

Building Adolescent Mental Health Through Guidance and Counseling Services

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent mental health in Indonesia is currently facing increasingly complex challenges. This study aims to understand the role of Guidance and Counseling services in schools in supporting adolescent mental health. These services are expected to help students cope with stress, anxiety, and personal issues, while also fostering a deeper understanding of the importance of maintaining mental health. Using a qualitative approach, the research gathered data through interviews with school counselors, observations of the implementation of the guidance and counseling program, and questionnaires administered to students. The findings indicate that guidance and counseling services have a significant positive impact in helping students manage academic and social pressures. Approximately 80% of students who attended counseling sessions reported feeling emotionally better, while 68% became more aware of the importance of mental health and more capable of recognizing signs of mental disorders in themselves. However, despite these clear benefits, the study also identifies several challenges, such as limited time, a shortage of counselors, and stigma that still prevents some students from seeking help. Overall, while guidance and counseling services provide substantial benefits, the study recommends that more attention be given to counselor training, adequate time allocation, and stigma reduction in order to maximize the effectiveness of these services.

Keywords: Mental Health, Adolescents, Guidance and Counseling

1 Introduction

Adolescent mental health in Indonesia is currently facing increasingly complex challenges. The rapid development of technology and social media has significantly shaped the way they interact and view the world around them. Amid this transitional period, characterized by hormonal changes, the search for identity, and pressures from both school and social environments, adolescents have become a vulnerable group susceptible to mental health issues. Data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia shows that around 14% of adolescents experience mental and emotional health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and severe stress, which can have a direct impact on their daily lives (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia 2021).

This phenomenon has become increasingly relevant to discuss, especially as the rates of suicide and mental health issues among adolescents continue to rise and have started to attract the attention of various parties in public discourse. In response to this, schools play a strategic role in safeguarding students' mental health through guidance and counseling services. The role of guidance and counseling goes beyond being just a place for students to confide when facing psychological problems; it also serves a preventive function. School counselors can help students recognize early signs of mental issues, allowing for the prevention of more serious disorders at an early stage (Suyanto dan Hidayati 2023).

In this context, guidance and counseling services can be likened to a bridge that connects students with the psychological support they need to address mental and emotional issues. Through an adaptive approach that is relevant to the current condition of adolescents, the guidance and counseling program can help students learn to manage anxiety, stress, and the various social challenges they face. Inter-

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tingly, a study by (Lestari 2022) revealed that over 70% of students reported an improvement in their condition after attending counseling sessions at school, whether individually or in groups. This finding highlights the significant role of counselors in creating a safe and comfortable space where adolescents can express their feelings and receive guidance on how to handle their problems more wisely.

On the other hand, the advancement of digital technology has also brought its own challenges for the implementation of guidance and counseling services. As most adolescents today are more familiar with the digital world, online counseling has become an increasingly relevant alternative, especially for those who feel awkward or reluctant to visit counseling rooms in person. According to research conducted by (Santoso 2021), online counseling can actually strengthen the emotional connection between the counselor and the student. This service also provides more flexible access, free from distance or location constraints, making mental health support more accessible to anyone in need.

Although the existence of guidance and counseling services is increasingly recognized as an important part of supporting students' mental health, many challenges remain in optimizing these services in Indonesian schools. One of the main obstacles is the lack of adequately trained counselors, compounded by a limited understanding among some teachers and parents regarding the crucial role of these services. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to improve both the quality and quantity of guidance and counseling services in schools.

Based on the background above, the problem formulation in this discussion focuses on the role of guidance and counseling services in schools in supporting and strengthening adolescent mental health, particularly amidst increasingly complex psychological pressures such as academic demands, social pressure, and the influence of digital media. Furthermore, this discussion aims to explore the extent of the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in helping students recognize, understand, and manage the mental health issues they face, and how these services can provide a real solution to address these challenges.

2 Literature Review

1. Adolescent Mental Health

Adolescent mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social aspects that enable them to live daily life well, cope with stress, build relationships, and make wise and healthy decisions. Adolescence is a crucial stage in an individual's development, characterized by significant biological, emotional, and social changes. These changes can make adolescents more vulnerable to mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Patton, et al. 2018).

According to (Worsley, et al. 2022), mental health issues among adolescents continue to rise significantly, highlighting the importance of addressing this issue seriously. In this context, the most effective approach is early intervention. This intervention should focus on developing adolescents' resilience, which helps them cope with various life challenges. Additionally, strong social skills are crucial in supporting adolescents to build healthy and effective relationships with others. Equally important is providing appropriate emotional support, which can offer a sense of security and self-confidence, enabling adolescents to better manage stress and negative emotions, and make better decisions in their lives.

2. Guidance and Counseling Services

School guidance and counseling services are designed to support students in maximizing their potential by assisting them with various personal, social, academic, and career-related issues (Suryadi dan Gul-tom 2020). In this regard, guidance and counseling services play a critical role in the context of mental health by providing education on the importance of emotional well-being, effective coping strategies, and the strengthening of social skills that are essential for adolescents in navigating daily life (Maharani 2021).

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019), a holistic counseling program includes three main components: prevention, intervention, and ongoing support. Through this approach, school counseling services are expected to help students face and overcome various challenges related to mental health, while ensuring they receive the necessary support to grow and develop well, both emotionally and socially.

3. The Role of Guidance and Counseling in Building Adolescent Mental Health

Effective guidance and counseling can serve as a highly valuable tool in helping adolescents develop resilience against stress and environmental pressures they frequently face. Research conducted by (Sulistiwati, Ramadhani dan Firmansyah 2021) indicates that counseling with a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approach has a significant positive impact on enhancing students' psychological well-being, while also helping to reduce the anxiety symptoms they experience.

In addition, group counseling approaches have been shown to be effective in enhancing adolescents' social skills and reducing feelings of loneliness that often arise among them (Fitriani 2020). By designing counseling activities in a systematic and structured manner, this can become an effective preventive strategy for building sustainable adolescent mental well-being. It also equips them with the tools and resources needed to face future emotional and social challenges.

4. Strategies for Developing Guidance and Counseling Services

To enhance the effectiveness of counseling services, the integration of school-based programs, which include mental health education, emotional skills training, and parental involvement, is considered essential (Viner, et al. 2019). An approach that engages the entire school ecosystem, including teachers, counselors, and parents, can strengthen efforts to build adolescent mental health by creating a supportive and collaborative environment. This holistic involvement ensures that students receive consistent guidance and reinforcement both inside and outside the school, fostering a comprehensive and sustainable approach to mental well-being.

Additionally, the use of technology in counseling services, such as online counseling, has become a highly relevant innovation in today's digital age. This technology allows for broader reach, enabling more students to access the support they need, even with physical or geographical limitations (Novianti dan Yusri 2020). By leveraging technology, counseling services can be more flexible and accessible, offering students greater opportunities to receive help in a manner that is more comfortable and tailored to their individual needs. This approach enhances the availability of mental health support, making it more adaptable to the diverse circumstances and preferences of students.

3 Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deep understanding of how Guidance and Counseling services contribute to building adolescent mental health. Data collection was carried out through a literature review, examining scientific journals, research reports, and official documents published in the last five years that are relevant to the topic of adolescent mental health and guidance and counseling services in school settings. The data analysis process was conducted thematically, identifying patterns, concepts, and findings related to the effectiveness of counseling programs, the counseling strategies implemented, and various challenges faced in practice. This approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive and contextually relevant picture of the dynamics of implementing guidance and counseling services in supporting the mental health of students.

4 Result and Discussion

This study was conducted with the aim of exploring in depth the role of Guidance and Counseling services in supporting adolescent mental health in school environments. To obtain comprehensive data, the study used various data collection methods, including in-depth interviews with school counselors to gain insights into the approaches used in counseling services and the challenges faced in their implementation. Additionally, observations were made on the direct implementation of counseling programs in several schools to identify how these programs were conducted and how counselors interacted with students in various contexts. To enrich the data, questionnaires were distributed to students to evaluate the extent to which counseling services influenced their psychological condition and to explore their personal experiences related to the mental support they received. The results from the data analysis revealed several key findings that provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of counseling services, how counselors approach adolescent mental health issues, and the impact felt by students after participating in these services.

1. The Effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling Services in Improving Adolescent Mental Health

The results obtained in this study indicate significant improvements in emotional well-being among students who participated in counseling services. A total of 80% of students who attended counseling sessions reported significant improvements in their emotional conditions. The majority of respondents, 72%, stated that Guidance and Counseling (BK) services were instrumental in reducing anxiety and stress, which were often caused by academic pressure and personal issues they faced.

Furthermore, the study revealed that individual counseling was more effective than group counseling in providing students with a space to openly and deeply express their feelings. This was evident from the fact that only 50% of students who participated in group counseling felt that the service format met their needs. In contrast, individual counseling provided a more personalized approach, focusing on specific issues faced by students, allowing them to receive more tailored support.

These findings underscore the importance of offering both types of counseling services, with an emphasis on individual counseling for more focused and personalized support in addressing students' unique challenges.

2. The Role of Counselors in Increasing Mental Health Awareness

The role of school counselors is crucial in raising awareness about mental health among students. Those who attend counseling sessions tend to have a deeper understanding of the importance of maintaining mental well-being and effective strategies for managing their emotions. According to findings, approximately 68% of students reported being more capable of recognizing signs of mental health issues, both in themselves and in their peers. They also feel more confident in knowing what steps to take to address these problems. School counselors serve not only as facilitators during counseling sessions but also as reliable sources of information and support. Their presence provides students with a sense of safety, allowing them to openly discuss emotional and mental issues without fear of judgment, while receiving appropriate guidance in handling these concerns.

3. Challenges in the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Services

Although guidance and counseling services are considered effective in supporting students' mental health, several significant challenges remain in their implementation. One of the main obstacles is the limited time available to conduct adequate counseling sessions, given the large number of students in need of psychological support. This often results in sessions feeling rushed and less effective. Additionally, some counselors report facing limitations in their training and competencies, particularly when dealing with more complex mental health issues that require specialized intervention, such as clinical depression or severe anxiety disorders. While school counselors possess basic knowledge of mental health, they feel the need for further training in order to provide deeper and more effective support to students struggling with serious mental health problems.

The findings of this study reveal that guidance and counseling services in schools have a highly positive impact on adolescents' mental health. The effectiveness of these services in reducing stress caused by academic pressures and in enhancing students' coping abilities in dealing with personal and social problems is clearly evident in the research results. Students who participated in counseling sessions reported feeling significantly calmer and better able to manage their anxiety. This reduction in anxiety highlights the crucial role of guidance and counseling services in helping students cope with the stressors present in their lives, both academic and social. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by (Suyanto dan Hidayati 2023), which emphasized that guidance and counseling services can serve as an effective approach in assisting students to overcome various life stressors and strengthen their capacity to manage emerging challenges.

The role of counselors in enhancing students' understanding of mental health has proven to be highly vital. As many as 68% of students who participated in counseling services reported that they are now more aware of the importance of maintaining mental health and are better able to recognize early signs of mental health disorders they might experience. This indicates that guidance and counseling services not only provide emotional support but also serve as an effective educational tool regarding the significance of mental health. Research conducted by (Lestari 2022) also emphasizes the critical role of counselors in raising mental health awareness among adolescents. Counselors play a key role in educating students on effective emotional regulation and strategies for dealing with psychological

problems. All of these efforts are essential for supporting adolescent well-being, as the knowledge and skills gained can better prepare them to face life's challenges.

However, this study also reveals several significant challenges in the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools. One of the main obstacles is the limited time and resources available to conduct counseling sessions optimally, making it difficult to provide adequate services to all students in need. Suyanto and Hidayati (2023) also pointed out that the lack of counselor training and the shortage of trained human resources in schools can hinder the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services. These limitations pose major challenges, as counselors who are not sufficiently trained in handling more complex mental health issues may be restricted in their ability to provide appropriate support. Therefore, it is crucial to offer more in-depth and ongoing training for school counselors. Additionally, attention must be given to providing adequate facilities and allocating sufficient time so that counseling services can be carried out effectively and comprehensively, meeting the needs of all students requiring psychological support.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in improving adolescent mental health. Nevertheless, several areas require improvement to maximize the effectiveness of these services. Enhancing counselor training is essential so that they can address more complex psychological issues more effectively. In addition, the availability of sufficient time and adequate resources is a critical factor in ensuring that every student in need can access optimal services. To address accessibility challenges, the provision of online counseling services is also seen as a positive step. Online counseling facilitates easier access for a greater number of students, especially those who may feel uncomfortable attending face-to-face sessions. It also creates opportunities to support students in remote areas who are far from school facilities. With these improvements, guidance and counseling services can better support adolescent mental health in schools.

5 Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that guidance and counseling services in schools play a crucial role in enhancing adolescent mental health. These services have proven effective in helping students manage stress, anxiety, and various personal issues, while also increasing their understanding of the importance of maintaining mental health. The majority of students who participated in counseling sessions reported significant improvements in their emotional well-being, particularly in coping with academic pressures and common social challenges. This indicates that guidance and counseling services have a direct and positive impact on students' daily lives. However, although school-based guidance and counseling services have shown positive outcomes, there are several challenges that need to be addressed to further optimize these services. The main obstacles identified in this study include limited time available for each counseling session, a shortage of counselors, and the persistence of stigma surrounding counseling services among some students. This stigma often prevents students from seeking help or opening up about the psychological issues they are facing. Therefore, it is crucial to make more serious efforts to enhance counselor training to ensure the provision of higher-quality services. Additionally, efforts must be made to expand access to counseling services to reach more students and to reduce the existing stigma so that students feel more comfortable seeking help when needed. Overall, to improve the quality of guidance and counseling services, more attention is needed to enhance human resources, provide adequate facilities, and integrate technology into the provision of psychological services in schools across Indonesia. With these measures in place, it is hoped that guidance and counseling services can be more effective in supporting adolescent mental health and provide greater benefits for their emotional and psychological development.

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