

# Counselling Psychology: The Role Recognition In India

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## Abstract

Counselling psychology as a subject matter and as a profession has been in limelight for a while now. In India, practice of clinical psychology is dominant. However, researchers have developed a favorable attitude towards the acknowledgement of counselling psychology as a potent entity, independent from its clinical colleagues. This article presents a literature review of counselling psychology in professional practice, focusing on the function and role of counselling psychologists in comparison with other mental health professions, particularly clinical psychologists. The purpose being the exploration of counselling psychology as a professional field in terms of its acceptance in the society. It is being debated for its west adopted practices which counts for its bleak recognition. As an independent profession, counselling psychology has been making a way, but, is still rooted in clinical origins of mental health. Accounting its growth as an autonomous profession in India, licensure is at the top of the list; with recognition and acceptance as grappling issues. It is still an open question whether or not western-style counselling education & practice can have an impact in Indian society, despite the fact that modern life and related stress has made it necessary to have access to counselling psychologists.

**Keywords:** "Counselling psychology, counselling, mental health professionals, mental health, licensure, accreditation"

## I. INTRODUCTION

A lot of attention is being paid to mental health issues across the world these days. Just like the importance of physical health has been widely recognized, people have begun to recognize the importance of mental health as well. "Professional aid," as Rajagopal (2013) puts it, "searches its place" in Indian society because of the rapid expansion and development of Indian society. Mental health professions such as "Psychiatry and Clinical psychology," which have grown rapidly in India, focus primarily on treating patients with clinically significant problems and diseases (Bedi et al, 2018). In cases of severe mental illness, a clinical psychologist is often called upon to assist the psychiatrist (Rao, 1991) and counselling psychology looks at 'otherwise alternative' issues (Bedi et al, 2018) like couple conflict, low self-esteem, bullying, burnout, overthinking, mid-life crisis, grief & loss etc. Cited by Hapney (2016), "Counselors do not diagnose or label people, but instead do their best to work within whatever framework of understanding makes most sense for each client" (McLeod, 2013, p.24).

In today's new world order, challenges in professional and personal lives are on a rise. Urbanization brings along with it, stressors of various kinds, work pressure, work-life imbalance,

break ups, relationship issues, loneliness etc. Not only that, Nezami (2017) added that with the rise of social disconnection, the cultural phenomenon of relating with one and another has also changed, which in turn has impacted the quality of our interactions with others (Milton, 2016). Consequently, working with such obstacles beyond a certain point becomes too upsetting, which takes a toll on people's mental and emotional health. Therefore, it is evident that some sort of professional assistance is called for. The time has come to classify relevant fields for relevant classification and levels of concerns.

However, both specializations, clinical psychology as well as counselling psychology are considered more similar than different (Norcross, Sayette, Martin-Wagar, 2021); investing large part of their time to teaching, supervision, research and most significantly providing therapy (Mayne et al., 2000). American Psychological Association (APA, 1991) has described clinical psychology as a "discipline that involves the provision of diagnostic, assessment, treatment plan, treatment, prevention and consultative services to patients of emergency room, inpatient units and clinics of hospitals." While, counselling psychology is that speciality where professionals work towards improving an individual's or group's wellbeing, eliminating distress and helping them build

problem solving and decision-making skills (Wahass, 2005). The striking difference between both these mental health fields endorse, Clinical psychologists tend to deal with people who are seriously disturbed, aren't able to comprehend life properly, are dealing with serious mental health conditions whereas counselling psychologists' work with people who are somewhat healthier, have no major psychological disorders or have little or no pathological concerns (Norcross, 2000).

### **Counselling Psychology**

Counselling in this modern living & lifestyle has become highly essential (Wanghai, 2018). Therefore, it can be seen as a larger part of the world wanting to seek professional help, in terms of counselling for the psychological distress they go through, to be able to overcome daily life problems in a way that they can be prevented from getting into the zone of any kind of psychological pathology. The lack of understanding, recognition and importance as well as an overlapping of terminologies in the field has failed to make 'counselling psychologists', stand as unique identities in professional arena. For many years, it has been seen as more of a "guiding" process; expecting the counselling psychologist to have ready-made answers. This could be because of the historical emergence of counselling since 1938, viewed and referred as 'vocational guidance' (Arulmani, 2007). Bedi et al (2018) and Akos, Jain & Gurjar (2014) confirms, counselling as rooted within the Indian tradition of community guidance by elders.

While research & awareness are ongoing factors, 'counselling' in terms of psychological perspective still hold a blurred view. Pereira & Rekha (2017) assert that formal counselling is not that aged. Counseling nowadays must be understood as a process where the counselling psychologist and the client work towards developing insight and look for solutions that were stuck somewhere in the client via the process of facilitation and empathic support supplied by the counselling psychologist. Counseling, in general, helps people become more self-sufficient, self-reliant, and adaptable to their situations. (Rao, 1991). Douglas et al. (2016) elaborated on counselling psychology as a field viewing humans as free, yet innately relational and connected.

As cited in Marini & Stecnicki (2009, p.16) classic definition of counselling is about helping clients reach 'their optimal level of psychosocial functioning through resolving negative patterns,

prevention, rehabilitation and improving quality of life' (Hershenson and Power, 1987). Pepinsky and Pepinsky (1954) argued, counseling may be defined as an interaction between a client and a counsellor that takes place in a private setting. During this process, the client works with the assistance of the counsellor to make adjustments in his or her behavior in order to attain a desired outcome.

In contemporary terms, Counselling Psychology can be seen as:

'A specialty within professional psychology that maintains a focus on facilitating personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span. The specialty pays particular attention to emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns. The practice of Counselling Psychology encompasses a broad range of culturally-sensitive practices that help people improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, and increase their ability to function better in their lives (Suman, 2016, p.31).'

Gerstein, Leung and Norsworthy (2009, p. 5) have also described it as "a focus on using a broad array of psychological strategies and activities aimed at the process of helping others to reach individual, group, organizational and system goals."

The field of counselling psychology can be regarded as one where academic research & professional practice, 'marry the scientific demand for rigorous empirical enquiry with a firm value base grounded in the primacy of the counselling or psychotherapeutic relationship (BPS, 2005, p.1).'

It is possible to seemingly consider all these definitions to be dynamic, yet in similar harmony with each other. In recent years, the word "counselling" has taken on a variety of meanings based on various professional cultures within the domain of counselling psychology, the ethical understanding & meaning has more or less digressed. However, a good thing is that Goodyear et al (2016) noted, while the semblance of counselling psychology varies across countries, the specialization contains some identifiable characteristics wherever it is being carried out.

Therefore, an urgency to identify a collective theoretical amalgamation of what counselling psychology looks like on a global front is to

1. Characterize the profession of counselling psychology as an independent field within mental health domain.
2. Bring clarity demanding the urgency for accreditation and authorized licensure for its rightful practice.
3. Understand the long-pinned research around these factors across various countries; with India still struggling to demarcate and provide counselling psychologists their significant position in Indian context.
4. Elaborating on looking at the positive side of western perspective to counselling as a beneficial step towards a more acceptable multicultural and international model of counselling.
5. Last but not the least, this paper wants to highlight the chaos amidst the gap in research, practice and training in counselling psychology.

### Central concern: Accreditation & Licensure

Counselling psychology as an independent profession in India, doesn't have a governing authority and "the ratio between educated counselors and people in need of mental health services, strongly unbalanced" (Raney & Çinarbaş, 2005, p.154). Rajagopal (2013) states that RCI registration for clinical psychologists, within the mental health sector is considered mandatory in India. However, there is no provision for certification for counselling psychologists yet, except for clinical psychologists, rehabilitation psychologists and for those in disability domain. India lacks an accrediting system and licensing body to verify that counselling services are aligned with ethical norms (Sriram, 2016). Pereira & Rekha (2017) also hold the same view regarding lack of licensing authority assessing the status of counseling. Hodges (2011) maintains the existing concern of licensure for counselling psychologists. Chang et al. (2013) highlighted that for academic courses, Government approved accreditation systems such as university grants commission and medical council of India approve the courses that are considered acceptable and 'relevant'. However, it can be seen that, there is no individual organization for accreditation of counselling programs as yet (Carson, Jain, Ramirez, 2009). Usually, independent organizations and institutes providing counselling courses that rely on international bodies for accreditations (Chang et al, 2013). Bedi et al., (2018) pointed out that organizations like National Academy of Psychology or Indian Academy of Applied Psychology haven't been advocating the need for

accreditation & licensure for counselling psychologists. This is why reliance on government is more towards provision of the same (Agrawal, 2015).

Central board of secondary education of India in 2001, had mandated every school to have a trained school counsellor (Yadav, 2017). Similarly, University Grants Commission of India announced all the accredited universities to have on-campus counselling services & centers (Akos et al., 2014; Bedi et al., 2018). Lok Sabha Bill no. 301 of 2016 of India, endorsed the provision of mental healthcare counselling facilities in government schools; under the Compulsory Mental Healthcare Counselling Facilities in Government Schools Act, 2016. However, online document that speaks about this provision poses serious flaws that need addressal and also adds unclear statements to where counselling is headed. Surprising statements such as "counselling" means a process by which a psychiatrist addresses the mental healthcare of a child; The appropriate Government shall appoint adequate number of psychiatrists to provide mental healthcare counselling in Government schools in such manner, as may be prescribed (p.2)'. This blurs the vision of where counselling psychologists as independent professionals are to be placed.

**National Education Policy of India (2020)** has also highlighted the effective need of trained counsellors and social workers to be able to contribute in enhancing the learning systems at schools. Alongside, stressing the need for encouragement, support & psychological and emotional support for socio-economically disadvantaged section of the society, with the help of counsellors and social workers as a necessary step. However, the policy document doesn't state or talk about the eligibility criteria for professionals to take the professional position in such case.

The need of counselling services, counselling psychologists, counsellors & counselling centers at school & university level in India being addressed is essential and is a positive sign to have recognition somewhere. In spite of that, above mentioned government initiatives have highlighted the need for school and university counselling services only. That is just one domain of the bigger umbrella that counselling psychology is.

In India, RCI regulates the professional field of clinical psychology. Its licensure is close-knit with India's mental health act (1987, 2017) that lay emphasis on treatment of serious mental illnesses. The 2017 bill had the official announcement and declaration of clinical psychology as an

independent mental health profession alongside its qualification and training requirements (Bedi et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be said that in comparison with how clinical psychology as a professional field is understood is different from how the society views counselling psychology as a professional field. So, advantage being taken here is by those who are either not adequately qualified or lack training are providing counselling services. This can be accounted for not having a licensed policy or legal coding for using the term ‘counselling psychologist’; a constant need for initiatives by government of India in terms of jobs, clear policies, licensure, public awareness are being demanded (Bedi et al., 2018). Despite changing reforms, accreditation and licensure remain a serious and central concern that require more robust revolution.

### Westernized Eye

Arulmani (2007) highlighted that many universities and colleges provide education and training for counselors. Still, it is certain that the number of professionally trained counsellors in India falls short as per the demand of the population (Bhola, Kumaria and Orlinsky, 2012). Unfortunately, the academic base is founded on western view to counselling and therapy (Sriram, 2016), theories and models taught distort the individualistic viewpoint versus the collectivist one, in terms of Indian socio-cultural context. Numerous universities provide counselling courses; however, the material taught is based on western academic practices (Gerstein, Leung and Norsworthy, 2009). Smoczynski's (2012) noted that earlier researches have focused on the problematic usage of research and methodologies adopted from the west in non-western countries. According to Noordin, Williams & Zimmer (2002), historically, counselling is seen as western concept. The notion of counselling has traditionally been popular in western nations (Brown & Lent, 1984). It has been said that western nations are a parent to the development of the counselling profession (Kodad & Kazi, 2014). As a result, Talib (2010) expressed little surprise that research has focused on the adaptation of western counselling approaches in non-western setting.

As stated by Smoczynski (2012), counsellors do not see the methods of ‘western heritage’ a problem, but there are reasons why people do not attend or visit counselling centers (not exclusive to the Indian setting only); such as lack of governing body and training, stigma related to mental, expectation for suggestive counselling, rather than facilitative counselling to name a few. Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge (2003) asserted that as a

non-western nation, India has not yet gained attention in this respect because it is still not popularly recognized and lack recognized body's governance over it. Hodges (2011) maintains that the western counselling mode has been working towards gender equality, multiculturalism, pluralism for sexual minorities. Yet, issues related to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation prevails; however, a forum for controversial viewpoints is given space while we look at a global perspective. In countries like India, where discrimination is dominant, can a western bent to counselling prove useful? Can sensitivity towards issues such as sexual orientation, woman oppression be taken without judgment through the western counselling vision? The emphasis should be laid upon the west adopted counselling to check if it can promote universal counselling principles regardless of the prevailing rigid cultural phenomenon.

For example, Ivey & Ivey (1999), in their book ‘*Intentional Interviewing*’ initiated a multicultural approach to counselling, providing a systematic guide on the procedural layout in consideration with counselling skills to be utilized according to the cultural requirement. It has proven to be an authentic pathway in understanding the role of intentionality in counselling approach, being different from the clinical protocol for mental health. Despite the criticisms it carries, the materials they have provided allows flexibility in cross cultural and multicultural practices. However, university courses, at degree & diploma level, both provide a general spread of knowledge, instead of training students pursuing counselling psychology as a subject matter, with skills oriented towards fulfilling the multi-dynamic and global population redressal.

Similarly, “*Counselling Psychology in Kenya: A contemporary Review of the developing world*”, a book by Wango (2015) highlights accreditation in terms of professionalism, counselling ethics and competence of a counsellor as three essential components that need utmost recognition for a practicing counselling psychologist. He lay emphasis on the importance of research towards contemporary practices, originating from analytical and organised enquiries. This book provides guidelines & places value for both, developed and developed countries, alike, posing interest in professional, ethical and research-based complexity the profession of counselling psychology faces multiculturally.

### Research on Counselling Psychology in Other Countries

An account of counselling psychology as a discipline as well as a profession in different countries can provide striking similarities and differences to see as to where does it fit in a country so dynamic like India.

In Greece, which is also a collectivist society like India, family structures dominated the help seeking idea (Christodoulidi & Malikiosi-Loizos, 2008). Recently, with increasing urbanization, this idea has shifted towards seeking help from a trained professional (Malikiosi-Loizou & Ivey, 2012). Only a bachelor's degree in psychology is deemed sufficient for Greek professionals to have a state license for practice (Lampropoulos & Stalikas, 2009). This can be addressed as an issue related to lack of counselling skills training in Greece.

Surprisingly, Sunderland & Findlay (2013) informed that although in demand and preferred, counselling & therapy is not widely accessible mental health service in Canada. Peachy et al. (2013) emphasized that public in Canada rely mostly on their family doctors for mental health aid. Lack of counselling skill-set, in which counselling psychologists are trained can also be looked at as a challenge for general or family physicians in Canada.

Wango (2013) studied some philosophical groundwork in context with the role & positioning of psychology in Africa. He stated that counselling psychology must be directed by the international standards like following ethical code of conduct laid down for practicing counselling psychologists such as by American Counselling Association, 2005; Standard for Ethics in counselling (Bond, 2005); British Association for counselling, 1991, in order to have a more globalised approach. This initiative can bridge the gap in constructing ethical standards amidst what is followed in west adopted practices and African perspective and vision of counselling & mental health.

Within Africa, the field of counselling psychology in Kenya needs to be more defined. Factors that include political dilemma, terrorism, relationship problems, HIV, other terminal illnesses, religion and spiritualism, academic challenges and reforms, family crisis as well and advancing technology are issues not necessarily unique only to Kenya or developing countries. Therefore, contextualizing the field is a requirement. While demand is high and urgent to help work through the above-mentioned issues (Wangai, 2018).

Baraka et al. (2021) asserted the use of cross-cultural interaction between Ukrainian counselling supervisees and US International supervisors in order to bridge the gap between challenges faced by counselling educators in Ukraine and practice of counselling profession at international level. This study shows a healthy amalgamation, in order to bring forth, authentic practice in position, regardless of multicultural and traditional gaps faced amongst Ukrainian counselling psychologists and students.

Research carried out in Afghanistan by (Bragin et al., 2018), addressed that using western training for counselling and also drawing from specialised methods drawn in Afghani context such as their customs, culture and religious underpinnings be amalgamated to have an integrative and effective counselling curriculum is necessary. It can be looked at a serious effort to allow and accept the international counselling processes while keeping the rich cultural and religious context as a base.

Details from Nielson & Nicholas (2016) paper suggests that, in the United Kingdom, there is a Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP) that lays emphasis on the interests of counselling psychologists. It also publishes a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal named, the Counselling Psychology Review; which focuses on high-quality research related to counselling psychologists both in the UK and on the global front. Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is the regulatory body that asks for a doctoral level qualification to be registered with the HCPC under the protected title of "Counselling Psychologist; which also looks at the ethical guidelines for counselling professionals. The British Psychological Society (BPS) is the representative body for psychology and psychology professionals in the UK. It functions in collaboration with HCPC to create, promote and establish the counselling psychology field, its education & training framework and more. Apart from that, BPS, alongside HCPC accredit educational programmes and courses as well (BPS, 2014a). Professional bodies such as British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), National Counselling Society (NCS) and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) are some of the names that work on the front of promoting counselling psychology and related professionals.

Speaking of India, Yadav (2017) noted that the ratio between the demand and need for counselling is not at par with the number of accredited courses, trainings and counselling services available in

India. Yadav also emphasised on the changing global impact on family, group and individual persona, leading to an increase in emotional and behavioural concerns. For that, counselling psychology in terms of Indian socio-cultural context needs a makeover.

### **Uncertain Standpoint of Counselling Psychology**

There is a huge hurdle to counselling psychology whenever the training provided does not support the course content taught. Graduate students sometimes get perplexed when faculty members from other specialties, such as from clinical psychology, social psychology, organizational psychology background, teach counselling psychology as a subject Hawley and Calley (2009). In India, counselling psychologists are seen in various professional set ups like schools, de-addiction centers, hospitals, NGOs, family courts, private practice to name a few. Janardanan & Rajan (2015) discovered similar professional placements for students finishing their counselling psychology studies.

Bhola, kumaria and Orlinsky, (2012) argued that the detailing of this field revolves around the diversity related to the contextual framework among the counselling psychologists' practices. In present scenario, their role is quite blurred. Counselling psychologists are often hired by schools, corporate as well as non-profit organizations. The fact that so many students choose internships in clinical or psychiatric settings, that complicates the matter than resolve it, resulting in subpar professional practices due to a lack of differentiation in the application of these various subsets of mental health professions; experiencing difficulties and challenges in counselling (Duggal & Rao, 2016).

In fact, as cited in Hodges (2011) paper, 'doctoral students in counselor education are largely supervised in clinical internships by non-counselors due to a dearth of clinical counselors at the doctoral level' (J. S. Hinkle, personal communication, May 12, 2011, P. 197). This blurs the importance that 'diversity' has to offer, in training and education, both. There is a dearth of understanding for counselling services in educational set-ups as well as contextual variables such as time constraints, looking for ready-made solutions, less awareness etc. adding up to the idea for students unfollowing the counselling services (Rajagopal, 2013).

Over the last few decades, economic reforms have risen (Sriram, 2016), in turn a rise in money-making mindset has also increased to the point where the essential is overlooked. Thereby, in Indian settings especially, it has led to the questioning of counselling psychologists as to where they fit in this society and in some cases, their typical areas of expertise and practice are being sought by other types of mental health professionals.

According to Sprinthall (1990) counselling psychologists need to rediscover their origins in order to better demonstrate their distinctive identity and worth. The field of counselling psychology was directed towards the demise of this profession through its merger with the clinical field (Fitzgerald and Osipow (1986). There has been an attempt by counselling psychologists to establish a position in the hierarchy along with their clinical colleagues in the mental health domain (Brennan & Hollanders, 2004). Instilled in our Indian culture's high acceptance for presupposition and dominance of a medical paradigm, the field of counselling psychology falls prey to it and remains under the rug

(Mullan, 1995). Despite these challenges, counselling psychology has remained steadfast in its focus on the humanistic ground (Hansen, 2007) ensuring development and optimum human functioning (Lichtenberg, Goodyear and Genter, 2008). However, keeping a 'client centered' bent in focus, the present status of this field has become eclectic in nature. Chwalisz (2003) reflected the argumentative present scenario among those who are inclined towards following a prevention model and those who wish to accept the remedial model and the ones who wish to combine the two will have to accept the weakening of the roles among counselling psychology and other mental health professions (Gale and Austin, 2003). It can be said that counselling psychologists have been sailing in multiple ships at the same time, affirming their professional identity as such.

### **Role of a Counselling Psychologist**

The counselling psychologist's role is developmental, therapeutic and at the same time preventive and educational (Campbell, 1969). It can be defined as a "therapeutic experience for 'otherwise' reasonably healthy people faced with problems" (Rao, 1991, p. 22). The main role of a counselling psychologist is of 'client facilitation' by providing a non-judgmental space, empathetic ear and a confidential and safe environment. They

do not directly solve the problems or make choices on behalf of the clients in order to reduce their emotional conflicts, but help their clients discover their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can become better at coping with uncertainties of life. Earlier view by Super (1995, p.5) viewed counselling psychologists' identity to marked by "locating & developing personal and social resources & adaptive tendencies" in all humans. Savickas (2003) stated that counselling psychologists have always been seen as focusing on the "positive" in every human. In fact, Lopez et al (2006) supported the same view. Speaking of earlier times, when APA was established, ever since then counselling psychology has had its focus "Hygiology", a term that can be described as studying the concerns of normal individuals in regulating their emotional difficulties (Super, 1955).

With different areas emerging within the umbrella of counselling psychology such as marriage counselling, sports counselling, school counselling, corporate counselling; counselling psychologists have been trying to mark their place in Indian society, however, they lack dominance and recognition. Carter & Davis (2001) shared that initially educational/career counselling were the center points for the research, training and even practice of counselling psychologists. Today, when spoken about counselling, Indian outlook largely has the predominance of vocational counselling; which more or less work towards the goals an individual can set and strategize to reach them. However, to reach those goals, the client needs to sort out his emotional problems, be it of any kind; where the role of psychological counselling comes into play. Just like any other person, counselling psychologists are also humans, having their own set of daily life concerns. It is not certain that a solution found in the counselling as a joint venture between the counselling psychologist and the client would fix the psychological obstruction; any better than what we can do for ourselves. However, a counselling psychologist helps the client take responsibility of their thought, behavior and emotion and facilitate them to work towards the consequences maturely with in-depth understanding and awakened insight. However, before bringing 'counselling' per say in limelight, it would prove significant and beneficial to first clear its repute as an independent lens. Stronger boundaries are to be built, if its theory and practice has to be preserved and also reserved. Counselling is usually seen as a last resort because in Indian scenario, medical and instant relief is searched for. Syed et al. (2009) argued that Indians follow more

or less a conventional approach; they usually avoid being seen by a counselor. Therefore, a profound shift in the practice of counselling psychology is needed as it is unsure to which version of it will actually outgrow or integrate considering the future of counselling. An understanding of the existent identity of counselling psychology in India lends a strong direction towards the views of (Young and Nicol, 2007, p.25) who stated that in order to "maintain a unique identity, counselling psychology will have to continue to focus on its differentiated knowledge and practice." Pereira & Rekha (2017) have recognized that lack of awareness, stigma to seek counselling, lower pay scale as concerns faced by counsellors. They have also highlighted not having a government body for regulating counselling profession, unavailability of counselling supervision as problems unique to Indian set up.

## II. DISCUSSION

Although, counselling psychology as an individual entity has come out as a challenge to the predominant field of clinical psychology and its 'privileged scientific status' (Parker, 2015). Nonetheless, Woolfe (2006) holds the view that counselling psychologists' professional identity is peculiar and significant to its owners. With a humanistic inclination (Steffen, 2013), counselling psychology places the therapeutic alliance above the clinical realm (James & Bellamy, 2010). House and Feltham (2015) discussed that counselling psychology practice has drifted away from diagnosing, labeling and medical approach; it rather embraces the counselling values. In this positive direction, Arulmani (2007) shared that with the socio-economic developments, new generational cohort of the country, is more inclined towards seeking counselling with the western concepts in function.

Rajagopal (2013) suggests that adding a scientific abut, counselling psychology will be able to come at par with other mental health professions. Though the field of psychiatry is not free from critics (Glasser, 2003). Maddux & Winstead (2010) maintain that it still has an upper hand in the mental health field. While awareness towards the importance and need of counselling is increasing, it is often seen as equal to psychiatric treatment (Pereira & Rekha, 2017).

The education and training for counselling psychologists is not up to the mark as they are taught within or around the boundaries of pathological domain, not only leaving the students



confused but also spreading conflicted practices. Hansen (2003) states that, "It is not unreasonable to assume that the juxtaposition of these completely opposite models in counselor training has an impact on the development of counselor trainees and the profession as a whole" (p. 98). As per Goldstein (2010), it is the need for counselling psychologists to reflect their potential in flourishing their multitudinous identities, so as to reach out to human conditions in a variety of ways. In Indian context, limited research and limited efforts have been put forth to regulate it as an individual profession (Sriram, 2016). Hence, it is hardly disseminated (Manickham, 2010) to the academicians and practitioners, alike. However, Arulmani and Nag (2006) highlighted that research has been focusing on filling the gaps between the western and diverse Indian practices. Some pioneers who have worked in addressing these gaps such as (Bedi et al, 2018; Jain & Sandhu, 2015; George & Pothan, 2013) to name a few.

While, this study attempted to compare and contrast the status of counselling psychology in various countries and also look at the Indian Scenario closely. This study does carry potential limitations. Due to the space limitations, the researchers could not cover more countries where the status, role recognition and position of counselling psychology has been assessed and evaluated. Due to its theoretical nature, some professional aspects of counselling psychology could not be highlighted, which could have been a benefit if looked at from a qualitative lens. A general scenario of government initiative was looked at in terms of CBSE, NEP, Lok Sabha guidelines. Separate 'Indian State' interventions were not assessed to see how counselling psychology has been viewed as in southern, eastern, western as well as northern part of India.

Heppner et al., (2000) believed that "a challenge for the future is how various organizations within the counselling profession will respond to both internal and external forces that may affect their future development and interrelationships" (p. 38). As stated by Nikolopoulou (2016), to recognize counselling as an effective service globally, it cannot be labeled as a western specialty. "If these critiques are to be addressed, it would be necessary to examine subjective versus objective epistemologies with a view to building bridges that would allow counselors from different persuasions to function in tandem." (Laungani, 2005, p. 254). Developing and incorporating 'Ethical decision-making models' for this field would prove to be useful as these could 'facilitate a comprehensive

review of relevant considerations and all models emphasize consultation, documentation and informed consent' (Werth, cummings and Thompson, 2008, p.5). "Competency is generally understood to mean that a professional is qualified, capable, and able to understand and do certain things in an appropriate and effective manner" (Rodolfa et al., 2005, p. 348). Enough light has been thrown on professional competence (e.g., APA, 2006). Therefore, developing and defining the professional competence for the filtration of practice for counselling psychologists' will also be beneficial in selection of the right candidates as per their skilled ability to counsel appropriately. However, Herman (1993) documented, personal characteristics should also be made a criterion for competence.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

As suggested by **Gaiha et al. (2014)**, mental health education is still lacking its mark. Within this mental health sector, Gladding (2009) and Remley & Herlihy (2007), found out that the struggle to correspond with other mental health professions, counselling psychology per say has been continuously attempting to gain that status; an existing issue even today. It has been dealing with other psychological domains, to stand out as a unique entity of 'knowledge & practice' (Pugh & Coyle, 2000). Gladding (2009) claims that counselling psychology needs a drastic shift in becoming flexible and prioritizing the profession with the help of technological advancements.

Counselling is a process of facilitation where a client works with a counselling psychologist through 'talk-therapy' and counselling skills. The aim of the counselling relationship is to help declutter and unravel the client's path in order for the client to see and understand various perspectives; to identify and build up his/her own coping mechanisms. People who are otherwise distressed in their daily lives can benefit a lot from counselling.

Counselling can essentially help in restoring and maintaining the mental health of the society, individually and as a whole. The professionals from this field are in major demand considering the Indian scenario. The stress and emotional toll that people are on these days, counselling psychology as a professional entity can prove to be beneficial in the Indian set up.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT



The first author of this paper wishes to acknowledge the support, understanding and guidance the second author of this paper has shown in helping put the first author's thoughts and views in a direction.

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