

THE EXPLORATION OF PRACTICAL SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS

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Abstract

The decline in students' social skills in the era of digital disruption and the post-pandemic period poses a serious challenge that hinders academic achievement and mental health. This study aims to explore Guidance and Counseling (BK) practices in enhancing students' social skills, drawing on Norman C. Gysbers' comprehensive model. Using a qualitative case study method, the research involved guidance counselors and students as research subjects selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The research findings indicate that the most prominent guidance and counseling practice is structured play designed to teach sharing, taking turns, and cooperation, which appeared consistently across a number of observation sessions and was confirmed in interviews with guidance and counseling teachers and kindergarten principals. Other practices that were also identified include storytelling and discussions that convey social values, as well as the use of classroom routines (lining up, eating, washing hands) as opportunities to practice patience and cooperation, which explicitly aim to foster empathy and cooperation. Teachers and kindergarten principals found this intervention to be effective, as evidenced by improvements in the children's behavior specifically in sharing, cooperation, and basic empathy during the activities, as well as the perception that the children were becoming better at waiting their turn and communicating more politely. Qualitatively, the students felt more capable of empathizing with and understanding others' perspectives. However, the implementation of the program is still hampered by limited service hours and a less-than-ideal counselor-to-student ratio within the system support component. This study concludes that structured guidance and counseling services are effective in enhancing social competencies but require stronger school policy support to address human resource constraints.

Keywords: *Guidance and Counseling, Social Skills, the Gysbers Model, Role-Playing.*

Abstrak

Kemerosotan keterampilan sosial siswa di era disrupsi digital dan pasca-pandemi menjadi tantangan serius yang menghambat prestasi akademik dan kesehatan mental. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi praktik layanan Bimbingan dan Konseling (BK) dalam meningkatkan keterampilan sosial siswa dengan mengacu pada model komprehensif Norman C. Gysbers. Menggunakan metode kualitatif studi kasus, penelitian melibatkan guru BK dan siswa sebagai subjek penelitian yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik layanan BK yang paling menonjol adalah bermain terstruktur yang dirancang untuk melatih berbagi, menunggu giliran, dan kerja sama, yang muncul secara konsisten dalam sejumlah sesi observasi dan ditegaskan dalam wawancara dengan guru BK dan kepala TK. Praktik lain yang juga teridentifikasi meliputi bercerita dan diskusi bermuatan nilai sosial, pemanfaatan rutinitas kelas (antre, makan, cuci tangan) sebagai momen latihan kesabaran dan kerja sama yang secara eksplisit

menargetkan empati dan kerja sama. Intervensi ini dirasakan efektif oleh guru dan kepala TK, terlihat dari peningkatan perilaku berbagi, kerja sama, dan empati dasar anak selama kegiatan, serta persepsi bahwa anak semakin mampu menunggu giliran dan berkomunikasi lebih sopan. Secara kualitatif, siswa merasa lebih mampu berempati dan memahami sudut pandang orang lain. Namun, implementasi program masih terkendala oleh keterbatasan waktu layanan dan rasio konselor yang belum ideal pada komponen dukungan sistem (system support). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa layanan BK yang terstruktur efektif meningkatkan kompetensi sosial, namun memerlukan dukungan kebijakan sekolah yang lebih kuat untuk mengatasi hambatan sumber daya manusia

Kata Kunci: Bimbingan dan Konseling, Keterampilan Sosial, Model Gysbers, dan Role-Playing.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital disruption and the post-COVID-19 pandemic, students' social skills have declined significantly. According to the 2022 PISA report (OECD), 42% of adolescents in 81 countries face difficulties in collaboration and interpersonal communication, while a survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) revealed that 38.5% of junior high school students in Indonesia experience social isolation due to prolonged remote learning. This phenomenon not only hinders academic achievement but also increases the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety (25%) and depression (18%) among students aged 12–15 (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2023). Therefore, systematic interventions are needed to equip students with adaptive social competencies.

The BK social services program is designed to help students develop the ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships, understand themselves and others, and adapt to social demands within the school environment (Nurwiati et al., 2025). Based on a meta-analysis of 213 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs involving 97,000 students, LBK interventions improved social skills by 23%, with long-term effects on reducing bullying (9%) and enhancing a positive school climate (Durlak et al., 2011). In Indonesia, Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 111/2014 mandates LBK as a character education service (KEMENPU-PR. SPIP. No 4 Tahun, 2018), yet its implementation remains inconsistent due to counselor shortages (a ratio of 1 counselor to 450 students, according to 2022 PGRI data) (Setyawati, 2024).

Social skills refer to the ability to interact appropriately with one's social environment. Social skills are evident in daily attitudes and behaviors, such as the ability to communicate; adapt; engage in group activities; solve problems; and develop one's

potential within a given context (Suharmini et al., 2017). However, in reality, various social issues are still observed among students, such as a fear of speaking in front of the class and a reluctance to express their opinions, even though they understand the material being taught. These children tend to follow their peers' answers, wait for instructions without taking initiative, and are reluctant to ask questions even when they do not understand the lesson. This indicates that their self-confidence in the learning process is low (Anggraini et al., 2025). This situation suggests that students' social skills have not developed optimally and require special attention from the school.

In addressing these issues, guidance and counseling services play a highly strategic role. Guidance and counseling not only serves as a curative service but also as a means of fostering students' holistic development, including their social well-being. Guidance and counseling is designed to help students overcome academic, social, and emotional challenges so that they can reach their full potential. Through a comprehensive approach, guidance and counseling provides students with full support, helping them make sound decisions, develop personally, and adapt to various life situations (Nadiya Nurhasanah et al., 2025). This concept aligns with Norman C. Gysbers' comprehensive guidance and counseling approach, which emphasizes the professionalism of school counselors and, at that time, began to focus on the strategic and systemic goals of developmental and comprehensive counseling programs (YUNINGSIH & HERDI, 2021).

According to Norman C. Gysbers, a comprehensive guidance and counseling program consists of several key components: basic services (guidance curriculum), responsive services, individual planning, and system support (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). These four components are integrated to help students develop various aspects of their growth, including social skills. Through the guidance curriculum, students are provided with an understanding of good social skills; through responsive services, students are assisted in overcoming the social problems they face; while individual planning helps students design their own development; and system support ensures the effective sustainability of the guidance and counseling program within the school environment.

However, the implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in schools has not yet been fully optimized. In practice, there are still limitations

in the delivery of services, both in terms of the variety of services provided, the strategies employed, and the role of guidance and counseling teachers in developing students' social skills (Ivantoro et al., 2025). Guidance and counseling services sometimes still focus on addressing emerging problems (remedial) and have not been fully effective in carrying out preventive and developmental functions, as emphasized in Norman C. Gysbers' model. Consequently, efforts to improve students' social skills have not yielded optimal results.

In addition, the lack of integration among the components of guidance and counseling services is also one of the obstacles to the development of students' social skills (Ivantoro et al., 2025). However, from Norman C. Gysbers' perspective, the success of guidance and counseling services depends heavily on the integration of all program components as well as the active role of guidance counselors in designing and implementing services systematically. Thus, a deeper understanding is needed regarding how guidance and counseling practices are implemented in schools, particularly in enhancing students' social skills.

Several previous studies have shown that guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in enhancing students' social skills. Research on the implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling based on Norman C. Gysbers' model indicates that services delivered systematically can help students develop social skills, such as interpersonal communication, cooperation, and empathy (Rangkuti et al., 2025).

Other studies have also revealed that the implementation of guidance and counseling services—including group guidance, individual counseling, and classroom-based services—can have a positive impact on improving students' social skills. However, the results of these studies also indicate that there are still challenges in implementing guidance and counseling services, such as time constraints, a lack of variety in techniques, and the suboptimal role of guidance counselors in carrying out comprehensive programs (Hidayah, 2024).

Based on the above discussion, it is important to conduct research on the exploration of guidance and counseling practices aimed at improving students' social skills, grounded in Norman C. Gysbers' comprehensive guidance and counseling model. This study is expected to provide a clear picture of the types of services implemented, the strategies employed, and the role of guidance counselors in developing students' social

skills, thereby serving as a foundation for improving the quality of guidance and counseling services in schools.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-exploratory research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to conduct an in-depth exploration of practical guidance and counseling services provided in kindergartens to enhance children's social skills. Exploratory research was used to obtain a comprehensive picture of the nature of the services, how they are implemented, supporting and hindering factors, and the observable impact on children's social skills from the perspectives of teachers, preschool principals, and parents.

The study was conducted at Raudhatul Jannah IT Kindergarten, located at 30 Kulim Street, Kampung Baru Village, Senapelan Subdistrict, Pekanbaru City, Riau. The primary participants consisted of one kindergarten principal and two guidance counselors who were directly involved in designing and implementing activities related to social skills. A total of four kindergarten children served as subjects for the observation of social behavior in the classroom. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) familiarity with kindergarten policies and programs related to social-emotional development; (2) direct involvement in the planning and implementation of activities that support children's social skills; and (3) willingness to be interviewed and observed.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. One interview was conducted with the kindergarten principal, lasting approximately 40 minutes, and three interviews were conducted with each of the two guidance counselors, each lasting approximately 40 minutes. The interview guidelines included questions regarding the nature of practical services, the planning and implementation of activities, supporting and hindering factors, and perceptions of changes in children's social skills. The interviews were conducted in person, recorded with the informants' permission, and compiled for analysis.

The observations consisted of six classroom sessions, comprising two structured play sessions, two storytelling and discussion sessions, and two classroom routine sessions (play-based learning, religious education, hygiene, and self-care). The

researchers used a Simple Observation Sheet that included: (1) observation details (date, time, class, type of activity); (2) children's social behavior across six aspects, namely sharing, waiting for one's turn, cooperation, basic empathy, simple communication, and self-control; (3) a checklist of teacher roles (modeling, praise, reminding students of social rules, conflict mediation, use of stories/games with social value); and (4) notes on classroom dynamics (classroom atmosphere, descriptions of children's behavior, conflicts, and how they were resolved).

The document review involved analyzing the Daily/Weekly Activity Plans (RKH/RPP) and preschool programs related to social-emotional development (e.g., character-building programs, kindness projects). These documents were used to understand how teachers design activities that support children's social skills and to triangulate the findings with data from interviews and observations.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following these steps: (1) familiarization with the data (repeatedly reading transcripts, observation sheets, and documents); (2) initial coding; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) reporting the results of the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A comprehensive guidance and counseling program is understood as a comprehensive set of planned services designed to help all students achieve their academic, personal, social, and career development goals on an ongoing basis (Mughiroh et al., 2018). Gysbers emphasizes that guidance and counseling in schools must be viewed as a program, not merely a series of incidental activities, and thus requires systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation (Harry & Norman, 2000).

One of the basic assumptions of this model is its developmental and comprehensive nature, meaning that services not only address existing problems but also develop students' competencies and prevent new problems from arising. Such programs are built on a team-based approach, involving counselors, teachers, principals, parents, and other stakeholders within a coordinated framework.

In their further work, Gysbers and Henderson identified four key components of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program: guidance curriculum, responsive

services, individual planning, and system support (Gysbers, Norman C. - Henderson, 2001):

1. Guidance Curriculum

The guidance curriculum is a structured service provided to all students through planned classroom instruction or large-group activities to support personal, social, academic, and career development. The content of this curriculum may include topics such as effective communication, teamwork, emotion management, decision-making, and the prevention of risky behaviors, all of which are integrated into the school curriculum.

2. Responsive Services

Responsive services encompass a counselor's efforts to address students' immediate needs and issues, such as conflicts with peers, anxiety, disciplinary problems, or personal crises. These services may take the form of individual counseling, small-group counseling, mediation, consultation, and referrals to other services as needed.

3. Individual Planning

Individual planning is a service that helps students formulate and monitor their personal, academic, and career goals through both short-term and long-term planning. On the social front, this component enables students to set goals for developing social skills (such as becoming more assertive or being able to work in groups) and to evaluate their progress on a regular basis.

4. System Support

System support encompasses activities that support the sustainability and quality of the guidance and counseling program as a whole, such as program management, professional development for counselors, coordination with teachers and parents, and the development of school policies conducive to student well-being. This component ensures that the guidance and counseling program has a strong structural foundation, administrative support, and adequate resources.

These four components complement one another: the guidance curriculum and individual planning are directly oriented toward all students; responsive services address the needs of students with specific challenges; and system support underpins the overall implementation of the program.

Social skills refer to an individual's ability to exhibit appropriate and effective behavior when interacting with others, thereby achieving communication goals without

harming oneself or others. These skills encompass several dimensions, such as interacting and communicating with others by predicting and understanding their intentions, feelings, emotions, and behaviors (Soto-Icaza et al., 2015).

In the context of adolescent development in high school, strong social skills contribute to a positive classroom environment, peer acceptance, and academic success (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat, I Made Suraharta, 2024). Findings from a meta-analysis of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs indicate that interventions targeting social and emotional skills can enhance students' interpersonal competencies, improve prosocial behavior, and reduce problematic behavior in school (Durlak et al., 2011)

A comprehensive guidance and counseling model provides a clear framework for how schools can systematically develop students' social skills. Through the guidance curriculum, counselors and teachers can design learning units that explicitly train skills such as interpersonal communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution in the classroom setting

Responsive services enable intensive support for students facing challenges in social interaction, for example through individual and group counseling to develop strategies for managing emotions, dealing with bullying, or building self-confidence in social situations. One component of comprehensive guidance and counseling is individual planning services. Individual planning services are provided to all students and are intended to guide students in the development and implementation of personal, social, academic, and career plans (YUNINGSIH & HERDI, 2021). On the other hand, the support system ensures that policies, school culture, and collaboration among stakeholders foster a safe and inclusive social environment, which is a prerequisite for the development of healthy social skills.

In line with SEL research findings, guidance and counseling programs that are comprehensively designed and implemented with high quality tend to result in significant improvements in students' social skills while also enhancing their behavior and academic achievement. Thus, Gysbers' framework can serve as a strong theoretical foundation for explaining how guidance and counseling practices in schools contribute to the development of students' social skills.

1. Description of Guidance and Counseling (LBK) Practices

The implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools demonstrates the variety of practices counselors use to support students social skills.

Table 1. Guidance and Counseling Services

Practice	Description	Evidence in This Study
Structured play (role-based)	Teacher-designed games that require turn-taking, sharing, and cooperative problem-solving.	Observed in 2 sessions; mentioned by both guru BK and head teacher.
Storytelling + discussion	Moral or social-themed stories followed by guided questions about feelings, sharing, and helping.	Observed in 2 sessions; supported by RKH/RPP documents.
Classroom routines	Daily activities such as queuing, washing hands, and eating together used to practice patience and cooperation.	Observed in 2 sessions; reinforced by teacher interviews.
Social-emotional programs	School initiatives (e.g., character day, sharing day) that explicitly target empathy and cooperation.	Document analysis; referenced in head teacher interview.

This pattern indicates that guidance counselors and teachers tend to prioritize active, everyday, and experiential learning approaches in developing children's social competencies, particularly through structured play, story-based discussions, and intentional use of routines.

The predominant use of structured play demonstrates that guidance and counseling services are oriented toward developing empathy, perspective-taking skills, and communication abilities in natural, play-based situations. Meanwhile, storytelling and discussion provides a safe space for children to talk about feelings, helping, and sharing, which supports their social understanding. Although classroom routines and social-emotional programs are not labeled as "counseling sessions," they function as integral parts of the guidance curriculum by offering repeated, real-life opportunities to practice patience, cooperation, and rule-following.

2. The Effectiveness of the Program in Improving Social Skills

Teachers and the head teacher reported that structured play and storytelling sessions helped young children notice their friends feelings and try simple perspective-taking in everyday situations. Observational notes showed that, over the observed sessions, children increasingly used caring language, e.g., "Are you okay?", "Do you

want to play together?” and displayed basic empathic behaviors such as comforting a crying peer or offering help without being prompted. Guidance teachers emphasized that embedding these practices within daily routines (queuing, eating together, washing hands) provided frequent, natural opportunities to practice patience, sharing, and cooperation.

At the same time, teachers highlighted structural constraints, including limited time for dedicated social-emotional activities and a high child-to-teacher ratio, which made it challenging to monitor every child’s social interactions consistently. As a result, teachers prioritized strategies they considered most practical and impactful such as short, repeatable games and brief story-based discussions that could be integrated into existing classroom schedules while still supporting the goal of strengthening children’s social skills.

These qualitative findings align with SEL research suggesting that structured and sustained social-emotional interventions can improve students’ social skills, prosocial behavior, and adjustment to school (Durlak et al., 2011). Structured play and storytelling in this study represent forms of active, interactive, and reflective learning that provide children with opportunities to practice expected social behaviors in a safe and familiar setting. Observational evidence that children increasingly used caring language and showed simple empathic behaviors reinforces the view that these methods are effective for building foundational interpersonal competencies in early childhood.

From the perspective of Norman C. Gysbers’ comprehensive guidance and counseling model, the combination of structured play, storytelling and discussion, classroom routines, and social-emotional programs can be understood as an integrated implementation of the guidance curriculum and responsive services designed to develop and address young learners’ social needs. The guidance curriculum is realized through everyday classroom activities and intentional routines that facilitate all children, while responsive services are reflected in teachers’ ad hoc support for children who experience specific social difficulties (e.g., difficulty sharing, frequent conflicts). The observed improvements in children’s social behaviors suggest that when these components are consistently implemented, the guidance and counseling program is able to have a meaningful impact on social skills in accordance with Gysbers’ framework.

However, teachers' notes regarding time constraints and workload indicate that the "system support" aspect of the Gysbers model has not yet been fully optimized, particularly in terms of school policies and scheduling arrangements that support the comprehensive implementation of social-emotional learning. This finding aligns with evaluations of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs, which indicate that the success of interventions is determined not only by the quality of counseling strategies but also by structural support such as teacher-to-child ratio, availability of time, and school managerial support. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the literature that structured LBK practices aligned with Gysbers' comprehensive framework are effective in improving students' social skills, but their sustainability and expansion are highly dependent on systemic support at the school level. **CONCLUSION**

Based on observations of six guidance and counseling sessions in the kindergarten, the most commonly used practices in efforts to support young learners' social skills were structured play, storytelling followed by guided discussion, and the intentional use of classroom routines, while social-emotional programs (e.g., character day, sharing day) were documented through school documents and teacher interviews. This pattern indicates that the series of services provided was effective in strengthening children's emerging social skills, both in terms of observable behaviors (such as sharing, waiting for turns, and using caring language) and in teachers' perceptions of children's growing empathy and cooperation.

Nevertheless, qualitative findings reveal that program implementation still faces major obstacles in the area of human resources. This situation prevents the optimal implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs, particularly in ensuring the integration of service components and the consistency of sustained intervention implementation.

For guidance and counseling teachers, it is recommended to adopt the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach when designing social skills enhancement services, by dividing interventions into several levels of support (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3) according to students' needs. At the foundational level (Tier 1), guidance and counseling teachers can integrate role-playing and social-emotional learning into classroom-based services for all students, while at the advanced levels (Tier 2 and Tier 3), more intensive services

such as small-group counseling or individual counseling are provided for students exhibiting more serious social interaction difficulties.

For school principals, a stronger policy commitment is required through the allocation of a dedicated budget of at least 5% of the total school budget to strengthen guidance and counseling services. This budget can be used to increase guidance and counseling service hours, procure social skills assessment tools and materials, provide professional development for guidance and counseling teachers regarding SEL programs and the Gysbers comprehensive model, and foster collaboration with relevant external partners.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further research using a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design across multiple schools to test the effectiveness of role-playing, peer mediation, and the RTI model in a more robust and generalizable manner. Further research could also explore moderator variables, such as principal support, student-to-counselor ratio, and classroom climate, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that strengthen or weaken the success of guidance and counseling services in improving students' social skills.

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