

THE HINDU

Jain University brings in play therapy

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: With more people voluntarily seeking psychological assistance, Jain University on Tuesday launched the Kalarava Psychological Assessment and Counselling Centre at its J.C. Road campus. The centre will offer free counselling to people from the economically weaker sections. It will also cater to those who can pay for therapy. It will be open from 9.30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

But its unique offering is play therapy for children in the age group of two to 12. It is touted to be the first of its kind in the city.

Shailaja Shastri, head of the Department of Psychology, said the centre is equipped to offer counselling for up to 12 people per day with sessions

extending up to 90 minutes, and can handle three parallel sessions. During the last six months, it has been counselling students admitted under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act in four schools. "A lot of segregation could happen. We try building their self-esteem," Prof. Shastri said.

"Second-year postgraduate students will also be given practical exposure," she added.

Play therapy

It involves the use of finger puppets (of figures of grandparents, parents, etc), sand tray, 'soothing corner' stacked with soft toys and cushions, musical instruments and other things to get the children to express themselves.

Sherin P Antony, assistant professor, said play therapy is employed in combination with other therapies and is driven by the child. She cited the case of a five-year-old girl whose mother committed suicide in front of her. "The child became too clingy with her mother's sister. It was changing family equations. We used finger puppets to get her to express herself. Children usually find it difficult to express themselves. They take 10 to 15 sessions to open up and they do so with the help of such aids."

Health Minister U.T. Khader inaugurated the centre. He offered support to the centre. He also mentioned that the government can, with the centre, draw up guidelines and suggestions to offer counselling.