

Research Article

Key Support Persons of Counselling Programs in Indonesian Vocational High School

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Abstract

The counselling program contributes to school achievement by promoting character development and teaching social behaviours. In Indonesia, particularly in vocational high schools, the provision of counselling services is still unsatisfactory and requires improvement, but studies on the implementation of such services are currently lacking. I collected data at a vocational high school in Indonesia by interviewing a school counsellor, a subject teacher and students about the implementation of counselling services and the personal support offered by these programs. The results showed that implementing counselling services in vocational high schools in Indonesia has a positive effect. The headteacher, form tutors, subject teachers, counsellors and parents of students suggested collaborating and communicating in counselling service programs. Therefore, this study strongly supports the sufficient application of counselling services in vocational high schools in Indonesia, requiring personal support from those involved in improving academic performance and behaviour of student.

Keywords: Academical, Education, Guidance, Psychology, Service.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout its long history, the counselling program has been integrated into the academic process and contributed to every achievement in schools

(Barbanel & Hoffenberg-Rutman, 1974; Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). School counselling programs focus on strategic interventions to improve academic achievement (Brown & Trusty, 2005). This is supported by a study by Tobias and Myrick (1999) who found that the strategic intervention used by school counsellors significantly improved grades and attendance of students, while reducing disciplinary problems. A combination of tutoring and counselling was an effective means of increasing academic achievement in schools (Edmondson & White, 1998).

Counselling programs have involved providing guidance to promote character development and teach social behaviours (Paisley & Borders, 1995). The high school years are not only filled with learning in many subjects, but students also face emotional changes due to the challenges and pressures of approaching adulthood (DaGiau, 1997). These years are full of growth, frustration, disappointment and hope, which makes students require harmony in their vocational, emotional, social and personal development (Torunoğlu & Gençtanırım, 2015). Good mental health in young people can improve cognitive skills and academic performance (Salazar de Pablo et al., 2021).

Developing counselling programs provides an opportunity to educate policymakers about the role of school counsellors (Sweeney, 1988). In schools, professional counsellors support students in processes that help them to establish relationships, identify their needs, design services to meet those needs and actively help them to make decisions, solve problems, develop self-awareness and lead healthier lives (Schmidt, 2008). However, teachers are generally considered to be responsible for preventive and collaborative school psychology services (Ford & Migles, 1979). Furthermore, school administrators, teachers and parents tend to have different views on the role of a school counsellor, which has led to ambiguity in the professional role of school counsellors (Burnham & Jackson, 2000).

Indonesia is the one of most populous country and continues to experience population growth and economic development (Budi Prakoso et al., 2023). In Indonesia, educational institutions bear a significant responsibility to facilitate student success in their academic endeavours (Nurihsan, 2005). The proportion of time allocated for counselling service programs in Indonesian schools decreases as the school level increases from elementary school to high school (Habsy, 2017). In Indonesia, particularly in high schools in Bandung, the effectiveness of counselling services remains deficient and requires enhancement (Prasetiawan & Alhadi, 2018; Wardhani et al. 2019). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies that have examined the implementation of such services, moreover, many researches were conducted in developed countries compared to Indonesia (Budi Prakoso et al., 2024). The role of support personnel in the performance of counselling guidance services in vocational high schools in Indonesia is still ambiguous (Amalianingsih & Herdi, 2021). In the present study, data was collected in a vocational high school in Bandung City, West Java Province, Indonesia. The present study was designed with the objective of assessing several unanswered questions concerning the implementation of counselling service programs and personal support in vocational high schools in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data collection was conducted at Vocational High School 13 in Bandung City, West Java Province, Java Island, Indonesia, on 13 June 2023. Bandung City is the capital of the province and the fourth largest city in Indonesia. Established in 1938, the school offers academic programs in chemical analysis, computer networking and software engineering. This national high school is overseen by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. The vocational school employs 74 teachers, including three counselling service teachers for each year group. A total of 1,338 students were enrolled at this school, comprising 691 males and 647 females, divided into three-year groups.

A total of 1,338 students studied at this school, comprising 691 males and 647 females, divided into three-year groups. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach to assess and evaluate counselling service programs in vocational high schools, focusing on the types of services offered at these schools. The answers to each question concerning counselling services made it possible to identify the implementation and personal support of counselling programs in vocational high schools. I employed a qualitative research approach to examine informant experiences in depth, conducting in-depth interviews and observations (Hennink & Bailey, 2010).

Data were collected through a field survey involving interviews with representatives of school counsellors. The sample group for this study consisted of a school counsellor, a subject teacher, a male student and a female student. Purposeful sampling was used to select the samples, so that the information could be used to identify the optimal treatment dosage, limit the sample size and determine who should be eligible for random assignment (Palinkas et al., 2013).

The student counsellor and teacher respondents have at least five years of experience working at this school. The selected student respondents were studied in recent years and have long-term impressions of counselling services. Different interview guidance was used for each respondent based on their occupation, taking a pedagogical approach to the schools. The counselling services interview was similar to the psychological services interview. I then used guidance developed by Sandoval and Lambert (1977), modifying the study aims, thus that it consisted of eight questions for each informant. The respondents were asked about the importance of counselling services, their impact on student achievement, strategies and facilities for delivering programs, those who contribute to the services and how the counselling programs could be improved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, I examined the importance of counselling services and their implementation in Indonesia, based on interviews conducted with teachers and students at Vocational High School 13 in Bandung. The school counsellor and subject teacher responded that the counselling service had been applied optimally. There are three counselling programs consisting of individual, group and classical services. The counselling service is implemented based on student requirements, such as providing consultations for students with academic or nonacademic

Satrio Budi Prakoso

problems, group discussions, and career guidance. The counselling services have a positive effect on vocational high school students, helping them to solve academic, family, environmental and other problems outside of school. The time taken to solve problems of students varied depending on the students characteristics, with an average of two months for the service.

Furthermore, students answered that the counselling services provided at this school are important in resolving student issues, such as educating disruptive students and alleviating the trauma of bullying, as well as supporting their future careers. For students who plan to continue their studies at college, counselling teachers provide lots of suggestions. The consultation service helps to relieve concerns about academic achievement. The results showed that counselling services provided in vocational high schools offer various treatments based on the needs of the students. Counselling programs play an important role in student education and are most effective when applied through individual and group methods. Similar results have been found in many other studies which have linked counselling to student behaviour (Gerler & Crabbs, 1984; Mariani et al., 2015; Salazar de Pablo et al., 2021) and supported academic performance (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Kivlighan et al., 2021; Wilson, 1985;). These assessment of counselling services results imply that the effectiveness of implementing counselling services depends on the suitability of the program for treating students.

Based on information from counsellors and teachers, counselling services run annual programs involving visits to each class with all the teachers. Then, each homeroom counsellor is responsible for their students. Classical counselling services are performed weekly by a homeroom counsellor to identify the characteristics of each student. This enables the counsellors to provide treatment to each student based on their background and behaviours. To support the academic process, counsellors communicate with homeroom and subject teachers. Sometimes, school counsellors conduct home visits to solve student problems. Counsellors also participate in several upgrading programs to improve their skills and programs, such as counselling forums, psychology training and drug prevention counselling. Counselling programs are supported by individual counselling rooms, group counselling rooms and administrative offices. The school also provides visual and audio equipment for presentations and educational programs. Students are aware that the school provides counselling rooms, guidance books and presentations with positive suggestions using video in class. They believed that the availability of counselling services had a positive effect on their academic achievement.

The counsellor and teacher said that the headmaster, homeroom teachers, subject teachers and parents of students have made important contributions to the targets of counselling services. During the academic process, homeroom and subject teachers educate students by imparting knowledge. Parents support students at home. The headmaster addresses students' problems when they encounter issues with other schools or outside of school. The teacher and counsellor said that communication between all those involved in counselling

Satrio Budi Prakoso

services must be improved to enhance the programs. On the other hand, counsellors, homeroom teachers and parents play an important role in providing students with information.

Based on this result, the counselling programs began with annual class visits, after which each homeroom counsellor provided their services. After completing the classical method, the counsellors had sufficient information to treat students based on their background and characteristics. The school counsellor also runs a periodic program to upgrade their capabilities. The school provided various counselling rooms and presentation equipment to support the counselling programs. The classical counselling service is a local method that fosters structured positive behaviour (Lase, 2022). The counselling services are more comprehensive and supported by many facilities, particularly visual presentations (Hatch, 2014). The study results suggested that counselling services require suitable strategies and facilities in schools.

The findings from Vocational High School 13 in Bandung underscore a crucial point: the success of counselling services is not merely about their presence, but their strategic design and integrated delivery within the broader school ecosystem. The emphasis on individualized and group methods, informed by classical counselling sessions that allow for student characterization, demonstrates an adaptable approach. This flexibility is vital, especially within a vocational high school setting where students may face unique pressures related to career pathways, practical skills development, alongside typical adolescent challenges. The varying timeframes for problem resolution highlight the complex and diverse needs of students, reinforcing the necessity for a tailored, rather than one size fits all, counselling model.

Moreover, the proactive nature of the counselling program, exemplified by annual class visits and weekly classical sessions, moves beyond a purely reactive crisis management approach. By engaging with all students regularly, counsellors can identify potential issues early, fostering a preventive environment that supports positive behavior and academic progress. The continuous professional development of counsellors through upgrading programs, psychology training, and drug prevention counselling is also paramount. This commitment to enhancing counsellor skills ensures that the services remain relevant, evidence-based, and capable of addressing the evolving needs of students in a dynamic societal context. Such investment in human capital directly contributes to the efficacy reported by both teachers and students.

All academic staff in schools play a role in supporting counselling services. However, the parents of student also play a role in determining the success of this program objectives. Everyone must collaborate to provide counselling to students to help them achieve their academic goals and develop their behaviour. This may be particularly true given that many previous studies have shown that collaborative problem solving between counsellors, parents, teachers and other school personnel is required to maintain counselling service programs (Borders & Drury, 1992; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Johnson et al., 2022). In this study, counsellors, teachers and students gave similar answers to each question, suggesting that the

Satrio Budi Prakoso

implementation of counselling services plays an important role in supporting school programs and providing personal support, both from academic staff and parents, to achieve counselling service targets in vocational high schools in Indonesia.

The study effectively illuminates the multifaceted support system crucial for robust counselling services. The active involvement of the headmaster, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents is not simply beneficial but, as the results suggest, foundational to achieving counselling targets. This collaborative network ensures that students receive consistent support across different environments academic, social, and home. The headmaster role in addressing external issues, teachers' academic guidance, and parents home support creates a holistic safety net. This distributed responsibility aligns with established literature emphasizing that collective problem-solving among all stakeholders is indispensable for maintaining effective counselling programs, moving beyond the counsellor as an isolated support figure.

The consensus among counsellors, teachers, and students regarding the positive impact and importance of counselling services provides strong internal validation for the program effectiveness in this specific Indonesian vocational high school. This alignment of perspectives suggests a shared understanding and value for the services provided, indicating good communication channels and a collective belief in their utility. The comprehensive support from various facilities, including dedicated counselling rooms and presentation equipment, further enhances the accessibility and appeal of these services. This holistic approach, integrating suitable strategies, adequate facilities, and collaborative human support, provides a compelling case study for successful counselling implementation in similar educational settings, particularly in low to middle income countries in Asia where such integrated approaches might face unique challenges.

Despite the valuable insights gained, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the research was conducted solely at Vocational High School 13 in Bandung, Indonesia. While providing an in-depth understanding of a specific context, this single-school focus limits the generalizability of the findings to other vocational high schools, general high schools, or educational institutions in different regions of Indonesia or other countries. The unique student demographics, administrative structures, and cultural nuances of this specific school might influence the reported effectiveness and implementation strategies. Future research would benefit from a broader, multi-school comparative study across diverse geographical areas and school types to assess the external validity of these findings.

Secondly, the study primarily relied on interviews with teachers and students, which, while providing rich qualitative data, can be subject to social desirability bias or retrospective recall inaccuracies. Although triangulation between teachers and students' responses was noted, the absence of quantitative data on student outcomes (e.g. academic performance metrics before and after counselling, reduction in disciplinary incidents, or long-term career success rates

directly attributable to counselling) makes it challenging to establish a definitive causal link between counselling services and tangible improvements. Future studies could incorporate mixed-methods approaches, integrating quantitative data collection (e.g. pre/post-intervention scores, attendance records, academic grades) to provide more robust evidence of the impact and effectiveness of specific counselling interventions.

Furthermore, the study mentions the varied timeframes for problem resolution, with an average of two months, but does not delve into the specific characteristics of problems that take longer or shorter to resolve. Understanding the types of issues that require more extensive intervention could inform resource allocation and specialized training for counsellors. There is also limited exploration of potential barriers to access or utilization of counselling services from the student perspective, beyond the acknowledgement of positive effects. Factors such as stigma, time conflicts, or lack of awareness among certain student groups could hinder optimal uptake. Future research could explore these barriers through broader student surveys or focus groups to identify areas for improving accessibility and engagement.

Finally, while the study highlights the importance of collaboration among academic staff and parents, it suggests that communication between all involved must be improved to enhance the programs. This implies an existing gap or area for development that was not fully explored. Future research could investigate the specific communication mechanisms currently in place, identify bottlenecks or areas of inefficiency, and propose evidence-based strategies for fostering stronger, more integrated collaborative practices. Longitudinal studies tracking student progress over several years would also provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of counselling services, especially concerning career development and sustained behavioral changes beyond the immediate problem resolution period. This would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the enduring value of these crucial school-based support systems.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that implementing counselling in vocational high schools in Indonesia has a positive effect. The school strategies and facilities were determined by the counselling programs and must be supported by the school. To improve academic performance and student behaviour, the headmaster, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, counsellors and parents of students were encouraged to collaborate and communicate within the counselling services program. Therefore, the results strongly support the application of counselling services in vocational high schools in Indonesia, requiring personal support from those involved in improving students' academic performance and characteristics.

Globally, effective counselling is increasingly recognised as a key component of holistic education systems that promote student well-being. Indonesian vocational schools should follow this trend by providing continuous counsellor training, improving parental engagement programs and integrating counselling into academic and career guidance plans. Prioritising facilities and

Satrio Budi Prakoso

resources, including private counselling rooms, digital tools and structured communication platforms, is essential to ensure counsellors can work effectively and confidentially with students. Further research is required to examine the long-term effects of counselling on student outcomes in vocational education and to explore how emerging technologies could complement human-centred counselling practices. The Fuzzy AHP approach is able to facilitate various opinions and generate decision making from uncertainties factors (Prakoso and Notodarmojo, 2018), particularly in the case of educational conflicts. Aligning national strategies with global educational development goals can enable counselling services in vocational high schools to significantly contribute to students' academic achievement and personal wellbeing.

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