seems relevant for the counselling programme. The probability value (.000) states there is higher level of significance in the association between school and pattern of use of the counselling service for personal advices. In other words school has a major role in providing personal advices to the adolescents and it influences the PSS.

Boys (33.6) and girls (36.1) often visit the counsellor for personal suggestions. They are neither regularly or nor often visit the counsellor for their personal benefits. A majority of boys (33.6) and girls (36.1) use the service for personal advice. Thus the probability value (.131) also rejects the relationship between gender and approach of children in PSS for personal advices. The probability value (0.00) shows there is higher level of significance in the school variations. And thus it affects the level of participation in adolescents. The probability value (.165) shows the participation level of PSS, gender based classification has no significance.

### **Counsellor-Counselee Communication Status**

Counsellor- counselee communication status denotes that how the adolescents are free to approach counsellors when they are needed. The data here probe that whether there is school, gender, and class influences the counsellor- counselee relationship. The data here is classified into three levels i.e. low level communication, medium level of communication and higher level of communication.

The difference between school and counsellor- counselee communication is statistically significant ( $P = .041$ ). Thus the schools have a role in determining counsellor-counsellor communication status. The difference between gender and counsellor- counselee relationship is statistically insignificant ( $P \text{ value} = .530$ ). The probability value (0.00) expresses the difference between classes wise communication status is statistically highly significant. The communication status and class have a prominent role of relationship.

### **Role of PSS in Counselee's Communication**

Through the data here expressed, the researcher probe into the facts that whether PSS influenced the improvements of adolescent's different spheres of academic-non academic life. Thus the researcher here tries to find out how PSS determined the effectiveness of their interpersonal, family, classroom and public communication status. The effectiveness of communication here is classified into three levels such as higher, medium and lower.

From the table, the interpersonal skills are determined by the approach of children on various occasions in their peer relations.

**Table 1: Interpersonal Communication by Level of Communication Status**

Group Statistics					One-Way ANOVA Results				
Level of Communication	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Between/ Within Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Lower	34	2.97	2.928	.502	Between Groups	410.73	2	24.96	.000
Medium	97	4.94	3.269	.332	Within Groups	2196.39	267		
High	139	6.58	2.536	.215					
Total	270	5.54	3.113	.189		2607.13	269		

ANOVA determined that difference of mean scores of effective interpersonal communication status among adolescents from the three schools was statistically highly significant ( $f(2,267) = 24.965$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Adolescents have higher communication status ( $M = 6.58$ ,  $SD = 2.536$ ) maintained higher level of effective interpersonal communication skills and lower level communication status ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 2.928$ ) had poor interpersonal skills.

From this finding it can be concluded that Psycho Social Services have well rooted among the adolescents to improve their interpersonal relationships by enabling them to communicate freely between peer groups. The strong interpersonal communication skills benefits to the adolescents to make healthy relationships and there by achieve pleasure and skills in this specific period of time.

The researcher identified the data through understanding the children’s family environment and assessed whether they have a role in their family environment

**Table 2: Family Communication by Level of Communication Status**

Group Statistics					One-Way ANOVA Results				
Level of Communication	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Between/ Within Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Lower	34	7.82	3.205	.550	Between Groups	28.738	2	1.716	.182
Medium	97	6.97	3.114	.316	Within Groups	2235.647	267		
High	139	7.58	2.645	.224					
Total	270	7.39	2.901	.177		2264.385	269		

ANOVA found that difference of mean scores of effective family communication status among adolescents from the three schools was statistically insignificant ( $f(2,267) = 1.716$ ,  $p = .182$ ). Adolescents have lower communication status ( $M = 7.82$ ,  $SD = 3.205$ ) maintained higher level of effective family communication skills. Those who have higher level communication status ( $M = 7.58$ ,  $SD = 2.645$ ) had decreased family communication skills.



From this finding it can be concluded that Psycho Social Services haven't make effective interventions among the adolescents to improve their family relationships by enabling them to communicate freely in a homely environment. The poorer family communication skills evident that there are some other factors including insecurities, constrained spaces for opinion, the system of family etc determining the family atmosphere of the adolescent children in these schools.

The table below explains how the communication level of children affects the class room relationship of adolescent children.

**Table 3. Student-Teacher Communication by Level of Communication Status**

Group Statistics					One-Way ANOVA Results				
Level of Communication	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Between / Within Groups	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Lower	34	3.91	5.053	.867	Between Groups	336.031	2	13.313	.000
Medium	97	5.25	4.023	.409	Within Groups	3369.732	267		
High	139	6.98	2.655	.225					
Total	270	5.97	3.712	.226		3705.763	269		

ANOVA shows that difference of mean scores of effective student-teacher communication status among adolescents from the three schools was statistically highly significant ( $f(2,267) = 13.313$ )  $p = .000$ ). Adolescents have high communication skills ( $M = 6.98$ ,  $SD = 2.655$ ) maintained higher level of effective student-teacher communication status. Those who have lower level communication status ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 5.053$ ) had inferior student-teacher relationship and communication skills. From this finding it can be concluded that Psycho Social Services have visible prominence in making effective classroom environment among the adolescents. The effective rapport build between student and teacher's communication indicate that the conventional teaching methods and culture has revamped in the schools. There by interventions such as PSS has placed its role in the academic management of schools among the children to make it healthier than before.

The table given below interprets how PSS has helped the adolescent children to improve their public communication level.

**Table 4. Group-Public Communication by Level of Communication Status**

Group Statistics					One-Way ANOVA Results				
Level of Communication	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Between/ Within Groups	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Lower	34	2.21	4.604	.790	Between Groups	288.121	2	8.906	.000
Medium	97	3.53	4.260	.433	Within Groups	4318.708	267		
High	139	5.09	3.688	.313					
Total	270	4.16	4.138	.252		4606.830	269		

ANOVA interprets that difference of mean scores of effective group-public communication status among adolescents from the three schools was statistically highly significant ( $F(2,267) = 8.906$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Adolescents have high communication skills ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 3.688$ ) maintained higher level of group and public communication status. Those who have lower level communication status ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = 4.604$ ) had less public communication skills and relationship. From this finding it can be concluded that Psycho Social Services have prominence in making effective public access among the adolescents. The group or public skills indicate that the children are competent enough to the societal needs in future. The PSS interventions benefits to them to avoid public inhibitions and there by ensure sociability of the children in schools.

### Summary of Findings

Major findings of the study are:

- School and class have higher level of association with adolescent's attendance in Psycho Social Services counselling programme.
- Adolescent's attendance in PSS counselling programme for seeking personal advices is largely influenced by the school and class.
- Active participation of younger children is highly associated with the school. The participation level and association with class seems insignificant.
- The counsellor-counselee communication status and relationship between both are highly significant by the influence of factors like school and class.
- The adolescent's interpersonal communication skills are highly nurtured by the PSS. Adolescents who maintain higher level of communication status have high interpersonal communication abilities and vice versa.
- Adolescent's who maintain lower communication abilities have effective family communication status and vice versa.
- The classroom communication between student and teacher is influenced by the effective interventions made by PSS counselling communication.
- The group/public communication abilities of adolescent children are improved by the influence of PSS.
- Gender is an influencing factor for determining the adolescent's attendance in PSS counselling. Still gender seems irrelevant in their approach for counsellor for seeking personal advices and the active participation level of counsellor- counselee relationship.

In a discussion with counsellors from the three districts most of them pointed certain improvements need to be taken into consideration for the better reach of counselling programme. Some major suggestions they had put forward includes:

- A constant monitoring system must be established for measuring counsellor's performance and grievances.
- The programme demands a standard working procedure for making effective interventions to carry out.

- Enable effective review meetings monthly to address needs of the counsellors in schools.
- Ensure the counsellors are satisfied with their working environment
- Enable counsellors to cooperate effectively with Local Self Government Institutions when the need arises.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In general, PSS have made notable changes in dealing with adolescents in schools. The infrastructure, counsellor's approach, accessibility are the major factors identified to challenge the effectiveness of the programme. The schools and classes found influenced by the programme is an example of providing better administration of the counselling intervention. Recognizing adolescents as unique individuals increases the potential for trust and openness and provides a foundation for giving them voice. By listening to adolescents really matters which enable them to challenge with complicated life situations.

Based on the study conducted, it has several suggestions for improvement which initiates further studies in the field.

- The study could be conducted in detail by taking up a much larger sample to make it as a more general one. The same study can be replicated to the other districts to understand the overall impact of the PSS counselling programme among adolescents in the schools of Kerala.
- The study can be extended to counsellors to understand their level of understanding about the programme and their limitations.
- The present study focused on the communication aspect of the programme. Further researches can be initiated by considering its socio-developmental factors also.
- The research could be extended by adding some other factors including satisfaction level of adolescent's and counsellors, content analysis of the counselling programme and methods, factors influencing the communication process etc.
- And moreover the analysis could be done more detailed to understand close associations and factors driving the PSS counselling communication programme.

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