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The Study Based on the Impact of School-Based Counselling Interventions on Reducing Examination-Related Stress among G.C.E. Ordinary Level Students in the Gampola Education Zone, Sri Lanka

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Background: Examination-related stress among secondary school students is a growing concern in Sri Lanka, particularly among those preparing for the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (G.C.E. O/L) examinations. The pressure to perform well academically can lead to increased anxiety, negatively affecting students' mental health and academic performance. In response, many schools have introduced school-based counselling interventions aimed at mitigating this stress.

Objective: This study investigates the impact of such counselling services on reducing examination-related stress among G.C.E. O/L students in the Gampola Education Zone, Sri Lanka.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach was applied to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires that measured stress levels before and after counselling sessions, while qualitative data were gathered through group discussions with students and interviews with school counsellors.

Results: The sample consisted of 60 G.C.E. O/L students from five government schools within the Gampola Education Zone, selected through a random sampling method to guarantee representation across different socioeconomic backgrounds. Quantitative data and qualitative data were analysed using simple statistical methods and thematic analysis, respectively. Findings indicate that school-based counselling significantly reduces examination-related stress, improving students' mental health and emotional well-being. Students reported increased confidence and better time management following counselling interventions. Additionally, counsellors mentioned the importance of individualised support and stress management workshops. However, the study also identified challenges such as limited resources and a lack of awareness among students about counselling services.

Conclusion: Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education invest in expanding counselling programs, including training more counsellors and promoting awareness campaigns to encourage student participation. Improving school counselling infrastructure could play a crucial role in supporting students' mental health and academic success during critical examinations.

Keywords: Examination-related stress, G.C.E. Ordinary Level, Mental health, School counselling and Student well-being.