



Received: 16-06-2022

Accepted: 26-07-2022

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

School counseling practices in an International setting: A Metasynthesis study

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Abstract

One of the lifelines of a school system is guidance counseling. Its role is vital and required in school institutions. The researchers in this study chose random articles from all over the world to better understand how therapy was offered during the epidemic. These articles were pulled together from several databases. These include Google Scholar, ResearchGate, The Web of Science, Scopus, and Dialnet. This study identified fourteen (14) different school counseling services offered worldwide. These are ASCA National Model, Uni Virtual Clinic (UVC), Therapeutic change processes, school-based combined individual and dyadic intervention, Psychopharmacology evaluation, ICT-based Counseling, Technology-Aided Counseling Services, School Counseling Services at the Onset of COVID-19, Quality Guidance and Counseling Program, social media-based Counseling

Services, Creative career coaching, Shared Goals Activity, and Narrative Therapy. All of which are from fourteen (14) articles that were meta-synthesized and analyzed through a thematic approach. The research found two governing modalities of guidance counseling in the new normal, face-to-face and online. To address the issues and gaps presented in the discussion of each method, the researchers came up with a HyFlex Model of Guidance Counseling. This model caters to different services designed for a hybrid and flexible setup, mixing face-to-face and online modalities on its services. The researchers recommend utilizing more research studies for the meta-synthesis process to support further the claim on the hybrid and flexible setup of counseling methods in the new normal. They also encourage future researchers to study the model's effectiveness and efficiency further.

Keywords: Metasynthesis, HyFlex Model, COVID-19, Constructivism

1. Introduction

One of the lifelines of a school system is guidance counseling. Its role has been considered vital, and its existence is very much required in school institutions. To holistically develop a student, the best services must be extended to him. One of these services is counseling. Counseling, as mentioned by Dhami (2020) ^[6] is considered a well-planned program of activities that provide a solution to address the current problem in the modern era of complex scientific and technological developments. The objective of guidance counseling is to offer assistance toward behavior change, improve coping mechanism skills, help decision-making, build a relationship, and ease users' potential. Counseling accounts for more responsibilities to bring out the best in students. Counseling helps recognize and understand one's potential, develop optimism to mitigate untoward behavior, and aid individuals in becoming resourceful and resilient in adapting to societal changes. Moreover, guidance and counseling also enhance human emotions, improve productivity, and give valuable lessons to individuals.

However, with the onset of the Pandemic, counseling service has been dramatically affected. It is challenging for the school administrators, specifically the guidance counselors, to stretch out counseling services to students due to limitations on in-person classes. Putri *et al.* (2020) disclosed in their study that the school counseling profession has challenges in Pandemic or post-Covid-19 pandemic conditions for self-development and alleviation of student problems. The Pandemic limits all access

to learning, including guidance counseling services.

According to Pedroso (2021) ^[15], the role of guidance counselors has been highlighted during the COVID-19 Pandemic as the provision of several guidance and counseling services that promote mental health is highly regarded. However, guidance counselors' personal and professional skills have been tested with the advent of technological needs during the Pandemic. Being faithful to their profession, they continue to work with initiatives to serve their stakeholders despite the restrictions and inadequacy in terms of support in delivering guidance and counseling services. Meyers (2020) ^[13] mentioned that students' mental, emotional, and physical well-being are at the core of what school counselors do during the coronavirus outbreak. Still, they have frequently been at the center of the problem-solving process. They have answered teachers' requests to find out why students weren't showing up for online classes, relieved stressed-out parents, advised families on how to set up, assisted parents (or grandparents) with technical troubleshooting, and specifically inclined for families in need to receive gift cards and community resources, and conducted check-in phone calls to ensure students had the necessary equipment and internet access.

In a study by Arrieta *et al.* (2021) ^[2], guidance counselors perceived several challenges in channeling counseling to students in an online setup. As expected, counseling in the new normal was difficult—the same in India. The results revealed that school counselors had difficulties incorporating online counseling with individual and group therapy services during the Pandemic. This study found out that mental health issues, feelings of isolation, voluminous requirements, and unstable internet connections were the concerns of the students. They addressed these by offering individual and group counseling; talking to the parents; working more closely with the academic heads, instructors, and class advisers; enhancing homeroom; and holding mental health activities that have different functions that include social and emotional education; academic counseling; conflict resolution; wellness coaching; mental health therapy; and student advocacy. Considerable challenges that are notable for counselors may be posed due to the growing impact of more challenging client problems; management of telehealth methods; problems with online confidentiality; ethical standards; and personal experiences with the COVID-19 Pandemic, according to Litam *et al.* (2021).

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, the role of information technology and social media has been underscored as one of the issues that affect the delivery of guidance and counseling services during the Pandemic. E-counseling has served as a viable channel for guidance counselors to do counseling. As cited in the works of Arrieta *et al.* (2021) ^[2], Andriani & Zikra (2019) pointed out that e-counseling services are not limited to providing counseling only. It also extends to the provision of overall guidance and counseling.

Moreover, in the same paper by Arietta *et al.* (2021), Ardi *et al.* (2013) emphasized that counseling is not only limited to internet utilization, but it expands to the use of information and communication technology such as the use of instrumentation program, sets of student's data, applications on counseling management, information system, media use for old information in class and others which includes the use of telephones during counseling. Pedroso *et al.* stated

that guidance counselors work beyond their normal ways of implementing services by utilizing technology-aided gadgets and online platforms to cater to the needs of the students, teachers, families, and the community. The review of educational guidance during the COVID-19 Pandemic by Mielgo-Conde *et al.* (2021) ^[14] noted that many counselors felt disadvantaged and stressed as they lacked training on digital skills since it was their first-time utilizing ICT in their profession unexpectedly. Putri (2022) ^[16] shared how guidance counselors innovatively utilized social media as an alternative support to guidance counseling services. Two primary social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and YouTube, were used for accessibility and convenience for the students. These social media tools allow guidance counselors to maintain interactive relationships with students. It must be noted that ICT and social media are valuable platforms for delivering guidance and counseling services. However, they also have limitations and restraints. Though some may have coped with the challenges the Pandemic posed in providing counseling services, many schools in different parts of the world, especially in developing countries, are still struggling and grappling with how they can do well in extending counseling services in the new normal. Having said this premise, it is imperative that vast information on international counseling practices, and strategies must be collected and analyzed. These practices may serve as bases for an improved counseling service for this Pandemic which may be adopted if it applies to one context. Thus, this thought prompted the researchers to gather, collect and synthesize studies and research that pertain to the international practices and strategies in delivering guidance counseling services.

The study is anchored on the idea of a philosophical concept called constructivism. According to the constructivism philosophy, learners create knowledge rather than just absorb it. People construct their representations of the world and incorporate new information into their prior knowledge as they experience it and reflect on it (schemas). Guided by this philosophy, the researchers aimed to develop a model based on the information gathered and the process and mechanisms they experienced.

This theoretical underpinning explains that a student must think about the material being covered and create an interpretation based on prior knowledge, values, and cultural context. There are two primary groups within constructivism: radical and social. The first type of radical constructivism, cognitive constructivism, contends that an individual's subjective interpretation of their operational experience determines how they construct knowledge. The second type of social constructivism asserts that knowledge is created via social interaction and that human growth is socially located. This chapter examines the background, current usage, educational applications, and restrictions.

The researchers aimed to achieve three main goals. The first aim was to define the counseling practices used in a sample of randomly chosen schools in an international setting during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The next step was to explain each international counseling practice that has been found. The last one was the creation of a conceptual school counseling model.

2. Methods and materials

The approach used in this study is metasynthesis. This process was explained in the article "Meta-Synthesis of

Qualitative Studies: Background, Methodology, and Application," published by Assistant Professor Jan Chrastina of the Institute of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Meta-synthesis is crucial for evaluating qualitative research, particularly in social science and educational research. With this approach, the researchers' extrapolations of the phenomenon and the viewpoints of individuals touched by it are carefully explored. It utilizes the results of multiple qualitative research to provide a conceptually sounder explanation of the relevance and importance of a phenomenon (Lee, 2013) ^[12]. A method for combining qualitative descriptions from several studies to increase comprehension is called metasynthesis. Since the process involves taking into account the data and then interpreting them to provide new insights, it is not merely a recap of the conclusions and findings of qualitative studies. The three unique objectives of theory formation, theory explication, and theory construction should be considered when performing meta-synthesis (Chrastina, 2018). The results of the meta-synthesis may include new theories, the development of conceptual models, the identification of research gaps, the expansion of the realm of already known knowledge, etc.

The researchers in this study chose random articles from all over the world to better understand how therapy was offered during the epidemic. All told, 16 papers were read and evaluated. These articles were pulled together from several databases. These include Google Scholar, ResearchGate, The Web of Science, Scopus, and Dialnet. When looking for literature, the researchers will utilize the phrases "counselor, guiding procedures, and COVID-19." Any educational setting, whether local, public, or private, is eligible for consideration. Both qualifying and non-qualifying research is included in the first inclusion. Understanding the different counseling techniques used during the Pandemic was crucial in this case. The research team then selected just two papers for each participant. The chosen articles were read and examined after a search of the bibliographic sources was done. The pieces were picked using relevancy criteria. The relevance criteria were concentrated on the pandemic counseling techniques that were employed. Examples of various pandemic-related school counseling techniques must be given in the study's cited sources. They commented on the accepted practices' methods, processes, protocols, and mechanisms. Each researcher summarized their readings and included the article's title, author, and other pertinent information; this helped to ensure that the information contained in the report was arranged correctly. After discovering these patterns, the researchers expanded on the customary procedures.

The 16 publications' conclusions were compiled under the following four headings: (1) Sources and title of the article, (2) Identified Practices, (3) Justifications and details; (4) Methods or procedures to find the similarities between the outcomes and methods, color coding was applied. Themes were developed due to frequent comparisons between the researchers' findings and discussions with a research specialist professor teaching this course. The concepts were then used to create a new approach to school counseling that may be employed wherever, not just in times of Pandemic but also in the contemporary.

The team used a variety of metasynthesis techniques,

referred to as the combined methodological model, to create a conceptual counseling model that could be used in this new normal (Chrastina, 2018). This contains seven stages that were followed in this study's meta-synthesis:

1. Choosing the phenomena of interest to create conceptual models of it. This research concentrated on the pandemic counseling techniques employed. The team's goal was to improve how therapy is now provided in this Pandemic or other new normal.
2. The researchers used several search engines and well-known keywords to choose relevant research from many databases and meta-search engines to find papers relevant to their investigation. The search results influence how many reviews there are for each article. Some authors claimed that the metasynthesis needed to contain at least 10–12 primary studies (Willig, 2018). The team ultimately decided to include 16 researchers in the study, even though it was mandatory for each to submit two articles. There are eight researchers in this group.
3. Read the accompanying studies twice again with great attention. The researchers searched for the titles, brief descriptions, and steps involved in this stage's counseling activities. The purpose of this process is for the researchers to determine whether the studies fit the criteria for inclusion and to spot any instances of the counseling technique being employed. The results are now tabulated in this stage. The themes relevant to the study are now visible to the researchers from this perspective.
4. Establishing connections between studies and the main themes by looking for associations. In this phase, the researchers attempted to determine if the study stated in each article fell within the topic of counseling theory or technique of giving counseling.
5. Interpreting research into other fields. This is the most challenging part since it necessitates a complete comprehension of every study's specific. Here, the research team held group discussions to analyze, contrast, and search for similarities and differences among the 16 articles. This led to the identification of the sub-themes. The article or articles were rejected if it was determined that they were irrelevant to the identified theme because the results could not be applied to another study.
6. Synthesizing requires a more complex interpretation to offer a new stance on the issue. This unifies the ideas and clarifies their meaning. Two themes were found in this investigation. Here, you must blend these two ideas to create a brand-new model.
7. Expressing the combined conceptual model comes last. Now that all the themes and findings have been compiled, a new paradigm has been developed.

3. Results and discussion

Following the data collection, processing, and identification of similarities and contrasts across the 16 articles, themes and subthemes were identified, and the following thematic map was created. The most common theme in the study is counseling practices online with face-to-face through therapy & intervention and the aid of technology. The following parts will summarize the significant findings associated with each theme.

Theme 1: Face-to-Face Counseling Practices

Face-to-face counseling practices, as shown in the research articles which the researchers reviewed, pertain to therapy and intervention, which include:

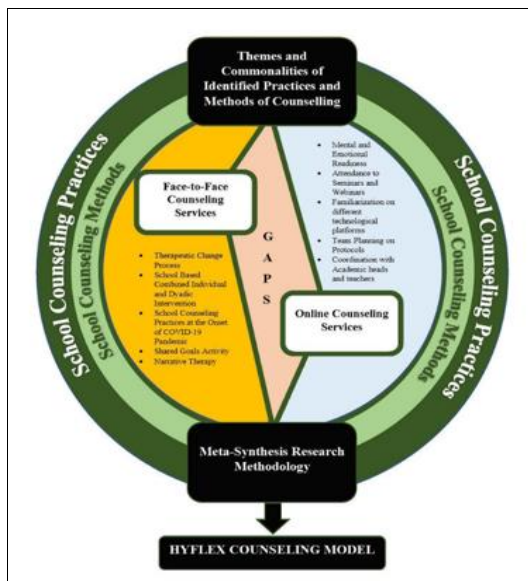


Fig 2

1. Therapeutic Change Process

Three different change processes, including new ways of thinking, improving relationships, and feeling good, are highlighted in the study by Harrison (2020) [10]. School counselors encourage clients and students to explore their ways of thinking by acting as facilitators, guides, catalysts, or companions and frequently asked questions (Harrison, 2020) [10]. Harrison (2020) [10] claims that the counselors assisted students in creating healthier connections by helping them practice communication, cultivate empathy, explore relationships, and gain new perspectives on those relationships and the impacts of actions. The counselors gave pupils happy emotions so they may experience positive emotions. Good communication between the counselor and the client leads to positive feelings. These pleasant feelings include relief, love, and a sense of importance and belonging (Harrison, 2020) [10].

Harrison (2020) [10], who completed the following stages, discovered these three change processes:

Step 1. The initial reading of the transcript (Development of ideas on coding)

Step 2. Active coding (Inductive, Semantic coding, salient coding)

Step 3. Developing themes and two thematic maps are the fourth step in the process.

Step 4. Reviewing themes (Checking for coherence between the articles and the data).

Step 5. Triangulating Themes (Comparison and Theme Formulation).

Step 6. Identifying and explaining themes and how they relate to one another (Creating superordinate).

Step 7. Writing the analytic narrative (Laid down the data sets with respondent validation in a narrative).

2. School-Based Combined Individual and Dyadic Intervention

By asking the participants which sort of support was beneficial to them and why Churchman *et al.* (2020) [5]

sought to understand how teenagers and their guardians experienced the two-fold intervention. The research was based on the findings of Churchman *et al.* (2020) [5], which investigated whether delivering a dual intervention was feasible and acceptable. Control Therapy (PCT) and Levels Therapy comprise the double intervention (MOL). Young people were allowed to participate in a parent-child activity or share aspirations as part of this two-fold intervention. Churchman *et al.* (2020) [5] defined the following steps for the process of implementing the individual and dyadic intervention:

Step 1: Enable participants to consider their wants and how important this is to them.

Step 2: Provided participants with the chance to consider why the goal chosen in Step 1 was significant to them. By posing queries like, "What makes this important?" the participants will be pushed to continue reflecting. "on their previous statement.

Step 3: Permitted participants to consider both their original objectives and wants and the final thing they said during

Step 4. After that, they were asked to discuss doable strategies to help each of them succeed. This allowed participants to consider whether their original goal could/might alter.

Step 5: As they discussed their objectives and desires, participants were urged to make a list of the things they shared.

3. School Counseling Practices at the Onset of COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on a study by Karaman (2021) [11] on COVID-19, the researchers of this metasynthesis study about the best counseling strategies also included school counseling services.

Turkey's Aralik University. There are three types of counseling services offered at schools: services for students, services for families, and services for teachers. The school counselors provided social support, peer counseling, career advising, preventive counseling, individual and group counseling online, and other student services. The school conducts parent conferences; parent needs assessments, online parent seminars, home visits, and other services for the parents. The consultation was named one of the techniques for assistance for teachers (Karama, 2020). For one, consultation took the form of a counseling session.

4. Shared Goals Activity

Participants select essential goals for themselves and their parents during the shared goal activity (Churchman *et al.*, 2020) [5]. When it became clear that children and their parents had conflicting or incompatible interests, this activity allowed them the chance to study the matter systematically. As a result, parents and children may learn how to resolve conflicts between inter-personal goals while also being aware of what is essential to one another. A pamphlet was provided to participants to help them navigate discussions about opposing objectives and was also made available to their parents (Churchman *et al.*, 2020) [5].

The booklets/brochures featured the following three stages:

1. Determine the Investigate higher-level goals related to the initial goal;
2. Consider its significance;

3. Agree to unpalatable terms.

Churchman *et al.* (2020) ^[5] listed the following procedures for a shared goal activity:

1. Setting Criteria/Qualifications;
2. Initial Meeting with Parents and Students;
3. Conflict Identification;
4. Material Distribution;
5. Three-stage Counseling Session; and
6. Voluntary Follow-Up Session.

5. Narrative Therapy

The goal of narrative therapy is to approach counseling and community work with respect, without placing blame, and with the idea that each person is the first authority in their own life (Farouk *et al.*, 2020) ^[8]. It sees issues as distinct from people and presupposes that people have a wide range of abilities, skills, competencies, beliefs, values, and commitments that will help them to lessen the impact of issues in their life. (dulwichcenter.com). Additionally, narrative therapy is a type of therapy that aids clients in developing a sense of expertise in their own life and embracing it. The stories you create and maintain throughout your life are emphasized in narrative therapy.

Farouk *et al.* (2020) ^[8], there are preliminary steps to narrative therapy, which comprise

1. Preparation relates to agreements with the school, stakeholder participation, and ethical approval.
2. Identification of participants and their qualifications and criteria comes in at number two.
3. Orientation to the counseling technique,
4. To collect their autobiographies, home visits are made.

Following the initial activities, the narrative counseling procedure was started, as described by Farouk *et al.* (2020) ^[8], and included the following steps:

Meeting with the parent(s) and student(s) at home

First session: the school's autobiographical interview session

Session 2: Narrative Solution Focused

Session 3-6: Examining recent events, assessing development, and modifying the intervention

The intervention's progress and conclusion will be reviewed in the final session.

Meeting at school with parents, teachers, and students.

Theme 2: Online Counseling Practices

Online transactions started to spread around the world during the New Normal period. Schools had to keep up with the significant changes the world was undergoing at the beginning of the Covid-19 epidemic, even though many were not prepared to automate transactions. Numerous schools began using technology to help their kids receive counseling services online as they helped their pupils adjust to the New Normal. Some academic institutions have created online resources and platforms like the Uni Virtual clinic (UVC) to meet their students' mental health requirements, which were examined and evaluated by Farrer *et al.* (2020) ^[9]. One of the recommendations made by Pedroso *et al.* (2021) ^[15] is the conduct online classes.

Arietta, Valeria, and Belen (2021) ^[2] suggested the following in preparation for a quality guidance counseling program in the new normal:

1. Mental and Emotional Readiness

Counselors must be emotionally and mentally prepared to offer counseling and guidance services because they may experience challenges, exhaustion, burnout, and stress when helping students. To better prepare them to deal with students struggling with anxiety, depression, and other issues, school counselors should get training in education and skills, a nurturing environment, and appropriate recognition for their job.

2. Attendance to Seminars and Webinars

Guidance counselors should participate in online webinars to obtain practical virtual counseling tactics, approaches, and ways to address various problems that students may have.

3. Familiarization with different technological platforms

Technology platforms have challenges that must be overcome in their utilization. Counselors must know how to use the media and any potential issues arising during an online consultation or session. Poor network, lack of student trust, and an absence of non-verbal indications are a few challenges that a counselor needs to be prepared to handle effectively.

4. Team Planning on Protocols

When developing the online counseling service procedures, the counselors should consult with school personnel, including students.

5. Coordination with Academic heads and teachers

To gain permission and support for the online service, whatever model, processes, and platforms are produced and picked from the planning stage should be laid out and debated with academic heads and teachers.

Based on the international research by Conde, Santos, Prado (2021), Pedroso *et al.* (2021) ^[15], Farrer *et al.* (2020) ^[9], and Arrieta, Valeria, and Belen (2021) ^[2] evaluated in this study, the ICT tools utilized in online counseling are as follows:

1. Online platforms or Websites, such as EducaMadrid, the community's or the institutions' education portal, and Uni Virtual Clinic (UVC).
2. Social media includes Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Remind.
3. YouTube Webex, Zoom, Google Duo, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Skype are all video conferencing tools.
4. Moodle, Edmodo, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams are tools for daily work.
5. Prezi, Genially, Blogger, Wix, and WordPress are examples of content creation and sharing tools.

The findings of the Putri *et al.* (2021) study regarding the use of social media in guidance counseling services indicated the following points:

1. Social media influence the practice of the guidance counseling service.
2. Students can give feedback on the guidance counseling service through group chats and social media chat rooms.
3. The usage of the WhatsApp Group in the implementation of the conversation in the counseling service was noted in the study.

4. Discussion in the guidance and counseling service through social media.
5. Only chat-room-only and conveniently located social media platforms are used in guiding and counseling services.
6. Relationships between a counselor and a student, then between students and restrictions on social media use.
7. Social media interactions are starting to appear in providing guidance and counseling services.

Aside from the usual online school guidance and counseling practices and services, Pedroso *et al.* (2021) [15] cited activities such as webinars for students, webinars for parents, and online wellness activities are considered to be included in the online counseling services as they are helpful in the distance learning setup for both students and parents. The researchers designed a HyFlex Guidance Counseling Model from the study's findings. The term is coined based on the HyFlex course design discussed in the works of Beatty (2014) [3], with the same concept applied in the

school counseling services. Figure 2 shows the flowchart of events in implementing the said model. The HyFlex Guidance Counseling Model is a process that starts with Counselor pieces of training and ends with Continuous improvement, which may serve as a basis for the next set of activities for guidance counselors. After the series of workshops and pieces of training for upskilling the guidance counselors, the entire department shall set criteria/targets/goals during the school year. Then, upon determining it, the school shall conduct an initial screening based on the profiles of the students to determine possible cases of people who need individualized counseling support. Also, the pre-screening may provide the department with ideas that may enhance the guidance counseling services of the school. It must be offered in a blend of face-to-face and online modalities. Home visitations and choosing the preferred video conferencing application will be the next target once the clients are oriented on the modalities shall they avail the guidance counseling services of the school. This introduces the HyFlex Guidance Counseling Method.

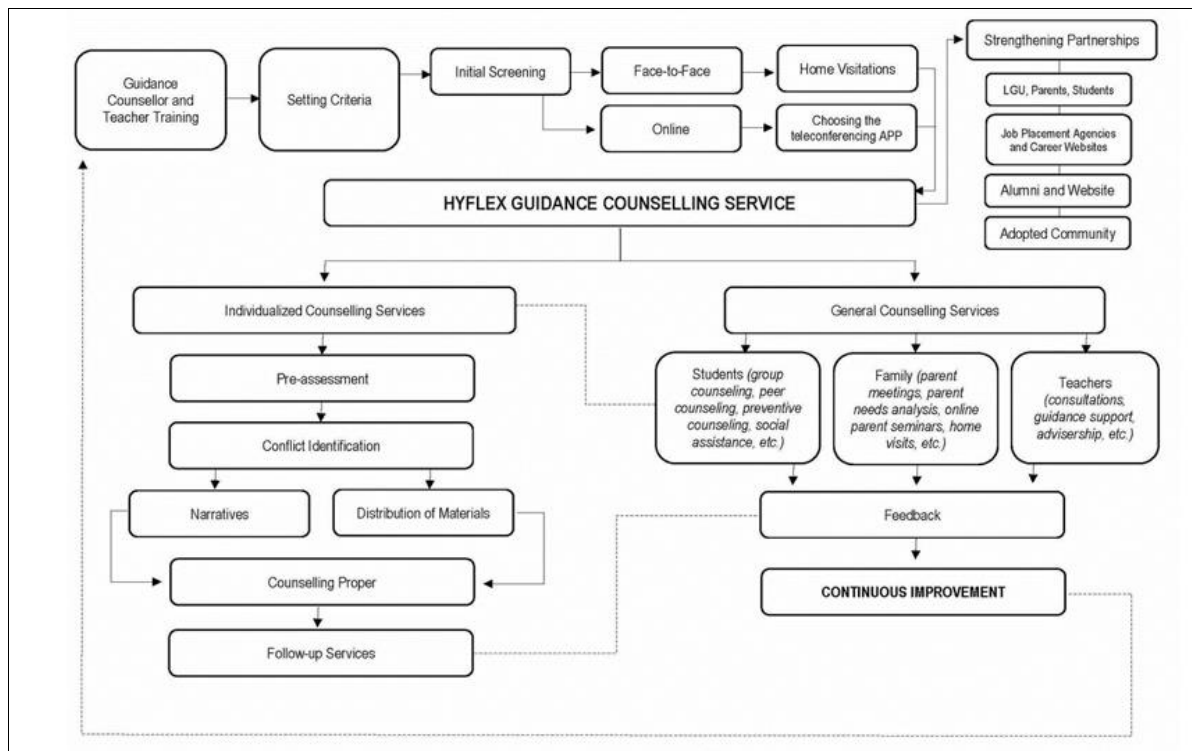


Fig 2: The HyFlex School Counselling Service

The model is divided into two services- individualized, and general counseling- both offered in hybrid and flexible setups. The learners will undergo a pre-assessment for the individualized counseling services to identify the conflict within their context. Then, materials will be distributed, and narratives from the clients will be collected. It will serve as the guidance counselor's basis for the counseling sessions. The HyFlex Model does not take the session specifically because the researchers believe that all counselors have a distinct strategy for dealing with the sessions. Thus, the proper authority lies with them in this part of the process. However, follow-up sessions will be solely voluntary in the client's interest. Lastly, feedback mechanisms must be established to contribute to the overall continuous improvement of the guidance counseling service. On the other hand, general counseling services will be

offered to students, families, and teachers within the school premises. The benefits for students shall include but are not limited to individualized, group, peer, preventive, and social assistance counseling methods. For the family, parent meetings, online parent seminars, and home visitations are some services the department must offer. Lastly, the teachers shall be assisted and supported by the counseling services department of the school in handling the students, consultations, and resolving student issues within the advisory section of their advisory teams. All services must be evaluated for feedback collection, which may contribute to the continuous improvement of the methodology. Lastly, to strengthen and support the new method of counseling for schools based on the model presented, a partnership shall be established between the Local Government Unit, parents, students, job placement agencies,

career websites, alumni, website visitors, and the adopted community. The researchers believe that these linkages may help the effectiveness and efficiency of the process the model has to offer.

4. Conclusions

This study identified fourteen (14) different school counseling services offered worldwide. These are ASCA National Model, Uni Virtual Clinic (UVC), Therapeutic change processes, school-based combined individual and dyadic intervention, Psychopharmacology evaluation, ICT-based Counseling, Technology-Aided Counseling Services, School Counseling Services at the Onset of COVID-19, Quality Guidance and Counseling Program, social media-based Counseling Services, Creative career coaching, Shared Goals Activity, and Narrative Therapy. All of which are from fourteen (14) articles that were meta-synthesized and analyzed through a thematic approach. The research found two governing modalities of guidance counseling in the new normal, face-to-face and online. To address the issues and gaps presented in the discussion of each method, the researchers came up with a HyFlex Model of Guidance Counseling. This model caters to different services designed for a hybrid and flexible setup, mixing face-to-face and online modalities on its services.

5. Recommendations

The researchers recommend utilizing more research studies for the meta-synthesis process to support further the claim on the hybrid and flexible setup of counseling methods in the new normal. The study's proponents also welcome new injections of knowledge on the model presented in this study and further investigate its effectiveness and efficiency. However, they encourage the schools to adopt this new form of counseling as it may embrace the normal setup of education.

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