

## Priming the college guidance counseling program thru “On-line Kumustahan” amidst pandemic

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### ***Abstract***

The coronavirus outbreak caused a major interference to colleges and universities across all countries in the world. Cancellation of face to face classes and moving to simulated online classes as medium of instruction in teaching and learning was found to be one, if not the best solution to cope up with the sudden change in educational scenario. The pandemic also pointedly changes almost every phases of college life, from admission, enrollment, and collegiate activities including all aspects pertaining to student service particularly, the guidance services. Uncertainty continuously surrounds students as the pandemic continues. The future of education is still at stake. Many stressors and fears bother the school and its stakeholders all the way. Fortunately, there exists support for students, staff and parents for they learn the benefits of mindfulness in time of crisis. Mindfulness practices help to control anxiety making things manageable despite unpleasant conditions. Counseling methods help students connect with others, fine-tune their thinking and beliefs, become more hopeful and flexible, practice self-care, attend to the spiritual dimension of life or promote self-compassion bolster suppleness despite changing conditions brought by pandemic. The study is important because it will open an avenue to deliver counseling program in schools in order to assist individual students to develop their abilities to understand themselves better, guide them in solving their own problems and to propose and apply early interventions, favorable solutions and promote adjustments to their environment.

***Keywords:*** online kamustahan, google meet, students, teachers, mental health

## **Priming the college guidance counseling program thru “On-line Kumustahan” amidst pandemic**

### **1. Introduction**

The coronavirus outbreak caused a major interference to colleges and universities across all countries in the world. Cancellation of face to face classes and moving to simulated online classes as medium of instruction in teaching and learning was found to be one, if not the best solution to cope up with the sudden change in educational scenario. The pandemic also pointedly changes almost every phases of college life, from admission, enrollment, and collegiate activities including all aspects pertaining to student service particularly, the guidance services. Uncertainty continuously surrounds students as the pandemic continues. The future of education is still at stake. Many stressors and fears bother the school and its stakeholders all the way. Fortunately, there exists support for students, staff and parents for they learn the benefits of mindfulness in time of crisis. Mindfulness practices help to control anxiety making things manageable despite unpleasant conditions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students' access to education and training activities through online platforms has increased the impact of the crisis situation experienced. Social/physical distance and other limitations can cause negative psychological situations such as anxiety and fear, and these can affect students' well-being (Özer, 2020; Wang et al., 2020; del Castillo & Alino, 2020). Students have been shown among the groups with the most psychological difficulties during this period (Cao et al., 2020; Güngör et al., 2020) because they had to take part in distance education activities without participating in any orientation process and adapt to this process without support. This has created a general disappointment in students (Shores, 2020).

In other words, the pandemic has brought not only the risk of illness and death but also negative psychological impacts (Duan & Zhu, 2020; Guo et al., 2020). For example, fear of getting sick, fear of being alone at home and delay in education, fear of families' inability to pay their education fees due to loss of income, and watching negative content on social media negatively affected the mental health of students (Kernan, 2019; Cao et al., 2020; Güngör et al., 2020; Tönbül, 2020). Increasing level of fear leads to a decrease in individuals' levels of well-being and hope. In addition, quarantine practices can increase the stress level and cause emotional problems (Fardin, 2020; Naeem et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). The pandemic increases the risks of permanent mental distress (Liu et al., 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the mental health and social, emotional, psychological, and educational well-being of young people (Golberstein et al., 2020). Counseling methods help students connect with others, fine-tune their thinking and beliefs, become more hopeful and flexible, practice self-care, attend to the spiritual dimension of life or promote self-compassion bolster suppleness despite changing conditions brought by pandemic. Counseling make college life easier if students understand the advantages of seeing a counselor, which include having a safe place to be honest, to feel no judgment for the problems and issues they share, to get help and support in developing school-life balance, and to gain skills in building healthy peer relationships despite Pandemic condition through on-line cyber counseling.

As mentioned in the study of Arnot et al. in 2020, At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, human activities were no longer the same as before. Various countries in the world imposed regulations for working from home, studying from home, social distancing, physical distancing, etc. Furthermore, these adjustments may eventually have triggered mental health symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, stress, and so on. This is the reason why the researcher decided to initiate counseling thru “On-line Kumustahan (OK)” among College students of University of Rizal System, Cainta campus to be able to find out the degree of assistance the counselor can offer as counseling program most especially in times of pandemic. Since the researcher is newly hired in a state university despite her 10 years' -experience as guidance counselor in private institutions. Wagner

et al. in 2014 recommend that at whatever point an Internet counselee/client is communicating in a virtual world, their problems should always be regarded as genuine.

The study is important because it will open an avenue to deliver counseling program in schools in order to assist individual students to develop their abilities to understand themselves better, guide them in solving their own problems and to propose and apply early interventions, favorable solutions and promote adjustments to their environment. This study was anchored on the Theory of Web-based Counseling and Support which has become increasingly commonplace for children and young people (CYP). Currently, there is limited research that focuses on the mechanisms of change within complex telepsychology platforms, a factor that makes designing and implementing outcome measures challenging. This theory aims to articulate a theory of change (To C) for Kooth, a web-based therapy and support platform for CYP. Developing the Top C helps to shed light on how web-based therapy and support services aid the mental health and well-being of CYP. Furthermore, it helps to understand the development of positive virtual ecosystems and can be used to devise evaluative tools for CYP telepsychology providers

“On-line Kumustathan” was conceptualized with the following objectives:

- Encourage openness among college students thru friendly conversation in an on-line setting
- Administer, collect and analyze data from the students accomplished counseling instrument in Google form and lastly
- Implement guidance program that will give proper direction to the counseling services for college students.

## 2. Methodology

Descriptive research was used in this research. It involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of the present nature, composition, or process of phenomena. The focus is on the prevailing conditions, on how a person, group, or thing behaves or functions at the time of the study. Manuel and Medel (1976), Survey through on-line mode was particularly used which includes questionnaires, personal interviews, phone surveys, and normative surveys. The purpose of choosing this design is to allow the researcher to collect, verify, and synthesize findings for future use. The study was conducted in University of Rizal System Cainta, Campus during the school year 2020-2021. The subject of the study includes all the college students in the College of education in URS Cainta campus from first year level to third year level respectively. There were no fourth year students at present because of K-12 curriculum with its full and final implementation in 2022. The study focused on the initialization of guidance counseling program amidst pandemic 2019 to present.

**Research Instrument** - Data gathering instrument used in the study was the counseling form that was adopted and modified for the purpose it was meant to be. The gathered data was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted.

**Statistical Treatment of Data** - To obtain necessary data from the respondents and determine the level of concerns derived from the student respondents, frequency distribution was used.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The following are the results and analysis of the data gathered from the students of University of Rizal System Cainta, campus which were utilized to present the results. The table revealed that majority of the students' population have varied individualized concerns that bothers each of them in times of pandemic. Among which were mental, emotional and personal stresses. It is followed by financial problem that upsets them and some family problems that more or less affecting them in this time of crisis. Majority of the respondents were female students which only shows that in the priming of the guidance program of the campus only few

responded since mainstreaming them requires internet connections and use of appropriate gadgets were required as well that not everybody can afford.

**Table 1**

*University of Rizal system E-counseling report bachelor of elementary education all levels*

CONCERNS:	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS
Family problem	0	3
Financial problem	1	7
Grief/ bereavement	0	0
Career concerns	0	0
Health/ sickness Covid-19-related	0	0
Academic concerns	1	4
Personal problem	1	5
Others: Emotional/Mental concerns/Personal issues	1	24
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>43</b>

**Table 2**

*Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (All levels)*

CONCERNS:	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS
Family problem	0	0
Financial problem	0	1
Grief/ bereavement	0	0
Career concerns	0	0
Health/ sickness COVID 19-related	0	0
Academic concerns	0	0
Personal problem	1	2
Others: Emotional/Mental Concerns/Personal Issues	2	8
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

The table showed that only 11 students from BTLE responded. Most of the female students and few male students were bothered by emotional, mental and personal issues during pandemic. Only few was worried about financial problem under the said program.

**Table 3**

*Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English (All levels)*

CONCERNS:	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS
Family problem	0	0
Financial problem	0	1
Grief/ bereavement	0	0
Career concerns	1	0
Health/ sickness COVID 19-related	0	1
Academic concerns	0	1
Personal problem	0	3
Others: Emotional/Mental/Personal Issues	1	8
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>

It can be gleaned from the table of the 14 representatives among BSE English major, female students were mostly affected also with emotional, mental stresses and personal issues in times of covid-19 pandemic and only few on financial aspect. This only shows that since they are in the adult stage already, thinking twice for the family in times of uncertainty like the present condition, greatly affect their moods and emotions by thinking how they could serve the family as they also stay with them at home specially during lockdowns.

**Table 4**

*Sample Table of Individualized concerns of College students in URS Cainta Campus*

NAME:	YEAR/ COURSE	REASON FOR SEEKING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT /COUNSELING	STATUS
(Name protected)	BTLED 2	-She hurt herself as a means of coping with difficult emotions (Non-suicidal self-injury)	-Recommended to attend individual counseling session. For follow-up and monitoring

In line with some personal issues that essentially need the help of persons in authority including parents, shall be given proper attention in order to help our students in their present condition taking into consideration the Privacy Act law (RA 10173) the “Data Privacy Act of 2012, Sec.11., the policy of the State to protect the fundamental human right of privacy of communication while ensuring free flow of information to promote innovation and growth of concerned individuals. Specific issues discussed during the counseling sessions were treated with strict confidentiality. The matters disclosed in the counseling report which are directly related with the behavioral concerns of the student were treated with strict confidentiality. Individual counseling reports were kept and filed in the cumulative records for future reference.

Based from the results and data gathered, the “On-line Kumustahan” initiated by the Guidance Counselor served as a pre –intervention way to communicate better with the students in general, then attending to them individually as needed. They reached out from each other comfortably and provide encouragement for openness through personal communication. The problems encountered by the students specially this pandemic season, provided early intervention in consultation with expert psychiatrist in the field of medicine which the guidance counselor personally attended in collaboration with LGU hospital in Cainta, free of charge. People concerned like parents, advisers and deans were notified with strict implementation of Privacy Act law (RA 10173) the “Data Privacy Act of 2012, Sec.11., the policy of the State to protect the fundamental human right of privacy of communication while ensuring free flow of information to promote innovation and growth of concerned individuals”. Post interventions of cases with continuous medication and follow-ups were closely monitored from time to time.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were formulated: It is therefore very necessary for a Guidance counselor to open the line of communication both virtually or via face to face following the necessary health protocols in attending to their personal needs especially during consultations with experts. Data gathering instrument and application of the different processes in quantifying the results of the study is much needed to support the study, Qualitative means may also be applied when necessary for better understanding and realization of facts. Finally, research-based information is best suited for a more comprehensive and accurate guidance counseling program in College.

The following suggestions are recommended based from the results of the study:

The Guidance counselor should encourage more participation of students in on-line engagements by providing other communication measures in order to provide awareness of self-understanding. The guidance services should be flexible and accessible at all times to be able to provide genuine services despite unavoidable circumstances that may arise beyond our control

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