Virtual Community Mentoring Models for Middle School Underachievers' Psychosocial Development and Well-Being During COVID-19

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Abstract: Recent studies highlight the outcomes of COVID-19 on the psychosocial skills of early adolescents. It shows the unavailability of virtual community mentoring models for teenagers' individual and interpersonal growth in the virtual scenario. Hence, there emerges a need to explore and apply the available virtual communication resources by facilitators, families, and other community professionals for teenagers' self-development. This article reports the application of virtual resources like WhatsApp, graphic design platforms (CANVA and Adobe), graphic interchange formats (GIPHY App), all-in-one visual content editing forums (InShot App), and memes (Meme Generator App) in engaging and supporting community mentoring capacities leading to psychosocial development and well-being for teenagers during COVID-19. Through this article, contemporary virtual models are explored and executed with community guidance to integrate the personal developmental skills of middle school underachievers. There is also a need to work with community interventions by using virtual mentoring skillsets for positive youth development.

Keywords: COVID-19, virtual community models, psychosocial development.

Introduction

COVID-19 was declared to be a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020. It led to the closure of schools that chronically resulted in unprecedented psychosocial changes among children, teenagers, and adolescents. The outcomes were noticed in the downfall of early adolescents' skills of self-exploration and experiential life skills (Tyminski, 2021). The pandemic has resulted in the creation of 'virtual schooling' that poses a greater need to understand its working on adolescents' thinking and actions (Bueno, 2020). Academic institutions were battling to recreate virtual resources in delivering to it learners despite the shortage of resources, unavailability of staff, and funding initiatives (Malik, 2020). These consequences also opened up suggestions for schools to work towards a digitalised transition by blending virtual models, training facilitators in using social media platforms, customising virtual materials for smaller groups, training adolescents to deliver as 'big brother' or 'big sister', and recreating an 'open schooling model'. Early adolescents were given less opportunistic forums for their affective and social growth that further have depleted their psychosocial capacity building (Tyminski, 2021). Therefore, this pandemic extinguished the deterioration of psychosocial functioning among teenagers and created opportunities for them to learn life skills within their family systems (Iyengar, 2021). These life skills need to be delivered through the community that intersects school, family, peer, and other societal partnerships in uplifting virtual novel instructions for the progression of teenagers' personal and social skills (Hodges et al., 2020).
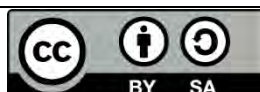
These associative networks primarily should mentor middle school teenagers with low interpersonal skills in coming out from their psychosocial traumas that became more stabilised after COVID-19.

Middle school underachievers in this article belong to the age group 13-14 years. Teenagers are defined as 'middle school underachievers' who emit disconnectedness, dysfunctional personal skills, and intrinsic motivational skills that go unrecognised by schools which urge the creation of experiential programs in guiding psychosocial development (Muir, 2000). The psychosocial development of early adolescents has taken a steep decline in the time of the pandemic. There have been restrictions posed in peer interactions and co-curricular activities (Wray-Lake et al., 2020). It has been found that teenagers are faced with varied psychosocial distractions in the digital world that make virtual connections all the more difficult as they fail to express their personal and social concerns (Ettekal & Agans, 2020). The academic spaces have been unable to recognise and define these personal and social underachievements due to the inclination of academic development and recognition of grading. There is a noticeable affective alienation proposed by educational institutions that are unable to understand middle school underachievers' psychosocial challenges (Hira & Anderson, 2021). This further impacts teenagers' associative learning, relatedness and social skills of well-being. These well-being constructs encompassing personal and social trajectories are unpredictable, which further recognises the urgency of virtual instructional methods focusing on the personal development of these teenagers (Murray, 2021). Thus, the urge for virtual community mentoring programs for psychosocial development, encompassing the well-being constructs of these adolescents, which are needed in promoting self-development and peer interactions (Guessoum et al., 2020). These community virtual models need to be driven by mastery of teenagers' skillsets resulting in personal autonomy, self-worth, and social relationships. Families, schools, peer groups, and other community organizational networks become part of this virtual association in guiding early adolescents to self-express their strengths and apply the same in coping with conflicting personal and social situations. The current pandemic affecting schools and family systems hence should be viewed as an opportunity to understand, value and associate with the community in handholding teenagers by developing their social skills in personal development (Kapetanovic et al., 2021). This further also suggests that academic systems open up 'psychosocial' training methods in guiding early adolescents to associate with the community.

Virtual community mentoring models need to be attributed to co-partnering tendencies that involve teenagers, educators, caregivers, peers, school management, and the community at large. Virtual community mentoring programs have been a failure in academic institutions due to the unpreparedness of the pandemic that led to building its facilitation through community networking (Mahapatra & Sharma, 2021). This would fill the gap of interrupted socialisation, application of digital tools, supportive interactions between middle school underachievers and the community (Onyema et al., 2020). There is a dire need to reconstruct interventions to work virtually in mentoring adolescents about 21st-century skillsets, namely, social understanding, perspective taking, the value of community, and life skills (Hadjeris, 2021). It also reiterated the goal of sustainability and inclusivity by blending life-skills education.

Need for Virtual Community Mentoring Models Towards Psychosocial Development and Well-Being

During the pandemic, varied community institutions came forward in initiating virtual forums to handhold teenagers and guide them in experiential learning (Iyengar, 2021). They worked towards developing a community associative network in enhancing academic achievement, and project-based learning with the involvement of the community and caregivers. They also recommended updating instructional materials to make them more context-specific, responsive to learners' needs, and supportive of independent learning and well-being (Gul & Khilji, 2021). Educational systems need to be guided in assisting the learner's personal, social and academic needs (Nur Ullah et al., 2021). It also formulated a need for virtual mentoring after the identification of learners' concerns. As a result, proper design is required for the transition between virtual scenarios and learning contexts in the interaction between adolescents and community in terms of the synergy relationship between learning in the real world and learning in the virtual world (Setyowati, 2021). Community partnerships between institutions pave their way towards collectivistic methods and inclusivity. Some of the primary sorts of solutions that have evolved from self-regulatory research include challenging adolescents to analyse how they learn online, providing pacing support, monitoring engagement, and assisting families (Carter Jr et al., 2020). Thus, every existent institution should reiterate the social responsibility of restoring the resources by co-partnering and learning from each other's perspectives. COVID-19 has crafted the societal working and has given the institutions time to rejuvenate their strategies by connecting with each other and developing virtual mentoring models with the help of schools, families and peers (Hodges et al., 2020). These partnerships need to be developed based on each other's personal strengths.

The community networks play a major role in innovating service-based initiatives that integrate life-skills education with holistic development (Iyengar, 2021). There is a need to explore social capital and apply sensory-driven strategies like workshop-based sessions, environment education, parental monitoring through activities, and community virtual models that incorporate life skills and psychosocial development. Community mentoring through the Zoom application that promotes virtual discussions on restoring the environment would reinforce the psychosocial development of teenagers and strengthen volunteering skills (Iyengar, 2021). These skillsets provided by college students towards middle school underachievers could result in the expansion of community ownership, peer-mentoring and leadership traits. Educational systems need to associate real-life stories to the formal curriculum in further generating well-being among teenagers. It has been noticed that community institutions are absorbing renewed capacities, digital resources, renewed creative models of psychosocial reasoning, and are shifting to innovative virtual mentoring models (Mose & Kamina, 2020). Virtual pedagogical tools need to be curated through community connections by using virtual forums like Zoom and WhatsApp in coming up with models for middle school underachievers' psychosocial development and sustainable digital models (Hodges et al., 2020). It necessitates the understanding of teenage concerns revolving around well-being and the deepening of mentoring grounded in nurturance (Lasater et al., 2021).

Traditional face-to-face interactions have been abolished in the current pandemic. There is a need for digital growth. The roadblocks for virtual delivery with the unavailability of digital resources for educators and teenagers call for the imbibement of 'blended learning' into the school sessions (Devi et

al., 2021). This would further ensure participatory experiential learning and also develop the attributes of co-learning within the groups. Digital resources, virtual mentoring facilities, staff for training, virtual gadgets, and expensive digital packages in guiding virtual delivery have been unavailable in the educational system (Nur Ullah et al., 2021). This novel worldwide transition urges educators to become equipped with digital m-learning techniques to work with the learner's psychosocial and academic needs. There is an urgency for a progressive instructional structure used by educators in association with the school and the local community.

WhatsApp Driven Models for Personal Development and Well-being

Digital communication models like WhatsApp and Zoom stood out during the pandemic, which can be further explored for teenagers' psychosocial development (Iyengar, 2021). This application of the logical framework (WhatsApp) is a guide in moving from a conventional model to a collaborative model of delivery from educators (Budianto & Arifani, 2021). This finding also suggested that these collaborative skills are similar to Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, which is appropriate for WhatsApp. It was also found that teenagers were enthusiastic about the use of WhatsApp to implement group projects. Educators must observe, comprehend, and practice using available resources related to adolescent issues and flexibility (Budianto & Arifani, 2021). WhatsApp-based facilitation and understanding have been localised as an innovative transitional model. Incorporation of visual models, experiential stories and audio notes would give opportunities to teenagers in developing self-expressive skills, competence to share their ideas, and personal autonomy.

Virtual Community Models through CANVA

Virtual community models can be incorporated by applying the available digital tools that are cost-effective and easily accessible and learned by the users. These symbolise the graphic design that follows a systematic approach as in the tool Canva (Farmoudehyamcheh, 2019). Canva is a web-based graphic design application that aims to democratise graphic design and make it more accessible to the general public. Melanie Perkins, the inventor of Canva, devised a technique for creating school yearbooks in 2007, and eventually expanded on the concept to establish Canva as a platform. Canva has created design programs for anyone who wants to make a variety of visual products (Lehnen & Artemchick, 2016). Canva is available in 190 countries and 100 languages, and it is compatible with all operating systems (Gehred, 2020).

Canva attempts to overcome the problem of graphic design by making graphic creation accessible to anyone. Canva is a free tool that has simplified the design process by allowing users to drag and drop elements (Farmoudehyamcheh, 2019). Thus, through the website design tools are utilised without a fee. For all users (professional and non-professional), the Canva site features a simple user flow and gives tools for making any visuals. It contains a large library of design templates, images, and other elements. Users can select from a variety of templates in a variety of formats and sizes, and then personalise them to meet their specific needs. These templates can be used for both print and digital media and come in a variety of layouts. Canva's basic subscription includes one gigabyte (GB) of photo and asset storage, two design folders, over 8,000 templates, personal image uploads, and access to millions of images (Gehred, 2020).

Therefore, the Canva app is an intuitive tool for sharing and collaborating on projects with others that can be explored as an integrated virtual model.

Virtual Community Models through Graphics Interchange Format

Graphics Interchange Format is a pedagogical strategy added to the DREAMS Intervention Program (Thomas, 2014) in embedding concepts with humor and infographics that is reflected as a sensory-driven virtual model. Infographics are visual representations of data information that are used to tell stories and communicate ideas. They implement varied patterns of visualisations (Ferreira, 2014). Thus, virtual understanding is determined by learning media that make an infographic, whether digital or printed, an appropriate medium for self-expression because it assists self-presentation (Pertiwi & Kusumaningrum, 2021).

Infographics are often simple to read and comprehend. Therefore, infographics help teenagers to collaborate, while also honing their creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills, thereby expanding project-based understanding and self-confidence (Pertiwi & Kusumaningrum, 2021). Infographics guide school pupils to emerge as active learners with the development of cognitive autonomy (Kalimbetova & Ilesbay, 2020).

Virtual Models through All-In-One Visual Content Editing Forums and Memes

Text or images can be found in memes (facial expressions, gestures, etc). The current fascination with memes, as well as the current understanding of the term, was proposed by geneticist Richard Dawkins in 1976. The interpersonal execution of virtually expanding digital 'memes' (pronounced 'meems') as a dimension of ethnic community proposition and delivery needs to be explored (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). It also found that biological studies of memory permanence in creatures initially mentioned "memes" as "contagious or inheritable units of cultural knowledge over 80 years ago" (200). Memes are photos or images that have been written for a specific purpose and are primarily used for entertainment (Rekha & Dianastiti, 2020). Popular songs, catchy slogans, fashion trends, 'architectural styles, ways of doing things, icons, jingles', and other similar items are all examples of memes (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). The increasing use of memes on social media has resulted in a plethora of meme variations. The ability to entertain the reader is due to the uniqueness of the sentences and the right imagery. Internet memes are the most popular video and photo content on the internet, and they express or send a specific (often hilarious) message with well-established codes and meanings in worldwide society (Faculty of Philosophy Niš & Milosavljevic, 2020). Cartoon memes include components of concept dimension, interaction, and ethnicity in their selection (Rekha & Dianastiti, 2020). These stand as experiential models in generating self-development through intuitive methods that convey a specific meaning or purpose.

There is a need to examine the outcomes of digital models in developing community culture and guide facilitators to reconstruct newer contemporary methods of life-skills education through virtual ideas that render a transmission of culture. This article suggests the use of virtual models as a cultural virtual tool to imbibe self-developmental skills among teenagers through community stories in the form of memes that would further inspire these teenagers towards holistic growth.

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