

Lifeline Online: E-Counseling and the Wellbeing of Overseas Filipino Workers and their Families

Ma. Regina M. Hechanova
Ateneo de Manila University

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

- What is the profile and concerns of OFWs using online counseling?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of online counseling?
- What are the barriers and prospects of online counseling for OFWs and their families?



METHODOLOGY

- Content analysis of counseling transcripts
- Focus group discussion with counselors
- Interviews with OFWs and their families

SITE USER PROFILE:

- 209 site users, 45 counselees, 21 forum users
- 85% OFWs, 15 family members
- Mostly male (68%), from Middle East (62%)
- Office workers (44%), engineers, (21%), health professionals (7%), IT (6%)



OFW CONCERNS:

- marital & relationship
- family & parenting
- financial
- loneliness
- employment
- acculturation
- personal
- government support
- interpersonal
- spiritual

ONLINE COUNSELORS' PERSPECTIVE

Advantages

- Anonymity
- Review of session
- Editing
- Counselor training & supervision

Disadvantages

- Lack of nonverbal cues
- Editing by counselee
- Length of counseling
- No control of environment and commitment of counselees
- Technology problems

BARRIERS TO USE:

- Lack of information
- No need
- Lack of access
- Stigma attached to counseling
- Lack of computer skills



PROSPECTS:

- Online counseling appears to be viable option in assisting OFWs and their families because of its accessibility
- In addition, its anonymity appears to be liberating especially among male OFWs
- Challenges are increasing awareness of service, clarify misconceptions of counseling, improve access, capability to use internet
- There is also a need to develop and document strategies for online counseling