

Sophia College - J. N Heredia Centre for Counselling: End of Year Report 2023-2024

Report by: Counsellor- Sukrutee Bhosale

Co-ordinator: Jennie Mendes

Introduction

The academic year 2023-2024 commenced on June 15, 2023, and concluded on April 30, 2024. During this period, a total of 375 sessions were conducted both online and offline at the counselling centre. Of these, 333 were individual sessions, 11 were emergency cases, 11 were parent meetings, 6 were workshops, and 14 were group sessions. Additionally, the counsellors regularly met with Ms. Jennie Mendes for discussions, updates, and supervision of all activities.

Systems such as an intake form, separate email ID, and Google forms for consent, introduced by previous counsellors, were utilised by the counsellors during this academic year as well. These systems have streamlined the counselling process at the centre, ensuring efficient management of regular reports, client lists, and other relevant documents.

Students raised a wide range of issues during the year. A significant number reported struggles with anxiety, panic attacks, extreme distress leading to self-harm, and suicidal ideation. Such cases were categorised as emergencies, and in accordance with protocol, guardians were informed, and further psychiatric care from mental health professionals beyond the college's capacity was recommended to address their intensive needs. Themes including struggles with peers, studies, curriculum, authority figures, personal issues, dysfunctional family dynamics, relationship issues, anger, and depression were also noted.

The majority of students responded positively to counselling approaches, workshops, group sessions, and other activities conducted by the counselling centre, demonstrating resilience in addressing difficult aspects of their lives.

Counsellors employed an eclectic approach, utilising one-on-one sessions, group sessions, workshops, parent meetings, college committee meetings, and competitions to facilitate counselling. They made diligent efforts to address student concerns and needs to the best of their abilities. A comprehensive list of activities conducted at the counselling centre throughout the academic year is provided below.

Programs and Initiative

Activities conducted during the year:

Name of the activity	Description
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
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Orientation for students	Students were introduced to the counselling centre, its brief history, purposes and how they can avail of its services.
Group session for JC Classes	10 group sessions for various divisions of the junior college were conducted. The group session was designed like a workshop for the students focusing on specific issues as observed from previous individual sessions. Some of the themes touched upon in the group sessions were facing peer pressure to consume alcohol, bullying, Name calling, targeting, exclusions, bunking college etc.
Group session with FYJC	Group session where coping strategies for the anxiety and panic attacks were discussed and the students were encouraged to share the same strategies to help a fellow classmate in a similar situation if they come across any situation like these.
Group session with SYJC	Group session where coping strategies for the anxiety and panic attacks were discussed and the students were encouraged to share the same strategies to help a fellow classmate in a similar situation if they come across any situation like these.
Slogan writing competition	Slogan writing competition was organised for students to come up with creative and interesting slogans for creating an awareness of alcohol abuse in young adults. The students came up with very interesting slogans. The slogans were also put up on the counselling centre notice board.
Skit presentation	Skit presentation activity was arranged where students had to form a group of 8 and had to present the skit. There were more than 10 groups who presented skits, the skits were based on peer pressure/ peer influence on alcohol consumption.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
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Workshop on Research in practicality	Two day workshops had been organised for the students focusing on the scope of research in the practical world. This was to discuss the field of research, the ethics, the scope, the dynamics, difficulties etc. a researcher can face. Ms. Khushbu Khatri had been invited to do the workshop for the same. She is full time focused on research in the public health sector, currently working with TISS in association with the government on various policy evaluation projects.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.

Alender

Anger management workshop	Anger management workshop was conducted the focus was to provide them with tools and techniques to safely manage their stress levels and avoid triggers that can cause feelings of anger. The workshop also aimed at anyone that wants to understand anger in more detail and learn to control their emotions and those of people around them.
Workshop on How to deal with negativity on social media	Social media can be a great place to keep up with friends, make plans or hear about events. At the same time, it can be a bombardment of news and information, which can get stressful. Thus a workshop on how to deal with negativity on social media was conducted.
Dealing with uncertainty	The workshop was conducted to teach students on how to deal with uncertainty as often life is filled with uncertainty and worries about the future. While many things remain outside your control, our mindset is key to coping with difficult circumstances and confidently facing the unknown.
CUC	A meeting with CUC core members was held to understand the issues of the students at large and insights were received through this meeting.
Workshop- Introduction to Therapeutic Journaling	This workshop was conducted since there were increasing enquiries about therapeutic journaling in individual sessions. The workshop touched upon the basics of therapeutic journaling and how to get started.
Group session- End of Year reflections	The group session to reflect on the year that had been was focused on helping the participants take stock of the year that had been, the good, the bad and the neutral.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
Emotional regulation group session	This group session focused on emotional regulation, where the significance of acknowledging and expressing emotions rather than suppressing them was explored.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
Video shoot of the counselling centre and its activities	There was a video shoot of the various departments in the college by Mr Sanjeev Das and team. The counselling centre and its activities were highlighted through video bytes and an interview with Ms Jennie Medes.
Meeting with parent of student	Discussed the mental health challenges of the student and suggestions for further therapy outside of college.
Vigilance committee meeting	The meeting helped students who were under disciplinary action to undergo counselling if they wanted to.

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Summary Data

This is the summary of the activities conducted in the counselling centre for the academic year 2023-2024.

Summary of activities at J. N Heredia Counselling Centre for the Academic Year 2023-2024					
Month	Appointments	PTA	Workshop	Group session	Total
June	11	0	0	0	11
July	33	3	0	0	36
August	29	1	0	10	40
September	39	0	0	2	41
October	54	2	2	0	58
November	14	1	3	0	18
December	33	0	1	1	35
January	52	2	0	1	55
February	38	1	0	0	39
March	35	0	0	0	35
April	6	1	0	0	7
Total	344	11	6	14	375

Appointments refers to the one-on-one session with the students.

PTA refers to the parent meetings.

Workshop refers to the workshops conducted by the counselling centre.

Group Sessions refers to the group sessions conducted by the counselling centre.

Challenges and Opportunities

The primary challenge faced by the counselling centre is the lack of awareness about the available services on campus. Some students, even when aware, feel hesitant to schedule a session, indicating a need for increased visibility of the counsellors in the future.

Additionally, there are lingering stigmas surrounding mental health issues and therapy, particularly among parents, which can create barriers to students seeking help.

J. N Heredia

Another significant issue is the imbalance between the number of students and counsellors, making it challenging for everyone to access therapy. Due to this ratio, it's difficult to provide more than three to four sessions with a student, limiting the capacity to offer intensive care. As a result, students with greater needs may find the college counselling centre unable to provide the level of support required.

Future Plans and Goals

For the upcoming academic year, the counselling centre can enhance its collaboration with CUC and college clubs to elevate the visibility of its services and promote mental health awareness. Additionally, organising a presentation for parents of students can help diminish any stigma associated with their children seeking counselling services.

Furthermore, the counselling centre can extend its efforts to involve staff members. Equipping staff with mental health first aid training can better prepare them to address panic attacks that may occur during lectures or other academic settings.

Introducing a monthly support group allows students facing similar challenges to convene and address their issues collectively. This approach can be particularly beneficial given the limited capacity of the counselling centre for individual sessions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as counsellors, we acknowledge the challenges and successes we encountered throughout the academic year. Looking ahead, our aim is to enhance our preparedness by developing improved plans, acquiring additional training, and securing additional resources for the upcoming academic year. With these enhancements, we aspire to better serve the needs of our students and continue our commitment to their mental health and well-being.

