Exploring Resilience in Filipino Counseling Professionals: Levels and Resources in Managing Life Transitions

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The Philippines in Asia with Australia
The Philippines

UN Estimate (July 1, 2016)
102,250,133

Catholic 82.9% (2000 census)
Filipino and English

About 7,500 islands, about 2,000 are inhabited, 3 major island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao
Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004 (R.A. No. 9258), professionalizing practice of guidance and counseling in the Philippines; expected to provide high quality programs and services to their students, clients or stakeholders

Psychology Law of 2009 (R.A. No. 10029)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published the ASCA National Model: A framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs validated in the Philippines; Social Emotional Learning (SEL) approach

Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association (PGCA)

Psychological Association of the Philippines (The Accredited Professional Organizations by the Professional Regulation Commission)

Code of Ethics in Guidance and Counseling (2011)
Counseling in the Philippines

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of school counselors in order to be more responsive to the needs and emerging issues of the students or clients with **evidence-based practice** on the following areas of competency:

- Counseling and Psychotherapy
- Psychological Assessment
- Group Process / Program Development
- Career Development / Job Placement
- Crisis Intervention
- Consultation / Consultancy
- Research and Evaluation
- Organizational Management
- Counselor (Clinical) Supervision
- Others: Multicultural Counseling, Community Engagement, Interdisciplinary Approach, Case Management/Documentation
Flow of Presentation

1. Introduction (Rationale)
2. Review of Related Literature
3. Conceptual Framework
4. Method
5. Results and Discussion
6. Implications for Counseling
Introduction (Rationale)

The evolution of School Counseling as a viable profession providing more accountability in meeting the challenging needs of the youth, families, schools, and communities has been underscored (Thompson, 2002).

In the Philippines, Villar (2009) enumerated these needs in view of the different problematic family situations and complexity of living - disappearing or separated parents, couples’ unpreparedness for marriage or parenthood, pathological families with absence of nurturance and supervision, increased mobility of Filipinos working or migrating in foreign lands, increasing career options and educational attainment, proliferation of new job titles due to changes in labor market and industrial demands, companies forced to close down or retrench employees to survive, increasing financial difficulty experienced by many Filipinos, natural calamities, and crisis, among others.
Introduction (Rationale)

School Counselors in compliance with the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004 (R.A. No. 9258), which seek to professionalize their practice of guidance and counseling in the Philippines, are expected to provide high quality programs and services to their students, clients, or stakeholders. As stated in its Rules and Regulations (RR cited in Villar, 2009), Guidance and Counseling has been defined in Rule 1, section 3: “As a profession involving an integrated approach to the development of a well-functioning individual primarily by helping him/her to utilize his/her potentials to the fullest and plan his/her present and future in accordance with his/her abilities, interests and needs (p. 8)”.
School counselor’s role is to be a conductor of an orchestrated program of responsive services and activities that complement the instructional program of the school and not just merely a facilitator of a series of unrelated crisis-oriented services (Schmidt, 2008).

Lewis and Hatch (2008) pushed for the cultivation of strengths-based professional identities among school counselors based on culturally relevant and evidence-based practices that support the developmental learning abilities of all students. Navigating to health-enhancing (resilience) resources when faced with life difficulties is crucial to nurture individual, relational, and community assets. As mental health care providers and/or counseling professionals are expected to thrive under adverse circumstances because of their training, supervised practices, and learned experiences.
Resilience is “the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions” (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2016).

It is 1.) “the capacity of individuals to navigate their ways to resources that sustain their well-being, 2.) the capacity of individuals’ physical and social ecologies to provide those resources, and 3.) the capacity of individuals and their families and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways to share resources” (Resilience Research Centre, 2013, p. 3).
Liebenber, Ungar, and LeBlanc (2013) described resilience from a socio-ecological perspective, “wherein the individual’s engagement in interactive processes with complex, multi-level environments makes it possible to avoid potential threats to one’s development. This pertains to the individual-, peer-, family-, school-, and community-level resources that promote and protect good outcomes” (p. 131).

This capacity maybe contextual because a person may thrive or succumb under adverse circumstance or maybe able to cope over time in varying ways depending on one’s interaction with risk factors associated with culture, ethno-racial status, ability, gender, and socio-economic status.
Resilience is associated with the bioecological theory of human development as proposed by Bronfenbrenner cited in Smith, Webber, and DeFrain (2013). “By strengthening relationships and environments, the extent of potential realized into positive developmental outcomes may be increased” (p.1). Smith et al. (2013) reported on the role of spiritual well-being in strengthening resilience focusing on relationships and connectedness.

Ahern cited in Smith et al. (2013) proposed that “resilience is an outcome derived from the interactions between personal attributes and characteristics, and available social support, community resources, and health-promoting interventions” (p. 2).
Studies show significant relationship between emotional stability personality disposition and psychosocial mentoring and between emotional stability and career resilience. Psychosocial mentoring is a predictor of career resilience mediating partially the relationship between emotional stability and career resilience (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015).

Resilience characteristics were associated with demographics, counselor education program, risk, and protective variables using 585 MA counseling students (http://search.proquest.com).
Conceptual Framework

- RGCs
- Resilience Level
- Resilience Resources
Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the level of resilience and resources of Filipino Counseling Professionals (RGCs).

1. What is the level of resilience in Counselors as measured by their scores on the following three components and overall:
   1.1 Individual Capacities/Resources
   1.2 Relationships with Primary Caregivers
   1.3 Contextual Factors that facilitate a sense of belonging
   1.4 Overall score on Resilience?

2. What are the challenging or difficult major life transitions experienced by RGCs?

3. What are the resilience resources of RGCs when faced with life difficulties and in managing life transitions?
Design. Concurrent mixed methods procedures were used to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem converging the quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the information in the interpretation of the overall results. “The researcher may embed one smaller form of data within another larger data collection to analyze the different types of questions. The qualitative addresses the process while the quantitative, the outcomes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 31).

Participants. Filipino Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs). See Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>RGCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
<td>103 (76.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28 (20.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: Married</td>
<td>78 (57.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>44 (32.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13 (9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean = 41.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Counseling Years</td>
<td>Mean = 14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing Graduate Studies: No</td>
<td>89 (65.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>28 (20.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Family</td>
<td>107 (79.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>7 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With roommates</td>
<td>8 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13 (9.6%)</td>
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</table>
**Method**

**Instrument.** 28-item, 5-point Likert type self-report Resilience Adult Measure measuring Individual Capabilities/Resources (item nos. 2, 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 25), Relationships with Primary Caregivers (item nos. 5, 6, 7, 12, 17, 24, 26), and Contextual Factors that facilitate a sense of belonging (item nos. 1, 3, 9, 10, 16, 19, 22, 23, 27, 28) and questions about their resources in managing life transitions” (Resilience Research Centre, 2013, p. 3).

**Data Collection and Analysis.** Fielding of instruments from February – December 2015; Computed group subscale and total mean scores and standard deviations (SD) as quantitative data and ranked themes were generated from content analyzed qualitative responses.
## Results

### Table 2. Group Means and SDs of RGCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience Components</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Capacities/Resources</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Key Primary Caregivers</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Factors</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties/Transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting married and raising children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having illness and death in family/relatives and friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shifting career, adjusting in workplace, pursuing graduate studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Getting old, nearing retirement, encountering financial difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Experiencing calamities, war, conflicts, modernization, changes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Results

### Table 4. Top 5 Resilience Resources

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Knowing oneself in terms of solving problems, adapting to changes, keeping one’s focus, seeking help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Praying for God’s providence and guidance (Faith in God) – reflecting on experiences and God’s words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Receiving support from family and friends, joining caring groups, making use of available assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Moving forward, travelling, reading, studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Being grateful, accepting, motivated, persevering, optimistic, relax (positive attitude)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results show evidence of Filipino Counseling Professionals’ increased level of resilience as manifested in high group mean scores. This may be accounted for by the multifaceted components of psycho-spiritual and social resources available to professionals in their different environments/schools when faced with adversities or difficult conditions.

Life difficulties/transitions were noted in facing challenges related to family, career, health, death, finance, and aging, which lend support to Villar’s (2009) report on complexity of living in the Philippines.

Personal capacities, attitude, and relational assets, spiritual well-being (faith in God) and family/friends support, topped resilience resources, which supported studies reviewed (Smith, Webber and DeFrain, 2013; Arora & Rangnekare, 2015).
The complementarity of quantitative and qualitative results of this study provided additional meaning to the word “resilience”. Findings support the claim of Liebenberg, Ungar, and LeBlanc (2013) on the importance of a nurturing environment and the extent of personal assets in developing health-enhancing resources or resilience, as evidenced by the qualitative responses of the participants.

This observation may also be attributed to the participants’ training and exposure to more challenging roles and functions, as licensed professionals, in facing various students’ problems/crisis that have implication to their personal and professional development (Estanislao, 2013).
Discussion

It could be further inferred from the findings some additional qualitative domains that help to identify important factors in resilience. For example, personal attributes such as, belief in oneself and in God, positive attitude, and acceptance, were mentioned repeatedly in open-ended responses.

The results imply that counseling professionals, just like their clients are also vulnerable to pain, thus, needing personal meaningful relationships from their significant others and God in order to take care of their psychological well-being and function effectively as mental health service providers.

It is recommended that peer support system, supervision, and continuing professional development be regularly offered, monitored, and evaluated in the workplace to ensure personal and professional welfare and client quality care.
Implications for Counseling

1. For us Counseling Practitioners - A continuing professional development and supervised practice are called for specially in managing difficult/clinical cases and keeping our wellness to ensure quality client care. Lewis and Hatch (2008) pushed for the cultivation of strengths-based professional identities among school counselors focusing on intrinsic assets.
2. For the Counselor/Peer Supervisors / Consultants / Mentors – to build on the counselor’s competencies and personal capacities in managing life transitions and handling difficult cases by providing evidence-based supervision services and counseling techniques.

3. For Counselor Educators – A Review of the Counseling curriculum to incorporate the importance of continuing professional development and enhancing self-efficacy (resilience) in related subjects and during the supervised practicum/internship program.
References


Guidance and Counseling Republic Act of 2004 (R.A. No. 9258). Documents from the third regular session of the Congress of the Philippines, Metro Manila.


References


Thank you. God bless.