

Developing Effective Counseling Strategies for Visually Impaired Students: Personal, Social, Career, and Academic Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the guidance and counseling needs of visually impaired students, emphasizing the importance of tailored programs to address their unique challenges. Using a qualitative approach complemented by quantitative data collection, the research surveyed visually impaired students at SLB – A Karya Murni Medan. The findings reveal that personal needs, such as independent daily living activities, are the highest priority, followed by career needs, including career guidance and decision-making skills. Social needs, involving communication and social interaction, and academic needs, covering fundamental educational skills, were also significant. The analysis underscores the necessity of a comprehensive counseling program designed to support visually impaired students in achieving personal independence, career readiness, social skills development, and academic success. This program should incorporate a thorough understanding of students' needs, clear objectives, and robust implementation strategies to ensure their overall well-being and development.

Keywords: visually impaired students, guidance and counseling, personal needs, career development, educational support programs



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INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counseling are essential components in the educational process as a system. As a system, guidance and counseling are needed to guide students' behavior, especially in facing changes as they grow older. Guidance and counseling are necessary for everyone, including those with special needs. Children with special needs require counseling to help them address their issues and to receive guidance from a counselor in facing their limitations, such as problems in education, career, personal matters, and more. Sunanto (2009: 3) states that children with special needs are those who have permanent or temporary special needs and thus require educational services. Several factors hinder the learning of children with special needs, including environmental factors, factors within the children themselves, and a combination of both. Therefore, the guidance provided by counselors should be based on the obstacles and problems faced by these children.

The role of a counselor is to assist students in solving their problems, and as such, it is natural for a counselor to be a good role model to motivate students to resolve their issues. However, many

children with special needs, particularly those who are visually impaired, do not receive proper counseling services. This issue arises from several factors, including the lack of understanding of guidance and counseling by teachers, the absence of counseling programs in schools, counselors' lack of awareness of their clients' conditions and situations, and the fact that many guidance teachers are not trained counselors. These issues can cause visually impaired children to be reluctant to express their problems, whether personal, social, educational, or career-related. Therefore, counselors must possess competencies such as mastering the concepts and practices of assessment to understand the needs and problems of their clients, mastering the theoretical and practical frameworks of guidance and counseling, designing counseling programs, implementing comprehensive counseling programs, evaluating the outcomes of counseling activities, having awareness and commitment to professional ethics, and mastering the concepts and practices of research in guidance and counseling.

The objective of providing counseling services to visually impaired children aligns with the educational goals outlined in the National Education System Law (UUSPN) of 1989 (Law No.2/1989), which is to develop intelligent, faithful, and pious individuals with noble character, knowledge and skills, mental and physical health, a steady and independent personality, and a sense of social and national responsibility (Depdikbud, 1994:5). The counseling program for visually impaired children aims to help them achieve optimal adjustment according to their remaining abilities, talents, and values. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the role of counselors and the availability of counseling programs for children with special needs are crucial. The form and content of counseling programs depend on the needs and characteristics of the children. Visually impaired children should be provided with an environment that helps them learn independently, develop their imagination, enhance social interactions, and receive adequate protection. Several problems are related to the development of counseling programs for visually impaired students in schools. These include the lack of mapping of visually impaired children's needs based on four areas: personal, social, career, and academic; the ineffectiveness of existing school programs in addressing the needs of visually impaired children; and the absence of comprehensive counseling programs for visually impaired children in schools.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach complemented by quantitative methods for data collection. The quantitative data is gathered using instruments or questionnaires specifically designed for this research. The subjects of this study are all visually impaired students attending SLB – A Karya Murni Medan. The aspects measured include personal, social, and academic aspects. The personal aspect encompasses personal habits such as eating, drinking, toileting, brushing teeth, cutting nails, grooming, and managing household tasks like cleaning and maintaining the house, buying, maintaining, and storing clothes (washing, ironing, folding, and hanging), including maintaining shoes and selecting appropriate clothing. The social aspect

includes the ability to introduce oneself, friendship skills, communication skills, and responsibility. The academic aspect includes social academic skills such as reading, writing, numbers, time, and measurements. Economic management covers handling and managing money, and citizenship encompasses societal rules, rights, and obligations as members of society.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive statistical analysis. Quantitative descriptive statistics present data in tables or graphical presentations. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the frequency distribution of respondents' answers and measure the needs of visually impaired students. Describing the needs of students is done by looking at the mean and standard deviation values. The mean is the average value of all respondents, while the standard deviation represents the variation in respondents' answers. This analysis is not intended to test hypotheses but merely to provide a description of the data based on the average value, standard deviation, maximum value, and minimum value (Ghozali, 2011:19). To test the validity of the items, the Product Moment Correlation formula is used. The validity test results are analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) software for Windows version 20.00. An item is considered valid if the value of Sig. To obtain precise and accurate analysis results and to avoid higher risk of errors in manual calculations, the data processing is aided by the SPSS program version 20.00. The analysis results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha for the self-concept variable is 0.914.

Data Categorization

Overall, there are 16 items of visually impaired students' needs divided into four areas: personal, social, academic, and career needs. The categorization of students' needs levels is divided into two categories: high and low. To create the categorization, theoretical mean and population standard deviation units are required. The standard deviation is calculated by finding the score range, which is the maximum possible score obtained by respondents minus the minimum possible score, then dividing the score range by two (Azwar, 2012).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Personal Needs of Visually Impaired Students

The personal needs of visually impaired students are the highest, accounting for 30% of the total needs, compared to the other three areas: social, academic, and career. This percentage is derived from the students' responses to the needs questionnaire. In the personal domain, there are four items: needing assistance in daily activities, ability to use life-supporting objects, independently cleaning the house and maintaining clothes, and buying and storing items independently. The scores obtained by each student varied. Among these items, buying and storing items independently has the highest percentage at 28%, followed by the ability to use life-

supporting objects at 27%, independently cleaning the house and maintaining clothes at 25%, and needing assistance in daily activities at 20%.

Career Needs of Visually Impaired Students

The career needs of visually impaired students constitute 29%, making it the second highest need. This percentage is based on the scores from the students' responses to the career needs questionnaire. The career domain includes four items: knowledge of available career options, ability to make independent decisions, skills in using and maintaining provided equipment, and doing one's best when given a task. Among these items, knowledge of available career options has the highest percentage at 34%, followed by doing one's best when given a task at 25%, ability to make independent decisions at 22%, and skills in using and maintaining provided equipment at 17%.

Social Needs of Visually Impaired Students

The social needs of visually impaired students account for 22%, ranking third among the four areas. This percentage is concluded from the scores of the students' responses to the social needs questionnaire. The social domain includes four items: introducing oneself properly, friendship skills, communication and expressing opinions to others, and caring about people or events around them. Among these items, communication and expressing opinions to others has the highest percentage at 32%, followed by friendship skills at 25%, introducing oneself properly at 22%, and caring about people or events around them at 21%.

Academic Needs of Visually Impaired Students

The academic needs of visually impaired students are the lowest, accounting for 19%. This percentage is based on the scores from the students' responses to the academic needs questionnaire. The academic domain includes four items: reading and writing skills, understanding numbers, measurements, and time, understanding rights and obligations as a member of society, and understanding public services like post offices and hospitals. Among these items, three have the highest and equal percentages at 26%: understanding numbers, measurements, and time, understanding rights and obligations as a member of society, and understanding public services. Reading and writing skills have a percentage of 22%.

General Overview of the Counseling Program Design for Visually Impaired Students

After identifying the general needs of the students, the next step is to design a counseling program based on the analyzed data of personal, social, academic, and career needs. The counseling program is formulated based on the comprehensive counseling program elements, including the rationale, legal basis, vision and mission, description of student needs, formulation of identified needs, program components, counseling service areas, service themes/topics, action plan, evaluation plan, facilities and infrastructure, and budget.

From the percentage distribution, it can be concluded that visually impaired students require counseling services primarily in the career domain, followed by the personal, social, and lastly, the academic domain. This indicates that academic needs are relatively well met, whereas there is a significant need for counseling services in the career and personal domains. Career for visually impaired children is seen as a vocation (Winkel & Hastuti, 2005: 632). If the work aligns with their condition, abilities, and interests, they will work joyfully and enthusiastically. Conversely, if the work does not align with their inner self, they will likely be less enthusiastic, unhappy, and less diligent. The second highest need is in the personal domain, which relates to understanding oneself and overcoming difficulties in exploring one's potential and developing oneself within the surrounding environment (Suhesti, 2012:17). Personal needs include needing assistance in daily activities, ability to use life-supporting objects, independently cleaning the house and maintaining clothes, and buying and storing items independently. The third highest need is in the social domain, which involves developing healthy and effective social relationships with peers, family members, and the wider social community. This area aims to help students understand their environment, interact positively, develop social skills, solve social problems, adjust themselves, and have harmonious relationships with their social environment, leading to happiness and meaningful life (Lisinus & Sembiring, 2020). The lowest need is in the academic domain, which focuses on optimal learning abilities. This area aims to assist students in achieving optimal learning success (Marsudi, 2003). Academic needs include reading and writing skills, understanding numbers, measurements, and time, understanding rights and obligations as a member of society, and understanding public services.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that visually impaired students' most significant needs are in the personal and career domains. Personal needs, such as independent daily living activities, account for the highest percentage, indicating a strong need for fostering independence. Career needs, including awareness of career options and decision-making skills, are also crucial, emphasizing the importance of career guidance and vocational training. Social needs, while less prominent, are essential for developing communication and social skills. Academic needs, although the least prominent, still require attention to maintain and improve educational skills. Overall, a comprehensive counseling program tailored to these unique needs is vital for the well-being and success of visually impaired students.

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