

# Factors determining the motivation of staffs and students in seeking counselling services

Sangay Tshering<sup>1✉</sup>, Sonam Zangmo<sup>2</sup>,  
Wangchuk Dorji<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> stshering.sce@rub.edu.bt  
Samtse College of Education  
(Bhutan)

<sup>2</sup> szangmo.sce@rub.edu.bt  
Samtse College of Education  
(Bhutan)

<sup>3</sup> wdorji.sce@rub.edu.bt  
Samtse College of Education  
(Bhutan)

✉ Corresponding author

**ABSTRACT:** *Despite the availability of professional counselling services at the Samtse College of Education, it has been documented that majority of the staff and students do not avail it. This study investigated the factors determining staff' and students' motivation in seeking counselling services of the college. A mixed research method specifically convergent parallel design was adopted for this study. A total of 64 staff of the college and 395 students across all the academic programme have responded to the survey questionnaire. Likewise, a total of 10 focus group interviews (2 FGI with staff and 8 FGI with students) was conducted. The findings revealed that although both staff and students understand the importance and possess positive attitudes towards counselling, they indicated numerous factors affecting their motivation to seek such services. The results showed lack of basic knowledge about counselling of students, awareness of services, infrastructural facilities, the culture of the college, professionalism of counsellors and belief systems of an individual person as the significant factors determining their motivation in seeking counselling services. Several recommendations are also proposed such as conducting separate orientation of counselling and instituting different modes of counselling services in the college.*

**KEYWORDS:** counselling service, motivation, perception, professional practices, mixed research methods, Samtse College of Education

→ Received 5/5/2022 → Revised manuscript received 6/8/2022 → Published 30/12/2022.

## 1. Introduction

The distinctive nature of human-being is to lead a happy and successful life. Accomplishing such a basic aspiration entails intricate balance among social, physical, emotional and intellectual spheres of one's life. Professional counselling service is seen a one of the significant strategies to nurture and address issues at any given stage of human development (Roaten et al., 2012). Unfortunately, young adults are vulnerable to many forms of mental health issues that pose enduring consequences in their lives. Many times, these issues concern problems with their family and friends, work and study-related stress, anxiety, depression, anger problems, self-esteem, alcohol and substance abuse (Pedrelli et al., 2015). Considering such risk factors, Samtse College of Education (SCE) offers in-person and online counselling services to help promote students' overall welfare. The College Counselling service team has been formed to create a positive and motivating environment

through various initiatives like general counselling, intervention programmes, personal-development training, and mindfulness practice sessions (SCE, 2020). Despite such encouraging initiatives, it has been observed that the majority of the staff and students do not avail counselling service in the college. The table below is a record of counselling services provided till mid-July, 2020 by one of the senior counselling faculty of the college. Table 1 shows the number of clients who have availed counselling services so far according to the record maintained by the college counselling team. The record clearly indicates a slow decline in the number of students seeking counselling service over the years with just one client in the year 2020.

As a higher educational institution, in the year 2020, SCE is home to 695 students who are future teachers, social workers and counsellors. It is of utmost importance to ensure that the future teachers, social workers and counsellors hold good conduct of behaviour and self-identity

in the society. However, problems with students' conduct and behaviour have been a recurring issue in the institution. In the past two years, most disciplinary cases were attributed to drugs and alcohol abuse (Dean of student affairs of SCE, personal communication, August 11, 2020). Not only that, but there may also be unrecognized mental health issues affecting the staff.

*Table 1. Record of counselling service sought till July 2020.*

Sl.no	YEAR	Within the College	Outside the college	Total
01	2015	7	1	8
02	2016	9	1	10
03	2017	7	2	9
04	2018	7	2	9
05	2019	4	1	5
06	Till July, 2020		1	1

Providing the right counselling service may help those students improve their mental wellbeing and avoid undesirable behaviors. However, it has become a challenge to provide counselling service to the students, as most of our students do not come forward to seek help (Dean of student affairs of SCE, personal communication, August 11, 2020) Although there is considerable amount of studies conducted on studying the factors determining the willingness to seek counselling service, most of these studies are based on international or regional contexts. Until now, only one study in the country has exclusively explored high school students' avoidance factors in seeking counselling which provided limited clue on higher education context (Choidup, 2020).

The aim of the study was to explore factors determining staff' and students' motivation in seeking counselling service. The study was guided by the following research questions.

**Main research question:** What are the factors determining staff and students' motivation in seeking counselling services in college?

**Sub questions:**

1. How do staff and students perceive seeking

counselling services?

2. What encourages staff and students to seek counselling service?

3. What hinders staff and students from seeking counselling service?

A mixed method design was adopted for the study. Mixed methods research involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, and has gained popularity because the isolated use of either the qualitative or quantitative approach fails to adequately address complex problems (Creswell, 2018).

**2. Literature review**

Counselling practice is a relatively new culture in Bhutan, in which "the movement of counselling as a profession began with school counselling following a Royal Decree issued by His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck on the 10th of January 1996" (Doma & Dolkar, 2019, p. 152). Counselling services in Bhutan were initiated a few decades ago and have been gaining popularity since then. Further, counselling service has been made a mandate in Bhutanese schools to help adolescents and juveniles with various problems. According to Eyo (2010), counselling is defined as a "professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared toward assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their environment and their world and also to develop adequate capacity for making wise choices and decisions" (p. 89). Thus, counselling helps in navigating through arrays of human issues with appropriate interventions and support.

Counselling services in higher education institution is one of the most essential services rendered to help promote student welfare. For example, Devi et al. (2013) found counselling services effective in easing out personal difficulties and improving the academic performance of the majority of college students. However, students' unwillingness to avail counselling services has been cited repeatedly in the research literature. The reasons for the unwilling attitude of students in terms of seeking counselling help have been discussed widely in many research papers (Kamunyu et al., 2016).

People often view themselves as being capable of solving their issues without any help from others (Topkaya, 2015; Watson, 2006). This attitude keeps them from sharing their concerns with an expert or seeking psychological help that is required (Topkaya, 2015). Similarly, a lack of knowledge about the importance of counselling and mental illness has been proved detrimental in seeking help from counsellors (Rastogi et al., 2012). While there is no previous research on university students, poor counselling room, help from a spiritual person and fear of breaking confidentiality were found to be the main avoidance factors for seeking counselling of high school students in Bhutan (Choidup, 2020).

A recent study found that one of the most prominent barriers for not seeking counselling services by college students is the social stigma around mental health issues and treatment in the community (Menendez et al., 2019). Further, Watson (2006) justifies that students are likely to feel discomfort seeking counselling help if the counsellors are their tutors. This often leads to seeking help from an unqualified person in dealing with the issues and may not receive the adequate treatment required (Watson, 2006). A research conducted in universities of Kenya found six factors; gender of the counsellor, social mistrust, lack of confidence in counsellors, confidentiality level, peer pressure and help other significant persons which determines college students' motivation to seek counselling services (Kamunyu et al., 2016). In the Asian context, Choi and Miller (2014) describes how there are very strong societal and cultural norms against seeking counselling help. They add that due to such strong public and self-stigma, individuals fear that seeking counselling will damage the family's reputation thus gradually developing unwillingness to seek professional help. The factors affecting the motivation to seek counselling are complex which broadly range from personal, social, cultural, religious and even the professional competency of the counsellors. With scanty previous research on this topic in the higher education setting of Bhutan, this study will help to better understand factors affecting the motivation to seek counselling and further improve existing services.

### 3. Methodology

The overall research was guided by the principles of 'Pragmatism'. Highlighting the essence of pragmatism, Creswell (2018) contends that a pragmatic approach allows areas that are of interest to be studied, embraces methods that are appropriate, and uses findings in a positive manner in harmony with a recognized value system held by the researcher. Pragmatism provides the underlying philosophical framework for mixed method research and offers the opportunity to explore complex phenomena. Thus, the unique features of the pragmatic perspective were congruent with the nature of this research.

A mixed method design was adopted for the study. Mixed methods research involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, and has gained popularity because the isolated use of either the qualitative or quantitative approach fails to adequately address complex problems (Creswell, 2018). Of the different types of research designs within the mixed methods research, this study adopted the convergent parallel design considering the nature of the study and need to complete within stipulated time. Creswell (2014) describes, "a convergent parallel mixed methods design will involve simultaneously collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, merging the data and using the result to understand the problem investigated" (p.540).

The research participants were the staff and students at Samtse College of Education. With the use of random sampling method, out of 105 staff, 64 (29 lecturers and 35 non-teaching staff) and 395 out of 695 students across five different academic programmes have responded to the survey questionnaire. Likewise, a total of 10 focus group interviews (2 with staff and 8 with students) with at least 4 participants in each group was conducted. The survey questionnaire featured a demographic section and 29 Likert-type items assessing motivation in seeking counselling services. A six-point Likert-type scale with the categories labelled left to right as Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The survey was administered online

through google form. Prior to data collection, the survey questionnaire was validated by running a Cronbach’s alpha test for 20 respondents in SPSS. Similarly, 14 guiding questions of focus group interview was validated by a senior researcher of the college.

The survey data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25) and used descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Raw data gathered from focus group interviews were transcribed, colour coded and categorised into various themes for the interpretation of the qualitative components of the data. To protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used: CSG (college staff’ focus-group) and SFG (students’ focus-group).

#### 4. Results

This section presents the results under three broad themes; a) Perception on counselling, b) Factors affecting the motivation to seek counselling service, and c) Perspectives on professional competency of counsellors of the college.

##### 4.1. Theme 1: Perception on counselling

Perception on counselling consists of the participant’ thoughts over importance and willingness to seek counselling in the college.

The descriptive analysis of the item 1 ‘counselling service is important in college’, CSS (College staff) with mean score and standard deviation (M=5.19; SD=0.732), and CSD (college students) with M=5.49; SD=0.849 shows higher side of six-point Likert scale without much variability. This implies both staff and college students strongly perceive counselling

as an important service in the college. Further, the analysis of qualitative data also affirm that both staff and students perceive counselling as an important service for it is natural for every human being to experience difficulties in any given stage of life. The students have expressed experiencing numerous difficulties such as relationship, academic, psychological and substance abuse (SFG1, SFGG2 & SFG5). For instance, SFG1 has stated *“So I think they do face lots of academic issues and problems together with the pressure from the family. So, I feel that it’s very important for the students as well as the college counselling department to like, provide counselling services”*. SFG2 further added *“now, we have these drinking habits, we have the smoking habits, we have the habits that we want to drop”*. Similarly, staff also admits its importance when CSG1 commented *“Yes, definitely. It is important, but I’m sure at our level, we’ll be able to manage to some extent. We are grown up, we have the skills to manage. But there will be times where we could really need to avail the services”*.

With the scores of staff (M=5.22; SD=0.991) for item 2, (M=5.00; SD=0.873) for Item 3 and (M=4.77; SD=0.904) for Item 4 and CSD (M=5.45; SD=0.736) for Item 2, (M=5.27; SD=0.834) for Item 3 and (M=5.20; SD=0.872) indicates that all the staff and students see counselling as service which will address emotional difficulties, empower life skills and promote overall well-being.

Likewise, the staff also agree with the benefits when CSG1 stated *“We also have our own problems or professional problems or personal problems. I think counselling services can jump*

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on perception of counselling.

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I feel counselling service is important in college.	5.19	.732	5.49	.849
2	I think counselling is an effective strategy in addressing emotional difficulties.	5.22	.881	5.45	.736
3	I think seeking counselling would benefit my overall wellbeing.	5.00	.873	5.27	.834
4	I feel availing professional counselling service will empower me with life skills.	4.77	.904	5.20	.872
5	I think only people with mental health issues will seek counselling service.	2.70	1.734	2.63	1.57

in help. So therefore, counselling service is not only for the students, but it is also necessary even for the staff”. Similarly, with CSS (M=2.70; SD=1.73) and CSD (M=2.63; SD=1.57) for the item 5 ‘only people with mental health issues will seek counselling service’ suggests that both staff and students see counselling for all as not only for persons with mental health issues. This indicates that both students and staff are generally clear about the importance and benefits of counselling service.

For item 1 ‘I am willing to actively seek counselling, if need be’ with CSS (M=5.02; SD=1.03) and CSD (M=5.28; SD=1.32) shows that both the staff and students have the willingness to actively seek counselling if need be. However, response to item 2 with CSS (M=3.67; SD=1.50) and CSD (M=3.89; SD=1.45), it implies somewhat agreeing to seek counselling if referred by another person. For item 3 ‘I am able to deal with my personal matters without counselling service’ with (M=4.59; SD=1.05) of CSS and (M=3.94; SD=1.32) of CSD, the staff agree whereas students indicated somewhat agree in his/her ability to deal with personal matters. With CSS (M=4.55; SD=0.975) and CSD (M=4.89; SD=0.901) of item 4 ‘counselling services will provide a viable solution to my problems’ reveals that they perceive counselling as a service to provide solution to a problem. For instance, SFG5 described “Counselling service provided in Samtse College of Education is based on emotional, social, behavioral and personal problems to solution”. It seems the staff also tend to see counselling as giving solutions to problems as evident in this conversation

“Even to the students what kind of the problem that they have not tackled and know the sound solution that they have provided and know how the person is doing right now” (CSG1).

The quantitative data also shows that with CSS (M=5.45; SD=0.890) and CSD (M=5.49; SD=0.755) of item 5, both staff and students are fully aware about the existence of counselling service in the college and with CSS (M=2.30; SD=1.41) and CSD (M=2.53; SD=1.63) indicates that they have not availed counselling service. However, qualitative data shows that the majority of students are just aware of the existence of counselling services and possess scanty or no information about the types of services, whereabouts of infrastructural facilities and who are the counsellors. For example, SFG2 stated “Yes, we have heard but actually, where is the counselling room?” The students reported knowing about such services through only a few channels such as brief orientation upon initial admission and some occasional emails” (SFG1, SFG2 & SFG3). Although the staff know who the counsellor is, they also seem to have scanty information about the counselling room and activities related to counselling. Interestingly, not a single research participant has availed any counselling service despite their willingness to seek it. In contrast, some students feel that if many seek counselling, it simply would mean something problematic at personal and college level. For instance, SFG1 said “What I feel like many students going to counselling also indicates something bad for the college. It means something is wrong with the system and students”.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on willingness to seek counselling

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I am willing to actively seek counselling, if need be.	5.02	1.03	5.28	.894
2	I will seek counselling if I am asked to seek counselling by another person.	3.67	1.50	3.89	1.45
3	I am able to deal with my personal matters without counselling service.	4.59	1.05	3.94	1.32
4	I think that the counselling services will provide viable solution to my problems.	4.55	.975	4.89	.901
5	I am aware of the counselling services offered by the counselling team in the college.	5.45	.890	5.49	.755
6	I have availed counselling service in the college.	2.30	1.41	2.53	1.63

**4.2. Theme 2: Factors affecting motivation to seek counselling**

The motivation to seek counselling will be affected by several factors such as basic knowledge of counselling, professionalism of counsellor, infrastructural facility and personal belief system.

The quantitative analysis of the item 1 *“Having a basic knowledge of counselling will encourage me to seek counselling service”* of CSS (M=4.77; SD=0.771) and CSD (M=4.97; SD=.0.943) shows that staff and students agree basic knowledge of counselling is one of the factors behind their motivation to seek counselling. Moreover, qualitative analysis surfaced the need to create more awareness about the importance, process and existing facilities of counselling services of the college. For example, SFG1 said *“I do not know what kind of problems should be actually consulted with the counsellors. Firstly, this awareness should be there”*.

Interestingly, for item 2 *“I do not seek counselling because there is no dedicated room of counselling service in the college”* with CSS (M=2.78; SD=1.43) and CSD (M=2.78; SD=1.47) shows that having dedicated room does not affect the motivation to seek counselling of both staff and

students. However qualitative analysis points out the need to have diverse facilities and strategies of counselling to accommodate individual differences and preferences (CSG2, SFG1, SFG2 & SFG6). The majority of participants have strongly recommended different modes such as; dedicated rooms, awareness programs, observing national and international days, online counselling, counselling apps and making the services more vibrant than today. For example, SFG1 emphasised *“I feel that some people may not be able to express themselves in person. So therefore, I feel that the flexibility of availing the service should also be made available through their mobile phones through text”*. Furthermore, SFG2 has stated *“I think college should make counselling services visible, I don’t think it is visible right now. They could observe counselling week, something like that, global days and make students aware of the counselling services, things like that”*. Many strategies are recommended to make the counselling service of the college more vibrant than now.

The quantitative data analysis of item 1 shows that both staff (M=4.84; SD=0.979) and students (M=5.23; SD=0.979) agree with the counsellor’s personality in affecting the

*Table 5. Descriptive statistics on basic knowledge of counselling*

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	Having a basic knowledge of counselling will encourage me to seek counselling service.	4.77	.771	4.97	.943
2	I do not seek counselling because there is no dedicated room of counselling service in the college.	2.78	1.43	2.78	1.47

*Table 6. Descriptive statistics on professionalism of counsellors*

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I would seek counselling services if the counsellors are open, friendly and welcoming.	4.84	.979	5.23	.979
2	I would seek counselling services if confidentiality is maintained.	5.11	1.14	5.42	.884
3	I would seek counselling services if the counsellors are known to me.	3.64	1.53	4.08	1.36
4	I would prefer to seek counselling by counsellors from outside the college.	3.73	1.49	3.69	1.41

motivation to seek counselling. All the research participants believe qualities of a counsellor such as approachability, friendliness, openness as the key traits of a professional counsellor. However, for item 2, CSS (M=5.11; SD=1.14) and CSD (M=5.42; SD=0.884), they strongly agree implying confidentiality as an integral factor of counselling.

The qualitative data analysis also confirms that the majority of the participants emphasize ‘confidentiality’ as a very important factor affecting the motivation to seek counselling. They expressed feeling insecure, unsafe and guilty, fearing that their secrets may be known by friends and other people and may become a victim of social stigma. For instance, SFG5 stated *“Students feel shy or lose confidence to share with teachers because they think teachers may share it with other teachers. Similarly, students also think that teachers may think badly upon their problem”*. Similar views are expressed by staff when CSG1 remarked *“We don’t come forward because of the stigma attached to visiting the counselling services because there’s a negative connotation”*.

For item 3 ‘I would seek counselling services if the counsellors are known to me’, staff (M=3.64; SD=1.53) have somewhat agreed whereas students (M=4.08; SD=1.36) rated agree. This indicates some reservation by the staff to seek counselling from someone who is known but for student’s relationship with counsellors does not affect their motivation. Likewise, CSG1 said *“In the same organization, same level so people may not like to visit the same friends”*. The same

feeling was expressed by SFG2 *“I think because most of the counsellors are tutors, we wanted us to feel comfortable and scared to talk about the topic”*. In case of item 4 “I would prefer to seek counselling by counsellors from outside the college” with CSS (M=3.73; SD=1.49) and CSD (M=3.69; SD=1.41) indicates somewhat agree to seek counselling from outside the college. The qualitative analysis also found that there are some students who seek counselling from outside the college because they were referred by the medical doctor (SFG1).

In response to item 1 ‘I can solve personal problems on my own’, staff (M=4.33; SD=1.00) and students (M=4.03; SD=1.30) agreed that they believe in their own ability to solve personal problems. For example, SFG1 stated *“I think our problems should be solved by ourselves. In my case, I watch motivational videos, biographies of successful people, time also heals”*. Further CSG1 added *“It is important, but I’m sure at our level, we’ll be able to manage to some extent”*. Similarly, for item 2 ‘I do not seek counselling as I do not like to share my personal problems with others’ staff (M=3.13; SD=1.44) and students (M=3.21; SD=1.44) show both have rated somewhat agree implying that they feel quite reluctant to share their personal problem with others. According to SFG5 *“most students do not come forward to seek counselling services because they feel shy or think that their problem might be known by other friends. So, they keep it a secret and do not share any problem”*. Similar opinions were expressed by staff *“Sometimes we tend to feel that if I share everything with him*

Table 7. Descriptive statistics on personal beliefs and religion

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I can solve personal problems on my own.	4.33	1.00	4.03	1.30
2	I do not seek counselling as I do not like to share my personal problems with others.	3.13	1.44	3.21	1.44
3	If I seek counselling, I will be considered as emotionally weak person by others.	2.52	1.43	2.81	1.51
4	I browse the internet to help myself for any personal matters.	4.02	1.39	4.18	1.37
5	My religion encourages seeking counselling.	3.11	1.47	3.18	1.50

tomorrow that might know that to somebody else and so ethical issues people doubt” (CSG1). Both staff (M=4.02; SD=1.39) and students (M=4.18; SD=1.37), thus revealing that they browse the internet for solutions. For item 5, both ratings somewhat agree indicating that their religions encourage them to seek counselling. The qualitative findings also show that religion has no influence over the decision to seek counselling as two aspects are entirely different but would feel more comfortable with the counsellor with same fate (CSG1 & SFG4).

**4.3. Theme 3: Perspectives on professional competencies of counsellor**

The perspectives on professional competencies of counsellors are found to be diverse. This theme discusses personality, professional knowledge, practice and values of the counsellors.

The responses to all items are rated agree by both staff and students with minimum variability as shown in above table. This indicates that the counsellors of the college are friendly, interact with all, inspire people and exhibit professionalism in their conduct. However, staff’s responses (SD=1.10-1.16) tend to vary a bit in their perspectives compared to students (SD=0.965-0.990) shown by the values of standard deviation. For example, SFG3 remarked “counsellors were approachable and friendly which eases any sort of clients to seek counselling services. They were frank and more open compared to lecturers of other departments”.

In terms of gender of the counsellor, the majority of the students expressed that it will depend from case to case and even on one’s individual differences. SFG6 stated:

*“If the issues are tough situations and relationship issues, I think it might be difficult to share my problems to a female counsellor. To share problems about my girlfriend I will feel comfortable to talk with a male counsellor. They will not judge me”.*

It indicates that clients should be given the choice to choose the gender of the counsellor depending on the nature of his/her problem at hand (SFG1, SFG2 & SFG6).

For all the items in this theme, both staff and students have agreed, thus indicating that the counsellors of the college have sound knowledge and engage in professional practices which are current and evolving. Similarly, the qualitative analysis points out that the majority of the staff and students perceive the counsellors of the college as qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. For example, SFG3 stated *“The college has qualified and experienced counsellors and during the pandemic or any stressful times”.* However, in response to item 5 *“I think the counsellors in the college promote professional counselling services through various platforms”* staff have rated somewhat agree (M=3.78; SD=SD=1.24) and students rated agree (M=4.82; SD=0.999). This suggests the need to improve visibility of the counselling services through various strategies.

As per qualitative data analysis, although the

*Table 9. Descriptive statistics on professional practices*

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I feel the counsellors in the college has sound theoretical knowledge of counselling.	4.78	.845	5.07	.914
2	I find the counsellors in the college engaging in professional practices that are current and evolving.	4.38	1.01	4.81	.969
3	I feel the counsellors in the college apply their counselling knowledge and skills in their day-to day life.	4.28	1.14	4.92	.965
4	I feel the counsellors in the college create awareness about the availability of counselling services in the college.	4.39	1.19	4.92	1.05
5	I think the counsellors in the college promote professional counselling services through various platforms.	3.78	1.24	4.82	.999



counsellors are highly qualified and experienced, majority of the staff and staff expressed genuine need to make the services more visible and vibrant. The recommended counselling services to be visible through both face-to-face and online services (SFG1, SFG2, SG4 & SFG6). Although the counsellors are qualified and competent, the majority of the students and staff seem to be quite dissatisfied with the existing services as it is not up to their level of expectation. CSG1 voiced out “*I have not received myself but in terms of practice, I think they are not so vibrant as we know and expect the counselling department to be doing, but there could be reasons*”. The following comments by the staff strongly emphasised the need to improve the professional practices.

*“In terms of qualification, they have the required qualification. But as I said, whether they have been able to translate all the knowledge and skills that they have acquired from the masters have been useful to them, I’m not very sure about that. So, I can see a gap between what they have learned and whether they have been able to use those skills and knowledge to help people who are in need. I’m not really sure of that”* (CSG1).

Both the staff and students also expressed a need to have at least one well-furnished room to make the counselling process more conducive and effective (CSG1, CSG2, SFG1, SFG2 & SFG4). For instance, CSG1 recommended “*I think that is a basic requirement, a structure that is conducive for both. At the moment, I don’t know where it has been conducted, but I believe it is in the lecturers’ cubicle. Not very conducive*”. Moreover, for diverse needs of the clients, the majority of the students recommended college to train peer helper (SFG3, SFG4, SFG6 & SFG7).

SFG7 emphasized “*they know what are going through, they know what his or her friends are facing. Because they know themselves very well*”.

While staff (M=4.61; SD=0.936) have rated agree for item 1 “*I feel counsellors in the college have willingness to listen to my problems*”, students have rated strongly agree (M=5.03; SD=0.930) thus indicating counsellors’ willingness to listen to their problems. From item 2 to 4, all have rated ‘agree’ which suggests that counsellors of the college possess professional ethics such as empathy and non-judgmental attitude to everyone in the college. SFG3 described the expected qualities of a professional counsellor as “*Factors that motivates students to seek counselling are their professional qualities like approachability, passionate listeners, non-judgmental attitudes, good in maintaining confidentiality, soothing and best choices of words they made, friendly, supportive, inspiring, healing, and genuineness*”. The findings indicate that the counsellor possesses professional ethics of counselling.

## 5. Discussion

The discussion is presented under three main headings; Perception of counselling service, factors affecting the motivation to seek counselling and perspectives on professional competencies of counsellors of the college.

### 5.1. Perception of counselling service

The findings revealed that both staff and students of the college perceive counselling as an important service. Counselling is seen as imperative as it is natural for every human being to face some form of difficulties at a given stage of

Table 10. Descriptive statistics on professional ethics

Sl.no	Item	Staff		Student	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	I feel counsellors in the college have willingness to listen to my problems.	4.61	.936	5.03	.930
2	I hear my friends talking good about the counsellors in the college.	4.17	1.13	4.68	1.08
3	I feel the counsellors in the college are empathetic in dealing with everyone.	4.39	1.03	4.86	.997
4	I think the counsellors in the college possess non-judgmental attitude towards everyone.	4.31	1.11	4.71	1.19

life. While staff have expressed issues related to job, family and relationship as the main reasons, students have highlighted daily academic works, relationship, psychological and substance abuse as the key reasons to seek counselling. They perceive counselling as a beneficial service which will generally address their emotional difficulties, empower with life skills and promote wellbeing thereby making them a better human-being. According to Thuryrajah et al. (2019) counselling service help people address emotional, social or behavioural problems and help them develop a clearer focus in life. In contrast, findings revealed that counselling is perceived as a platform for a viable solution to their problems. It is a major misconception to see counselling as a process to solve the problem of a client by telling what to do by a counsellor (Kabir, 2017).

The findings also demonstrated that both staff and students are just aware about the existence of counselling service but the majority of them have very scanty information about the type of service, counsellors and infrastructure. Moreover, no participants of this study have availed any counselling service till date. They have voiced out numerous factors affecting their motivation to seek counselling in college based on their personal observation and lived experiences in the college. In contrast, some feel that if many seek counselling, it simply would mean something fundamentally problematic both at personal and college levels. According to Kabir (2017), the attitude where one thinks that only crazy or problematic people seek help from counselling is still one of the significant myths of counselling. Predominately in Asia, social stigma and cultural norms still play significant role in willingness to seek help from counselor (Choi & Miller, 2014).

## **5.2. Factors affecting motivation to seek counselling**

The basic knowledge of counselling service is found to influence their motivation to seek counselling. They have expressed the need to know the importance, process and existing facilities of counselling which they are not fully aware of as of now. Rastogi et al. (2012) found that lack of knowledge about the importance of counselling and mental illness as key factors

affecting motivation to seek counselling.

Many important recommendations were proposed to accommodate diverse needs of clients through various modes of counselling. The majority of participants have strongly recommended; dedicated rooms, awareness programs, observing national and international days, online counselling, counselling apps and making the services more diverse and vibrant than today. Broglia et al. (2018) found that university students showing more interest in using online counselling services such as email counselling, online communities and mobile phone apps. Therefore, robust orientation on basic knowledge of counselling and its services of the college is crucial to make staff and students seek counselling. According to Khanda (2018), some of the factors that hinder effective counselling are lack of formal training in counselling, lack of time for guidance and counselling, lack of support given to teacher counselors and lack of resources.

The professionalism of counsellors such as personality, ethics and type of relationship with counsellor also influence the decision to seek counselling. Bhargava et al. (2016) found out that personality attributes of professional counsellors have a severe or great impact in the counselling process, in other words the success of counselling services rendered by a professional counsellor depend largely upon his personality attributes. They have indicated approachability, friendliness, openness as the key traits of a professional counsellor. Yaumas et al. (2018) recommended that the counsellor candidates have to broaden their perspectives and knowledge. Ensuring 'confidentiality' is explicitly described as one key factor of counselling because they are worried if their secrets are disclosed to others and suffer the risk of social stigma (Choidup, 2020). The findings also show that some students do not feel comfortable to share their stories to whom they know.

This could be the reason why some students have sought counselling service from outside the college. Findings also show that participants believe in his/her ability to solve personal problems to a certain extent. Further, personal issues are described as one's responsibility to

resolve by himself/herself (Topkaya, 2015; Watson, 2006). This is congruent with Bhutanese general belief in seeing a person as a creator of his own destiny through one's actions (Gayleg, 2004). It is interesting to note that students look for solutions in reading books, browsing the internet and discussing with friends. This could be the reason why students have recommended training peer counsellors.

In terms of professional competencies of the counsellor, findings show that counsellors of the college are generally friendly, approachable and interact with all. Farirai and Richard (2015) claimed that professional competence, trust, empathy, warmth, positive regard, approachability, acceptance, respectfulness, genuineness, relationship building of the counsellor as the top qualities to make the counselling most effective. As such, the majority of the staff and students perceive the counsellors of the college as qualified and experienced. However, the findings demonstrated numerous gaps in existing counselling service of the college. Although the counsellors are professionals, both staff and students have genuinely expressed the need to make the service more visible and vibrant. They have pointed out some discrepancies between professional knowledge of the counsellors and their practices in the college. The findings revealed that the majority of the staff and students are unaware about the service except through occasional emails from the management and during the time of orientation. Counselling as a brand for the college, findings of this study inform robust service through various strategies to cater to diverse clients of the college and nearby regions. A study by Andegiorgis (2019) revealed that the main factors that affect counselling services were lack of proper office for counselling services, lack of trained counsellors, not knowing students background, no counselling materials at all, less attention from school management to counselling department, lack of awareness both from students and teachers about counselling services, counselling offices being run by unqualified personnel such as the student affairs and discipline masters, students feeling shy, and overall lack of availability of resources for counselling services.

## 6. Conclusions

Counselling is perceived as an imperative service of the college. It is considered as a means to professionally address a person's emotional difficulties, endow life skills and promote overall well-being in becoming a better human-being. This positive attitude towards counselling as a service is not short of gross misconception of considering it as a platform for viable solutions in resolving personal problems. Likewise, motivation to seek counselling service of the college is attributed to numerous factors such as basic knowledge about counselling, awareness of service, infrastructural facilities, culture of the college, professionalism of counsellors and belief systems of an individual person. As motivation to seek counselling is subjective in nature and influenced by diverse factors based on individual differences, there are various recommendations proposed to improve the existing counselling services of Samtse College of Education. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to further enhance the counselling service.

- Conduct separate orientation on counselling service soon after the new admission of students to familiarize with counsellors, type of services and clarify misconception of counselling.
- Institute various modes of counselling services such as face-to-face, online service through relevant apps and informal ways so that it caters to diverse personalities.
- Make the existence of counselling services of the college more vibrant by observing some significant national and international days related to mental health.
- Establish a dedicated room for counselling service in the college.
- Train peer counsellors to improve the outreach of the service and for an earlier identification of students at risks.
- Enhance the professional practices of counsellors to correspond with changing aspirations of the staff and students of the college.

As the findings and recommendations are completely based on staff' and students' responses, this study is also subjected to limitations especially in terms of discussion on professionalism of counsellors of the

college. Therefore, an in-depth study on college counsellors' lived experiences and their voices can be another future research topic to gain comprehensive understanding of counselling services at Samtse College of Education.

## References

- Andegiorgis, G. E. (2019). Factors Affecting Counselling Services in Secondary Schools in Karen Sub-zone, Anseba Region, Eritrea. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(31).
- Bhargava, S., & Sriram, S. (2016). Counsellor characteristics and the counselling experience. In *Counselling in India*, 13-33. DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-0584-8\_2.
- Broglia, E., Millings, A., & Barkham, M. (2018). Challenges to addressing student mental health in embedded counselling services: A survey of UK higher and further education institutions. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46(4), 441-455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2017.1370695>.
- Choidup, K., & Dendup, T. (2020). Avoidance Factors in Seeking Counselling Help by High School Students in Bhutan. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 13(1), 46-54.
- Choi, N., & Miller, M. J. (2014). AAPI College Students' Willingness to Seek Counselling: The Role of Culture, Stigma and Attitude. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 61(3), 340-351. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000027>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). PHI Learning Private Limited.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Devi, R., Devaki, P. R., Madhavan, M., & Kuma, P. S. (2013). The Effect of Counselling on the Academic Performance of College Students. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 7(6): 1086-1088. DOI: 10.7860/JCDR/2013/5247.3054.
- Doma, D., & Dolkar, T. (2019). Overview of Counseling in Bhutan. *Shukutoku University Graduate School of Integrated Human and Social Welfare Studies bulletin*, 26, 149-160.
- Eyo, M., Joshua, A., & Esuong, A. (2010). Attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Cross River State. *Edo Journal of Counselling*, 3(1), 87-99.
- Farirai, M., & Richard, B. (2015). The effectiveness of counseling on students learning motivation in open and distance education. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2(7), 85-99.
- Gayleg, K. (2004). *The characteristics and levels of happiness in the context of the Bhutanese society*. Centre for Bhutan Studies.
- Kabir, S. M. S. (2017). *Introduction to Counselling. Essentials of Counseling*. Abosar Prokashana Sangstha,
- Kamunyu, N., Ndungo, C., & Wango, G. (2016). Reasons Why University Students Do Not Seek Counselling Services in Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(15), 142-145.
- Khanda, S. (2018). Challenges faced by teacher counsellors of secondary schools in the smart city Bhubaneswar, Odisha. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(11), 327-340.
- Menendez, J., Franco, M., Davari, J., Gnilka, P. B., & Ashby, J. S. (2019). Barriers and facilitators to Latinx college students seeking counseling. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 34(4), 302-315.
- Pedrelli, P., Nyer, M., Yeung, A., Zulauf, C., & Wilens, T. (2015). College students: mental health problems and treatment considerations. *Academic psychiatry*, 39(5), 503-511.
- Rastogi, M., Massey-Hastings, N., & Wieling, E. (2012). Barriers to seeking mental health services in the Latino/a community: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 31(4), 1-17.
- Roaten, G. K., & Roaten, D. J. (2012). Adolescent Brain Development: Current Research and the Impact on Secondary School Counseling Programs. *Journal of School Counseling*, 10(18), 1-27.
- Samtse College of Education. (2020, March). *Happiness and Wellbeing Centre*. <https://sce.emcwub.pce.ed>.
- Thuryrajah, V., Ahmed, E. M., & Nathan, R. J. (2020). Do public universities have more effective counselling services than private universities in Melaka? *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 20(2), 300-308.
- Topkaya, N. (2015). Factors Influencing Psychological Help Seeking in Adults: A Qualitative Study. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 15(1), 21-31.
- Watson, J. C. (2006). Student-athletes and counseling: Factors influencing the decision to seek counseling services. *College Student Journal*, 40(1), 35-42.
- Yaumas, N.E., Syafril, S., Noor, N.M., Mahmud, Z., Umar, J., Wekke, I.S., & Rahayu, T. (2018). The Importance of Counselling Basic Skills for the Counsellors. *Internal Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 119(18), 1195-1207.