

**SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE AND**  
**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**  
**MBA HRD –406(a) Optional Paper**

**SUBJECT NAME: COUNSELING**  
**SKILLS FOR MANAGERS**

**UNIT-I**

**TOPIC NAME: COUNSELING**  
**FACTORS**



## **Client Factors**

The client is not a passive object who sits there and is treated in the manner of a traditional doctor-patient situation. A critical question is about what is going on in their heads and they hence need to be an active part of the process.

If they have positive expectation and faith in the counseling process and counselor, then their chances of success will increase. Likewise if they have willingly sought out the counselor and are truly seeking resolution then this will help too.

On the other hand, being depressed or otherwise negative may act to hinder the treatment, for example where they do not engage well or work to change their thoughts and actions. In such cases, the skill of the counselor becomes more critical.

## Counselor Factors

The counselor has a significant effect on the outcomes of the sessions. They first should encourage and support the client in taking a positive viewpoint about the treatment and the outcomes.

A counselor who is warm and has an empathetic and positive regard for their clients, with a non-judgemental and accepting approach will be more likely to create the right conditions for success.

And of course the counselor should be expert in the methods that they practice, with a continuing concern for improving their ability in a discipline that is both science and art.



## Contextual Factors

The environment in which the counseling takes place can have a significant effect. If it takes place where the client feels uncomfortable, for example where a school counselor speaks with a child in a feared classroom, then this may negatively affect the session.

Ideally the counseling takes place in a quiet, warm and comfortable place away from any distraction (including distant sounds) where the counselor and client can talk in comfort and safety.



## Process Factors

There are many factors within the counseling process that may contribute towards success including:

- Understanding of client and counselor roles
- Bonding between client and counselor
- Open listening
- Unconditional acceptance
- Exploration of problems
- Insights and awareness of issues
- Periods of reflection and inner thought
- Opportunity for catharsis and emotional release
- Learning new models and ways of thinking
- Desensitization of sensitive issues
- Trial and adoption of new ways of thinking and acting
- Feedback on success of trials
- Ongoing practice and improvement



# **SOME OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING COUNSELING**

1. **Economic conditions**
2. **Social and cultural context**
3. **Gender roles**
4. **Household decision-making processes**
5. **Couple counselling**



# 1.Economic conditions

Economic status refers to one's financial status and is strongly related to health and educational status. So in general, most people with a low economic status (e.g. a low income) are also likely to have a lower educational and health status.

On the other hand, those with a higher economic/financial status will have better access to education and health services and will have higher status in these areas. It is important to take into account the socio-economic status of a woman, couple or family because this status will affect the decisions they have to make as well as the needs they have. For example, a woman who is poor may not have money to attend a health facility (either for child care, transport or where she must pay user fees). Similarly if a woman has a low educational status she may not appreciate the benefits of birth in a health facility and her low health status may mean she is at higher risk of poor health outcomes for both her and her baby. Educational status is also related to literacy. You need to know the literacy level of people that you counsel so that you do not give them complex advice or instructions in words which are unfamiliar to them, materials that they cannot read, or forms which they are unable to understand or complete.

## 2.Social and cultural context

Culture is a term we use to describe the values, beliefs, practices and ways in which a community or society lives. It also includes the way the people express themselves, communicate, and interact with one another. The social context refers to how people are organized, in terms of family groupings (do they live in extended or nuclear /traditional families? or do husbands have several wives?) It also refers to group interactions and hierarchies within communities. For example, are there group leaders, chiefs, or headmen or women, and what role do they play? The cultural and social context affects all aspects of life, from how people greet one another, to how they interact in the household and how they make decisions.



### **3. Gender roles**

Two of the differences between men and women are sex and gender. Sex is the physical, biological difference between women and men. It refers to whether people are born female or male. Gender, is not physical like sex. Gender refers to the expectations people have from someone or a community because they are female or male. Gender attitudes and behaviours are learned and the concept can change over time. Sex is biologically determined while gender is socially determined in terms of the roles and responsibilities that society or family assigns to women and men.

Men and women usually accept the roles defined and perpetuated by their community which can have both advantages and disadvantages for them. There are many factors that influence gender roles. These include: age, culture, marital status, education, economics, profession, and the country or society itself. Understanding the gender roles in the community can help you to better understand the situation of the women and men you counsel, and thus improve your counselling interactions.



## EXAMPLES OF GENDER ROLES

- Women should stay at home and look after the home or family.
- Men should not do housework.
- Men should not cry.
- Women should not disagree with their husbands.
- Women should keep their bodies covered.
- Women should not drink alcohol.

How are women and men expected to think, feel and act in your community? How do they learn to do this? Gender roles are learned from a young age as parents may treat girls and boys differently. In addition, children often copy the behaviour of their parents.

Many women find the gender role of wife, mother and housekeeper very satisfying, providing them with status in the community. However, it can be a disadvantage to other women who want to have only a few children or want to pursue a career or other interests. Some women manage to combine a number of different roles. For the family and the community it can be beneficial for women to look after the children and remain at home, but it could also be a disadvantage as women who have paid employment could bring other benefits to the family and community.

## 4. Household decision-making processes

People do not make decisions in isolation from the context of their lives, and this includes asking advice from other family members and even the wider community. Research has shown that both the context in which decision-making occurs and the social influences such as those of a partner or the family, often have more effect on decision-making than merely information and education or the provision of communication materials.

You may need to facilitate the decision-making process among all those in the household who have important contributions to make. Cultural practices and gender roles often heavily influence the decision-making process. A woman may be unwilling to commit to a plan of action or take a decision until she has discussed the issues with her partner or other family members such as her mother or mother-in-law. You can support women in these discussions by reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of different options and her needs in that situation.

## **5. Couple counselling**

Just as it is important to consider the household decision-making processes, there are many times during counselling for maternal and newborn health where you will need to work with couples - the woman and her partner/husband. There are some obvious instances such as counselling about family planning where you could work with a couple, but there are other times also such as when you counsel about care during pregnancy, discuss support during labour or following birth.

When counselling a couple it is important to acknowledge that they may not have the same attitudes, beliefs and values. They may not even have the same perception of the problem or need that you are discussing. They may have different educational, social and literacy levels, and this is particularly true if culture gender roles in your community do not support women's education. Therefore you cannot treat them as a couple, but rather you must tailor your counselling skills to two individuals who need to reach a mutual decision.

