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Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Purpose

- The purpose of this project was to explore the challenges students are facing during the pandemic, including implications for diverse populations, and interventions school counselors can implement to assist students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Introduction

- Students who have had to adjust to virtual learning outside of the traditional school building may be experiencing:
 - stress, anxiety, and depression (Seidel et al., 2020);
 - worry about their academics (Son et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021);
 - fears beyond their schooling (e.g., contracting COVID-19; Seçer & Ulaş, 2020);
 - barriers accessing helpful resources with these issues (e.g., mental health services, school counseling services; Boudreau, 2020; Savitz-Romer et al., 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Student Mental Health Concerns

- Two thirds of college students reported “overwhelming anxiety” (Seidel et al., 2020, p. 1259).
- Nearly half reported depression making it “difficult to function” (Seidel et al., 2020, p. 1259).
- The resulting anxiety interfered with student’s academic success, as well as their socialization (Boudreau, 2020, as cited in Shafer, 2017).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Student Mental Health Concerns

- The increased anxiety is also causing some students to:
 - avoid reaching out to friends (Boudreau, 2020, as cited in Shafer, 2017; Seidel et al., 2020).
 - avoid leaving their homes (Boudreau, 2020, as cited in Shafer, 2017; Seidel et al., 2020).
- In some of these cases, there is increased depression and suicidal ideations (Boudreau, 2020, as cited in Shafer, 2017).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Student Mental Health Concerns

- 43% of school counselors reported less time for individual counseling than pre-pandemic (Savitz-Romer et al., 2020).
 - Instead of spending their time helping students, school counselors are:
 - tracking virtual student attendance (Boudreau, 2020; Savitz-Romer et al., 2020).
 - providing technological information and assistance (Boudreau, 2020; Savitz-Romer et al., 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Student Mental Health Concerns

- Therefore, school counselors have not been able to:
 - “check in” on students, (Savitz-Romer et al., 2020, p. 24)
 - identify problems, and (Savitz-Romer et al., 2020)
 - start interventions (Savitz-Romer et al., 2020)

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Mental Health Concerns

- According to researchers, students are most worried about:
 - changing teaching methods and syllabus format (Son et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021)
 - increased workload, ambiguous course expectations (Tasso et al., 2020)
 - lower quality of teaching and education (Son et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021)
 - difficulty of online learning and technological issues (Son et al., 2020)
 - ability to finish the school year (Tasso et al., 2021)
 - and fundamentally a lack of support from instructors (Son et al., 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Literature on Mental Health Concerns

- Students are fearful of attending in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic because they:
 - may be fearful of contracting COVID-19
 - psychological symptoms may worsen if they experience any related symptoms
 - could experience problematic behaviors

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Diverse Populations

- Racial discrimination towards Asian-Americans:
 - Racial stigma has focused particularly on Asian-Americans (Liu & Modir, 2020).
 - 1,500 incidents of racial discrimination per month against Asians (Liu & Modir, 2020).
 - More susceptible to psychological distress like anxiety and PTSD (Guo et al., 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Diverse Populations

- Racial discrimination towards Black and Hispanic Americans:
 - disproportionately affected through a higher mortality rate due to lack of
 - adequate healthcare
 - Housing
 - Testing (Liu & Modir, 2020)
 - disproportionately at risk due to incarceration (Liu & Modir, 2020)

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Diverse Populations

- Racial discrimination towards undocumented individuals:
 - no access to government aid and financial stimulus
 - fear of using public services
 - and fear of deportation (Liu & Modir, 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions

- Mental health concerns students are facing:
 - their worries about their academics (Son et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021)
 - their fears beyond their schooling, such as medical concerns (Seçer & Ulaş, 2020)
 - and accessing resources like mental health and school counseling services (Boudreau, 2020; Savitz-Romer et al., 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for School Counseling Resources

- School counselors require support to adapt their services:
 - Thus, it is advised against assigning school counselors to administrative duties, such as
 - tracking attendance and technology help
 - Provide school counselors with relevant training
 - Smaller student to counselor ratios

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for School Counseling Resources

- Recommendations from ASCA and NASP:
 - Organizing virtual events such as
 - Back-to-school social events and virtual tours/classroom visits
 - Peer buddy mentorship
 - Homeroom/morning meeting
 - Advisory periods with school counselors

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for School Counseling Resources

- Researchers recommend:
 - having screening tools for depression, anxiety, and stress (Savitz-Romer, et al., 2020)
 - making direct contact with students via phone or other technology (Bowen, 2020)
 - study tips and techniques for online learning (Nebraska School Counselor Association, n.d., p. 3, as cited in Missouri School Counselor Association, n.d.)
 - appropriate student behaviors online workshop for parents (American School Counselor Association, 2020)

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for Mental Health Resources

- Providing mental health resources to students and parents:
 - 24-hour hotlines (Seidel et al., 2020)
 - lists of clinical mental health counselors with contact information (Bowen, 2020).

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for Diverse Populations

- To combat the spread of racial stigma, school counselors should:
 - share accurate information and counter misinformation
 - avoid stereotyping people or countries
 - speak up if you hear, see, or read discriminatory comments made by students or staff
 - counter microaggressions with micro-affirmations
 - model compassion and acceptance of differences
 - stop any type of harassment or bullying immediately

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Interventions for Diverse Populations

- Continued:
 - empower students to seek help
 - emphasize positive, familiar images of diverse groups
 - identify “heroes” of varying backgrounds involved in response to crisis events
 - undertake projects to help those in need with people from diverse backgrounds
 - and discuss historical instances of American prejudice

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Future Research

- Implications for Future Research:
 - How much are school counselors able to counsel students versus providing them guidance or performing administrative duties? (Boudreau, 2020, as cited in Anderson, 2019).
 - How much are people getting done now versus before the pandemic started?
 - What are the percentages of students whose school plan has pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - How many students are attending classes (virtual or in-person) during the pandemic versus before the pandemic?

Virtual School Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Future Research

- Continued:
 - What is the percentage of students who are failing classes during the COVID-19 pandemic versus before the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - What are the percentages of students who are being diagnosed with mental health disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic versus before the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - What is the percentage of students who could not talk to their school counselors virtually due to not having Internet access, working all the time, having to take care of their brothers and sisters, not having a good home life, their parents not wanting them to talk to their school counselors, not wanting their family members to hear them talk about themselves to their school counselors, etc.?

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