

Abstract Title:-

Counselling Intervention Model for Positive Lifestyle Development in Youth Experiencing Psychological Distress

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Sonakshi Ruhela – Rochester Institute of Technology Dubai



Abstract:

Psychological distress refers to emotional suffering commonly expressed through symptoms such as anxiety, depression, restlessness, and persistent tension. Social stressors are among the most significant contributors, influencing mental wellbeing through environmental and relational pressures. Counselling interventions play a vital role in supporting individuals to accept, modify, or sustain behaviours that directly impact health outcomes and overall wellbeing.

This study explored psychological distress, depression, and anxiety among youth aged 18–35 years, and examined the impact of a structured counselling intervention model on these conditions. The research also investigated how counselling interventions contribute to promoting a positive lifestyle among young adults.

A purposive sample of 60 pre-diagnosed Indian nationals (18–35 years) experiencing depression, anxiety, and psychological distress was selected. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were conducted using standardized tools including Beck's Depression Inventory, Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test, and the Simple Lifestyle Indicator Questionnaire. Findings demonstrated a positive correlation between counselling interventions and improved lifestyle indicators. Counselling interventions were associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, and enhanced levels of positive lifestyle among youth.

The outcomes highlight the importance of counselling interventions for early mental health identification and support, promoting a preventive rather than curative approach for psychological wellbeing in young adults.

Keywords:

Counselling, Psychological Distress, Interventions, Depression, Anxiety

Short Professional Biography:

Dr. Sonakshi Ruhela is a **CDA Dubai Licensed Psychologist** and educational leader with over **15 years of experience** in teaching, mentorship, training, and research across undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She holds a **PhD in Psychology**, a

Harvard Certification in Higher Education, and is recognized as a **Senior Fellow (SFHEA)** under the UK Professional Standards Framework (Advance HE).

She is a TEDx speaker and was honoured in **2025 as Asia's 40 Under 40** by TradeFlock for her contributions to education and leadership. Dr. Ruhela has extensive clinical experience in counselling, psychotherapy, behavioural lifestyle interventions, NLP, and psychometric assessment, supporting adolescents and adults in areas such as anxiety, depression, distress, and family relationships in both India and the UAE. She currently serves as a consultant psychologist at **Open Minds Psychiatry, Counselling and Neuroscience Center, Dubai**, and supports inclusion initiatives through educational advisory roles in the UAE.

For more information: www.drsonakshi.com