

School Counselors' Experiences in Providing Counseling Services to Teachers and Parents during the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study

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Extended Abstract

Aim

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many facets of our existence, including education. The pandemic has had a significant impact on school counselors, who have had to provide guidance and support to students, parents, and teachers during these difficult times. Using a phenomenological research approach, a study was conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of school counselors who provided consulting services to parents and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study sought to investigate the experiences of school counselors in Tehran, Iran, who provided consulting services during the pandemic.

Methodology

In terms of objective, the employed research method was fundamental, while phenomenological in terms of strategy. In Tehran in 2022, the research community included all school counselors. The researcher began by conducting interviews with the most seasoned school counselors in the field and continued sampling with intent until information saturation. Seven women and three men were interviewed semi-structuredly for a total of 10 school counselors. The interview information was analyzed using the Colaizzi method and the MAXQDA-20 software.

Findings

The analysis led to the identification of five major themes and 18 sub-themes regarding the experiences of school counselors in providing consulting services during the pandemic. The themes included consulting patterns, the challenges and impediments of providing consulting services, the positive aspects of epidemic conditions, the characteristics and competencies of counselors, and the pathology of the Corona era through the provision of consulting services.

The first theme, consulting patterns, centered on the various consulting services school counselors offer. Academic counseling, career counseling, mental health counseling, and social-emotional counseling were among the many consulting services provided by school counselors, as determined by the study. The second theme, obstacles and difficulties in providing consulting services, highlighted the numerous obstacles school counselors faced in providing consulting services during the pandemic. These obstacles included difficulties in communication, a paucity of resources, and an increased workload. The third motif, positive aspects of epidemic conditions, addressed the positive aspects of the pandemic experienced by school counselors. The study discovered that the pandemic created new opportunities for school clinicians to provide services to students and families, such as online counseling and virtual support groups. Characteristics and competencies of counselors centered on the personal characteristics and competencies required of school counselors in order to provide effective consulting services during the pandemic. This included emotional intelligence, communication abilities, and adaptability. The fifth and final theme, the pathology of the Corona era through consulting services, explored the deleterious effects of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of students, parents, and educators. The study discovered that school counselors' consulting services played a crucial role in addressing these negative effects.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the provision of advisory services encompasses a vast array of school counselor services and utilizes all of the school system's resources for the development and progress of students. However, this essential school service is not yet utilized in an established manner and encounters obstacles and challenges. Therefore, the study suggests the development of in-service courses for school counselors in order to enhance their competencies and address the challenges they face when providing consulting services during the pandemic. In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented school counselors with significant challenges in providing counseling services to students, parents, and educators. Nonetheless, this study emphasizes the crucial role school counselors play in supporting the mental health and well-being of those affected by the pandemic. By developing in-service courses for school counselors, we can ensure that they possess the necessary competencies and skills to provide effective consulting services in these difficult times.

Keywords: Counseling Services, Covid-19, Phenomenological Study, School Counselor, Teachers and Parents.