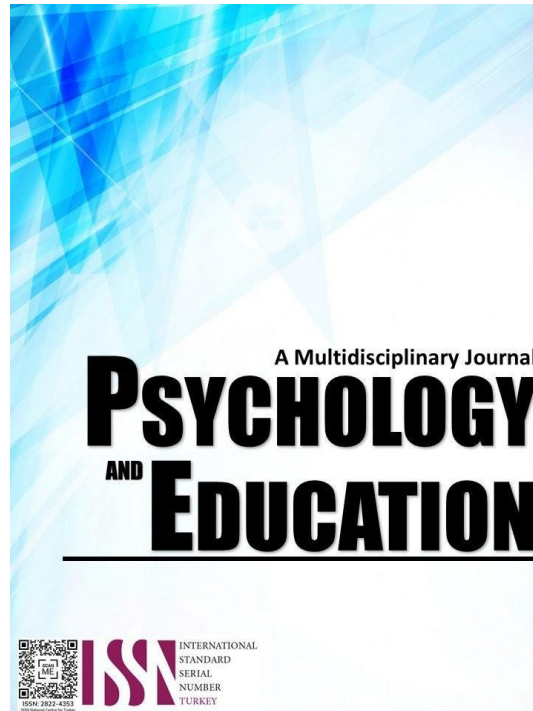


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Exploring the Self-Care Practices of Guidance Counselors in Cavite: A Transcendental Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract

This study explores the self-care practices of guidance counselors in Cavite as well as the challenges they face. A sample of six (6) Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs) have participated in this qualitative research, which utilized in-depth interviews and Moustaka's data analysis to understand their lived experiences. The essential features of this study's methodology are semi-structured interviews focusing on their self-care practices, challenges as well as their solutions in addressing such. Findings reveal that these professionals employed various personal self-care practices (emotional, physical and social self-care) to achieve individual well-being and professional self-care practices (social coping strategies, work-life balance and professional growth) to attain well-being in the context of their work setting. Challenges identified by guidance counselors working in the public schools are systemic barriers, role ambiguity and interpersonal conflicts, reflecting the resource-limited system in our education. Nevertheless, guidance counselors are able to address challenges through sustainable and interdependent self-care practices which include time management, boundary setting, support system and improvised solutions. Prioritizing their self-care practices in the context of professional responsibilities include negotiating their self-care practices through professional boundaries, self-preservation ethics and reframing minds to be of service to others.

Keywords: *self-care practices, guidance counselors, self-care challenges, qualitative study*

Introduction

In the context of guidance counseling, self-care is particularly critical due to the emotionally demanding nature of the profession. Guidance counselors often experience vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and role ambiguity, which can lead to burnout if not properly managed (Gallardo, 2022). The researcher witnessed and experienced firsthand the challenges that guidance counselors face - balancing heavy caseloads, emotional exhaustion and institutional expectations - and recognized the need to explore how the guidance counselors sustain their well-being.

Recent studies have established that self-care is essential for mental health professionals to maintain effectiveness in their roles (Posluns & Gall, 2020). However, there remains limited understanding of how guidance counselors in the Philippine context, particularly in Cavite's public school system, implement self-care practices amidst their challenging work environment and growing student mental health needs (DOH, 2021).

This study aims at achieving three key objectives: first, to explore the self-care practices employed by guidance counselors in Cavite; second, to identify the ways of addressing the challenges in self-care of guidance counselors; and third, to seek how guidance counselors prioritize self-care in the context of professional responsibilities. The findings provided valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers to develop targeted support systems for counselor well-being.

Current research on counselor self-care predominantly focuses on Western contexts (Tan, 2024), creating a significant gap in knowledge regarding the unique circumstances faced by Filipino guidance counselors. The scarcity of localized studies, particularly in Cavite's public schools where counselors manage heavy caseloads with limited resources, highlights the need for this study. By addressing this research gap, the study will contribute to the development of culturally appropriate interventions to enhance counselor well-being, resilience and effectiveness in the Philippine educational setting.

Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore self-care practices of the guidance counselors from selected public schools in the province of Cavite. At this stage of the research, the following were defined: 1) self-care practices as the actions made by the guidance counselors to preserve their mental, physical and emotional wellness; 2) ways the guidance counselors do to address the challenges in practicing self-care as their self-care agency; 3) prioritizing self-care in the context of professional responsibilities as their therapeutic self-care. Both the challenges and support experienced by the guidance counselors will also be explored to further determine other variables that might be affecting the self-care practices of the guidance counselors. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of self-care practices of guidance counselors in Cavite?
2. What are the ways of addressing the challenges in self-care of guidance counselors?
3. How do guidance counselors prioritize self-care in the context of professional responsibilities?

Methodology

Research Design

This study explored the self-care practices of guidance counselors in Cavite province using a qualitative research design. Qualitative methodology is well-suited for examining complex, real-world issues, as it provides in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Specifically, this approach allowed the researcher to investigate how guidance counselors perceive, engage in, and navigate self-care within their professional roles (Smith et al., 2021). Through semi-structured interviews and narrative analysis, the study uncovered the underlying meanings, challenges, and strategies associated with their self-care practices (Nowell et al., 2023).

Furthermore, transcendental phenomenology approach was utilized in this study. Contemporary phenomenological research emphasizes prioritizing participants' lived experiences over researcher interpretations, requiring investigators to approach phenomena with fresh perspective (Neubauer et al., 2020). This transcendental approach demands researchers bracket their preconceptions to focus authentically on participants' descriptions of their experiences. The current study applied this method to examine guidance counselors' self-care practices through their unfiltered experiential accounts. Additionally, Tan et al. (2024) mentioned in their study that phenomenological approach provides a powerful tool for researchers in opening the intricate and subjective realm of counselor self-care practices. This method aims to promote individual well-being and empower counselors to provide the best possible care to the students. Furthermore, the study of Mi Choi (2023) utilized a transcendental phenomenology approach in exploring the perceptions and experiences of school counselor trainees participating in a self-care course grounded in mindfulness and social-emotional learning as well as in the study of Greenidge (2023), wherein a same method was utilized to explore how school counselors experienced connecting with students and their families virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants

The participants for this study consists of six (6) registered guidance counselors employed in the public-school setting. The general population sample consisted of school counselors with the following selection criteria: (1) working for at least two years with students from the selected public schools in the province of Cavite; (2) who had an equivalent of a master's degree or higher in counseling or a related field; (3) who are licensed and registered guidance counselors, either with passing the licensure board examination or without examination (grandfather's clause); (4) rendering counseling services in each cluster; and lastly, (5) were representatives of the four clustering units of the Division of Cavite: north cluster (2 RGCs), east cluster (2 RGCs), south cluster (1 RGC) and west cluster (1 RGC) to reach a diverse sample of guidance counselors while minimizing the impact of researcher bias. There were a total of two (2) male and four (4) female registered guidance counselors.

Instrument

Data collection was conducted through the following tools/ instruments:

In-depth interviews. The study utilized semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection between the researcher and participants where it was driven by guiding questions and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019) as cited by Sobrino-Garcia (2024). Probing statements and clarifying questions were utilized to reach data saturation and explore participants' experiences deeply. In addition, this method allowed the researcher to explore the guidance counselors' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their self-care practices.

Observation. Observation in qualitative research involves systematically gathering data through focused attention to participants' behaviors and interactions (Lofland et al., 2021). As Hammersley (2020) emphasizes, this method remains fundamental for capturing nuanced non-verbal communication and contextual details that other methods might miss. In this study, the researcher carefully observed guidance counselors' non-verbal behaviors as part of the data collection process.

Document Analysis. Recent qualitative research highlights that textual and visual materials—including newspapers, institutional reports, photographs, and videos—serve as valuable data sources for analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2023). To select the appropriate documents to analyze, authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning were checked. Reflexive thematic analysis was done to produce valuable insights from the documents. Photographs were mainly shared by the guidance counselors for the document analysis.

Procedure

The study utilized a combination of in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis to comprehensively collect data.

In-depth interviews. Interview guide questions were created by the researcher considering its alignment with the research objectives (See Appendix E). Afterwards, the constructed interview guide questions were validated by three (3) mental health professionals: a registered psychologist and two (2) registered guidance counselors, one of which is a Certified Life Coach (CLC). The format of the informed consent form was provided by the DepEd, which was utilized in the study. Informed consent forms were then explained to the participants before data collection to ensure compliance with ethics. They were also informed about the video and audio recording

of the online/ face-to-face interview to collect an accurate transcription of the session. After which, guidance counselors who gave consent were asked about the day and schedule of their availability for the interview sessions on the self-care practices. During the interview, the researcher asked questions relevant to the research topic guided by the validated interview guide questions and clarifications were made to confirm the information that needs further explanation.

Observation. The researcher took note of the behavior of the participants during the interview to further analyze and validate the data which will be gathered through the semi-structured interview. During the online interview, this was done through the opening of the camera during the Zoom meeting and observing the non-verbal cues such as facial expression, body language, gestures and tone of voice. This was also done during the face-to-face interview.

Document Analysis. This was done by communicating with the guidance counselors through messaging app Messenger and email Gmail, asking for permission to gather any document which will validate their self-care practices. This may be in the form of photos, videos or journals. Authenticity and credibility of the shared photos were checked by looking at the photos' resolution. Photographs shared were then cross-examined with each guidance counselor's interview transcript, to check the representativeness and meaning of the documents. This further validated their self-reported self-care practices.

By triangulation of data collection methods, the study gained a more comprehensive understanding of the self-care practices of guidance counselors.

Data Analysis

Data collected were transcribed and organized for analysis. Moustakas' (1994), as cited by Alhazmi (2022), transcendental phenomenological data analysis was used in the study wherein a systematic procedure that is rigorous yet accessible was followed. This analysis was selected as its systemic processes complemented the study in exploring and understanding the self-care practices of guidance counselors. Moustakas' method involved several systematic steps to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the participants' experiences.

Epoché. The researcher starts with epoché by approaching the phenomenon of practicing self-care with an open and non-judgemental attitude to gain a new perspective about the experience. This helped in reducing the influence of biases, preconceived thoughts and judgments of the researcher about the self-care practices.

Phenomenological Reduction. The researcher focused on the main essence of what the guidance counselors shared by carefully listening to the interviews and rereading through the transcripts to understand the participants' answer fully. By diving into the stories shared by the participants, it aimed to find deeper meanings and understand the self-care practices discussed.

Horizontalization. The researcher then extracted significant statements from the verbatim transcripts through highlighting and listing. Repetitive and overlapping statements or those not relevant to the study were discarded. These resulted in several "horizons", which indicated the unique qualities of the experience.

Clustering Themes. The researcher coded the extracted data through vivo coding, descriptive coding and identifying similar meanings or concepts and organizing them. Similar codes were then grouped into categories which later turned into themes development.

Textural Description. The researcher then focused on "what" was said, describing a detailed story about what the guidance counselor experienced. Similar themes were grouped together to make a rich narrative that shows essence of experience.

Structural Description. The researcher then provided a structural description, explaining how the experiences occurred. This involved reflecting on the context and conditions that influenced the guidance counselors' self-care practices.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed and upheld several steps throughout the study to ensure ethical consideration to the research participants.

Voluntary Participation. It was explained to the participants that their involvement in the study is completely voluntary, and they have the right to decline anytime.

Informed Consent. According to Arellano (2023), documentation given to a participant should be easy to understand where they could read and raise concerns or withdraw from the study. In this study, the researcher utilized the informed consent form provided by the DepEd Division of Cavite, wherein the objective of the research, manner of data collection, number of required session and hours per session, benefits and risks from participating in the study and means to protect the participants' data were discussed. (See Appendix D). Before the conduct of the interview sessions, the researcher sought the consent of the participants through the informed consent form, emailing to those participants with online interviews and handing over to those who had face-to-face interview.

Anonymity. Anonymity principles are preserved and implemented as a means of protecting the privacy of all individuals, establishing trust and rapport between researcher and study participants. (Kang, 2023). For the protection of the participant's identity and location, the use of data anonymity was implemented (using RGC1...RGC6). In written documentations, asterisks, emojis, and black pens were used to prevent traceability of the participants' identity.

Confidentiality. With confidentiality, the protection of the participants' identity must not be revealed or be traceable. Data collected was secured digitally with password-protected technology. The data collected (audio and video recordings, transcriptions signed informed consent forms) was secured digitally in a discrete documented file on a private laptop and was also stored on a private GoogleDrive cloud storage. Retention of data shall only be for as long as necessary: for the fulfillment of the declared, specified, and legitimate purpose, or when the processing relevant to the purpose has been terminated (Data Privacy Act of 2012).

Potential for Harm. The possible risk of the study was discussed to the participants which is the potential discussion of unpleasant aspects of practicing self-care among guidance counselors. Interview guide was also validated by three (3) mental health professionals to keep the questions possible harm to participants to an absolute minimum

Results communication. The results of the study were communicated to the participants through member checking. (See Appendix H)

Results and Discussion

This section presents the operational data collection, operational data analysis, participants' profile, discussion, presentation and interpretation of the data collected, structural description and essence of the study. This offers a comprehensive insight into the self-care practices of guidance counselors in the public school setting of Cavite.

Participants' Demographic Profile

The study consisted of six (6) registered guidance counselors (RGCs) working on the public schools in the province of Cavite, handling different grade levels. Participants vary on the length of practice in the guidance and counseling profession ranging from two and a half (2 ½) years in the field up to more than three (3) decades, bringing expert perspective and new insight into their roles.

RGC1, a female who has two (2) and a half year of experience as a guidance counselor, handling students from Junior High School, specifically grade 7 to 10 students in a school with a population of 8,500. She was able to secure license through the licensure examination and is included in DepEd Cavite's north cluster.

RGC2, a male who has eight (8) years in guidance work, spending seven (7) years as a college counselor and one (1) year as high school counselor. He was able to secure license through the licensure examination and is included in DepEd Cavite's west cluster.

RGC3, a female who has more than fifteen (15) years working in the guidance and counseling profession, having several guidance designations within her length of service and has already handled all year levels. She currently handles SHS students in a school with a population of 4,500. She was able to secure license through the licensure examination and is included in DepEd Cavite's north cluster.

RGC4, a male who has sixteen (16) years of practicing counseling, handling college students for eight (8) years and junior high students, specifically grade 7, for eight (8) years. The school where he serves as counselor has a student population of 3,600. He was able to secure license through the licensure examination and is included in DepEd Cavite's east cluster.

RGC5, a female who has thirty-six (36) years of experience in the field, where she handled all levels of students: college and high school on the private setting for thirty-three (33) years and elementary on the public setting for three (3) years, which she currently handles. She was able to secure license through the grandfather's clause is included in DepEd Cavite's east cluster.

RGC6, a female who has nine (9) years of guidance work, seven (7) years as guidance designate and two (2) years as a guidance counselor. She currently handles grade 9 students. She was able to secure license through the licensure examination and is included in DepEd Cavite's south cluster.

The discussion centers on exploring the self-care practices of the Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs) in Cavite. They have put emphasis on boundary setting and prioritization, resource management, social support system, basic self-care necessities and professional growth.

Despite challenges such as systemic barriers, role-related stressors and interpersonal related ones, counselors practice self-care resourcefully and consistently to be of service to the students and continue to efficiently perform their duties as counselors.

Through five (5) themes and their corresponding categories, totaling 98 codes, the researcher delved into the self-care practices of the registered guidance counselors, together with its challenges and strategies in prioritizing such. Next, the findings were presented and discussed aligning with the research questions in Chapter 1.

Lived Experiences of Self-Care Practices of Guidance Counselors in Cavite

The lived experiences of self-care practices of guidance counselors revealed a complex interplay between personal well-being and professional demands, where self-care emerges as both necessity and a challenge. Through in-depth interviews, guidance counselors described navigating their roles while striving to maintain their own mental, emotional and physical health. Their narratives highlight how self-care is not merely an individual responsibility, but a dynamic process shaped by institutional constraints, cultural expectations, and the inherent emotional labor of their profession. Themes emerged were personal self-care practices and professional self-care practices.

Theme 1: Personal Self-Care Practices

Findings were supported by the literature review on self-care specifically for mental health practitioners. Posluns and Gall (2020) described how self-care practices can include broad categories of awareness, balance, flexibility, physical health, social support, and spirituality which were then reflected on the data collected. Based on the data gathered from the guidance counselors in Cavite, the following categories were identified: Emotional Self-Care, Physical Self-Care and Social Self-Care.

Category 1: Emotional Self-Care

The category highlighted the participants' experience in self-care practices, focusing on key aspects of emotional self-care. Stress reliever and mindfulness-based practices were identified under emotional self-care. RGC2 shared how taking care of pets improves his mood and relieves his stress while RGC4 shared how his visits to coffee shops relieve his stress. This is also further supported by document analysis on the photographs shared by RGC2 wherein he is holding a cat and bringing it to the veterinary clinic and RGC4 holding coffee while visiting a known coffee shop.

"Taking care of cats. I'm a cat lover ma'am, I have 5 cats. Eto yung isa si coffee, girl sya. Yung simpleng bonding namin, playtime at cuddle session pag gabi, pag matutulog na kami, ang laki ng epekto sa kin nun mam sobrang nakakaganda sya ng mood ko" [RGC2. L221-223].

"Nagiging stress reliever ko yung, pag punta sa coffee shop. Kasi iba yung, iba yong tao, iba yung naririnig mo, iba yung ingay, iba yung concern. So hindi sya yung ingay kung gaano kagulo or kaingay sa loob ng school. Hindi sya yung bata, problema ng magulang, hindi teachers, hindi principal, kundi yon. Minsan alone or with friends." [RGC4. L198-201].

Mindfulness-based activities were further seen practiced by RGC1 singing, buying and planting plants, going to the parlor while RGC2 doing rides with his motor, which are both verified by document analysis on shared photos of RGC1 singing while seated in her house, buying plants, holding her planted pechay, treating her hair at a local parlor and RGC2 sitting near his motor which is used in his rides.

"yung mga self care na ginagawa ko andami...feeling ko kumanta, kakanta ako, magbubukas ako ng videoke, ...Yun po bibili ng halaman, magtatanim then magpapaparlor, yan po yung mga ginagawa kong ano po, yung sinasabi ko sayo na aalagaan ang sarili, gawin ang mga bagay na nagpapaligaya. Magpaparlor eto nga nung huli na naistress ako, nagpakulay ako ng buhok, so nagpaayos ako..." [RGC1. L217-227].

"rides ma'am, yung sa motor, yung tinatawag naming na rides, yung ano lang kahit di ka lumayo, yung magikot ikot ka lang sakay ng motor mo, yung magpahangin ka lang, anlaki ng nagagawa...Ang saya, parang commune with nature! Parang yung mismong Diyos at langit yung nagpapaligo sayo, ang sarap! Kahit basang basa ako, kahit yung helmet ko di na ako naprotektahan sa tubig. Ang sarap sa pakiramdam na every once in a while ay nature ang nagpapaligo sa akin na ano, ang saya, ang saya ng mga ganon!" [RGC2. L230-246].

These findings are supported by the study that practices that attend to psychological and emotional self-care include using stress management strategies, building supportive relationships, and engaging in mindfulness-based practices (Wise et al., 2021). This emphasizes emotional self-care such as stress management and mindfulness are essential for sustaining well-being in high-stress profession such as counseling.

Stress managing techniques cited by the guidance counselors were taking care of pets, going to coffee shops and collecting stuff. Mindfulness-based practices of the guidance counselors, on the other hand, include planting/ gardening, doing rides, breathing exercises and spiritual reflections.

Category 2: Physical Self-Care

Within the category of physical self-care, practices of guidance counselors such as drinking caffeine, fulfilling basic needs and giving self-treats were identified. This was proved by the strategies for physical self-care in the literature which include eating a balanced diet, exercising, getting enough sleep, and preventing illness (Rogers et al., 2022). Practices like RGC4's drinking of coffee, also shown on the document analysis made on his shared photograph of him holding coffee, exemplify this culturally situated, resource-aware self-care strategy.

"Then, may time din na ang nananalaytay ata sa dugo ko ay Vitamin C, it's either coke or coffee. Vitamin C yon, literal na coke at coffee." [RGC4. L195-197].

Sleep and eating were the most identified self-care practices among the guidance counselors while some engage in self-treat activities like parlor and massage. This shows how crucial eating and sleeping is in preserving the guidance counselors' well-being as it is the source of one's energy and maintains our body's functionality.

"I make it sure na kumakain ako ng ayos, syempre importante yon kasi talagang alam nila pag gutom ako hindi mo ako makakausap, kaya dapat mo akong pakainin sa tamang oras. Ayun, hindi ako nakakapag-isip ng tama pag gutom, so kelangan ay maayos yung aking pagkain." [RGC3. L258-261].

Category 3: Social Self-Care

The data highlights how guidance counselors engage in social self-care through meaningful interpersonal connections, reflecting both cultural values and professional coping strategies.

The result was confirmed by studies that strong social support is related to lower levels of perceived stress (Smith et al., 2023), while a lower level of personal (e.g., family) and professional (e.g., collegial) support is linked to greater psychological distress (Lee & Kim, 2022). Guidance counselors employed their personal support group like RGC4's core group supported by document analysis done on his shared photograph of him with his support group and professional support group like RGC6's guidance office workmates, as their self-care practice to increase their well-being. This implies how guidance counselors give value to social self-care as they also practice giving support to other people in their field of profession.

"Tapos part ng self-care, may core group ako. Ang tinutukoy kong core group yung parang... I have only four groups ng set of people, na kapag naginvite sila over the weekend, tara concert, tara gala, tara roadtrip, most likely sila na yung lagi kong sinasamahan." [RGC4. L209-212].

"Nagoorder kami sa labas, kami ang magkakasama sa guidance office. Mababait naman yung mga kasama ko, makapagkwentuhan, makapagshare lang ng mga stories, may bonding." [RGC6. L216-218].

Theme 2: Professional Self-Care Practices

In considering how self-care can be supported in the workplace, Garcia et al., (2023), described professional structures, such as workload and time management, attention to the professional role, and social support and advocacy. Findings such as social coping strategies, work-life balance and professional growth were generated as the categories under the professional self-care practices of guidance counselors (Wilson; Lambie, 2022).

Category 1: Social Coping Strategies

This category was formed from codes related to negative relational detachment and harmonious relationship highlighting how collectivist values shape self-care in cultures where community, harmony and cooperation are highly valued.

Findings were supported in a study conducted by Thompson & Miller (2023). wherein it was suggested that self-care confidence and self-care behaviors can be enhanced by improving the quality of social support. Guidance counselors employed negative relationship detachment like RGC1's deadma and harmonious relationships by sharing stressful and lighthearted moments with each other (RGC2). These practices are the guidance counselors' social coping strategies which increase their well-being during negative and positive social circumstances.

"Ayun, ignore. Super ignore na kase imaginin mo babati ka ng good morning, no response yung parang ang dating nya e mapagmalaki, mapagmalaki, taas noo ganyan, parang...kung lumakad sa harap ko wala rin namang nakita, naramdaman parang di rin nageexist, bakit kailangan akong magpaapekto dun? Ideadma ko na rin, di ba po?" [RGC1. L259-263].

"Yung mga times na nakakabonding ko sila, nakakasama ko sila, it's a form of self-care na hindi lang pala kami during stressful moments magkasama, kahit sa mga pagkakataon ng katuwaan or light hearted moments". [RGC2. L303-305].

Category 2: Work-Life Balance

In the category of work-life balance, guidance counselors practice self-care in the work setting by utilizing the following strategies: managing time, claiming rest time and distributing workload, which aid in achieving harmony in personal and professional lives.

Recent studies emphasize that work-life balance remains a crucial element of professional self-care (Williams & Pennington, 2022), defined as the ability to effectively manage and separate occupational demands from personal time (Lee & Smith, 2023). Data gathered shows that time management was mostly utilized by the guidance counselors in the public setting due to no-noon-break policy in the government sector as RGC5 's there's no such thing as noon break and RGC6's wala kaming break time declared. Due to these time constraints, they cope by managing their time (as RGC5 and RGC6 stated), claiming rest time (as RGC4 and RGC5 stated) and distributing workload (as RGC4 stated) to other workmates.

"Sa government, there's no such thing as noon break kase e. Pero sinasabi ko, "Bigyan nyo lang ako ng 5 minutes, 10 minutes, then I'll get back to you", ganon." [RGC5. L347-350].

"Minsan nakakapag ano nap, kaso nga lang mabilisan lang talaga kasi nga wala naman talaga ng time break, wala naman talagang breaktime sa school. So ayun, di sya allowed sa government." [RGC6. L213-215].

"Then part din ng self-care pagdating sa work, nagsasabi akong, "di po ako papasok bukas, di ako papasok sa isang araw." Ang reason lang don, gusto ko lang matulog, gusto ko magpahinga, di ba" [RGC4. L251-253].

"saka yung ano non, pag may sakit na ako, never na talaga akong papasok. Kase syempre maaapektuhan yung trabaho mo e. Kapag may sakit, I just tell my boss na, "sir, di ako papasok, may lagnat ako, masama ang katawan ko, di ako makatayo" Yun lang, basic."

[RGC5. L354-357].

“So isa sa mga additional self-care strategy, huwag kang magpanggap na kaya mo lahat, pag hindi mo kaya, ibigay mo sa iba, hindi ka tanggap ng tanggap, ganon. [RGC4. L513-515].

Category 3: Professional Growth

In this category of professional growth, guidance counselors identified staying professionally updated and attending developmental activities as their self-care practices.

The findings align with recent research demonstrating that school counselors who engage in consultation, counseling, training, and evaluation experience enhanced professional growth and greater resilience in managing workplace pressures (Gysbers et al., 2021), ultimately supporting their overall well-being. Guidance counselors identified updating on the profession such as RGC4s updating sa profession mo na di ka stagnant and RGC6s umaattend ng mga seminars as their self-care practice in the work setting. Attending developmental activities such as Gender and Development (GAD) activity were also identified as self-care practices by RGC2 and RGC3.

“Self-care sa akin yung magbasa ako kung ano yung case nya, magbasa ako nung mga bagay kung anong concerns nya. Magresearch ako kung anong gusto nyang banggitin. Kasi ayoko ng nakikinig lang. “ah, okay”. Atleast meron kang maiinput, para sa akin self-care yun ha, updating sa profession mo na di ka stagnant.” [RGC4. L240-244].

“Siguro self-care na din yung umaattend ng mga seminars, yon. Professional growth na din namin”. [RGC6. L228-229].

“usually sinasama namin sya sa GAD Activity, Gender and Development Activity, parang konting formalities lang then the rest of the event ay bonding bonding or may konting kumbaga konting singing or dancing or talent session. May mga ininvite din na mga speakers or fitness instructors from time to time, usually kasama yung Zumba. At nagparticipate ako on that from time to time.” [RGC2. L282-286].

“Kasi di ba may mga seminars, may mga GAD, so siguro isa rin yon sa work.” [RGC3. L341].

Addressing the Challenges in Self-Care of Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors navigate significant challenges in maintaining self-care due to systemic constraints such as heavy workloads as stated:

“Ah yan yung mga ano, workload po...” [RGC1. L431].

“Kase ano e, minsan naman may mga times talaga na, sabe ko nga sayo di maiiwasan minsan na, minsan pag mas maraming pumupunta at kelangan ng agarang aksyon, minsan talaga may mga times na hindi ikaw agad kumakain on time..” [RGC3. L413-416].

“Andaming challenges na nangyayare. Sabi ko nga sayo, 1:1600. So pag maraming concern talagang I have to address it, and then iniischedule ko na.” [RGC4. L325-326].

“Ang ano lang neto siguro yung pag nagkakasakit. Yun yung ano e, kase there was a time talaga na parang, gusto kong pumasok, pero may sakit ako e. Kaya ang nangyare, pag balik ko, that’s the only time na, andami ko pa ring gagawin. Yun lang yung pinakabacklog ko.” [RGC5. L422-425].

Aside from heavy workloads, they have also experienced time and financial constraints as their concerns in practicing self-care as they have mentioned in the interviews:

“Siguro yung time, sobra sobrang trabaho, actually di mo na maiisip talaga ang ano. Kasi pagod ka na, uwi ka na tutulog na lang, yun yung pinakaself care mo, yung tulog, para energized ka kinabukasan, another day no ng trabaho...tsaka pera syempre. Pag gusto mo magself care, mamasyal, kelangan mo ng pera panggastos. Gusto mong magshopping, may bilhin, wala kang budget, yon.” [RGC1. L428-435].

“Time, finding time. Ah may mga times kasi na ganoon na wala ka talagang choice pag kelangang kelangan, kelangan mo magreport ng weekend, e syempre yung plans mo for the weekend na compromise na. So mejo masakit sa dibdib ko yung ganoon, and yun nga ah adulting or financial constraints because nothing in life is free, and if you want the finer things in life, you will shell out or give some money talaga.” [RGC2. L370-374].

“Madami. Kase when you go to public school, ang lagi nilang sinasabe, trabaho mo ay 24/7, your work is 24/7, ang sinasabi ko lang, “no”. Kase may mga part talaga na hihingan ka ng mga reports, pag chinat ka ng 8 o’clock, by 8:15 meron ka ng report. Sa gabi yun ah? Pag sinabing ASAP, ASAP yon.” [RGC4. L314-317].

In addition, role-related stressors add up to the barriers that significantly challenge the guidance counselors in fulfilling their duties. Some of which include multiple roles and conflicts as the counselors shared:

“Di ba tayo ay guidance counselor for guiding? Assisting lang, mediation? Ang nangyayari ikaw na rin yung disciplinary action. Yun, sa dami ng cases.” [RGC1. L50-52].

“some of the challenges pa din ay your task is not just guidance counselor but you acted as a registrar, we acted as a discipline officer, we acted as a little administrator in our own way on how we are going to implement the curriculum and the programs of the school.” [RGC4. L106-109].

“kaso nga lang ang discipline sa amin din, natanggal na ang discipline kaso nga lang bumalik, ibinalik sa min kase tinanggalan na ng mga task ang mga teachers, yung binaba ni Sara, na aalisan na ng mga extra task, kaya sa min napunta at mga non-teaching, kaya binalik sa guidance yung discipline.” [RGC6. L82-86].

Theme 3: Sustainable Self-Care Practices in Resource-Limited Systems

Despite the challenges, guidance counselors demonstrate notable resilience by developing sustainable, context-appropriate strategies that align with Orem's concept of self-care agency—the ability to adapt and problem-solve within systemic limitations. This theme highlights how guidance counselors continuously practice self-care while addressing the challenges in resource-limited settings.

Category 1: Time Management

Effective time management emerges as a critical self-care strategy for guidance counselors navigating heavy workloads and time constraints. Grounded in Orem's Self-Care Theory, this shows how guidance counselors exercise self-care agency through a system for tasks and scheduling to alleviate resource limitations while continuing to maintain one's well-being.

Recent research confirms that effective workload and time management strategies enable practitioners to mindfully regulate their professional tasks and work hours (Lee & Lambie, 2023). These findings support the current study's results regarding counselors' self-care practices. Guidance counselors stated that one of their ways to address challenges in self-care, particularly due to heavy workload and time constraints is to schedule tasks.

“magkakaroon ako ng time management, iischeduling ko yung sarili ko, yung mga task, baka kasi may maoverlook ako e, so nililista ko po, nagonnote ako, yun po yung effective sa akin. Then icheck ko sya kung naaccomplish, then another note kapag hindi nagawa, naaccomplish yon. So babalikan ko sya, may follow up follow up.” [RGC1. L475-478].

“Kaya nga dapat naschedule ka, ganito ganito. Kaya ayoko ng nababago, ayoko ng babaguhin. Akoy nagiisug struggle pano ko, aayusin later on.. Actually, natuto na akong magcalendar.” [RGC4. L542-544 & L447].

“I always keep a daily track of my schedule, per month yan.” [RGC5. L484].

Category 2: Boundary Setting

In the demanding profession of guidance and counseling, establishing clear boundaries is essential. The results show how guidance counselors applied boundary-setting to protect their well-being, aligning with Orem's Self-Care Theory's emphasis on self-care agency and developmental requisites. The data reveals that having clear roles, rejection and non-negotiable limits enables counselors to sustain their professional effectiveness while maintaining personal health.

Findings were supported by a study wherein strategies for enacting work and non-work roles often center on management of the boundary between the work and non-work domains (Yin, 2022). Guidance counselors address the challenges on role conflict, establishing clear role by distinction of roles at home and work.

“Ganun sya, kumbaga clear distinction of your roles, your different masks or personas when you're at work and when you're at home, kelangan malinaw yon sayo. Kasi kung ikaw ay nasa bahay at trabaho pa rin ang ginagawa mo, perhaps there is something wrong. Edi sana dito ka na lang tumira sa school or workplace mo di ba? [RGC2. L454-458].

“Pag dating naman sa boundaries, alam nyo rin yung boundaries nyo as friends, alam nyo ang boundaries nyo as colleagues. Not because you are colleagues, any time of the night pede ka nyang tawagan. Let us establish boundaries sa work is work, and family is family or me-time is me-time.” [RGC4. L578 & L581].

With rejection, some counselors had a hard time asserting themselves due to pakikisama value while some can manage.

“isa yan sa self-care ko, ang pagtanggap na, tumatanggi na ako kase talagang dati okay para lang maplease ako, maplease di ba? Pagbibigyan ko pa halos lahat, sa mga orientation kukunin kang speaker, ayan dinedecline ko na ngayon. Dati talaga, ano po, sige po, di 'yong alam kong di ko naman kaya, pero sige po, okay po, ambait bait. Pero ngayon dahil ramdam ko affected ako, tumatanggi po ako” [RGC1. L190-194].

“Kaya minsan, it's a matter of communication pa din. Kung sa tingin mo, hindi na kayang gawin that time, baka pede naman, why not sabihin mo. Hindi yung basta lahat ng ano, oo ka na lang. You don't have to say yes to anything lagi kumabaga kung sa tingin mo ay hindi pede, you can say no. Kase yung iba nga, “yes, yes, yes” na kahit alam naman nila na di nila kaya.” [RGC3. L540-544].

“huwag kang magpanggap na kaya mo lahat, pag hindi mo kaya, ibigay mo sa iba, hindi ka tanggap ng tanggap, ganon.” [RGC4. L514-515].

“...there is this saying na, “learn how to say no”. ” [RGC5. L485].

Theme 4: Interdependent Self-Care Practices

Interdependent self-care practices among guidance counselors highlight the critical roles of social support systems and improvised collective solutions in mitigating workplace stress. This theme aligns with research demonstrating that peer support, family networks, and communal resource-sharing significantly reduce burnout in helping professions (Rummell, 2020). The data reveals how counselors leverage relationships to sustain well-being despite systemic constraints, reinforcing the Filipino cultural value of pakikipagkapwa. Grounded in Orem's Self-Care Theory, this shows how guidance counselors exercise self-care agency through a system to alleviate resource limitations while continuing to maintain one's well-being.

Category 1: Community as Support System

In the context of our local community, support system is often seen as a big factor which contributes to one's well-being. Our sense of community enables us to have a wide variety of readily available support systems ranging from our family, peers and workmates. Guidance counselors also utilize this resource as self-care practice.

The findings demonstrate that guidance counselors perceive family and peer support as crucial resources for managing professional challenges. This aligns with recent empirical evidence showing that peer support networks significantly reduce burnout symptoms among helping professionals (Thompson et al., 2023).

“those few people that I could count on or depend on they're really helpful in my wellbeing and in my overall functioning as a person and as a professional. When all else fails, sila ang nalalapitan or nasasandigan ko. Yung simpleng pakikipagusap ko sa kanila or pagshashare ng problems, hindi ko naman, I'm not expecting for them to solve my problems or to have them make it to go away pero yung simpleng pakikinig nila, pagrarrant out ko sa kanila, ang laking bagay na.” [RGC2. L406-411].

“Pag dating sa school naman, meron din akong tinatawag na core group. Yung core group ko, dalawa lang kami hanggang tatlo na kung saan parang kami yung “sponge” ng bawat isa. May concern ka about sa school, tatanggapin ko, may concern ako, tatanggapin mo. So in a way, kaya kong sabihin na yung resources na yon is an outlet to release the emotions na hindi para hindi makaapekto yung mga bagay na yon pag pasok ko sa guidance office.” [RGC4. L424-429].

“nakikipagusap na ako sa mga ibang guidance counselor...ramdam ko sila, yung kanilang support...” [RGC1. L484-490].

“Self-care in the sense na I was able to connect with new and old friends” [RGC4. L432-433].

“Support lang dito sa tita, tsaka kasambahay ko, sa kapatid ko.” [RGC5. L476].

Guidance counselors serving as a support system to the students also stressed the importance of seeking support from others, even from professionals.

“so kelangan pa din natin iconsider yung kahit nagseself-care tayo, alam natin kung paano ang pagseself-care, pero, siguro kelangan mong iconsider din kasi ang assistance na provide ng ibang tao, especially professionals or experts tayo sa field kasi sa tingin natin alam natin ang mga self-care practices, di na rin sya effective. Kelangan nating magask ng help pa rin sa ibang tao, di naman perfect ang guidance counselors, minsan may pinagdadaanan din. Akala nila tayo lang yung makakatulong sa kanila pero pede rin tayong humingi ng assistance sa kanila...” [RGC6. L521-528].

Category 2: Improvised Collective Solutions

Frugal innovation is common in resource-scarce settings which is seen in our local public schools' settings. Guidance counselors, being naturally solution-focused professionals, often utilized creative resourcefulness and friends as resource in navigating the budget constrained environment they are working in.

“Ahuh, talagang pag ganun, itatawid mo, itawid mo na lang kahit simpleng idlip, or pahinga or pag masyadong toxic or ano, labas ka, huminga ka ng sariwang hangin or kainin mo yung paborito mong pagkaen sa canteen. Wala itatawid mo talaga kasi kung hindi mo itatawid, kawawa ka. Lalamunin ka ng sistema, mabuburnout ka pa kaya talaga pong itatawid pag ganun. There's no other way e, you have to keep your sanity intact.” [RGC2. L605-609].

Creative resourcefulness highlights the adaptive and low-cost strategies that counselors utilizes in order to work around their self-care practices despite the limited resources available.

“Gagawan ko na lang ng paraan sa sarili ko” [RGC1. L457-458].

“So minsan kahit di ganon kalaki yung resources, self-care is everywhere, kahit di ganong kalaking bagay, it's up to you how you do it in your own little way, di ba? Kasi di naman pag magseself-care kelangan talagang maraming resources, pedeng resources sa pera,

pedeng resources sa...yung mga naka paligid lang sayo, sa environment, sa services, kung saan pede, yon. Kanya kanya naman yang resources, depende na yan sa creativity. So, how you handle yourself.” [RGC1. L457-458].

Some leverage their relationships with others as a source of resource, displaying the creativity of counselors.

“And resources also, para hindi mastress, wala kasi kaming budget sa public, so resources ay... mga friends. “Magtalk ka sa akin, halika dito, magdonate ka ng ganito, gawin mo to” ganyan ganyan. [RGC4. L430-432].

Prioritizing Self-Care of Guidance Counselors in the Context of Professional Responsibilities

Theme 5: Negotiating Self-Care Within Professional Responsibilities

Guidance counselors demonstrate a conscious effort to prioritize self-care while fulfilling demanding professional responsibilities, as revealed through their strategies of boundary-setting and self-preservation. The data highlights how these professionals actively negotiate between their work commitments and personal well-being through deliberate practices.

Category 1: Professional Boundary

In this category of professional boundary, guidance counselors identified staying work-life separation, time-bound professionalism and emotional detachment as their self-care practices.

Counselors emphasize strict work-life separation, with RGC1 stating "hindi na naguwi ng trabaho...para mabalanse ko" and RGC4 reinforcing this with "di dala trabaho sa bahay". This physical boundary is complemented by emotional detachment, as articulated by RGC5: "I don't mess up my work with my other issues. Pag trabaho, trabaho". The counselors' adherence to time-bound professionalism, working strictly within designated hours (RGC4's "8 to 5" framework), serves as a structural safeguard against role overflow.

“So yun nga po, hindi na naguwi ng trabaho, ano po? Yun po yung ginagawa ko ngayon, para mabalanse ko” [RGC1. L513-514].

“After 5, how many calls do you have, ilang beses mo ako tawagan, di ako nasagot, ichat mo ako, di ako sasagot pag work-related. Kase, I don't want to be stressed pag dating sa bahay. Ayoko na syang dalhin. Yung trabaho, iniwan ko na yan.” [RGC4. L190-193].

“andun ako sa premise na magsipag ka at magtrabaho ka sa time na binigay sayo between 8 to 5 kase right after 8 to 5, you have to deal with yourself, you have to deal with your family, you have to deal with you friends. Yun yung mga pang recharge and outlet mo.” [RGC4. L464-467].

“kapag trabaho, trabaho. I don't mess up my work with my other issues. Yun yung ano ko e, pagtrabaho trabaho.” [RGC5. L522-523].

Category 2: Self-Preservation Ethic

Equally crucial is their self-preservation ethic, which manifests in three key approaches. First, a health-first mentality prevails, with RGC3 asserting "kung may sakit, wag pumasok", challenging the common Filipino work ethic of "tiis culture". Second, counselors practice strategic delegation, recognizing their human limitations - "isa ka lang, ang work marami" (RGC3) and "ibigay mo sa iba pag hindi kaya" (RGC4). Third, they employ micro-level stress resets, such as RGC5's technique of "breathing out and staying away for a moment" before returning to tasks. These practices collectively represent what Orem's Self-Care Theory would identify as developmental self-care requisites - adaptations specific to their professional role demands. The counselors' ability to maintain these boundaries and self-preservation strategies despite systemic pressures speaks to their development of strong self-care agency, demonstrating that professional dedication and personal well-being need not be mutually exclusive when proper negotiation strategies are employed. Their experiences suggest that sustainable guidance practice requires both institutional respect for these boundaries and individual commitment to maintaining them.

“Kase work is work, pero health is ano naman, you need to prioritize your health. Kumbaga kung meron kang sakit, wag mo ng ipilit na pumasok ka, kasi kelangan mong, ibig sabihin, kelangan mong magpahinga. Kelangan mong iprioritize yung sarili mo, more than anything else. Kasi sabi nga, “isa ka lang, ang work marami.” [RGC3. L510-513].

“huwag kang magpanggap na kaya mo lahat, pag hindi mo kaya, ibigay mo sa iba, hindi ka tanggap ng tanggap, ganon.” [RGC4. L514-515].

“halimbawa, mejo sort of stressed ako, kailangan ko lang huminga. Breathe out and stay away for a moment, then I'll get back to you, back to the work. [RGC5. L523-525].

Structural Description

The context of guidance and counseling practice is full of challenges and unpredictable situations due to the complexity of the concerns of students in the educational setting. As stated by one of the counselors:

“Nangyare na yan sa ken, dun sa, dito sa elementary. Di pa ko natatapos dun sa isa, eto na yung isang teacher...may dalang dalawa. “pedeng upo po muna kayo jan, jan muna sa labas, tatapusin ko lang to” Hindi pa ko natatapos dun sa ano, tinatawag na ko ng

guwardya, “mam, may nagrambulan dun sa labas”.” [RGC5. L613-616].

Aside from this, systemic barriers such as heavy workload, counselor-student ratio, financial constraint and limited resources at school are also persistent. Role ambiguity also plays a significant challenge in their function as a helping professional as the stigma around the guidance office being a disciplinary authority in the school setting is continuing from the past. Challenges in dealing with people which include interpersonal conflict at work, uncooperative parents and group conflict, also arises given that the profession works in the field of human behavior. Counselors, to continue their work amidst challenges, need to practice self-care to sustain functionality. Frequent self-care practice includes boundary-setting & prioritization, resource management, social support systems, basic self-care necessities and professional sustainability. It is crucial for the administration in the workplace to continuously provide support to the guidance counselors through mandated activities like Gender and Development (GAD) Activity, budgeted training and development seminars which are aligned to their field of practice, approval on proposed programs and establish work boundary setting. Moreover, because counselors are in the profession due to their purpose to be in service, they continue to thrive in the practice of guidance and counseling.

In the context of guidance and counseling, the elements of Time, Space, Relativity, Materiality and Bodily Concern play a crucial role in understanding and addressing challenges in the self-care practices.

Time. Due to the heavy workload, time constraints have been a big challenge for the guidance counselors in practicing self-care. Some counselors are extending their working hours just to accommodate students’ various concerns, making them miss their meals and go home late at times.

“Siguro pagka nagiging sobrang stressful yong araw sa guidance, pag may mga serious cases na laging dinadala sa guidance center. Sobrang consuming kasi yung minsan di na kami halos kumakain, nakakakain ng tama sa oras. ...So, napakatime consuming non. Ubos talaga yung oras mo, yon. So, after non, yun, tsaka lang kami nakakasingit na ng kaen. Yon, yun na ang self care namin, after non” [RGC6. L264-273].

The public setting usually functions in an 8-hour work set-up every day during the weekdays, which is the reason why some of the guidance counselors interviewed mentioned having chosen to work in the government. However, there are instances where the guidance counselor will be asked to complete a report outside office hours which even more highlight the importance of boundary setting in their work. In addition, it is essential that guidance counselors have time management skills to effectively handle the students’ various concerns without suffering from burnout.

Space. Environment plays a key role in the practice of self-care of the guidance counselors. In any work setting, the workmates have a considerable effect on the well-being of an employee, even more to the guidance counselors who deal with the frequent concerns of students, teachers and parents.

“Nagiging stress reliever ko yung, pag punta sa coffee shop. Kasi iba yung, iba yong tao, iba yung naririnig mo, iba yung ingay, iba yung concern. So hindi sya yung ingay kung gaano kagulo or kaingay sa loob ng school. Hindi sya yung bata, problema ng magulang, hindi teachers, hindi principal, kundi yon. Minsan alone or with friends” [RGC4. L198-201].

It is essential that guidance counselors are surrounded by supportive workmates to whom they can ask for help and can openly express themselves when they are the ones in need of a safe space. Their work alone is emotionally draining and will be more challenging to manage if they are surrounded with people hindering their practice of self-care.

“At siguro, isa sa pinakamaganda din siguro din na maging ano, sa self-care is yung environment. Kung yung mga kasama mo kasi is okay, kahit na pagod ka or marami kang ginagawa, parang di mo nararamdaman kase yung mga kasama mo ay okay” [RGC3. L306-308].

That is why it is crucial for guidance counselors to have social coping strategies to fully be functional whatever work environment they are currently in.

Bodily Concern. In practicing self-care, guidance counselors are most in tune with their physical and mental health as this aspect is the most basic and foundational self-care practice. Counselors make sure that their health is in good condition in order to serve students more effectively. They are highly aware of the need to prioritize their self-first to better work efficiently.

“pag may sakit na ako, never na talaga akong papasok. Kase syempre maaapektuhan yung trabaho mo e. Kapag may sakit, I just tell my boss na, “sir, di ako papasok, may lagnat ako, masama ang katawan ko, di ako makatayo” Yun lang, basic” [RGC5. L354-357].

Counselors listen to students but all the more to their bodies themselves.

“And also listening, listening to your body, di ba? It’s not only work work work work. Yung katawan mo nagsasabi na rin na, “I am tired. I need some rest. I need to be recharge. I need some friends. I need some..” So, you have to listen, listen to your body...kung anong sinasabe nya. Not because may kailangan kang tapusin, di mo na sya pakikinggan. Rest is important pag dating sa self-care and listening. Listening sa ibang tao, listening din sa physical body” [RGC4. L589-595].

Being aware of these elements- Time, Space and Bodily Concern- aid in understanding better the context in which the guidance

counselors experience self-care practices. Time management skills of guidance counselors greatly assist in dealing with the time constraints and heavy workload they are experiencing. Social coping strategies ensures effective adjustment of guidance counselors in their work space. While practicing basic physical and mental self-care and being aware of the need to practice such also aids in addressing physical health concerns of guidance counselors.

Conclusions

The study highlights the complex nature of the guidance counselors' self-care practices, its challenges, and prioritizing them in the context of professional responsibility.

Lived Experiences of Self-Care Practices of Guidance Counselors in Cavite. The lived experiences of Cavite's guidance counselors reveal self-care as a dynamic negotiation between personal wellness and professional obligations, where emotional, physical and social practices serve as vital coping mechanisms. Their narratives expose how institutional constraints frequently disrupt these efforts, positioning self-care as both a necessity and an ongoing challenge. These findings highlight that counselors' well-being is deeply intertwined with their work environment, requiring solutions that address both individual and systemic dimensions.

Ways of Addressing the Challenges in Self-Care of Guidance Counselors. Despite working in resource-limited settings, guidance counselors exhibit remarkable adaptability through time management, boundary-setting, and community-based solutions. These findings highlight how counselors navigate systemic challenges, such as scarcity of registered guidance counselors and role conflict by developing context-sensitive strategies that align with Orem's concept of self-care agency. Their ability to improvise solutions reflects a culturally embedded approach to well-being, emphasizing interdependence over individualism. This resilience, however, should not substitute for systemic change; rather, it calls for policy interventions, including improved counselor-to-student ratios and institutional support for mental health resources.

Prioritizing Self-Care in the Context of Professional Responsibilities. The study underscores that sustainable self-care cannot rely solely on individual efforts but requires a collaborative commitment from counselors, administrators, and policymakers. While counselors must continue prioritizing self-preservation through boundary-setting and stress management, schools and government bodies must address structural inefficiencies—such as role clarity and funding for wellness programs. The findings also advance self-care theory by challenging Western individualistic models, advocating for frameworks that incorporate cultural and systemic realities. Moving forward, fostering counselor well-being demands an integrated approach that harmonizes personal strategies with organizational and policy-level support, ensuring a healthier, more effective guidance workforce.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations were made to support guidance counselors in their self-care practices:

The students. Students may apply insights to appreciate counselors' challenges, fostering empathy and modeling self-care in their own lives.

The parents. Parents may utilize the findings to partner with guidance counselors through respectful communication when addressing student concerns.

The teachers. Teachers may utilize results by respecting guidance services' policies and procedures through proper referral of students.

The school administrators. To mitigate systemic barriers, administrators may institutionalize support by clarifying job scopes to prevent non-counseling duties, may implement mandated self-care periods and funding mental health resources.

The registered guidance counselor. The findings underscore the need for counselors to actively integrate the study's identified self-care strategies into daily practice. Counselors may use the data as a validated reference to seek better care for their well-being within schools, while also participating in professional communities to share and normalize self-care practices.

The mental health professionals. Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychometricians and social workers may adapt the study's culturally informed strategies like pakikipagkapwa into workshops and supervision frameworks. The data also supports collaborative advocacy to bridge gaps in mental health support for education professionals.

The future researchers. Researchers may expand on this work by investigating impacts of institutional self-care policies and cross-cultural comparisons.

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