

EXPLORING COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE NEEDS OF PIRIVENA STUDENTS IN SRI LANKA

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The Pirivena education system, which dates back to more than a thousand years in Sri Lanka, is the main system of education for Buddhist monks. Pirivena education differs from the general school setting in many respects, such as the status of the student and certain specialties of the syllabi. Counselling and guidance are considered one of the most effective and vital services for students in the school setting, which leads to achieving their academic goals and personal growth. The purpose of a counselling programme in education settings is the development of the academic, career, social and personal domains. However, there is no counselling and guidance programme in the Pirivena education system at present. Pirivena students, mainly monks who have been separated from biological parents and are cared and fed by chief monks of the temple or the Pirivena, may be vulnerable to various kinds of problems mentally, emotionally, socially and personally. There is a dearth of research on them and their problems. No research has been done to investigate their counselling and guidance needs. Therefore, this study is designed to fill that gap as it seeks to identify the counselling and guidance needs of students, especially monks, in the Pirivena education setting. The research was conducted under the qualitative research method. A sample of 43 student monks was selected from five Pirivenas in the Kandy district based on the convenient sampling method. The data collected using the focus group discussion method were analysed under the content analysis method. The focus group discussion was conducted under three themes related to the student monks in the Pirivena. The study revealed that they have academic problems, such as the lack of motivation for education, insufficient awareness regarding the psychological dimensions of learning and studying, and issues related to memorising. When it comes to personal and social aspects, unusual punishments and cruel blaming, low self-esteem, low reinforcement of good work and conflicts with the teacher could be identified. It is concluded that considering their problems, a counselling and guidance programme is a predominant need for the Pirivena. As such, the chief monks and teachers of the Pirivena need to be more sensitive to student monks and their psychological conditions.

Keywords: Pirivena Education, Student Monks, Counselling and Guidance Needs