STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH COUNSELING GUIDANCE SERVICES

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Abstract
This research aims to address four research questions based on the background of the problem above, namely: 1) To explain the phenomenon of Guidance and Counseling teachers' understanding of students' mental health problems; 2) To describe the planning and steps of mental health development activities for students carried out by Guidance and Counseling teachers; 3) To elaborate on the evaluation conducted by Guidance and Counseling teachers regarding the development of students’ mental health. In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach. Data were collected from 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. Data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study indicate that Guidance and Counseling teachers are knowledgeable about and understand what mental health is. The form of mental health development activities designed and implemented by Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar by providing information services on 'Mental Health' so that students understand the importance of mental health for themselves. Evaluation conducted by Guidance and Counseling teachers regarding the development of students' mental health at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is carried out through process evaluation and outcome evaluation.

Keywords
Counseling, Mental Health, SMAN 6 Pematangsiantar

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a condition in which an individual frequently finds it challenging to adapt to their environment. In certain situations, a sense of powerlessness to cope with problems may be present, leading to unnecessary stress, thereby diminishing one's mental health and resulting in the declaration of a mental health issue (F. Anwar & Julia, 2021).

Mental health has become a subject that needs attention concerning the issues experienced by children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly in recent times (Hapsari et al., 2009). Mental health is a component that must be considered to achieve overall well-being. Just as physical health is crucial, mental health is also of utmost importance. There is no health without mental health, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), as “health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (Ayuningtyas et al. 2018). An individual’s way of thinking, feeling, and behaving can be hindered when they have poor mental health (Dunm, 2016).

At Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, students’ mental health is generally good and normal. Only a few students experience symptoms such as learning difficulties or challenges in aligning their activities with their interests and talents. This often happens because teenagers have not yet fully developed emotional control and prioritize aspects of their lives, sometimes neglecting important responsibilities such as studying, doing homework, and paying attention in class when the teacher explains. This is often due to students being more interested in playing with gadgets and chatting with friends next to them rather than focusing on the teacher’s explanation (Bakar, 2021). If this continues, students may experience a decline in academic performance, feelings of doubt, lack of confidence, and excessive anxiety. As found in studies, one of the mental health phenomena prevalent in society is depression (Saputri & Indrawani, 2011).

The efforts made by the Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar to address students’ mental health problems include organizing activities that provide information about ‘Mental Health,’ helping students understand its importance. They also create an environment supportive of students’ mental health improvement, such as maintaining a clean and healthy school environment, having peer support programs, displaying motivational posters around the school to inspire students, ensuring conducive classroom settings for learning, and fostering a positive social atmosphere. When Guidance and Counseling teachers succeed in creating a favorable environment for students, it promotes healthy personality development.
In her research titled 'Analysis of the Mental Health Situation in the Indonesian Society and Its Mitigation Strategies,' it was found that there are many people in Indonesia who suffer from mental health disorders. However, there has been a decline observed from the period of 2007-2013 (Ayuningtyas et al., 2018). In Indonesia, a significant portion of the population believes that those with severe mental health issues continue to face persecution and isolation. This can be seen in how, even today, individuals with severe mental health problems in Indonesia still experience confinement and mistreatment. The proportion of households that have restrained family members with severe mental health problems is 14.3%, the highest among rural populations (18.2%) and in the lowest quintile of the ownership index (19.5%). According to government data, approximately 18,800 people are still in restraints, even though the government banned this practice in 1977 (Ayuningtyas et al., 2018). Such beliefs cannot be justified, and thus, community involvement is required to change this perspective in order to reduce long-term mental health issues.

In the field of education, educational psychology is used to address mental health problems by utilizing the existing fields of education, namely, learning and counseling guidance (Hanurawan, 2012). The implementation of Guidance and Counseling activities, known as counseling, has integrated Guidance and Counseling into human life systems (Syarqawi, 2019). The purpose of guidance and counseling in the school environment is to help students discover their personalities by letting them understand their strengths and weaknesses and accepting themselves positively and dynamically as a resource for further self-improvement. It serves as a platform or forum within the school environment for children to express the mental health issues they are facing (Syafaruddin et al., 2019).

To create a positive school environment that enhances the physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual well-being of children, Guidance and Counseling teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of mental health issues within the school. This enables them to also monitor the early indications of students’ mental health problems (F. Anwar & Julia, 2021).

When students struggle to grasp the material taught by teachers, they often become frustrated and stressed, leading to their inability to meet the standards of national final exams, which in turn can lead to depression. These mental health symptoms are frequently observed in schools and are described as a phenomenon of mental health disorders within the educational environment. In general, these issues can hinder the goals of learning and teaching in the school setting. To assist children in recovering a balanced mental health condition, all aspects of the school, particularly
school counselors, should engage in prevention, psychological care, and counseling (Hanurawan, 2012). This underscores the need to introduce mental health awareness to children at a young age through developmental activities in the educational environment. The mental health of each student significantly varies from one another in their daily activities and school-related tasks (Kaneita et al., 2021).

According to (Rahmah et al., 2023), in their research titled "Mental Health Development of Students through Religious Activities," it can be observed that religious activities are a key factor in the mental health development of students, strengthening their mental well-being. Activities such as Muhadharah, Tahfidz (Quran memorization), congregational Duha prayer, and Ngaturan (collective Quran recitation during Ramadan) can build self-confidence, comfort, tranquility, psychological security, and peace. (Bulu et al., 2021) state that students' attitudes toward applying Islamic Guidance and Counseling for mental health development can be seen in their enthusiasm for participating in and conducting school activities with a religious aspect, actively involving themselves, and fostering synergy among all teachers and counselors to create a religious atmosphere. They also optimize extracurricular programs related to Islamic spirituality, such as youth prayer groups, religious study sessions after Dhuhr and Asr prayers, Friday prayers, and character development sessions for female students every week. In his study (Ifdil, 2018), it is mentioned that individuals with good mental health are capable of shaping and developing themselves into productive individuals. Furthermore, individuals who are psychologically healthy contribute to a school community that is also psychologically well, thereby achieving national educational goals and producing quality, high-achieving students.

Considering the opinions above, the research mentioned does not yet cover mental health development conducted through counseling services. Therefore, it aims to address four research questions based on the background issues mentioned above: 1) To explain the phenomenon of Guidance and Counseling teachers' understanding of students' mental health problems; 2) To describe the planning and steps of mental health development activities for students carried out by Guidance and Counseling teachers; 3) To elaborate on the evaluation conducted by Guidance and Counseling teachers regarding the development of students' mental health.
METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach using a case study methodology (Sugiyono, 2019) conducted at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. This study is descriptive in nature and focuses on elucidating the strategies employed by Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar in the field of students' mental health development. The research data consists of strategies for fostering students' mental health at Senior High School through Counseling Guidance Services. The data source for this study was gathered from 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar.

Data collection techniques included direct methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, allowing the researcher to obtain authentic responses from the informants. During the observation phase, the researcher observed the counseling guidance activities at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar from the beginning to the end of the research. The interviews were conducted with 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar as respondents. Documents that served as data sources in this study included the curriculum/guidance module of the teachers and data related to the students and teachers involved in the strategies for fostering students' mental health at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar.

Data analysis is done through data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification. Data reduction in this study focused on summarizing data related to strategies for fostering students' mental health through Counseling Guidance Services at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. The presentation of data involved presenting information about the strategies for fostering mental health through Counseling Guidance Services at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. The researcher conducted a critical analysis of the data concerning strategies for fostering mental health through Counseling Guidance Services at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Regarding mental health, the understanding of Guidance and Counseling teachers is essential to assist Guidance and Counseling teachers in comprehending the issues students face and recognizing students who are experiencing mental health problems. Consequently, Guidance and Counseling teachers can plan and implement steps for mental health development activities for
students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. Subsequently, Guidance and Counseling teachers will evaluate the counseling guidance activities at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar to determine whether the mental health development activities at the school are being executed effectively.

**Table 1. Strategies for Fostering Students’ Mental Health in Senior High School through Counseling Guidance Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Analysis of Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Understanding</td>
<td>All five Guidance and Counseling teachers are aware of and understand what mental health is. Based on the findings from field interviews conducted with 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, in general, these Guidance and Counseling teachers have a grasp of mental health, although it may not be elaborated using expert opinions on the definition of mental health.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Planning and Implementing Steps for Student Mental Health Development Activities</td>
<td>In planning and implementing steps for student mental health development activities at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, Guidance, and Counseling teachers assess the overall mental health status of the students in this school. Afterward, Guidance and Counseling teachers determine the mental health development activities used at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, which involve comprehensive counseling guidance.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>The Evaluation Conducted by Guidance and Counseling Teachers on Student Mental Health Development</td>
<td>The Evaluation in the mental health development program at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is then documented in evaluation documents, analyzed, and followed up on each semester. A program implementation report is then prepared for review and signing by the school principal.</td>
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In examining the understanding of guidance and counseling teachers regarding mental health, the researcher conducted interviews with 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar. Among these 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers, there were varied responses, but they held nearly the same meaning. All of them provided definitions of mental health related to a general understanding of mental health. Therefore, the findings from interviews conducted with 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar indicate that, in general, these Guidance and Counseling teachers have an understanding of mental
health, even though it was not elaborated using expert opinions on the definition of mental health.

Guidance and counseling teachers in planning and implementing steps for student mental health development activities at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar observe the condition of students and identify services that can be used to assist students in fostering their mental health. Subsequently, it can be observed that the mental health of students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is generally good and normal. Only a few students experience symptoms such as learning difficulties or challenges in aligning their activities with their interests and talents. Based on the students’ conditions, Guidance and Counseling teachers design a student mental health development program used at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, which is in the form of comprehensive counseling guidance. This program is also based on the interests students want to develop, such as personal, social, learning, and career aspects.

The evaluation conducted by Guidance and Counseling Teachers regarding student mental health development at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar can be seen by identifying the program’s strengths and weaknesses. There is a need for ongoing evaluation activities to address the existing weaknesses. The mental health development program implemented by Guidance and Counseling at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar includes both process evaluation and outcome evaluation, in line with what has been stated by the Guidance and Counseling teachers and recorded in the research documentation.

Discussion

Analysis of Guidance and Counseling Teachers’ Understanding

Based on the findings from field interviews conducted with 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, in general, these Guidance and Counseling teachers have an understanding of mental health, although it may not align with the precise definitions provided by experts. This can be observed through the questions posed, where the first question aimed to determine whether Guidance and Counseling teachers truly comprehend mental health. The subsequent question inquired about the opinions of Guidance and Counseling teachers regarding the importance of mental health for students. In response to these questions, the Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar provided varied answers but shared a common underlying meaning, which is that mental health is crucial to maintain so that students can remain in good condition. They believe that maintaining good mental health enables students to engage in normal activities.
From the two questions posed to the 5 Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, it can be concluded that, in theory, these teachers have knowledge and understanding of mental health. However, their understanding may not align precisely with the academic definitions. Nevertheless, they recognize the significance of mental health as a condition of personal well-being, involving the ability to manage stress and lead a normal life, enabling productive work.

The purpose of Guidance and Counseling teachers’ understanding of the concept of mental health, is to provide services to students in matters not covered within the framework of instructional programs. Instead, it is guided and counseled by students to address the education they receive during their time in school and to ensure their well-being in terms of physical health, mental health, and spiritual development. One of the areas of service provided to students is student development. When compared to the functions performed by other student development fields, one of the subfields of Guidance and Counseling stands out due to its unique role. The approach taken by counseling services, which can be described as psychological or psychological assistance, generates specific functions provided by Guidance and Counseling services (Nada & Nasution, 2023).

The basic principles for understanding mental health were described by Schneider in 1964. According to Schneider, the principles of mental health include three important components. The first principle consists of 11 principles based on human nature. Comprehensive within it are aspects of mental health and adjustment that cannot be separated from physical health. To maintain mental health, an individual must exhibit character and religiosity as well as social skills, require integrity and self-control, enhance intellectual capabilities, improve self-realization and healthy self-esteem, maintain mental stability, adhere to goodness, possess adaptability, be capable of managing mental conflicts, and demonstrate maturity in thinking and emotions (F. Anwar & Julia, 2021).

**Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Planning and Implementing Steps for Student Mental Health Development Activities**

The primary focus of mental health science is personality and related aspects such as developmental disorders, guidance, structure, function, and dysfunction. There is a belief that a personality capable of regulating to meet needs will result in reasonably good mental health. Conversely, if the personality cannot do so, mental health disorders will emerge (Hidayat, 2013).
Developmental activities are efforts to improve the character of humans as individuals and social beings. This is done tangibly by improving attitudes, abilities, and skills (Zaman, 2017). Development is a consciously, systematically planned, and directed process to improve human character as individuals and social beings through education, both inside and outside of school, to become individuals with mature and complete personalities. It can be understood that development is an action, procedure, or statement aimed at improvement (Niswah & Setiawan, 2021).

As a school counselor, a Guidance and Counseling teacher helps students achieve mental health balance through counseling and psychological intervention and prevention. In a school, paying attention to the mental health of students, especially high school students, has become crucial. The pressures felt by teenagers in their daily lives can affect various aspects of their lives, including how they make decisions about their future careers, which can negatively impact their career prospects, psychological well-being, health, and social acceptance. One of the responsibilities of teenagers is to choose and prepare themselves for a job or career; this is also preparation before entering the workforce (Meivani et al., 2023). The transitional period or identity search will require assistance and efforts to prevent unhealthy mental symptom disorders. Mentally unhealthy students in school may experience several symptoms, including their inability to perform well in school and mental disorders such as hysteria, sensitivity, and withdrawal.

At Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, the mental health of students is generally good and normal. Only a few students experience symptoms such as learning difficulties or difficulty in aligning their activities with their interests and talents. This aligns with the idea that junior and senior high school teachers should have an understanding of students’ mental health during the transition period because many students experience mental problems due to a lack of understanding of the concept of mental health and how to address their issues, such as self-adjustment, conflicts with parents or peers, personal problems, or academic issues (Hidayat, 2013). The effects that can be seen in children experiencing mental health disorders include decreased performance, self-doubt, lack of self-confidence, and excessive anxiety.

Generally, teenagers are more susceptible to mental health disorders. In line with the times, one of the factors influencing students' mental health is the presence of social media, which is easily accessible to all, often causing more negative effects than positive ones, such as the emergence of teasing and boasting activities among students. The student mental health development program used at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is comprehensive counseling. This activity is in line
with the vision and mission of counseling services at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, which aims to provide assistance that supports student development and addresses problems so that students can lead happy lives. This helps students develop optimally, independently, and happily.

Each student receives comprehensive counseling that has been programmed by the school. Comprehensive guidance and counseling focus on teaching students to avoid things that may hinder their development. Preventive guidance also helps students make decisions about actions that will aid in their development (Sutirna, 2013).

In the comprehensive counseling model, counselors focus on achievement, work productivity, and communication of program goals. The comprehensive counseling program is a collaborative effort that assists parents, teachers, administrative staff, and the entire community. The comprehensive counseling model has the following characteristics: it encompasses the entire scope of services, is designed based on preventive principles, is developmental, student-centered, implemented collaboratively, supported by data, and integrated into the overall school program (Hidayat, 2013).

The Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar organize a comprehensive counseling program every semester. This program is based on the interests of students who want to develop such personal, social, learning, and career interests. The activities conducted by the Guidance and Counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar include providing information services regarding ‘Mental Health’ so that students understand the importance of mental health for themselves (Prawira, 2017). This is followed by other services such as placement and referral services, content mastery services, individual counseling services, group counseling services, consultation services, mediation services, case conferences, home visits because the role of families, especially parents, becomes crucial in guiding their teenage children through difficult times to prevent mental disturbances (Rerung, 2021), literature review, and case referrals conducted when dealing with severe cases such as severe emotional disorders, substance abuse, criminal behavior, pregnant students, suicide attempts, fights involving sharp weapons or firearms. Severe cases may be referred to psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, police, and legal experts following a case conference (S. Anwar & Rohmat, 2022). These services will be provided according to the needs of students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar.
The mental health development program for students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar through comprehensive counseling can be seen through the creation of an environment that supports the enhancement of students' mental health. This includes establishing a healthy and clean environment, having a school health unit, displaying motivational posters within the school environment to serve as encouragement for students, providing classroom spaces conducive to the learning process, and fostering a positive social environment. When Guidance and Counseling teachers succeed in creating a positive environment for students, it contributes to the mental well-being of the students.

For guidance and counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, students' personal mental well-being can be observed through how well they adhere to school rules, their interactions with teachers, and their enthusiasm in expressing their talents and potential. Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar implements a comprehensive student mental health development program through Guidance and Counseling, which is designed by counselors or Guidance and Counseling teachers within the school. This is because students in the midst of development require guidance and counseling throughout their lives. Issues may arise from within the students themselves, such as personal and family problems. Additionally, external factors, such as the influence of social media, often impact students' mental health issues.

**The Evaluation Conducted by Guidance and Counseling Teachers on Student Mental Health Development**

One of the goals of the Guidance and Counseling program evaluation is to gather information about the quality and aid in making decisions regarding which counseling programs to choose. The results of this evaluation will have a positive impact on the overall implementation of the Guidance and Counseling program (Diniaty, 2012). Assessment or evaluation programming should be carried out in a structured and integrated manner, both in terms of methods and outcomes. Subsequently, it should be analyzed to serve as the basis and follow-up for program improvement and development in guidance services (Salahudin, 2010).

The counselors assess the Guidance and Counseling program to determine its effectiveness and potential for development. Currently, the Guidance and Counseling program in Indonesia adopts the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling pattern. The components of the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling program include core services, individual planning, responsive services, and system support (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). At Senior High School 6
Pematangsiantar, mental health development activities use the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling program.

In line with the presence of strengths and weaknesses in a program, there is a need for evaluation activities to address existing shortcomings. Within the mental health development program by guidance and counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar, this includes both process evaluation and outcome evaluation, which is consistent with what has been mentioned by the Guidance and Counseling teachers and is documented in the research. The evaluation within the mental health development program at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is then documented in an evaluation document, followed by analysis and implementation follow-ups each semester, and finally, a program implementation report is prepared for review and signing by the school principal.

The mental health development program for students involves many others, such as class teachers, extracurricular guidance teachers, parents, discipline teachers, duty teachers, students, and the school principal. Sometimes, it also involves external individuals, such as motivators, police personnel, or college students. Conversely, program evaluation consists of both process and outcome evaluations while applying the mental health development program for students. Additionally, the school creates an environment where students can genuinely enhance their mental health.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that the researcher can draw from the questions posed to the five guidance and counseling teachers at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is that, in theory, guidance, and counseling teachers have some knowledge and understanding of what mental health is. However, their understanding may not align perfectly with the correct definition. Nevertheless, guidance and counseling teachers recognize that mental health is a condition of well-being in an individual, encompassing the ability to manage stress in order to lead a normal life and work productively.

The mental health development program for students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar begins with Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling because students exhibit symptoms of mental health issues, as evident in their learning difficulties, activity choices, and career decisions. Additionally, minor factors such as unfavorable student conditions can manifest as symptoms of mental health disorders requiring improvement. Furthermore, as guidance counselors,
Guidance and Counseling teachers designed this program to prevent other mental health disturbances influenced by environmental factors, such as negative effects from social media. This program is then tested and approved by the school principal.

The evaluation conducted by the Guidance and Counseling teachers regarding the mental health development of students at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar includes both process and outcome evaluations, which align with what has been mentioned by the Guidance and Counseling teachers and are documented in the research. The evaluation within the mental health development program at Senior High School 6 Pematangsiantar is then documented in an evaluation document, followed by analysis and implementation follow-ups each semester, and finally, a program implementation report is prepared for review and signing by the school principal.

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