



ESTABLISHING PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND COUNSELING CENTER AT LSPU - SPCC: A DESCRIPTIVE FEASIBILITY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the possible establishment of psychological assessment and counseling center at Laguna State Polytechnic University, San Pablo City Campus. Specifically, it aimed to assess its feasibility, acceptability and potential sustainability. Opinion of community stakeholders were also gathered as one of the research's primary objectives, which is to provide basic mental health services to the community. This study used exploratory mix method of quantitative and qualitative research which utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire with 150 working respondents from which 15 were subjected to unstructured in-depth interview. They were the ones who were residents of San Pablo City and other nearby municipalities namely: Victoria, Calauan, Alaminos, Nagcarlan, Rizal, and Liliw. Findings revealed that establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo was feasible in terms of the number of psychometricians and other mental health professionals available. In addition, it was acceptable in terms of the qualification of test administrators and its location as it lies at the center of 3rd district of Laguna. Moreover, it was sustainable in terms of the number of clients it can possibly have. However further considerations were raised by the respondents such as the existing conditions of LSPU-SPCC and its potential capacity to establish the said centers such as the aspects of human resources, physical facilities, funding and community eagerness.

Keywords: Psychology, Counseling, Descriptive Survey. State University, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Physical and mental health are both important aspects of people's total wellbeing. In the Philippines, there are a lot of medical practitioners, clinics and hospitals which ensure the physical health of the Filipinos. However, the scenario is not the same with mental health. Visiting a mental health professional for assessment is a taboo or else one will be judged as crazy. There are people who simply do not understand or with a limited understanding of the importance of assessment or keeping their mental health in check.

American Psychological Association (APA) defined psychological assessment as the gathering and integration of data to evaluate a person's behavior, abilities, and other characteristics, particularly for the purposes of making a diagnosis or treatment recommendation. to help arrive at some hypothesis about a person and their behavior, personality and capabilities. According to Framingham, (2018), it can also be referred as psychological testing or performing a series of tests to a person. It includes norm-reference testing or the use of standardized test, interviews both formal and informal, different types of observations and informal assessments



such as projective testing, career testing, and even a self-made test.

In 2004, an act that shall be known as the “Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004” was approved. It defined guidance and counseling as a profession that involves the use of an integrated approach to the development of well-functioning individuals primarily by helping them to utilize their potentials to the fullest and plan their future in accordance with their abilities, interests and needs. It includes functions such as counseling, psychological testing, (as to personality, career, interest, study orientation, mental ability and aptitude), research, placement, group process, teaching and practicing of guidance and counseling subjects, particularly subjects given in the licensure examinations, and other human development services.

After 15 years, RA 11036 was approved. It is an act establishing national mental health policy for the purpose of enhancing the delivery of mental health services, protecting and promoting rights of person utilizing psychiatric, neurologic, and psychosocial health services appropriating funds therefore and for other purposes. It is clear that the government is doing something to cater the mental health problems of the Filipinos. The problem are the agencies which offer these kinds of services which are lacking or if not, limited in Laguna. Unlike in nearby provinces like Batangas and Cavite, the National Center for Mental Health addresses the needs of the people for a healthy mental state. Meanwhile, Laguna has limited private clinics that offer such services but this is costly that ordinary citizens cannot afford. As Lully (2019) stated, there is lack of mental health professionals and underdeveloped community mental health services in our country.

The main purpose of the study is to help the University fulfill its mission and vision of transforming the lives of the people and improving their quality of life by complying with the demand of RA 11036. The researcher believes that this mission will only be fulfilled if people have healthy mental state especially nowadays that there is an estimated 792 million people lived with a mental health disorder, Ritchie and Roser, (2018). In the Philippines, 14 percent of a population of 1.4 million Filipinos with disabilities were identified to

have a mental disorder (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2010)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to establish a psychological and counseling center at Laguna State Polytechnic University, San Pablo City Campus. This will provide San Pablo City and nearby municipalities access to mental health services. To achieve this objective, first, assessing feasibility, acceptability and potential sustainability of establishing this psychological and counseling center was in utmost importance. Gathering community stakeholder’s opinion regarding the project will also be done.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized mixed method of quantitative and qualitative method. Using quantitative method, the researcher maximized the use of systematic empirical investigations of observable behavior of the respondents in the study using statistical techniques. Further, qualitative method, specifically an in-depth interview was also utilized to explore deeply the responses of the respondents in the study.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to gather the perceptions of 150 working students who were alumni of LSPU, San Pablo City and selected 15 among them using convenience sampling to undergo unstructured in-depth interview. They were all residing at San Pablo City and six other municipalities in the 3rd district of Laguna namely: Calauan, Victoria, Alaminos, Rizal, Nagcarlan, and Liliw were included in the study.

Using descriptive survey method, perception of the respondents in the feasibility, acceptability, and potential sustainability of establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center were gathered, tabulated and analyzed. The instrument used was a researcher made questionnaire, originally with 18 indicators but after pilot testing to fifty young adults, it was trimmed down to fifteen. The final instrument had an internal consistency of 0.81. In depth interview was also administered to gather additional



information about their overall impression regarding the proposal.

Simple descriptive statistics such as Mean and Standard Deviation were utilized to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and potential sustainability of establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU San Pablo City Campus. Transcript of the unstructured interview was interpreted using thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Feasibility of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center

Table 1
Respondents Perception on the Feasibility of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center at LSPU San Pablo City

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. There are psychological test that is readily available in the University.	3.47	0.52	Strongly Agree
2. A Psychological Laboratory where assessment and counseling services is present and ready to be utilized.	3.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
3. Presence of a a licensed guidance counselor can be observed.	3.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
4. There are licensed Psychometrician who can administer and interpret test easily.	3.93	0.26	Strongly Agree
5. Psychologist with adequate background in assessment is available in the University.	3.33	0.49	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.69	0.23	Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows the respondents' perception on the feasibility of establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo City. Data reveal that respondents believed that there were licensed psychometricians who can

administer and interpret test easily. Based on the Faculty Profile (2018), there were three regular faculty and three part time instructors who was licensed psychometrician.

However, psychologist with adequate background in assessment is available in the University, receives the lowest mean score. This was supported by Faculty Profile (2018), which identified a single professor who was licensed psychologist and background in assessment.

On the other hand, all indicators were strongly agreed by the respondents. An overall mean of 3.69 and standard deviation of 0.23 indicate that majority of the respondents strongly believed that establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo City is viable.

2. Acceptability of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center

As can be seen in Table 2, as to location, it is accessible to any part of the 3rd District of Laguna and other nearby municipalities, and on test administrator, approachable and respectful who provides a non-threatening environment to the clients both received the highest mean score of 3.93 and SD of 0.26 as perceived and strongly agreed by respondents. This indicates that respondents believed that LSPU San Pablo is a strategic place for this kind of endeavor as it is located at the center of the 3rd District of Laguna. This further indicates that test administrator attitudes encourage more the respondents to share their feelings and perception without hesitation.

On the other hand, indicator 4 "Ambiance: fully air-conditioned room with enough space for test taking and private room for counseling can be observed" received the lowest mean score of 2.80 and an SD of 0.56, interpreted as "agree." This can be inferred that improvement on the physical structure of the Psychological Laboratory must be done. This supports the researcher's observation that a single air condition unit is not enough, provided that the room is quite large.



Table 2

Respondents Perception on the Acceptability of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center at LSPU San Pablo City

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Location: It is accessible to any part of the 3 rd district of Laguna and other nearby municipalities.	3.93	0.26	Strongly Agree
2. Cost: It is cost efficient and practical.	3.33	0.72	Strongly Agree
3. Validity and Reliability: Standardized Psychological test were used by a licensed mental health professionals	3.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
4. Ambiance: Fully air-conditioned room with enough space for test taking and private room for counseling can be observed.	2.80	0.56	Agree
5. Test Administrator: Approachable and respectful who provides a non-threatening environment to the clients.	3.93	0.26	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.57	0.21	Strongly Agree

With a strong agreement and overall mean of 3.57 and SD of 0.21, can be surmised that most of the respondents believed that establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo City was perceived to be promising and will get support from the people of the 3rd district of Laguna.

3. Potential Sustainability of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center

Results on Table 3 show the respondents' perception on the potential sustainability of establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU in San Pablo with indicator 5 stating that there will be enough number

of clients in the area got the highest weighted mean of 3.87 and SD 0.32 and garnering a strong agreement from majority of the respondents.

Table 3

Respondents Perception on the Potential Sustainability of Establishing a Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center at LSPU San Pablo City

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Presence of enough number of mental health professionals can be observed.	2.80	0.68	Agree
2. Presence of enough number and type of Psychological test test can be observed.	3.47	0.74	Strongly Agree
3. Funding for possible procurement of other test materials can be made available.	3.07	0.59	Agree
4. Professional fee for mental health professionals was addressed.	3.20	0.68	Agree
5. There will be enough number of clients in the area.	3.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.28	0.32	Strongly Agree

This implies that respondents believed that clients will not be a problem in San Pablo City. Based on NSO (2015) census, in San Pablo alone, there are 266, 068 population who are possible clients. Clients coming from nearby municipalities will add up to this number.

On the other hand, findings reflected that presence of enough number of mental health professionals can be observed had the lowest mean score of 2.8 and with SD of 0.68 and garnering only an agreement from the respondents. This can be deduced that number of mental health professionals must be improved. Based on the data of the College of Arts and Sciences, there was only one licensed psychologist in the Department, only one regular faculty with PhD in psychology, two faculty with license in guidance counseling and Psychometrics. This might not be enough to cater the number of clients coming from the 3rd District of Laguna and



other nearby municipalities, the fact that they were all holding permanent positions.

Nonetheless, the overall mean 3.28 and SD of 0.32, implies that the respondents strongly agreed that the potentiality of sustainability of establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU San Pablo City was supported.

4. Results of Thematic Analysis

Though the respondents strongly agreed on the feasibility, acceptability, and potential sustainability of the establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo City, few points were taken into consideration:

1. *Human Resources.* There was only one psychologist, one PhD in psychology holder and two guidance counselors both with psychometrician license who were permanent. Meanwhile, the other two psychometricians were part timers. It may not be enough if there will be an increase in number of clients.
2. *Physical Facilities.* There is a facility for testing and counseling but the space might not be enough. The air conditioning system failed to provide a conducive environment
3. *Funding.* Some other psychological materials should also be purchased but knowing it is a government facility, where the source of fund will be coming from posed as a question and a dilemma.
4. *Community eagerness.* They are all looking forward that the proposal will materialize as it will not only provide services to the students but for the community itself knowing that there is no available mental health facility in Laguna.

CONCLUSION

With the evidences stated above, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo is feasible in terms of the number of psychometrician and other mental health professionals available.

2. Establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo is acceptable in terms of the qualification of test administrators and its location as it lies at the center of 3rd district of Laguna.
3. Establishing a psychological assessment and counseling center at LSPU, San Pablo is sustainable in terms of the number of clients it can possibly have.
4. Considerations were raised by the respondents such as the existing conditions of LSPU-SPCC and its potential capacity to establish the said centers such as the aspects of human resources, physical facilities, funding and community eagerness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are given:

1. Hiring of regular faculty who are licensed psychologist and psychometrician may be a great help in managing the bulk of clientele who may ask for help upon knowing that LSPU is giving such service.
2. Improvement of Psychological Laboratory that will make it more convenient and comfortable may encourage more clientele and facilitate the healing process.
3. Purchase of other test materials fitted to the needs of possible clientele here in San Pablo may provide ease in doing assessment.
4. Financial support coming from the administration will make the findings of this study materialize since this can be a source of income generating project or an extension service for LSPU, San Pablo City.
5. For future researchers, exploring the impact of establishing this Psychological Assessment and Counseling Center at the locality might help evaluate its significance.

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The author is a permanent instructor at Laguna State Polytechnic University, San Pablo City campus. He finished his master's degree in the same University with the degree of Master of Arts in Education

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