THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Almost a year after the outbreak began, Philippines seemed to have celebrated it with yet another lockdown as COVID-19 cases start to skyrocket. With this, it prolongs the prevailing quarantine of every Filipino family. However, out of all that is affected by the overstayed welcome of lockdowns, the average Filipino high school student appears to be impacted by it the most.

High school is anchored neither in a place nor an institution. It is an era in the lives of children when they mature and grow into teenagers. It is an era when their self-awareness drastically increases, for better or worse. It is an era when they field-train themselves in the vast sea of socialization. Hence, this is when they learn society’s cultures, norms, and the like. This is also when they learn to fully think.

Usually and obviously, this era has to happen somewhere physical in order for them to have ease of access to it. That is where places and institutions come into play particularly the schools and campuses where average teenagers congregate and feel free, independent and responsible for their actions. It certainly infuses a festive mood all around while learning and excelling academically.

Now, what happens if you take it away?

Similar to the philosophy of good and evil, these two factors cannot efficiently exist without the other. But now that the pandemic has removed access to physical location, the average teenager is now stranded in their room, with no one to physically socialize with outside their own families.
This can be devastating to a teenager’s mental health because their brains are hotwired to desire human interaction, and they are the most vulnerable individuals. Denworth (2020) had experimented mice by isolating them completely whilst giving them ample food and water as discussed in her article entitled “The Lasting Effects of Social Isolation in Adolescence”. When the mice were released, they have developed anxiety. Imagine if this experiment is conducted on a human being rather than mice. Human interaction is directly tied to sanity. If people don’t keep it up, they go mad.

Fortunately, this is where internet highlights its significance. It provides us a plethora of tools for use mostly on social media and other online platforms. But how about those who do not possess devices to utilize it? This is where the government steps in. In our country, Landbank is offering Php50,00-gadget loan to students who don’t possess gadgets or are in poverty. Additionally, there is an ongoing government project to provide free Wi-Fi everywhere.

The pandemic has taught us many things that were blinded by the responsibilities of work and education. One of those things, as mentioned here, is that we shall cherish one another, as we need each other not only for material needs, but for staying happy and sane as well.

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