

THE ROLE OF BK IN SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF INDIVIDUALS OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education requires a comprehensive support system for students with special needs, including tailored and collaborative guidance and support services. The aim of this article is to critically analyse the role of guidance and support in promoting social inclusion and the optimal development of students with special needs in inclusive schools. Based on a systematic literature review of recent studies, this article identifies four main dimensions of the role of counselling and support: (1) the management and implementation of needs-oriented counselling and support programmes; (2) group counselling techniques to develop students' social competencies; (3) the cooperative role of counsellors with teachers, parents, and other educational staff; (4) Strengthening students' resilience through counsellor support. Research findings indicate that the effectiveness of guidance and support services depends heavily on counsellors' competence in understanding the characteristics of children with special needs, their ability to adapt their guidance approaches, and the strength of interprofessional collaborative networks within the school environment. Meaningful social inclusion for children with special needs cannot be achieved solely through physical integration into mainstream classes, but requires planned interventions that actively involve school counsellors. This article recommends the development of an inclusive counselling and support model integrated into the school curriculum and programmes, as well as the strengthening of school counsellors' competencies through competency-based training in the field of inclusion.

Keywords: Guidance and Counselling, Social Inclusion, Students with Special Needs



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1. INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift in the world of global education that has occurred over the past few decades has brought about a fundamental change in the way society views the right of children with special needs (ABK) to access education. Since the adoption of the Salamanca Declaration by UNESCO in 1994, the concept of inclusive education has been widely accepted as an international standard that requires all children, without exception, to receive appropriate and equal educational services in public schools. (Dalgaard et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the commitment to inclusive education is reflected in various regulations, including the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education and Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities.

However, the implementation of inclusive education still continues to face a number of complex challenges. Most public schools designated as inclusive schools do not have all the necessary resources, both in terms of infrastructure, teacher competencies, and support services needed by children with special

educational needs. One of the most important, yet often overlooked, support services is guidance and counseling (BK). Indeed, the presence of competent counselors as well as well-designed guidance and counseling programs are the main determinants of the success of inclusion, not only in the academic field, but also in the social and emotional fields (Yuliawanti, 2019).

Social inclusion, that is, the ability of children with special educational needs to be accepted, actively participate, and establish meaningful relationships with their peers in the school environment is not something that happens automatically when these children are placed in regular classes. Various studies show that, without planned interventions, children with special educational needs are at risk of experiencing social isolation, bullying, and low self-esteem (Dalgaard et al., 2022).

This is where the strategic role of guidance and counseling becomes particularly significant, acting as a bridge between children's potential and special educational needs and the demands of their social environment.

A review of recent studies reveals that there is still a significant gap between normative expectations regarding the role of guidance and counselling in inclusive schools and the reality of its implementation in practice. Romadlon et al. (2025) found that the competence of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive schools still tends to be directed at students in the general education system and is not optimal to handle the special needs of students with special needs.

In addition, Azwar and Wanto (2021) show that the development of resilience in children and adolescents with special educational needs is highly dependent on the active role of counselors, who are able to change behavior and provide ongoing support. One of the obvious gaps in the existing literature is the lack of guidance and counseling models specifically designed for inclusive school contexts in Indonesia that integrate individual, group, and collaborative approaches.

Based on the above, this article aims to: (1) analyze the conceptual foundation and urgency of guidance and counseling in inclusive schools; (2) examine various approaches and techniques of guidance and counseling that have been proven effective for children with special needs; (3) identify the collaborative role of guidance counselors in the inclusive school ecosystem; and (4) formulate evidence-based recommendations for the development of inclusive guidance and counseling practices in Indonesia.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Inclusive Education: Concepts, Foundations, and Developments

At its core, inclusive education is not just a policy to integrate children with special needs into public schools, but a philosophy that demands a comprehensive transformation of educational culture, policies, and practices to accommodate the diversity of all students (Dalgaard et al., 2022). From this perspective, it is believed that all children have an equal right to learn alongside their peers in an environment that supports their holistic development.

In Indonesia, the development of inclusive education has gone through several long stages. Initially in the form of separate education in special schools (SLB), continued with an integration model, and now moves towards full inclusion, where children with special needs (ABK) learn alongside students in the public education system with appropriate individual support. The World Bank notes that inclusion efforts in Indonesia still face significant challenges, especially related to teacher training, school facilities, and coordination between levels of government in policy implementation.

The UDL Universal Design framework is defined as a framework for designing a flexible and inclusive curriculum so that all students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles can be accommodated. The three core principles of UDL are multiple means of engagement, representation, and action & expression to provide multiple ways to access materials, engage, and express learning outcomes. (Priyadharsini et al., 2024). UDL is explicitly said to challenge the traditional curriculum "*One size fits all*" and replace it with a design that assumes student diversity and incorporates flexibility and choice from the start.

2.1.1. Guidance and Counseling in the Context of Inclusion: Theoretical Foundations

In theory, guidance and counseling (BK) is understood as a comprehensive service that includes basic services, individualized planning, tailored services, and systemic support, which must be tailored to the characteristics of students with special needs so that they can develop a sense of identity, adapt to their disabilities, and develop life skills and social skills (Saputra, 2020).

Guidance and counseling (BK) in the context of inclusive education is based on the principles of education for all, equality, and fairness for students of all abilities, backgrounds, and special needs. Inclusive education requires guidance and counseling services tailored to the needs of those who are supported, with the aim of fostering independence, self-adjustment, and social participation without discrimination. Gea et al., (2024)

Vygotsky's theory of social development provides a fundamental foundation for understanding the importance of guidance and counseling for children with special educational needs. The concept of proximal developmental zones (ZPDs) suggests that all children, including those with special educational needs, are able to reach their full potential if given scaffolding or support from more competent individuals, be it counselors,

teachers, or peers. Guidance and counseling services are basically a concrete form of scaffolding in personal and social dimensions (Rusydi and Fikri, 2023).

Resilience theory is also a fundamental foundation for inclusive guidance and counseling practices. The concept of resilience of a person's ability to recover from adversity is particularly relevant for children with special educational needs who face various obstacles and challenges on a daily basis, both due to their individual circumstances and social environment (Azwar and Wanto, 2021). An effective guidance practitioner is one who can help children with special educational needs to develop this resilience capacity gradually and sustainably.

The collaborative tutoring model is also getting more and more attention in the literature on inclusive school tutoring. This model emphasizes that guidance practitioners do not work alone, but rather be part of a multidisciplinary team consisting of classroom teachers, special assistant teachers (GPK), parents, and other professionals such as psychologists and therapists (Yuliawanti, 2019). This approach is in line with a paradigm shift from the medical model that views ABK as individuals who need to be improved to a social model that emphasizes the importance of environmental modification.

2.1.2. Previous research: social inclusion and the development of ABK

Several studies have examined various aspects related to the social inclusion of children with special needs in schools. Atteng and Osuagwu (2021) emphasized that social inclusion is a developmental task that must be systematically facilitated through structured environmental support. Their research shows that children with special needs who do not receive adequate social interventions are more likely to be marginalized and have difficulty building healthy interpersonal relationships with their peers.

The findings of Vyrastelova's (2021) research, which used the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) instrument, reveal that students with special educational needs in public (inclusive) schools show varying levels of social inclusion depending on the quality of support they receive. It has been observed that factors in the school's social environment, including the attitudes of teachers and peers, have a greater influence than the type of disability itself in determining the quality of social inclusion for students with special educational needs.

In Indonesia, children with special needs in inclusive schools often feel isolated, bullied by their peers, and not integrated in a way that is not integrated. (Rosita et al., 2024). This condition is reinforced by the lack of teacher training in dealing with complex social dynamics in inclusive classrooms, as well as the lack of planned social intervention programs.

Alnahdi Research et al (2022) revealed interesting findings that the implementation of differential and individualized learning practices by teachers significantly affects the perception of social and emotional inclusion of ABK. This confirms that inclusive pedagogical practices and adaptive BK services are closely intertwined in supporting the development of ABK as a whole.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses the systematic literature review approach as the main research method. This method was chosen because the main purpose of the research is to synthesize, analyze, and interpret the findings of various existing studies in a critical and comprehensive manner, rather than generating new empirical data from the field. The process of collecting literature sources is carried out through identification and source search is carried out in academic databases such as Google Scholar and SINTA.

The inclusion criteria applied include: (1) articles published in national or international accredited scientific journals; (2) discuss topics relevant to guidance and counseling, inclusive education, and/or social inclusion of ABK; (3) available in Indonesian or English; (4) have a clear and academically accountable research methodology.

All selected sources were analyzed using content analysis techniques by focusing on: the main findings of the research, methodological approaches, practical implications, and the position of these findings in the broader context of the literature. The synthesis is carried out in a narrative-analytical manner by organizing findings based on themes relevant to the research objectives.

4. RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Management of Guidance and Counseling Programs in Inclusive Schools

The effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in inclusive schools is highly dependent on the quality of the management of the programs implemented. Romadlon et al. (2025), in their study on the implementation of guidance and counseling management in inclusive schools, observed that guidance and counseling teachers tend to be highly involved in tasks related to teaching roles, such as data collection and learning support, but less involved in specialized roles that require technical knowledge related to the management of children with special educational needs. These findings suggest that there is a skills gap that must be addressed urgently through specific professional development programs.

Effective guidance and counseling management in inclusive schools requires comprehensive, needs-oriented program planning. A good guidance and counseling program should include four main components: basic services (guidance in the classroom and groups), response services (individual and crisis counseling),

individual planning services (including the development of individual education plans in collaboration with multidisciplinary teams), and system support (cooperation and consultation with teachers and parents) (Badiah, 2017). These four components must be implemented in a balanced and integrated manner, not carried out separately.

The structural aspects of guidance and counseling programs including planning, implementation, and evaluation are often not designed with explicit consideration of children and adolescents with special educational needs. As a result, these children and adolescents only receive reactive services (only when problems arise) instead of proactive services that support their ongoing development. This is contrary to the principles of ASCA (American School Counselors Association), which emphasizes a comprehensive, development-oriented approach in school guidance and counseling services. (Gea et al., 2024)

The implementation of tailored guidance and counseling services for children with special educational needs also requires careful needs assessment prior to program planning. Counselors should use a variety of tools, including tests and other methods, to identify the individual needs profile of each child with special educational needs. The results of this assessment then became the basis for the development of different service plans (Rusydi and Fikri, 2023). Without proper assessment, school guidance services risk getting caught up in a common approach that fails to meet the real needs of children with special educational needs.

The challenges faced in managing inclusive guidance and counseling programs are quite complex. Key barriers include a lack of adequate resources and teaching materials for children with special educational needs, a heavy workload for guidance and counseling teachers due to an imbalanced ratio of counselors to students, and lack of coordination between guidance and counseling teachers, classroom teachers, and special education teachers. Similar conditions also occur in other regions of Indonesia, which shows that this is a structural problem that requires a systemic solution.

4.1.1 Group Counseling as a strategy for developing social skills of ABK

One of the most consistent findings in the literature on inclusive counselling and support is the effectiveness of group counselling as a means of developing social skills in children and adolescents with special educational needs. In their comprehensive literature review, Stephens et al. (2010) emphasized that group counseling is a highly effective way to address the various social skills challenges faced by heterogeneous populations in school settings. They found that group counseling provided children and adolescents with special educational needs with a safe space to practice new social skills, receive feedback from peers, and develop confidence in social interactions.

The advantage of group counseling for students with special needs lies in the dynamics of the group itself. In contrast to individual counseling conducted in face-to-face sessions, group counseling creates a natural environment that is very similar to real-life social interactions. In a controlled yet authentic setting, students with special needs can learn from the experiences of others, practice empathy, and develop communication skills. Research involving high school students with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) shows that Group Social Skills Training (SSGT) in an inclusive environment is promising both scientifically and socially (Leifler et al., 2022).

In practice, techniques often used in group counseling for children with special needs include role playing, social modeling, simulation of social situations, communication training, emotion management, and conflict resolution. Stephens et al. (2010) emphasize how important it is for counselors to consider various factors before carrying out group counseling, including: the appropriate composition of the group, the suitability of the techniques to the needs of the participants, and the willingness of the school environment to support the group process.

In Indonesia, the implementation of group counseling for students with special needs in inclusive schools still faces various challenges. A study by Rizqiyah and Albaar (2026), which focuses on the implementation of counseling and mentoring services within the framework of "*Learning by Doing*" for students with special needs in secondary school, five main challenges were identified: highly diverse student characteristics, difficulties in designing adaptive learning, lack of cooperation between teachers and parents, limited facilities, and the need to strengthen teacher capacity. These five challenges also indirectly affect the counselor's ability to carry out effective group counseling.

However, research conducted by Dita & Tita (2024) shows that group counseling approaches tailored to the specific characteristics of children with special needs such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and language processing disorders can have a significant positive impact on their social skills and learning motivation. The key lies in the ability of counselors to conduct accurate assessments and design contextually appropriate interventions.

One of the aspects that is often overlooked in the discussion of group counseling is the importance of involving students without special needs. Rosita et al. (2024) emphasize that social inclusion is not only the responsibility of students with special needs to "adapt," but also demands that students without special needs develop social awareness, empathy, and the ability to interact with different peers. Counselors can act as

moderators in peer mediation and peer support programs, serving as a bridge between students with special needs and regular students.

4.1.2. The Collaborative Role of Counselors in the Inclusive School Ecosystem

One of the most significant paradigm shifts in inclusive counseling and support is the realization that counselors cannot and should not work in isolation when providing support to students with special needs. In her study on the collaborative role of counselors in inclusive schools, Yuliawanti (2019) argues that collaboration is a crucial component for the success of inclusive education reform. Counselors should build productive, collaborative networks with classroom teachers, special education teachers, parents, principals, and, if needed, external experts such as psychologists and therapists.

The most often discussed aspect of collaboration in the literature is collaboration between school psychologists and teachers. Individual counseling services that are based on a cooperative approach including identifying teacher needs, providing emotional support, offering learning strategies, and mediating problems in the classroom have a significant impact on teachers' willingness and ability to create an inclusive and adaptive learning environment for all students. This shows that school psychologists not only serve students but also act as professional partners for teachers (Maliha & Rahmi, 2025).

Sulaiman (2018) emphasized, in the Indonesian context, the importance of cooperative counseling as a mechanism that brings together the parties involved in an equal position, in order to jointly formulate the best solution to the problems faced. This approach rejects the traditional hierarchy, where counselors or psychologists are seen as the only party authorized to provide recommendations to teachers. On the contrary, true cooperation requires mutual respect for the expertise of all parties involved.

Various studies also emphasize the importance of cooperation with parents. The World Bank notes that involving parents in the educational process of children with special needs, including the development of IEPs and progress monitoring, is a critical factor in successful inclusion. Counselors act as mediators, helping parents understand their children's needs and potential while facilitating communication between families and schools. However, research also shows that girls with special needs continue to face additional barriers in the form of stereotypes and stigmatization, which hinder their access to and participation in education.

From a broader perspective, Yuliawanti (2019) emphasized that inclusive education is a shared responsibility where counselors, teachers, school support staff, and parents work together synergistically. The teacher cannot act alone; Parents must be involved so that activities at school and at home can be carried out harmoniously and consistently. This collaborative model ultimately creates a stronger and more sustainable support ecosystem for the development of children with special needs.

4.1.3. Strengthening the Resilience of Crew Through Guidance and Counseling Services

Resilience or resilience is a psychological capacity that is urgently needed by ABK in dealing with various pressures and obstacles that they encounter in an inclusive school environment. Azwar and Wanto (2021) in their grounded theory study involving eleven BK teachers and a number of ABK from three schools in West Sumatra and Bengkulu found that self-resilience in ABK develops when counselors carry out three main roles: behavior modification, repetitive and structured guidance, and consistent emotional support.

The findings of Azwar and Wanto (2021) have significant practical implications. First, the behavior change implemented by educators must be based on a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of each child with special needs; There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Second, repeating instructions is not a sign of learning failure, but rather part of a scaffolding strategy that considers the individual learning styles of children with special needs. Third, sustained emotional support fosters a sense of psychological security, which serves as a foundation for resilience development.

A study conducted by Mawila (2023) on the resilience abilities of students with specific learning disabilities (SLDs) shows that although SLD negatively impacts the academic, psychological, social, and emotional functioning of the affected students, the quality of relationships with close people and peers and the availability of contextually appropriate resources are factors that support resilience. This emphasizes that resilience is not a fixed innate trait, but rather an ability that can be improved through appropriate environmental interventions, including counseling and mentoring services.

In a social context, true social inclusion demands that students with special needs not only be physically present in public schools, but also feel connected there and develop a sense of belonging (Vyrastekova, 2021). If students with special needs have strong resilience, they will be better able to deal with difficult social situations, overcome rejection, and maintain their motivation to continue participating in school life. Here, counseling services play an irreplaceable role.

Building resilience in children with special needs should be seen as a long-term process that cannot be simplified into a series of separate counseling sessions. Atteng and Osuagwu (2021) emphasized that social inclusion must be understood as a developmental task that covers the entire school period of children with special needs. Therefore, counselling and support programmes aimed at improving resilience should be designed within a developmental framework that takes into account the developmental stages as well as the specific needs at each age phase of students with special needs.

4.1.4. Critical Analysis: The Gap Between Policy and Practice

Although conceptual frameworks and empirical research on the role of guidance and counseling in inclusive education are now well established, there is still a significant gap between what should be (*das sollen*) and what actually happens in practice (*das sein*). Analysis of various studies highlights at least three fundamental weaknesses that require special attention from policymakers and guidance and counselling professionals.

First, lack of skills. Most special education teachers in Indonesia do not receive adequate training on the characteristics of children with special needs, appropriate intervention approaches, and strategies for collaborating with other professionals during their initial training. Romadlon et al. (2025) note that guidance and counseling teachers tend to feel more comfortable carrying out general teaching roles rather than specific roles required in an inclusive environment. This situation highlights the urgent need for a continuing professional development (CPD) program that focuses on inclusive coaching and counseling skills.

Second: structural weaknesses. The highly unbalanced ratio of guidance counselors and counselors to students where a counselor often has to deal with hundreds of students makes it difficult to provide individualized, intensive tailored support to students with special needs. In addition, the lack of adequate counseling space, limited budget for program development, and the absence of an integrated management information system for counseling and guidance further complicate the implementation of high-quality counseling and guidance programs (Abelia et al., 2025).

Third: Coordination gap. Although the collaborative model is recognized as the most effective approach in inclusive education, its application in practice is still highly fragmented. School counselors, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and parents often work separately from each other, without a clear and systematic coordination mechanism. The results of Sulaiman's (2018) research confirm that to address this problem, a school culture that encourages collaboration, proactive school leadership, and an organizational structure that allows for effective cross-role communication is needed.

On the other hand, advances in digital technology open up new opportunities to improve the quality of inclusive guidance and support services. The use of technology platforms such as Classpoint in the management of guidance and support services can significantly improve the competence and efficiency of guidance and support teachers. The use of digital assessment technology, progress monitoring applications, and online communication platforms can strengthen coordination among stakeholders and expand the reach of guidance and counseling services for students with special needs. (Romadlon et al., 2025)

5. CONCLUSION

From the literature review, it is clear that guidance and counseling (BK) is not just a complementary component in inclusive education, but the core of the success of inclusion itself. Children with special educational needs need OA services that are truly tailored to their needs in order to thrive fully, both academically and socially and emotionally. An approach that has proven effective is group tutoring, where children with special educational needs learn to interact, develop empathy, and strengthen their self-esteem in a structured yet welcoming environment. In addition, counselors cannot work in isolation. Close collaboration between counselors, teachers, special education needs coordinators, parents, and other professionals is key to ensuring that support for children with special educational needs is truly comprehensive and meaningful, not just a mere coordination formality.

However, despite all this potential, there is still a considerable gap between the ideals of inclusive policies and the reality on the ground. Many guidance counselors still lack the necessary skills, the facilities available are limited, and coordination between stakeholders is often uneven. Nonetheless, one of the most important roles of school guidance is to help children with special educational needs develop their resilience i.e., the ability to bounce back and remain persistent in the face of various challenges. When a guidance counselor is able to provide behavioral guidance, repetitive and structured teaching, and ongoing emotional support, children with special needs gradually become more resilient individuals, ready to be fully accepted into the general public. Therefore, overcoming the existing gap is not the responsibility of one party alone, but the joint effort of all stakeholders in the education sector.

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