

Embracing virtual support: A phenomenological study on the lived experiences of Filipino guidance counselees during the Covid-19 pandemic

Anna Patricia B. Agoncillo

MA Student in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, De La Salle University – Dasmariñas
DBB-B, 4115 West Ave, Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines
E-mail: annagoncillo@gmail.com

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic profoundly impacted student and faculty well-being, necessitating a closer examination of guidance counselee experiences in virtual counseling. This research aims to address the unique challenges and benefits of virtual counseling during crises and improve guidance counseling delivery. This qualitative research explored the experiences and challenges of Filipino guidance counselees during virtual counseling amid the pandemic using phenomenological inquiry. Ten purposively selected participants underwent in-depth interviews, then the information was transcribed and analyzed thematically. Analysis revealed three major themes: Psychological struggles, challenges of virtual counseling, and the importance of virtual counseling. Participants discussed psychological struggles, pre-existing mental health conditions, and challenges like poor Internet connectivity. They emphasized the significance of virtual counseling for well-being. The findings underscore recognizing and addressing counselees' psychological struggles during the pandemic. Effective support must mitigate challenges like technological literacy and resource constraints. Virtual counseling maintains connections despite social distancing restrictions. This research provides valuable insights into guidance counselee experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippines. It emphasizes embracing virtual counseling advantages while addressing specific challenges. Policymakers and school leaders should recognize counselor expertise and provide comprehensive support. Further research is recommended to develop interventions for different age groups and educational levels. Understanding and supporting guidance counselees to promote mental health and overall development.

Keywords: Covid-19; guidance counselees; virtual counseling; phenomenology; the Philippines

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Introduction

Marking a painful chapter in history, countless cities around the world experienced lockdowns due to the increasing fear and the widespread cases brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic (Situmorang, 2020). The World Health Organization (2020) highlighted that shock at the loss of jobs, difficult family dynamics, grief at the loss of loved ones, restrictions of movements, isolation, uncertainty, and fear of the future are just some of the psychological effects felt due to the pandemic. The uncertainty of the situation was mixed with physical and economic obstacles. The pandemic had a negative impact on economic, educational, socio-cultural, and other aspects (Putri, 2021). It is no wonder that the mental health industry gained more attention during this tough time. Before the pandemic, the Philippine government enacted the Mental Health Law (Republic Act No. 11036). This law aims to provide a platform for the delivery of integrated and comprehensive mental health services. Thus, it has been adapted to different sectors, such as schools. A recent survey by Premier Value Provider Inc. in Mendez (2020) showed how the pandemic and community quarantines affect the mental health of Filipino citizens. Millennials



and Gen Zs were found to be the most affected, where 15% experienced a critical level of stress, 21% had depression, and 29% had anxiety. The mental health crisis in our country elevated the importance of virtual counseling and guidance counseling.

Counseling is a fundamental profession and a useful tool to improve the lives of people (Amos, Bedu-Addo, & Antwi, 2020). It refers to the professional help given by the counselor to the counselee as they communicate with each other using electronic devices such as computers or smartphones (Zeren et al., 2020). Guidance is the assistance provided to a counselee to manage his or her life's activities, while counseling is a specific service given by an expert to a counselee who is experiencing trouble (Savitz-Romer, Rowan-Kenyon, Nicola, Alexander, & Carroll, 2021). Counseling is curative in nature. As counseling went virtual, different challenges arose.

Amidst the pandemic, mental health issues prevailed in various sectors, such as the academe. Empirical studies showed a high prevalence of university students' mental health issues during the early phase of Covid-19 (Liang et al., 2020). Both teachers and guidance counselors were overwhelmed by the sudden change brought by the Covid-19 lockdowns and were unable to provide the immediate personalized attention that many learners needed (Burns, Dagnall, & Holt, 2020; Savitz-Romer et al., 2021; Wieczorek et al., 2021).

In these changing times, the role of the guidance counselor is essential as their skills are needed by students who are experiencing personal difficulties (Mielgo-Conde, Seijas-Santos, & Grande-Prado, 2021). Virtual or online counseling became a viable alternative for counselors to reduce, fix, and prevent students' problems. According to a recent paper by Yuniarti, Asrowi, and Yusuf (2021), virtual counseling is a therapeutic intervention administered through a website with communication technology media. Its essence is similar to face-to-face counseling as it provides the eight functions of individual counseling. These functions include (1) developmental, (2) prevention, (3) repair, (4) investigation, (5) reinforcement, (6) cognitive function, (7) physiological, and (8) psychological enhancement. However, unlike its counterpart, virtual counseling relies on the efficiency of technology media.

Supriyanto et al. (2020) found that asynchronous media and technology-based synchronous media were the leading alternatives for virtual counseling during the Covid-19 pandemic. The use of asynchronous media included electronic messages on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, or social media. On the other hand, the synchronous media included Zoom, Google Meeting, and Microsoft Teams. These media were used to solve the students' problems. Moreover, the students' competency in using each media and the students' resources play important parts in the virtual counseling sessions. Dimri's (2021) study found that more than 50% of students faced Internet connection problems, which served as a significant hurdle for the smooth viewing of virtual counseling sessions. Despite the technical difficulties, the student's overall feedback on the usefulness and effectiveness of the virtual counseling sessions was significantly positive. Students were keener to participate in virtual counseling when they perceived the electronic platforms as secure. Li and Leung (2020) found that distressed students who perceived their previous counseling experience as effective would be more likely to use virtual counseling services.

Apart from technical difficulties, a study of school counselors found that they faced barriers to enacting their roles as they received limited direction and guidance with the new setup (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). Lastly, there is evidence indicating the reluctance of Philippine citizens to seek mental health services (Arnado & Bayod, 2020). Previous literature highlights the challenges that counselees and counselors face as they transition to virtual counseling. Further research is needed to explore the specific hurdles that Filipino guidance counselees face during this time.

To date, there has been a scarcity of studies published exploring the lived experiences of Filipino guidance counselees during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe the essence of being a Filipino guidance counselee despite the limitations of virtual counseling in the Philippines. Moreover, the study aims to know the virtual counseling process and the challenges Filipino guidance counselees encounter during virtual counseling amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

To effectively support and provide for the needs of these guidance counsees, it is first imperative to gain deep insight and understanding of their lived experiences as counsees. The information that the researcher gathered through in-depth interviewing can be helpful to school administrators and the policymakers who create mental health programs and policies in modern times.

For the statement of the problem, the present paper focuses on being a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Generally, it intends to describe what it means to be a Filipino guidance counselee receiving virtual counseling during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: “What does it mean to be a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic?” and “What challenges do guidance counsees encounter during virtual counseling amidst the Covid-19 pandemic?”

For the study’s framework, phenomenology was selected. Phenomenology is the exploration of phenomena and philosophical discussion (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological study explores what the individuals experience and focuses on their distinct experiences of a phenomenon. Research in phenomenology has overlapped with other vital qualitative approaches, including ethnography, symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutics (Moustakas, 1994). These phenomenological methods are efficient at highlighting the experiences and perceptions of the individuals from their own perspectives and, therefore, challenge the normative assumptions.

Methods

This study used qualitative methods to get an in-depth look into the lives of Filipino guidance counsees during the pandemic. This qualitative inquiry was anchored in the phenomenology approach. It encompasses exploration, analysis, and description of the phenomena through a series of in-depth interviews. In this study, qualitative methods were aimed at presenting the essence of being a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Since phenomenology has a robust foundation in philosophy, scholars must understand the writings of key thinkers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Moustakas, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

Ten participants were carefully selected to be a part of the study. To be selected as a participant in this study, participants must fit the predetermined criterion and must provide either their verbal (i.e., through audio/video recordings) or written consent (i.e., through asynchronous interviews). Participants of this present paper were Filipino guidance counsees who received virtual counseling, were university students, were Philippine-based, and were a part of Generation Z (i.e., ages 18 to 24). Throughout the data collection and data analysis, the participants were labeled using codes such as Participant 1, Participant 2, and others. The researcher opted to use codes to protect the anonymity and privacy of the participants. This phenomenological inquiry involved ten participants, five female (50%) and five male (50%). The participants' ages range from 21 to 24 years. The majority of the participants were in the process of completing their undergraduate studies, and the rest have been juggling work and graduate studies.

In terms of the data collection technique, individual in-depth interviews were undertaken as guided by the primary research question: “What does it mean to be a Filipino guidance counselee who receives virtual counseling during the Covid-19 pandemic?” and was followed by supporting open-ended inquiries. Individual in-depth interviewing is a process of data collection where the researcher meets the individual to collect detailed information beyond the surface-level answers (Creswell, 2007). The present study conducted a series of three interviews per participant to get substantial information. The participants were interviewed through synchronous and asynchronous methods, including videoconferencing, electronic mailing, and social media messaging. Permission to audio-record or document the interviews was requested as a part of the ethical protocol. The narratives of the participants were transcribed by actively listening through the audio recordings and by compiling all the written responses in one file. Standards for reporting qualitative research guidelines were conscientiously observed throughout the process of conducting the present study.

In the data analysis, the phenomenon of being a guidance counselee during the Covid-19 pandemic was analyzed with an open mind and an untainted perspective in accordance with the phenomenology approach. That resulted in acquiring new knowledge derived from the essence of the participants' lived experiences. Data analysis began by bracketing or suspending the researcher's prior judgment of the examined phenomenon. Horizontalization was also used to assign equal value to each statement that the participants gave, representing a segment of meaning (Merriam, 2009).

To illustrate, the data analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis. This method is a rigorous method that allows the researcher to reveal emergent themes. This approach includes (1) gathering the descriptions of the phenomenon from the participants, (2) reading the transcribed manuscript to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings conveyed, (3) determining significant statements and phrases and converting them into general terms, (4) formulating meanings of what it means to be a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, (5) organizing the derived meanings into clusters of units or themes, (6) writing textural and structural descriptions of the meanings examined, and (7) carefully validating the meanings from the participants of this study before writing the composite description to validate the findings and merge new ideas into the final comprehensive description.

The first step was collecting and compiling the participants' transcripts into one secured file. The second step entailed reading the transcribed file several times and making marginal notes to form the initial coding. This step is also known as memoing. The third step set the tone of the present paper as it identified the significant statements and phrases. These significant statements were then converted into general terms. That marks the process of horizontalization. After horizontalization, the fourth step was to formulate meanings to capture the experiences of the participants. The researcher clustered these meanings into units or themes in the fifth step. The meaning units and themes corresponded to the present paper's research questions. The six steps established the textural and structural descriptions of the themes. The researcher wrote the textural description to highlight what the participants of the study experienced during the phenomenon.

On the other hand, the structural description highlighted how the experience happened. The structural description included the virtual counseling settings and procedures as well as the participants' backgrounds. Lastly, the meanings were carefully validated before writing a comprehensive description. The comprehensive description captured the essence of the participants' experiences and represented the culmination of the phenomenon in the study.

Throughout the process of this present paper, the rigor of conductive qualitative studies was strictly observed. That is to ensure the study's trustworthiness and auditability. Furthermore, Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis is robust and, therefore, ensures the credibility and reliability of the results. That includes the verification of each participant that the composite description reflects their experiences, wherein unclear or misinterpreted themes prompted the researcher to return with the analysis and revise it respectively. This process allows the participants to follow the line of thinking that the researcher used during the data analysis process. A qualitative research expert from the De La Salle University - Dasmariñas' faculty was consulted to ensure that the description and coding used in the interpretation and analysis were accurate. All the audio recordings and transcripts used were saved and secured in a password-protected laptop.

Results and Discussion

Guided by the theoretical perspective of phenomenology, three themes were constructed to describe what it means to be a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 crisis. Three major meaning units or themes emerged from the participant's responses. These three meaning units or themes explained the essence of a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Theme 1: Experiencing psychological struggles

The responses from the participants revealed the reasons why they sought help. Interestingly, participants were motivated to seek help due to having pre-existing mental conditions or being mentally exhausted due to the uncertainties brought by the pandemic.

“I think being a counselee in this pandemic would mean that a person would like to seek for professional help/intervention during a time wherein a lot of uncontrollable situations are happening, which are taking a toll on someone’s mental health at a higher intensity than usual.” (P1)

“As a student in the midst of pandemic, I noticed that it has affected my physical and mental health and I acknowledge that I needed some help.” (P10)

Sub-theme 1: Presence of pre-existing mental conditions

Full-time and part-time students had to adjust to the learning methods imposed by the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. Many of the participants underwent a series of virtual guidance counseling due to the presence of pre-existing mental conditions such as bulimia, anxiety, and major depressive disorder.

“Because my MDD is affecting my work/study-life balance.” (P2)

“I experienced prior Psychological conditions such as bulimia and death of a loved one by suicide.” (P4)

Overall, the health crisis exacerbated the negative emotions experienced by the participants and motivated them to seek professional help.

“Things have been feeling heavier than usual and that my reactions to some specific triggers have been uncontrollable and frequent made me decide to seek counseling.” (P1)

“I am motivated by myself because I think it helped to lessen my worries and anxiety.” (P6)

Sub-theme 2: Emergence of mental health exhaustion due to Covid-19 pandemic

The participants of the present paper highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic took a toll on their mental health. External changes brought by the crisis included balancing online school and work, having multiple online requirements from school, and being isolated from social support. Students were given several synchronous and asynchronous requirements, which they had to accomplish despite the constraints on their resources. To deal with mental health exhaustion, the participants of the present study sought the help of their guidance counselors.

“I think being a counselee in this pandemic would mean that a person would like to seek for professional help/intervention during a time wherein a lot of uncontrollable situations are happening, which are taking a toll on someone’s mental health at a higher intensity than usual.” (P1)

“This pandemic has affected my mental health because I am living away from my family and friends.” (P7)

“The pandemic has been challenging and exhausting for me because I had to study in the morning and work at night in Ortigas.” (P4)

Theme 2: Undergoing the challenges of virtual counseling

Due to the relatively new concept and the fast-paced digital landscape of virtual guidance counseling, most of the participants were hesitant and unfamiliar with the platforms and strategies used in the counseling sessions. At first, some of the participants were afraid of trying virtual counseling due to the stigma attached to being a counselee. The majority of the participants had to adjust to the counseling set-up and warm up to their counselors. Additionally, the participants had to educate themselves on the different tools used to fulfill the virtual counseling sessions. Not everyone was digitally savvy. This theme had two (2) sub-themes, which are described below.

“Being a counselee during this pandemic is a tough job because of environmental factors such as the need to be tech savvy and literate.” (P4)

“I changed from a male counselor to a female counselor because I am more comfortable to share experiences with a female counselor.” (P8)

Sub-theme 1: Platforms and modes of virtual counseling sessions

The participants attended a series of virtual counseling sessions during the pandemic and were able to access help through asynchronous and synchronous modes. Asynchronous modes included messenger, email, helpline, and other social media platforms. Synchronous modes included video conferencing apps such as Zoom, Facebook Video Calls, and Google Meet. Other participants were able to book their guidance counselors through the school’s app or contact details.

“Facebook Messenger and Zoom as means of communication and counseling.” (P2)

“The process of my virtual counseling treatment started with registering through a Google Form and contacting them through a direct hotline. Then, I received responses through text, email, and messenger.” (P4)

“I book an appointment on Calendly for the virtual counseling and use my laptop as a device.” (P6)

Sub-theme 2: Barriers hindering the virtual counseling sessions

The responses revealed that there were a variety of barriers hindering the ease of the virtual counseling sessions. Firstly, there was an existing stigma attached to being a counselee. Secondly, almost all the participants experienced problems with their Internet connection. Slow internet connection resulted in prolonged sessions or the difficulty of the counselee to convey their emotions to the counselors. Lastly, the participants were faced with busy schedules due to school and work.

“Slow Internet connection kept prolonging sessions.” (P2)

“I cannot feel the presence of my guidance counselor because of the poor internet connection.” (P6)

“I do not want to experience the stigma that is attached to having counseling, that you a lesser person.” (P7)

Theme 3: Embracing the importance of virtual counseling

The participants felt favorable and unfavorable experiences throughout their virtual guidance counseling sessions. The participants highlighted the importance of virtual guidance counseling as it was a means of staying connected to a professional despite the social distancing restrictions of the pandemic in the Philippines. Nonetheless, all the participants felt that virtual guidance counseling was beneficial to their well-being. This theme had two (2) sub-themes, which are described below.

Sub-theme 1: Benefits to one's well-being

Virtual counseling offered a myriad of benefits to the participants of the study. Participant 4 stated that the main advantage of virtual counseling is having someone to talk to despite the limitations of the pandemic and the counselee's harder setup.

“Virtual counseling has been helpful to my well-being.” (P1)

“The counseling is mostly a pro-active way of defeating mental health issues especially during this pandemic.” (P2)

Many of the participants echoed the sentiments of Participant 4. They felt that the virtual counseling sessions helped them to address their thoughts and emotions, which were difficult to manage due to the pandemic. Furthermore, the participants considered the virtual counseling setting as a convenient, safe space where they could freely share their thoughts and feelings without judgment.

“Virtual counseling helped my straighten out my thoughts and emotions.” (P3)

“Virtual is more convenient than face-to-face counseling, no line queuing.” (P5)

“I like the feeling whenever my virtual counselee accepts my thoughts without judgement.” (P10)

Sub-theme 2: Encouragements from faculty, friends, and family

Having strong social support that puts the participants' well-being at heart is important in their counseling journey. Participants were encouraged to attend the guidance counseling sessions due to the suggestions of their friends, family members, and school faculty. Other participants were motivated both by others and themselves. The encouragement from the support system helped the participants to embrace the benefits of virtual guidance counseling to their well-being.

“A friend encouraged me to seek help.” (P1)

“I decided to undergo virtual counseling because I have a friend who underwent counseling pre-pandemic and it benefits him. I want to try too.” (P7)

“The school staff suggested that I undergo virtual counseling and since the university is working on skeletal workforce, I have to ask permission from the campus should it be completely necessary for us to go there in the counselor's office ...” (P8)

Filipino guidance counselees during the Covid-19

The year 2020 marked the start of a global health crisis known as the Covid-19 pandemic. Countless cities around the world experienced lockdowns and other social distancing measures. The students, teachers, and guidance counselors were overwhelmed by the sudden change brought by the pandemic. In fact, previous literature found a high prevalence of university students' mental health issues during the early phase of Covid-19 (Liang et al., 2020). In these changing times, the role of the guidance counselor became more essential to students who were experiencing personal difficulties.

The objective of the present paper was to develop a deeper understanding of how guidance counselees amidst the pandemic manifest themselves. The context of this phenomenological study focused on the students who received a series of virtual guidance counseling sessions despite the exposure to resource constraints and an emotionally taxing environment. Such contextual challenges heightened the guidance counselees' worries and stress. The findings demonstrated the manifestation of a guidance counselee amidst the pandemic as a dynamic phenomenon consisting of many facets. Firstly, a guidance counselee was a student who has experienced psychological struggles. For example, the participants elaborated on their pre-existing mental conditions, such as bulimia and anxiety. Secondly, a guidance counselee was a student who underwent the challenges of virtual guidance counseling. These challenges were brought about by the flexible and remote platforms utilized during virtual guidance counseling sessions. Whether the participants used asynchronous or synchronous tools to aid their sessions, the majority of the participants experienced the struggles of having a poor internet connection. The quality of the internet connection has an effect on the overall guidance counseling experience. Lastly, a guidance counselee was a student who embraced the importance of virtual guidance counseling during this crisis. The participants expressed how beneficial the sessions were to their well-being and their ability to bounce back from the issues brought by the pandemic. Providing virtual guidance counseling services to students was deemed essential as it could improve and strengthen the individual's mental health amidst any crisis.

Although the study offers an in-depth insight and understanding of how guidance counselees amidst the pandemic manifest themselves, it is limited in the extent to which the phenomena have been reported. Owing to the limited scope of the study, some aspects of being a guidance counselee (e.g., a dichotomy between a guidance counselee in rural and urban places) may have been overlooked. The findings, however, offer a fundamental insight and highlight the importance of understanding a guidance counselee to enable the enhancement thereof. Further research is recommended to consolidate the intervention design in the aspects of well-being and virtual counseling that need to be nurtured.

Moreover, since the study's participants were limited to tertiary students from Generation Z (i.e., ages 18 to 24), guidance counselees from other age groups and educational levels were not considered. Changes in the setting, such as the age groups, educational levels, and social classes, can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.

Finally, interpretations were influenced by a specific theoretical framework and provided one perspective of the research phenomenon, which contributes to the previous body of knowledge. The possibility of alternative interpretations, however, provides scope for continued research. Future research could adopt different theoretical perspectives.

Its implications are varied. The present study highlighted the importance of embracing the benefits of virtual counseling and the unique challenges that come with it to flourish as a guidance counselee in the virtual counseling setting. School heads and city leaders must acknowledge and honor the expertise that the guidance counselors offer to improve the well-being of their students. Rather than assigning guidance counselors to administrative tasks, these leaders should provide ample opportunities for them to offer comprehensive services that include academic and mental health support.

Technology may have filled some gaps that were created during the pandemic, but increasing the technological literacy of guidance counsees is essential during this time. As such, orientation on these platforms through online workshops or handouts could provide support amidst the constraints in resources during the pandemic.

Lastly, the findings of this study offer valuable insight into the experiences of guidance counsees. It is important for teachers to recognize the students who need psychological help under challenging environmental and academic circumstances. These teachers can suggest appropriate guidance counseling services. Such interventions should focus on programs that facilitate continuous self-development, promote healthy coping strategies, and enhance the positive social support associated with guidance counsees.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is among the few phenomenological studies that examine the essence of being a guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippines. The essence of being a virtual guidance counselee amidst the Covid-19 pandemic can be encapsulated by a phrase - difficult yet fulfilling. The Covid-19 pandemic posed serious and long-lasting effects on students' physical and mental health. Due to its adverse emotional effects (e.g., isolation) and environmental shifts (e.g., shift to online school), students were motivated to seek professional help through their school's guidance counselors. Participants of the present study were eligible for help due to being full-time students or working students. During the pandemic, the participants participated in several online counseling sessions and had access to both asynchronous and synchronous modes. Asynchronous modes included messenger, email, helpline, and other social media platforms, and synchronous modes included video conferencing applications such as Zoom, Facebook Video Calls, and Google Meet. Other participants could schedule appointments via the school's app or contact information with their guidance counselors.

Interestingly, participants who sought help either had pre-existing psychological conditions (i.e., Bulimia, Major Depressive Disorder, or Anxiety) or had been mentally exhausted due to the pandemic. These participants felt favorable and unfavorable experiences throughout their virtual guidance counseling sessions. Firstly, the participants had a hard time adjusting to the new set-up because this modern counseling method entailed literacy in technology. Secondly, constraints were felt due to time, resources, and Internet connectivity. Thirdly, the importance of virtual guidance counseling was highlighted by the participants as it was a means of staying connected to a professional despite the social distancing restrictions of the pandemic in the Philippines. Nonetheless, all the participants felt that virtual guidance counseling was beneficial to their well-being.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the significant challenges faced by guidance counsees during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the benefits of virtual counseling and the expertise required from counselors to navigate these complex situations. The challenges encountered by guidance counsees were multi-faceted. The sudden shift to virtual counseling platforms brought about technical and resource-related difficulties, such as poor Internet connectivity and limited technological literacy. Moreover, the isolation and upheavals caused by the pandemic contributed to pre-existing mental health conditions and new psychological struggles among students, underscoring the need for specialized support. Despite these challenges, the benefits of virtual counseling emerged prominently. Students acknowledged the positive impact of virtual counseling sessions on their well-being. These sessions provided an avenue for students to cope with the psychological burdens of the pandemic, offering a safe space to express their concerns and receive professional guidance.

The expertise of guidance counselors played a crucial role in mitigating the challenges and maximizing the benefits of virtual counseling. Counselors were required to possess a diverse skill set, including proficiency in navigating virtual platforms and effectively communicating through digital channels. Their ability to adapt their counseling techniques to an online environment was

essential in maintaining the quality of therapeutic interactions. Furthermore, counselors needed to be adept at addressing a wide range of mental health concerns and providing tailored support to suit individual needs. By recognizing the pivotal role of guidance counselors and offering comprehensive support, educational institutions can contribute to the mental health and overall resilience of their students, thereby enhancing the educational experience even in times of crisis.

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