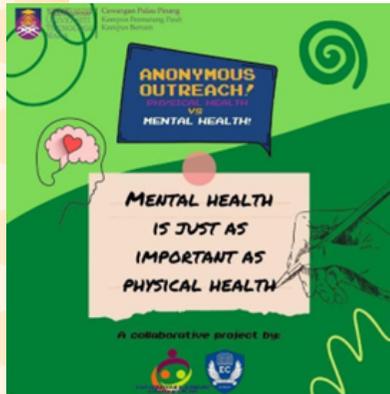




Using Gather for Counselling & Peer Support: The Anonymous Outreach Project

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The English Language Club of Universiti Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UITMCPP) in collaboration with the Counselling and Career Unit and Peer Counsellor UITMCPP Club conducted a project named Anonymous Outreach from October 2022 to January 2023. This initiative aimed to provide a virtual platform for students who face mental health issues to share and discuss their situations anonymously. Eight students from the organizing committee helped to develop an open-to-all and free-to-access platform using Gather, an interactive video chat platform where each user acts as a playable character in a virtual world. The project aimed to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health in our Malaysian and university community while creating a safe space where students

could comfortably talk about their mental health issues. The student developers customized the platform to meet the needs of the project. Several unique rooms or sections were filled with infographics and facts about mental health care and awareness for participants to explore, such as a counseling room to meet up with UITMCPP counselors, gaming areas, discussion and support section, and many more. The developers only took two months to customize the platform in line with the project's objectives. In November 2022, the platform underwent a three-day trial run or beta testing phase, which involved 30 students from the Permatang Pauh and Bertam campuses, as well as members of the Peer Counsellor Club. A total of 10

participants were involved per session. Based on feedback from beta testers, the student developers continued to modify the platform. Finally, in December 2022 and January 2023, the platform was made available for students wanting private meetings with UITMCPP counsellors. Throughout the project, weekly posters featuring mental health facts were created and posted on our Instagram page to raise awareness of mental health issues and promote the Anonymous Outreach platform. Overall, the project was successful and significantly impacted UITMCPP students by providing a platform for them to express their opinions, learn from others, and receive support from peers and counsellors in managing stress and other mental health issues.