

School Counselors Strategies in Promoting Psychological Well-Being and Addressing Bullying Related Trauma

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Abstract

This study aims to describe how school counselors help students achieve psychological well-being and how to overcome trauma caused by bullying at school. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, with data collection techniques including interviews, observation, and documentation. The subjects or informants in this study were school counselors, students, students who were bullies, and students who were victims of bullying. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity used triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The results of the study indicate that student psychological well-being at school is achieved through several activities carried out by school counselors. Services include individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, thematic counseling programs, career guidance, and crisis intervention. School counselors also play a strategic role in fostering student psychological well-being through structured, responsive, and collaborative services. School counselors address the impact of trauma caused by bullying at school through several strategies, including prevention and mitigation. Prevention strategies include counseling services on the dangers of bullying, education on communication ethics, wise use of social media, and routine patrols in the school environment. Mitigation strategies include individual counseling for both perpetrators and victims to prevent trauma and mediation to resolve conflicts. Both prevention and intervention strategies are effective in restoring victims' emotional well-being, increasing motivation to learn, and raising awareness among perpetrators to prevent repeat bullying.

1. Introduction

The educational process in schools is closely related to student readiness to participate in teaching and learning activities. Readiness is not only physical but also psychological, which is crucial so that students can enjoy learning activities. One psychological readiness that students need is good mental health, which allows them to achieve psychological well-being. Student psychological well-being is a fundamental aspect of individual development in the school environment. Ryff (2018) defines psychological well-being as a state in which a person is able to accept themselves with all their strengths and weaknesses, establish positive relationships with others, experience independence, control their environment, have a purpose in life, and strive to explore and develop their potential. The relationship between academic stress and students' mental well-being is significant, regardless of the number of problems students face at school. Cortina (2025) found a significant relationship between academic distress and students' mental well-being. High stress levels correlate with poor mental health, including anxiety and depression. This article is crucial for understanding the mechanisms of trauma related to school stress.

At the secondary school level, adolescence is a critical period in mental development, where students often face various emotional and social challenges. According to Anggraeni and Yulianti (2020), psychological well-being is positively related to academic achievement. Internal factors such as self-esteem and external factors such as social support significantly influence students' psychological well-being. Zhao et al. (2023) wrote that in elementary and secondary school students, there was a strong association between school bullying and psychological problems, including the risk of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and conduct disorder. The more frequently students experienced bullying, the higher their risk of poor psychological well-being. In this regard, school counselors are essential to support students' psychological well-being at school. Training for teachers, and mental support methods for students experiencing trauma from various social contexts are needed (Casale & Linderkamp, 2025). Not all school counselors are equipped to handle trauma issues for their students because they lack the skills and experience to handle trauma for students. Findings show that trauma management knowledge among counselors is still low and not systematically integrated, but expanding training and

resources is crucial to supporting student well-being in schools (Omoponle & Dwarika, 2025). Moreover, in recent years, cases of bullying in schools have increased, significantly impacting students' psychological well-being. The impact of bullying in schools is deeply disturbing, especially during the teaching and learning process. It is crucial for counselors to take appropriate action to help minimize the impact of bullying in schools. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions has released data on bullying cases in schools in 2023. From January to September, 23 cases of bullying were recorded. Of these 23 cases, 50% occurred at the junior high school level, 23% at the elementary school level, 13.5% at the high school level, and 13.5% at the vocational high school level. Most cases occurred at the junior high school level and were perpetrated by fellow students and educators.

The phenomenon of violence against school-aged children is currently a frequent occurrence in schools. A place that should serve as a place to acquire knowledge and develop positive character traits in students has instead become a breeding ground for bullying, fueling fear among students. In reality, numerous problems still arise in the educational process related to these issues, including school violence, also known as school bullying. Schools, which should be places to seek knowledge and cultivate exemplary, kind, and obedient character, have instead become venues for bullying itself (Ramdhoni et al., 2024). The impact of violent behavior that occurs in the school environment is closely related to the psychology of students at school. Schneider (2012) revealed that as many as 15.8% of students reported cyberbullying and 25.9% reported school bullying in the last 12 months. The majority (59.7%) of cyberbullying victims were also victims of bullying at school; 36.3% of bullying victims at school were also victims of cyberbullying. Peer bullying has been largely ignored by health professionals but should be considered a significant risk factor and a serious problem (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Adolescence is very vulnerable to bullying which will ultimately lead to traumatic problems and the majority (61.8%) of adolescents have experienced trauma problems, (McLaughlin, 2013). These problems will affect students' self-confidence as part of their psychological well-being, especially in participating in learning activities at school.

Furthermore, self-confidence, as part of psychological well-being, can also be fostered through guidance and counseling services. Research by Rahmadiyah and Seltiana (2021) shows that school counselors use individual and group counseling and collaborate with parents and subject teachers to increase student self-confidence, especially for those from broken homes. This is in line with the psychological well-being aspect according to Ryff, namely the ability of students to have life goals and strive to explore their potential. Furthermore, the role of school counselors is not only curative but also preventive in dealing with students' psychological problems. Putri, et al. (2022) emphasized that school counselors play a role in improving students' self-efficacy, social skills, and adaptive coping strategies. Thus, school counselors not only respond to students who already show psychological symptoms but also actively undertake preventive efforts through ongoing emotional and social development programs.

Social support from school counselors has also been shown to play a crucial role when students face academic pressures and social conflicts. Hidayat, Handayani, and Widiharto (2022) demonstrated a positive relationship between social support from school counselors and the adjustment of high school students in Semarang, although the correlation was relatively low. This suggests that the effectiveness of guidance and counseling support is significantly influenced by consistency, quality of intelligence, and the relevance of the support provided to students' needs. Counselors not only focus on academic and social aspects but also assist students in recovering from psychological trauma. Nastiti and Hanif (2023) emphasized that empathy-based intelligence, intelligent counseling services, and collaboration with parents and professionals can help students recover from trauma and return to a healthy psychological state. Therefore, the role of school counselors in the school environment is not only limited to learning support but also to strengthening students' psychological resilience in facing the dynamics of life. Likewise, when bullying occurs in the school environment, school counselors are essential to help students recover from the impact, especially those who are victims of bullying.

School counselors are professional teachers who develop tasks and play a vital role in the process of shaping students' personalities. School counselors are essential for educational institutions, particularly for students to develop their personality. Guidance and counseling services aim to develop personal activities, social activities, learning activities, and career advancement (Adiyono et al., 2022). The term bullying, also known as *perundungan* in Indonesian, is not unfamiliar to Indonesian society. This phenomenon has become a recurring social problem, particularly in educational settings such as schools. Its serious impact on students' psychological well-being and adjustment has been widely documented in academic literature (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Although various efforts have been made to prevent and address bullying, the reality is that these cases continue to occur and show a tendency to increase over time. This can be seen from the numerous reports, studies, and news reports that reveal various forms of bullying, whether physical, verbal, psychological, or through digital media. The increase in bullying cases indicates that this problem has not been fully resolved and requires serious attention from various parties, including schools, families, and the community. As found in research Perianto et al. (2025), bullying behavior is found and has an impact, especially on the psychological impact felt by students who are victims of bullying. Schools play a significant role in addressing the impact of trauma experienced by students with trauma issues. Trauma-informed programs in schools are effective in improving students' psychological well-being (Mendelson, et al., 2025). The model developed by Md Sultanul Islam Ovi et al., (2025)

can help schools identify stress risks that affect students' psychological well-being so that early intervention can be carried out more accurately.

Various issues concerning student well-being and trauma resulting from bullying at school constitute an irony that school counselors must address. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe how school counselors help students achieve psychological well-being and how to overcome trauma resulting from bullying at school.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The study was conducted at two secondary schools in Yogyakarta City and Bantul Regency. The subjects or informants were two school counselors at each school and seven students at each school, consisting of both the perpetrators of bullying and the victims. The collected data were analyzed using the Millels and Hubelman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure scientific accountability.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The research results indicate that school counselors contribute to students' psychological well-being by effectively fulfilling their duties and functions. School counselors act as counselors, listeners, and facilitators, helping students address various pressures, both academic and personal. The following is a summary of interviews with school counselors and students on how to achieve psychological well-being and address the impact of trauma on students who are victims of bullying at school.

Table 1. Results of Interviews with School Counselors and Students

No	Subject	Description of Interview Results
1	School Counselor	<p>School counselors provide individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom guidance. "I have provided services to students regarding student well-being and those who have been victims of bullying and have been impacted by it."</p> <p>School counselors use approaches designed to heal trauma in victims of bullying. For victims of verbal bullying, they use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to rebuild self-confidence, while for victims of physical bullying, they use Assertiveness Training to increase confidence in interactions. "I use approaches to help victims of bullying so they don't relapse, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, with the goal of reducing the impact of the behavior."</p> <p>Perpetrators of bullying are provided with individual counseling, motivational support, and mediation with the victim, and they commit to not repeat the offense. "I call the bullies to provide Guidance and Counseling services so they don't repeat the offense."</p>
2	Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School counselors provide motivation and help students find solutions when they feel overwhelmed with schoolwork, so they feel calm and comfortable at school. "I participated in the guidance and counseling services provided by the school counselor, and I felt comfortable when I felt tired from studying." 2. School counselors provide group counseling services, enabling students to be more open with their peers and facilitating healthy communication. "I participated in group counseling services to resolve the problems I was experiencing." 3. School counselors help students increase their self-confidence, accept their strengths and weaknesses, and better manage their emotions as victims of bullying. "I really enjoyed participating in the services provided by the school counselor, which made me feel more capable and motivated." 4. School counselors act as facilitators and mediators in resolving conflicts between victims and perpetrators of bullying. "I felt that the counselor was very helpful when I felt uncomfortable with the bullies, by connecting me with the bullies." 5. The school counselor provided classroom guidance at the beginning of the semester, covering material on bullying, reinforced by education through WhatsApp groups and direct monitoring in the school environment. "The school counselor not only provided counseling services but also provided material on bullying in the classroom so that we knew what to do when we were bullied." 6. The school counselor provided counseling services for students who were victims of bullying, so that the impact of trauma could be effectively addressed through this support. "I felt comfortable as a victim of bullying when I received help from the counseling services provided by the school counselor."

In addition to the above data, it can be added that interviews with students revealed that the presence of school counselors helped them increase their self-confidence, accept their strengths and weaknesses, and better manage their emotions. Three points can be concluded from the interviews with students: (1) that school counselors often provided motivation and helped them find solutions when they felt burdened by schoolwork. (2) that the group counseling services they participated in made them more open with their peers and facilitated

healthy communication. (3) stated that the career guidance provided by school counselors helped them develop clearer academic goals and aspirations.

From observations, school counselors were seen actively communicating with homeroom teachers and parents to maximize the interventions provided. This indicates that guidance and counseling services are not only individual but also collaborative. Furthermore, documentation in the form of administrative reports and counseling service records shows the existence of a Data-Based Needs Analysis document conducted by school counselors to more accurately map student problems.

Documentation of guidance and counseling services provided by schools includes administrative documentation, photos of service activities, guidance and counseling programs, counseling activity reports, and Counseling Service Implementation Plans. This documentation demonstrates that school counselors implement services systematically, from prevention to treatment and evaluation. Classical guidance is implemented using active methods such as discussions, video screenings, and group work, while curative services are provided through individual counseling using CBT, Assertive Training, and Behavior Modification techniques. This confirms the comprehensive and continuous role of school counselors, enabling them to create a safer and more conducive school environment, supporting bullying prevention and fostering student psychological well-being.

3.2. Discussion

School counselors strive to help students address various academic and personal challenges with a systematic, responsive, and collaborative approach. This aligns with Prayitno's (2018) view that the role of school counselors is to help students find solutions independently through ongoing guidance. Student Psychological Well-being is a crucial foundation that determines whether a student merely attends school or truly thrives. This concept goes far beyond the absence of mental health issues, focusing instead on the presence of a positive quality of life (Keyes, 2013). In the school environment, Student Psychological Well-being is the lens through which students process their learning experiences, social challenges, and personal growth. Leading expert in this field, Ryff (2018), defines Student Psychological Well-being through six eudaimonic dimensions. For students, these dimensions translate into essential needs in an educational environment. The first is Self-Acceptance; students with high Student Psychological Well-being are able to accept themselves, both their academic strengths and weaknesses, without becoming bogged down in damaging social comparisons. Second, Positive Relationships with Others is a key determinant; students need warm, supportive, and trusting connections, both with peers and authority figures, especially teachers (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Specifically, the findings of this study demonstrate a strong link between counseling services and Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Individual and group counseling services, as well as classroom guidance, have been shown to help students increase self-acceptance, improve social relationships, foster independence, and manage academic stress. Career guidance programs, using reflective techniques such as mind mapping, encourage students to develop clearer life goals, while various counseling activities lead to personal growth reflected in more confident, open, and motivated behavior. Student well-being improves when they feel they have a voice and control over their learning process, rather than simply being passive recipients of instruction. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), where support for autonomy, such as providing assignment choices or setting study schedules, increases intrinsic motivation and Student Psychological Well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2023). Two other dimensions closely related to performance are Environmental Mastery and Purpose in Life. Students who achieve Environmental Mastery feel competent in managing school demands, including time management, exam preparation, and utilizing school resources effectively. Meanwhile, Purpose in Life provides direction; Students who see that their current hard work will shape a meaningful future will be more resilient and have more stable Student Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 2018).

In the past decade, interventions to improve student psychological well-being have focused on teaching social-emotional competencies. A significant meta-analysis showed that school-based social-emotional competency interventions not only improved students' social-emotional well-being but also resulted in significant improvements in academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Implementing structured social-emotional competency programs, such as teaching emotion regulation and responsible decision-making, has proven to be an effective strategy. Overall, schools that successfully promote student psychological well-being in their students are those that create a positive school climate, where students feel physically and psychologically safe, supported, and motivated to grow. This represents a shift from simply focusing on academic achievement (grades) to cultivating life skills that enable students to thrive both in school and in the future (Shankland & Rosset, 2017).

The implementation of Data-Driven Needs Analysis also demonstrates that school counselors use a data-driven approach to identify student problems. This provides a strong basis for determining appropriate interventions and allows for more effective coordination with homeroom teachers and parents. This strategy

aligns with Corely's (2017) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of counseling based on students' real needs. Thus, guidance and counseling services are not merely reactive but also preventive and proactive in preventing the emergence of more serious psychological problems. In the Indonesian context, the role of school counselors in schools is limited to helping students resolve general issues. However, student issues are complex, particularly those related to psychological well-being and trauma resulting from bullying in the school environment. Rahayu et al. (2024) in their article stated that school counselors in Indonesia are deeply involved in students' emotional and traumatic situations. This provides empirical evidence that the school counseling profession is crucial in supporting traumatized students.

Raising student awareness of the importance of psychological support is essential and crucial. Furthermore, this phenomenon signals a new challenge for school counselors: the need to expand the scope of services and strengthen capacity to serve a larger number of students with increasingly complex problems. This is in line with research by Sintawati (2024), which shows that social support, self-esteem, and school climate play a crucial role in fostering student psychological well-being. Furthermore, the research findings corroborate Nastiti and Hanif's (2023) findings that counseling services can support psychological trauma recovery, and align with Azwar's (2023) research, which emphasized the importance of guidance and counseling in building students' self-esteem. Therefore, the work of school counselors can be seen as a concrete effort to address the increasingly complex needs of students in the modern era, particularly those related to psychological well-being.

This role is realized through preventive strategies in the form of classical guidance with active methods and the use of digital media for education, and curative strategies in the form of individual counseling tailored to the conditions of the victim and perpetrator, such as the use of CBT, Assertive Training, and Behavior Modification. In addition, the guidance counselor also carries out structured and sustainable interventions, including in-depth counseling, mediation to reach a peaceful agreement, routine monitoring in the school environment and through digital media, and referrals to professionals when necessary. These results are in line with the findings of previous studies (Filosofianita, Supriatna, & Nadhirah, 2023; Nurfalasyifa, 2025; Nimala, 2024) which emphasize that the role of guidance counselors is very important in preventing, handling, and intervening in bullying cases to create a safe, conducive school environment that supports the overall development of students. It is further explained that counselors can use techniques from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), particularly modules focused on training in relaxation skills and emotional management, to help students regulate their fight-or-flight responses triggered by trauma (Goenjian et al., 2015). Despite the limitations of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy approach, it can be used as an alternative to help students experiencing trauma, especially those who are victims of bullying at school. As Hutson et al. (2021) noted, although CBT and cognitive-behavioral skills are frequently used for common mental disorders, interventions specifically designed and tested for bullying are rare, thus limiting their direct application in counseling services for victims.

Bullying is a form of repeated, disproportionate violence that often leaves deep psychological scars on victims, which can develop into psychological trauma. These impacts include long-term mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), low self-esteem, and even suicidal ideation (Tofi & Farrington, 2011). School counselors are at the forefront of the education system, identifying, intervening, and facilitating the recovery of students who have experienced such trauma. The first step for school counselors is to create a psychologically safe environment and conduct proactive identification. Counselors are trained to recognize symptoms of trauma in students, such as drastic changes in behavior (e.g., social isolation, decreased academic performance, or increased aggression), which are often manifestations of undisclosed trauma.

Counselors serve as liaisons between students, parents, and school staff. They utilize the Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) framework an approach that recognizes the prevalence of trauma and seeks to prevent retraumatization (SAMHSA, 2014). Within this context, every interaction should be grounded in the principles of safety, trust, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural awareness. Counselors also facilitate restorative dialogue and mediation (when appropriate and safe) and ensure a clear support plan (e.g., safety plans and school environment modifications) is in place to prevent recurrence and retraumatization (Stopczynski, 2013). Success in addressing the trauma of bullying rests on a system-wide commitment to providing a climate that supports the psychological well-being of each student.

3.3. Implication

Based on the results of this study, several important implications emerge. The following are the implications of the research findings: This study shows that schools, through school counselors, are very important in helping to achieve students' psychological well-being. Achieving students' psychological well-being will impact the learning process that is comfortable, enjoyable, and meaningful. This study also explains that school counselors can use various methods and approaches to address the impact of trauma caused by bullying. The impact of trauma experienced by students who are victims of bullying is very dangerous, especially the psychological impact. This psychological impact will also affect the learning process at school. Therefore, schools, through school counselors, have an important role in creating a friendly and pleasant school

environment, by ensuring students' psychological well-being, and also ensuring that students who are victims of bullying can be handled and provided with guidance and counseling services effectively and well by school counselors with trauma counseling services.

3.4. Limitations

This study has limitations, meaning its results may not be generalizable to other research locations. These limitations include the limited number of junior high and high schools in the selected research locations. Interviews were conducted with two school counselors at each school and seven students at each school. Therefore, this study can be further developed and expanded by future researchers based on the location and subjects involved.

4. Conclusion

The conclusions of this study can be outlined as follows: (1) To achieve student psychological well-being at school, school counselors provide various comprehensive services, such as individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, AKT programs, career guidance, and crisis intelligence, all supported by the implementation of Data-Based Needs Analysis (ABKD) and collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents. School counselors not only function as counselors but also as facilitators, motivators, mediators, and evaluators capable of providing holistic emotional, social, and academic support. Therefore, their presence is essential to support the creation of a healthy and conducive school climate for student psychological development. (2) School counselors in dealing with the impact of trauma due to bullying behavior at school do several things including through preventive and curative strategies. Preventive strategies are carried out through classical guidance services about the dangers of bullying, education on communication ethics, wise use of social media, and routine patrols in the school environment. Curative strategies are carried out through individual counseling for perpetrators and victims so that the impact of trauma does not have a major impact on the learning process at school and carrying out mediation to resolve conflicts. The strategies and interventions provided, both preventive and curative, are effective in restoring the emotional condition of victims, increasing learning motivation, and raising awareness of perpetrators so that they do not repeat bullying actions.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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