

Impact of Telecounseling Practice on Compassion Fatigue of Filipino Counselors

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The global outbreak has profoundly impacted various sectors, compelling them to adapt rapidly to new modes of functioning. In the mental health field, telecounseling has emerged as a crucial service, allowing counselors to continue providing support despite physical distancing measures. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the extent of telecounseling practice and compassion fatigue among Filipino school counselors in Western Visayas. To assess the extent of telecounseling practice, an author-developed Telecounseling Practice Scale was utilized. Compassion fatigue was measured using [Stamm's \(2010\)](#) Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL Version 5). Results indicated that school counselors had moderate levels of telecounseling practice and compassion fatigue. Significant differences in compassion fatigue levels were observed based on civil status and counselor-student ratio, and a significant positive correlation was found between telecounseling practice and compassion fatigue. The findings gave emphasis to the emotional and psychological challenges counselors face due to prolonged telecounseling exposure, highlighting the necessity of providing support and enhancing the well-being of school counselors in telecounseling environments.

Keywords. Compassion fatigue, counselors, mental health services, online counseling, telecounseling, telehealth

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted global processes and operations, posing challenges for nations worldwide ([Heymann & Shindo, 2020](#)). Beyond its devastating effects on physical health, the pandemic has led to a significant increase in mental health

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issues, including heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Clemente-Suárez et al., 2021). These developments underscore the critical role of mental health services in mitigating the psychological toll of the pandemic.

The counseling profession has not been immune to the pandemic's repercussions. Faced with these challenges, counselors were compelled to adapt by transitioning their counseling practices to a remote or online modality (Tangco-Siason & Paulino, 2025). This shift is a strategic response aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 virus while still providing crucial psychosocial support to individuals in need during these challenging times (Pillay & Barnes, 2020).

The concept of telecounseling has gained substantial recognition as a viable psychological intervention, particularly as demand for remote mental health services intensified in response to the pandemic (Gupta et al., 2021; Moudatsou et al., 2024; Naik et al., 2022). To address growing concerns in mental health issues, counselors and mental health professionals are increasingly utilizing telecounseling services (Moudatsou et al., 2024; Tangco-Siason & Paulino, 2025). While telecounseling, also referred to as virtual counseling, e-counseling, or online counseling, continues to be conceptually examined and refined in the literature (Richards & Viganó, 2013), these terms are generally understood to describe the delivery of therapeutic services and interventions through technology-mediated platforms. Within this modality, trained professional counselors and clients interact via electronic communication technologies, such as telephones, computers, email, and the internet, while located in separate physical settings (Bakar et al., 2020). However, employing telecounseling and online mental health services presents notable challenges for mental health practitioners. These challenges encompass technological limitations such as network instability, ethical considerations including informed consent and confidentiality, cybersecurity and data privacy risks, concerns regarding professional competence, and the blurring of personal and professional boundaries in remote practice contexts (Khalifa, 2025; Mohamad et al., 2024; Stoll et al., 2020).

This study is guided by two key theoretical frameworks of Suler's Cybertherapeutic Theory (Suler, 2008) and Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1976; GAS). Suler's theory is particularly relevant for understanding the dynamics of telecounseling, which became a critical mode of service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. It outlines how digital platforms support various forms of therapeutic communication, such as text, audio, video, synchronous, and asynchronous, and examines how these modalities influence identity expression and social interaction in virtual environments (Suler, 2008).

The theory identifies six core elements of online communication between counselors and clients, enabling a nuanced approach to therapy that can adapt to the strengths and limitations of each format. Digital features can influence how therapeutic relationships are formed, maintained, and experienced. Within this study, the theory supports the notion that counselors can use diverse technological tools to effectively engage clients, demonstrating its relevance in crisis-driven counseling contexts. However, counselors may also need to compensate for limited physical presence, manage text- or screen-mediated emotional expressions, and sustain empathic engagement despite technological constraints.

Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome complements this by providing a physiological perspective on stress, outlining three sequential stages: Alarm, resistance, and exhaustion ([Selye, 1976](#)). The GAS model helps explain how sustained stress, such as that experienced by counselors managing increased client needs during the pandemic, can lead to emotional and physical fatigue or burnout. The alarm stage initiates the body's stress response, followed by a resistance phase where the body attempts to cope, and ultimately, if the stress is unrelenting, an exhaustion stage marked by depleted energy and heightened vulnerability to illness. This framework is instrumental in understanding how the cumulative demands of telecounseling during a global crisis may contribute to outcomes such as compassion fatigue, making it a vital theoretical lens for this research. [Almadani et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasized that compassion fatigue is a hazard encountered by professional caregivers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, counselors on psychological hotlines encountered compassion fatigue due to the high prevalence of severe stress and traumatic distress among callers ([Zhao et al., 2020](#)). Similarly, [Zhang et al. \(2021\)](#) found that counselors who frequently addressed traumatic experiences of help-seekers were prone to compassion fatigue, with 32.3% experiencing it, particularly when clients breached professional boundaries. Additionally, prior studies disclosed that school counselors and other mental health professionals are at high risk of compassion fatigue, particularly during counseling services ([Ondrejková & Halamová, 2021](#); [Singh et al., 2020](#)). Local research also found that mental health professionals are vulnerable to compassion fatigue ([Cayongcong et al., 2025](#)). Compassion fatigue among counselors may therefore hinder therapeutic engagement and diminish the quality of counseling services, even in virtual environments.

Moreover, prior research suggests certain demographic and work-related factors may influence compassion fatigue among health care workers and mental health professionals. A review study identified

various personal and occupational factors associated with the development of compassion fatigue, although findings were not entirely consistent across studies. The most frequently examined predictors included age, gender, professional role, and workload (McGrath et al., 2022). Another review paper found that higher levels of burnout among school counselors were associated with larger assigned caseloads (Kim & Lambie, 2018). In addition, previous studies have also reported significant differences in compassion fatigue by marital status, with single, divorced, or widowed practitioners often exhibiting higher levels than married counterparts (Aslan et al., 2022; Abo Shereda et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2022). A recent scoping review likewise identified marital status as a consistent sociodemographic correlate of compassion fatigue across caregiving professions (Noor et al., 2025). On the other hand, a systematic review noted work-related characteristics in contributing to the development of compassion fatigue (Singh et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, the transition to flexible learning, including remote mental health services, has been formalized through national policies. The [Commission on Higher Education](#) (CHED) has promoted telecounseling within student affairs, while the [Department of Education](#) (DepEd) has implemented mental health helplines to support students, educators, and the broader public during periods of psychological distress (CHED, 2021; DepEd, 2021). Complementing these policy initiatives, empirical evidence suggests that Filipinos generally perceive telepsychology and online counseling as acceptable alternatives to in-person service delivery during pandemic conditions (Dela-Cruz et al., 2023; Perez, 2025).

Despite progress in the adoption of telecounseling in the Philippines, this transition has posed significant work-related challenges for Filipino counselors. The increased dependence on digital platforms has exacerbated longstanding issues, including high counselor-to-student ratios, rising rates of psychological concerns among students, and insufficient institutional support. These factors contribute to occupational stressors, including vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, which is a condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to others' suffering (Tayoto, 2021). As counselors adapt to this evolving service delivery model, their own psychological well-being is placed at risk, underscoring the need to examine the hidden costs of telecounseling on those providing care.

Although interest in telecounseling as a modality for delivering mental health services has grown, and studies have explored telecounseling and compassion fatigue both internationally and locally,

limited quantitative research has specifically examined how the extent of telecounseling practice relates to counselors' mental health outcomes, particularly compassion fatigue, within the Philippine counseling context. To address this gap, the present study investigates the relationship between the extent of telecounseling practice and the level of compassion fatigue among Filipino counselors in Western Visayas. By exploring this underexamined area, the study aims to generate meaningful insights into the psychological impact of telecounseling on counselors and inform the development of targeted support strategies to promote their resilience and effectiveness amidst ongoing professional demands.

Broader objectives of the study were to determine the extent of practice of telecounseling among Filipino counselors. In addition, to identify the level of compassion fatigue among Filipino counselors. It was also intended to determine if there are significant differences in compassion fatigue when grouped according to age, sex, civil status, counselor-student ratio, and years of counseling experience and to examine the relationship between the extent of telecounseling practice and compassion fatigue among Filipino counselors in Western Visayas, Philippines.

Method

Sample

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. Due to the limited number of registered guidance counselors in Western Visayas, Philippines ([Magsambol, 2020](#)), school counselors in the region who were active members of the regional chapter of the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association, Inc. were invited to participate in the study. A total of 101 participants met the inclusion criteria and completed the survey ($n = 101$). The study respondents were selected based on the following inclusion criteria had to be registered guidance counselors employed in schools, either full-time counselors or licensed faculty members designated as guidance counselors. Furthermore, they must have provided telecounseling services since the onset of the pandemic and expressed willingness to participate in the research. Exclusion criteria included guidance advocates or designees without a counseling license, counselors not employed in schools, and counselors unwilling to participate.

[Table 1](#) summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 101 participants. The majority were female (77.23%) and aged 41 years and above (55.45%), with a mean age of 43.00 years ($SD = 1.67$). Over half of the respondents were married (57.43%), and the majority had more

than five years of counseling experience (78.21%). Slightly more than half (54.46%) were full-time guidance counselors, and 52.48% reported a counselor–student ratio of 1:1001 or higher.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Variables	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Men	23	22.77
Women	78	77.23
Age		
40 years and below	45	44.55
41 years and above	56	55.45
Marital Status		
Single	43	42.57
Married	58	57.43
Years of Counseling Experience		
5 years and below	22	20.79
More than 5 years to 10	39	38.61
More than 10 years and above	40	39.60
Present Position		
Full-Time Guidance Counselor	55	54.46
Designated Guidance Counselor	46	45.54
Approximate Counselor-Student Ratio		
1:1000 or fewer	48	47.52
1:1001 and above	53	52.48

Measures

Extent of Practice of Telecounseling Scale

This questionnaire focused on assessing the extent of telecounseling practice among registered guidance counselors. This section consisted of nine items developed by the researcher and validated by three experts in guidance and counseling, including a psychological testing specialist, a practicing counselor, and a research expert in counseling psychology. The content validity of the instrument was established through expert evaluation using the Survey Instrument Validation Rating Scale of Oducado (2020). Each item in the instrument was also assessed for its relevance to the construct of telecounseling practice. The extent of telecounseling practice was operationalized based on frequency of sessions, number of cases managed, and duration of counseling sessions. Respondents rated their telecounseling practice using a 5-point scale: 1 (*Almost Never*), 2 (*Seldom*), 3 (*Sometimes*), 4 (*Often*), and 5 (*Almost Always*),

corresponding to how often they conducted telecounseling in the past 30 days. For interpretation, mean scores were categorized as High (3.67-5.00), Moderate (2.34-3.66), or Low (1.00-2.33). Higher scores indicate a greater frequency and duration of telecounseling sessions across multiple cases.

Compassion Fatigue Scale

The survey utilized the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) Version 5, developed by [Stamm \(2010\)](#). This widely used instrument measures both the positive and negative effects of helping individuals who experience suffering and trauma. It comprises subscales for Compassion Satisfaction ($\alpha = .88$), Burnout ($\alpha = .75$), and Secondary Traumatic Stress ($\alpha = .81$), the latter two of which comprise Compassion Fatigue. For this study, 20 items were used to assess compassion fatigue among Filipino Counselors in Western Visayas. Respondents rated each item using a five-point Likert scale: 1 (*Never*), 2 (*Rarely*), 3 (*Sometimes*), 4 (*Often*), and 5 (*Very Often*). Scoring and interpretation followed Stamm's guidelines mean scores of 42 or higher indicated high compassion fatigue, 23 to 41 indicated moderate levels, and 22 or below indicated low levels.

Demographic Sheet

This part was used to obtain the personal profile of the respondents such as sex, age, civil status, years of counseling experience, present position or designation, and approximate counselor-student ratio.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained administrative permission to conduct the study and secured approval from the University Ethics Review Committee. Ethical considerations prioritized respondents' rights to make informed decisions, with human rights and respect upheld throughout the study. Recruitment of participants was supported by the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association, Inc. (PGCA, Inc.), which granted permission to post a general call for participation on their social media pages. Eligible participants were invited to complete the online survey via Google Forms, which was distributed via email and Facebook Messenger. Additionally, participation in the survey was announced at the organization's national

convention. Data collection occurred over a three-month period. Following collection, responses were checked for completeness and accuracy, cleaned to remove invalid or incomplete entries, and subsequently processed for analysis.

Results

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that Filipino counselors reported a low (46.53%) to moderate (50.50%) extent of telecounseling practice with a mean of 2.47 ($SD = 0.56$).

Table 2: *Filipino Counselors' Extent of Practice of Telecounseling and Its Subscales*

Categories	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%
Overall Telecounseling	2.47	0.56	101	100
Low			47	46.53
Moderate			51	50.50
High			3	2.97
Frequency	2.60	0.86		
Low			43	42.57
Moderate			46	45.55
High			12	11.88
Duration	2.43	0.88		
Low			54	53.47
Moderate			38	37.62
High			9	8.91
Number of Cases	2.39	0.63		
Low			60	59.41
Moderate			35	34.65
High			6	5.94

Note. Low = 22 or less; Moderate = 23-41; High = 42 or more.

Table 3 shows that the Filipino counselors' level of compassion fatigue ($M = 24.06$, $SD = 4.06$) was moderate, based on its two components that is burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Table 3: *Filipino Counselors' Level of Compassion Fatigue and Its Subscales*

Categories	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%
Compassion Fatigue	24.07	4.06	101	100
Low			31	30.69
Moderate			70	69.31
High			-	-
Burnout	24.38	3.74		
Low			24	23.76
Moderate			77	76.24
High			-	-
Secondary Traumatic Stress	23.75	6.03		
Low			41	40.59
Moderate			60	59.41
High			-	-

Note. Low = 22 or less; Moderate = 23-41; High = 42 or more.

Table 4 revealed nonsignificant differences in relation to age and gender on compassion fatigue. However, a significant difference in compassion fatigue by marital status was found indicating that counselors being single reflected higher levels of compassion fatigue as compared to married counterparts. In addition, those with higher ratio of counselor-student reflected higher levels of compassion fatigue.

Table 4. *Differences in Counselors' Compassion Fatigue by Demographics (N = 101)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Age	≤ 40 (<i>n</i> = 45)		≥ 41 (<i>n</i> = 56)				
	24.09	3.34	24.04	4.77	0.06	.95	-
Gender	Men (<i>n</i> = 23)		Women (<i>n</i> = 78)				
	25.22	3.91	25.53	3.98	1.79	.76	-
Marital	Single (<i>n</i> = 43)		Married (<i>n</i> = 58)				
	24.87	3.65	22.21	4.14	2.10	.03	.42
Counselor- Student Ratio	1:1000 & below (<i>n</i> = 48)		1:1001 & above (<i>n</i> = 53)				
	22.97	4.17	24.77	3.69	-	.02	.46

Regarding years of counseling experience, nonsignificant differences were found. Furthermore, the extent of telecounseling practice was positively correlated with level of compassion fatigue ($r = .25, p = .01$), indicating positive association.

Discussion

This study examined the extent of telecounseling and compassion fatigue among school counselors in Western Visayas, Philippines. Telecounseling, defined as the delivery of therapeutic services through technology-mediated platforms with counselors and clients in separate locations (Bakar et al., 2020), has been widely practiced in many countries. In the Philippine context, however, it remains relatively new (Flores & Rungduin, 2024). This emerging status provides an important backdrop for interpreting the present findings. Given its limited history of implementation locally, it is not surprising that counselors in this study reported only low to moderate levels of telecounseling practice.

Although telecounseling offers recognized advantages, such as increased accessibility and service continuity (Esguerra, 2024), its novelty in the local setting also brings considerable challenges. Counselors must possess adequate technological competence and receive specialized training to deliver services effectively in digital environments. Moreover, communication barriers inherent in online platforms, difficulties in establishing rapport and trust, and the potential for blurred professional boundaries further complicate practice (Esguerra, 2024; Flores & Rungduin, 2024; Stoll et al., 2020). Beyond professional readiness, structural constraints also play a critical role. Online counseling services also depend on reliable internet connectivity (Khalifa, 2025). Yet, as in many low- and middle-income countries, stable internet access remains a continuing challenge in the Philippines (Wei et al., 2025). Consequently, many students may lack consistent access to high-quality internet service, limiting both the feasibility and equitable reach of telecounseling initiatives.

Within this contextual landscape, the psychological well-being of counselors themselves becomes particularly relevant. The present study demonstrated moderate levels of compassion fatigue among school counselors. Compassion fatigue, described by Figley (1995) as deep physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that can result from working day to day in an intense caregiving environment, has been documented at moderate to high levels among counselors and mental health professionals in both pre-pandemic and pandemic contexts (Bentley, 2022; Cayongcong et al., 2025; Turgoose & Maddox, 2017). Pandemic-related disruptions, shifting work modalities, and heightened client distress have further intensified this concern in recent years.

Importantly, this study also identified a significant positive relationship between the extent of telecounseling practice and levels of compassion fatigue. Although the correlation was low, the direction of the relationship aligns with prior literature. This finding suggests that

sustained engagement in telecounseling may intensify empathic demands and emotional labor. Studies on the use of teleconferencing platforms report that more frequency, higher intensity, and duration of use were associated with greater levels of fatigue (Fauville et al., 2021; Oducado et al., 2021). Moreover, this finding is consistent with Figley's (1995) definition, which states that working extensively with an intensely caring environment leader can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and eventually compassion fatigue. Moreover, greater exposure to clients' distress and increased workload demands are associated with heightened emotional exhaustion and compassion fatigue among helping, caring, and mental health professionals (Noor et al., 2025; Singh et al., 2020). The present study further supports this interpretation, as it found that school counselors with higher counselor-to-student ratios reported greater levels of compassion fatigue, highlighting the contribution of service burden and caseload demands to increased emotional strain. More than half of the school counselors in this study reported managing ratios of 1:1001 or higher, exceeding recommended standards. This mirrors the broader national shortage of counselors in the Philippines, where ratios have been reported as high as 1:14,000, far beyond international benchmarks (Lacson et al., 2024). Workforce limitations, attributed to systemic issues such as low compensation and stringent licensure requirements (Lacson et al., 2024), have constrained service delivery, with only a fraction of registered counselors actively serving in schools (Magsambol, 2020). Although policy mandates suggest a minimum ratio of 1:1000 in higher education, achieving even this standard remains challenging. Such excessive caseloads may heighten workload pressures and increase the risk of compassion fatigue among school counselors.

Prior research on school counselors similarly found elevated compassion fatigue among counselors with high student ratios (Gunduz, 2012), highlighting the stress induced by excessive workloads and insufficient staffing. In the context of emerging telecounseling practice, where counselors navigate technological demands, connectivity limitations, novel professional boundaries, and increase number of cases, the added cognitive and emotional strain may incrementally contribute to compassion fatigue.

From a theoretical standpoint, the significant relationship between the extent of telecounseling practice and compassion can be meaningfully interpreted through the complementary lenses of Suler's (2008) Cybertherapeutic Theory and Selye's (1976) General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). Cybertherapeutic Theory posits that therapeutic processes conducted in cyberspace are shaped by distinct communication dimensions (Suler, 2008). In telecounseling contexts,

reduced nonverbal cues, possible communication ambiguities, and reliance on screen-mediated interaction may require increased cognitive processing and sustained empathic effort. Counselors must actively interpret tone, emotion, and relational meaning in the absence of full sensory feedback, potentially increasing cognitive load and relational vigilance. Over time, this sustained interpretive and emotional effort may intensify the psychological demands of therapeutic engagement. In addition, digitally mediated environments may facilitate heightened client disclosure due to online disinhibition effects, thereby increasing counselors' exposure to emotionally charged material. While such disclosure can enhance therapeutic depth, it may also amplify empathic engagement and emotional labor. Cybertherapeutic Theory does not conceptualize these features as inherently pathogenic; rather, it highlights how communication structures influence relational processes. When these structural characteristics coincide with extended practice hours or high caseloads, they may contribute to cumulative psychological demands.

On the other hand, the General Adaptation Syndrome provides a stress-based framework for understanding how these demands may translate into compassion fatigue. According to GAS, prolonged exposure to stressors progresses from initial activation (alarm) to sustained coping efforts (resistance), and eventually to exhaustion if recovery is insufficient. In the context of telecounseling, persistent screen exposure, blurred professional boundaries in remote work settings, technological disruptions, and elevated empathic engagement may function as chronic stressors. While counselors may adapt during the resistance phase, sustained exposure without adequate institutional support or restorative practices may increase vulnerability to exhaustion-related outcomes, including compassion fatigue.

Nonetheless, the low magnitude of the correlation suggests that telecounseling practice alone does not determine compassion fatigue. Other factors, such as counselor-student ratios, personal coping resources, supervision structures, organizational support, and socio-demographic variables, likely interact with telecounseling demands. For instance, the present study found that single school counselors experienced higher levels of compassion fatigue compared to their married counterparts. This finding is consistent with a recent scoping review identifying marital status as a recurring sociodemographic factor associated with compassion fatigue across caregiving professions (Noor et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the significant association underscores the need to attend to the structural and environmental features of online counseling practice when considering counselor well-being.

Overall, the findings are consistent with existing literature indicating that increased workload, sustained exposure to client distress, and prolonged digital engagement may contribute to emotional exhaustion among mental health professionals. However, these results should not be interpreted as suggesting that telecounseling inherently causes compassion fatigue. Telecounseling provides important benefits, including flexibility, accessibility, and continuity of care. Instead, the findings point to the need for further investigation, particularly in contexts where telecounseling is rapidly implemented, infrastructure is uneven, technological competence may be insufficient, and workload pressures persist. Under these conditions, the cumulative demands of digitally mediated therapeutic work may increase counselors' risk of emotional strain.

Results of this study also underscore the need for school counselors and mental health professionals to actively address compassion fatigue to safeguard their well-being and work performance. Although telecounseling expands service delivery and is generally perceived by Filipinos as an acceptable alternative to face-to-face counseling (Dela-Cruz et al., 2023), with benefits such as flexibility and perceived accessibility (Esguerra, 2024), it may also introduce new psychosocial and professional stressors. This highlights the importance of structured training, ongoing supervision, and robust institutional support systems to prevent the additional demands of telecounseling from outweighing its benefits.

Accordingly, the study carries important implications for the counseling profession. While telecounseling exposure appears to be one contributing factor to compassion fatigue, other personal and organizational variables likely play significant roles, warranting further investigation. The findings therefore support the development of contextually responsive guidelines and evidence-informed best practices to mitigate compassion fatigue and promote sustainable telecounseling practice among Filipino counselors.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study only surveyed 101 registered guidance counselors from Western Visayas who had experience providing telecounseling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although recruitment through the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association facilitated broad participation, counselors who were non-members, inactive members, or those with updated contact information may not have been reached, potentially limiting representativeness and generalizability. In addition, the demographic data did not differentiate counselors by institutional type

(public vs. private) or educational level served (basic vs. higher education), restricting more nuanced contextual interpretation. A key methodological limitation is the cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a single time point. Consequently, the assessment of impact is inherently constrained, as temporal sequencing between variables cannot be established. The findings therefore reflect associations rather than causal relationships, and the directionality of observed effects remains uncertain. Moreover, reliance on self-reported measures may introduce response bias. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, incorporate more detailed demographic indicators, and specify telecounseling modalities (e.g., synchronous vs. asynchronous platforms) to strengthen the rigor and interpretability of results.

Implications

The findings carry important implications for Filipino school counselors and the broader counseling profession. By establishing a significant relationship between telecounseling practice and compassion fatigue, this study highlights the need to safeguard counselor well-being as virtual service delivery becomes more embedded in the Philippine context. As telecounseling continues to expand amid the digital transformation of mental health services, attention to workload management, counselor–student ratios, and exposure to client distress becomes increasingly critical. The results also emphasize the importance of structured training in digital counseling competencies, regular clinical supervision, and strengthened institutional support systems to mitigate emotional strain. Developing contextually responsive guidelines and evidence-informed best practices for telecounseling may help ensure that its benefits such as accessibility and service continuity are sustained without compromising counselors' psychological well-being and professional functioning.

Conclusion

This research explores the engagement of Filipino counselors in telecounseling in the Western Visayas region, highlighting its potential to expand mental health services and bringing to light the implications of prolonged virtual counseling on counselors' well-being. While telecounseling has gained some traction, further exploration is needed to enhance counselor engagement, especially as the region increasingly turns to digital platforms in response to health risks, such as the pandemic. However, it stresses the importance of maintaining strong therapeutic relationships and ethical online counseling practices. The

study also addresses the risk of compassion fatigue among counselors, exacerbated by the challenges of telecounseling, such as heavy caseloads, emotional intensity, and technology stress. To mitigate these risks, the research advocates for tailored self-care toolkits to support counselors' well-being and resilience. Furthermore, school administrators and professional organizations should develop policies and guidelines to address compassion fatigue, ensure ethical standards, and enhance telecounseling skills and practices to improve the quality of mental health services. Eventually, as telecounseling continues to evolve beyond the pandemic context, the long-term sustainability of mental health services depends not only on accessibility for clients but also on the psychological health of counselors themselves. Protecting the well-being of Filipino counselors ensures that telecounseling remains a compassionate, ethical, and effective modality, capable of meeting the growing mental health needs of communities while preserving the resilience and professional vitality of those who serve.

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