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The Efforts Of Counseling Teachers In Addressing Adolescent Mental Health Disorders Caused By Bullying

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the efforts of guidance and counseling teachers in handling adolescent mental health disorders resulting from bullying in the ninth-grade class of MTs Ulumul Qur'an Bojongsari, Depok. Bullying is a social problem that can trigger psychological impacts on adolescents, such as anxiety, emotional distress, decreased self-confidence, and a tendency to withdraw from the social environment. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving five informants, namely the principal, the guidance and counseling teacher, and three students acting as the victim, the perpetrator, and a witness of bullying. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions, while data validity was examined using source and technique triangulation. The results indicate that the counseling teacher's efforts include early identification of student problems, individual and group counseling, emotional management assistance, communication with parents, and coordination with professional personnel when necessary. The counseling teacher also plays a role in building a safe school environment through mental health education and bullying prevention. The implementation of these services faces obstacles in the form of social stigma and limited expert personnel. This study emphasizes the importance of empathetic, sustainable, and collaborative counseling services to support adolescent mental health.

Keyword: Guidance and Counseling, Mental Health, Adolescents, Bullying

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescent mental health is a crucial factor that heavily determines success in education because it has a direct impact on academic achievement, school engagement levels, and students' overall socio-emotional development (Monzonís-Carda et al., 2025). Various psychological problems such as excessive stress, anxiety, and depression have been proven to be closely related to declining learning performance, disciplinary issues, and an increased risk of retention or delayed grade progression (Rose et al., 2017). Conversely, positive mental well-being can strengthen students' connection or attachment to the school environment, which in turn significantly reduces the risk of dropping out or becoming part of the NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) population (Larsen et al., 2026). In practice, the provision of school-based mental health services has been proven to improve attendance rates and support students' stress management (Lawson & Burks,2025). Nevertheless, low mental health literacy and social stigma attached to society often remain major barriers for adolescents seeking professional help (Simkiss et al., 2023; Song et al., 2023).

Bullying is a primary trigger for serious adolescent mental health disorders, carrying both short-term and long-term psychological impacts (Han et al., 2025). Whether traditional physical or verbal bullying or cyberbullying, it is closely associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, self-harming behavior, and suicidal ideation (Islam et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2026). Furthermore, victims of bullying frequently experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), behavioral problems, and negative mood changes such as emotional exhaustion and irritability (Idsoe et al.,2016; Díaz-Geada et al., 2020). Psychologically, the experience of bullying often traps adolescents in a cycle of repetitive negative thoughts (rumination), thereby further worsening their mental health condition (Chen et al., 2025). Higher psychopathological risks are also more vulnerable to being experienced by adolescents who already possess pre-existing mental vulnerabilities, disabilities, or histories of adverse childhood experiences (Stephens et al., 2018; Trompeter et al.,2024).

Through individual counseling services, guidance counselors provide a safe space for victims to express their emotions,process trauma, and rebuild their self-confidence and psychological resilience (Bjereld et al., 2025). Synergy between personal mentoring and the creation of a supportive school climate has proven to be the primary foundation for victims' sustainable recovery (Rigby & Griffiths, 2018). The role of guidance and counseling teachers is highly strategic in restoring students' mental health because they act as frontline service providers who directly respond to crises and socio-emotional stress (Kim et al., 2024). Through their unique position within the school environment, counselors are able to implement primary prevention efforts and early interventions to minimize the long-term psychological impacts of bullying (Cross et al., 2021). The support provided has been shown to contribute positively to enhancing resilience, self-esteem, and a sense of mattering, which are vital for students' psychological recovery (Karadaş et al., 2026). In addition,counselors facilitate the development of coping skills and positive attitudes through psychoeducational group services so that students are better empowered to face difficult situations (Hall, 2006). On a systemic level, they also play an active role in advocating for student needs, addressing the social determinants of health through collaboration with teachers and families, and reducing stigma so that students feel brave enough to seek help (Byrd-Badjie et al., 2025; Johnson et al.,2023). The synergy of these various strategic functions makes school counseling services a primary pillar of students' sustainable mental recovery (Yablon, 2018).

Various previous studies confirm that the implementation of empathetic and collaborative counseling approaches is a crucial foundation for increasing the effectiveness of guidance services in the school environment (Moran et al., 2022).Psychologically and neuroscientifically, empathy functions as the core element of the therapeutic process that helps students move beyond egocentrism, build basic social skills, and spark group creativity within a supportive learning climate (Woo et al., 2017). On the other hand, a collaborative approach positions school counselors as leaders of systemic change who advocate for the academic, career, and socio-emotional well-being of all students (Olsen, 2026). Active cross-professional cooperation among counselors, classroom teachers, administrators, and school health personnel is a primary prerequisite for interventions to run in an integrated and sustainable manner (Fish et al., 2025; Slijepčević & Zuković,2021).

Although prior literature affirms the urgency of empathetic and cross-professional collaborative counseling approaches in enhancing student well-being, empirical studies specifically exploring their implementation in handling the psychological impacts of bullying remain limited. Most studies only discuss the effectiveness of guidance services in general or focus on secular schools, thus failing to reveal the collaboration dynamics and structural hurdles faced by guidance and counseling teachers in Islamic madrasahs in restoring late adolescents' mental health. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of empathetic counseling models and cross-professional collaboration deeply contextualized within Islamic boarding school (pesantren) or madrasah-based educational units. This study offers empirical mapping regarding the synergistic mechanisms among guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, and madrasah leadership in handling adolescent mental health disorders caused by bullying during the crucial ninth-grade transition phase, while simultaneously identifying the internal and external determinants of successful intervention.

Theoretically, this study enriches the fields of Islamic guidance and counseling and educational psychology through a conceptual model of bullying trauma management based on empathetic collaboration in madrasahs. Practically, the findings of this study serve as a strategic reference for guidance and counseling teachers, madrasah principals, and education policymakers in designing integrated, responsive, and sustainable mental health intervention protocols to realize a safe, inclusive, and bullying-free learning ecosystem. This study aims to describe the efforts of guidance and counseling teachers in addressing adolescent mental health disorders caused by bullying in the ninth-grade class of MTs Ulumul Qur'an Bojongsari, Depok. Specifically, this study identifies the forms of counseling services, explains case-handling collaboration strategies, outlines supporting and inhibiting factors, and understands the contribution of services toward creating a safe and supportive madrasah environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ulumul Qur'an, Bojongsari, Depok, West Java, from February 19 to November 16, 2024. The data sources were based on real-world phenomena in the field regarding practices for addressing adolescent mental health problems. The methodology employed a descriptive qualitative approach to elucidate the phenomenon in a profound and scientific manner. The determination of research subjects involved the principal, the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, and three students with specific characteristics: a victim of bullying, a former perpetrator of bullying, and a student who had witnessed bullying. The selection of these subjects aimed to obtain comprehensive information regarding the effectiveness of guidance and

counseling services in overcoming the psychological impacts of bullying within the madrasah environment.

This study utilized observation and interview techniques to explore data in depth. Direct observations were conducted at MTs Ulumul Quran to examine the school environmental conditions, student activities, and the implementation of counseling services. Meanwhile, interviews were carried out through interactive dialogues with respondents to gather information focused on the research problems. These qualitative data sources involved five primary informants, consisting of the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Principal, one Guidance and Counseling teacher, and three ninth-grade students. The selection of these informants aimed to ensure that all information gathered regarding the handling of mental health issues caused by bullying could be presented accurately, validly, and comprehensively.

The data analysis process in this study proceeded through four main stages. First, data collection was conducted directly in the field using observation techniques, in-depth interviews using specific guidelines for the madrasah principal, BK teacher, and ninth-grade students, and documentation studies. Second, data reduction, which is the process of recording,detailing, and classifying complex data from the field to make it more focused. Third, data display, carried out by organizing the information into systematic narrative texts to facilitate understanding. Fourth, drawing conclusions as the final stage. Initial temporary conclusions were continuously tested with strong evidence from the field until they yielded clear, accurate, and profound new findings regarding the research focus.

This study established data validity or trustworthiness through four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. First, the credibility test (internal validity) was undertaken to prove the truth of the data concerning the counseling teacher's efforts in addressing adolescent mental health resulting from bullying. This was achieved through source and method triangulation to match data across informants, peer debriefing through analytical discussions, and intensive extension of the researcher's participation in the field to build rapport and trust with the research subjects.Second, the transferability test was designed to provide readers and educational practitioners with a comprehensive overview of the research context. This allows the findings to be understood and applied to other relevant settings or subjects. Third, the dependability test ensured the consistency of the entire research process from start to finish through audits and intensive consultations with academic advisors. Fourth, the confirmability test focused on the objectivity of the research results to ensure that all field findings had been tested for quality accurately and validly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Adolescent Mental Health at MTs Ulumul Qur'an

Awareness of the importance of adolescent students' mental health has grown within the environment of MTs Ulumul Qur'an, both among school management and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers. BK teachers explicitly state that this issue is urgent to address because many students harbor emotional pressure without knowing how to cope with it or whom to confide in. The high school's awareness of the importance of adolescent students' mental health is increasingly rising, especially in supporting academic performance and future well-being (Drake, 2026; Armbruster, 2002; Abhirami & Gupta, 2023). The most frequent factors causing mental health disorders appearing in field data are academic pressure, social conflict, bullying, family issues, and the negative influence

of social media. These factors often overlap and can worsen students' emotional conditions if not addressed immediately.

Symptoms visible when students begin to experience general mental health disorders include social withdrawal, drastic emotional shifts, decreased self-confidence, excessive anxiety, declining learning interest and academic performance, self-injustice, and even in extreme cases, students having self-harm ideation. BK teachers hold a central role in detecting,mentoring, and stabilizing students' mental conditions. Counseling teachers at MTs Ulumul Qur'an have implemented empathetic and non-judgmental approaches, periodic counseling, emotional regulation education, cooperation with parents and external psychologists, as well as comprehensive mental health education. Nevertheless, BK teachers and the principal acknowledge that limited professional staff and social stigma from students and parents remain significant barriers to optimal handling. However, in practice, schools often encounter various mental disorder symptoms in students such as anxiety, depression, and social barriers that demand the central role of Guidance and Counseling teachers as the frontline in prevention, crisis intervention, and student stabilization (Holt & Grills, 2016; Siler et al., 2022; Enokela,2023).

In everything, one will inevitably encounter challenges and obstacles in the process. This is also experienced by BK teachers in providing and educating about the importance of adolescent mental health. The challenges faced are always related to various stigmas against students who come to consult at the BK office. Coupled with students' low awareness and empathy regarding the importance of mental health, students' fear of opening up, and the lack of involvement from some parents, the school needs to strengthen: Mental health education based on character curriculum, implementation of digital counseling services or anonymous systems (suggestion boxes), systematic emotional regulation training programs for students, and student involvement in building a caring and empathetic culture. Nonetheless, this mental health management still faces a series of tricky challenges, ranging from limited professional personnel and social stigma to a lack of staff training (Hartley & Orlando, 2021; Cobb et al., 2023).

Bullying and How the School Handles Bullying

Bullying in the school environment is defined as intentional and repeated aggressive behavior by an individual or a group of students against an individual who has weaker physical,emotional, or social power (Giavrimis, 2020). At MTs Ulumul Qur'an, bullying is understood not merely as banter among students, but as deviant behavior that can repeatedly harm victims physically or psychologically. This awareness has been established among teachers and school management. This clear definition serves as an important foundation for the school in formulating handling and prevention strategies. Based on students' accounts, several forms of bullying frequently occur, namely: Verbal bullying, such as physical teasing, name-calling, and derogatory nicknames; Social exclusion, which involves ignoring or excluding someone from a group; Cyberbullying, particularly through chat applications or social media; Psychological intimidation, such as publicly humiliating someone.

The impacts generated are very serious, especially on the emotional and mental aspects of the victim. Several observable effects include: Decreased self-confidence, fear of coming to school, social withdrawal, impaired learning concentration, prolonged stress, and feelings of worthlessness. Bullying victims generally experience very serious psychological and emotional impacts, including anxiety disorders, deep depression, low self-esteem, somatic symptoms such as headaches,and an

increased risk of suicidal ideation and behavior due to chronic exposure (Zarate-Garza et al., 2017; Borrego-Ruiz & Fernández, 2026).

The school, through BK teachers, has taken various steps to handle bullying cases, including: Individual mentoring for victims, to ensure they obtain a safe space to share and recover emotionally. Counseling for perpetrators, using persuasive approaches to build empathy and responsibility. Mediation between victims and perpetrators, when possible, to improve social relations in class. Summoning parents to cooperate in handling the case. Anti-bullying programs through counseling, seminars, and Islamic character-building activities. To overcome this problem, effective handling steps demand close collaboration between the school especially through the role of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers and parents in terms of early identification, emotional intervention, and the implementation of preventive strategies (van Niejenhuis et al., 2020). Several major challenges faced by the school include: A culture of silence among students,as victims or witnesses fear being labeled as "tattletales." The perception that teasing is normal, especially among students. Low empathy from both perpetrators and the victim's surrounding environment. Stigma against students who seek help, making victims reluctant to speak up.

Guidance and Counseling Services at MTs Ulumul Qur'an

Guidance and Counseling (BK) services at MTs Ulumul Qur'an are designed as an integral part of the educational system that supports students' holistic development: academic, social, emotional, and spiritual. The main function of BK services is not only to solve student problems, but also to accompany them in the process of character formation and psychological well-being. Thus, BK services in this school have a long-term orientation, focusing not just on handling incidental cases, but also on building a sustainable mentoring system. Guidance and Counseling (BK) services in schools are designed with a long-term orientation to support students' academic, personal, and career development through comprehensive and professionally standardized programs (Hickman & Klassen, 2022; Desmond et al., 2022).

To accommodate existing issues, BK services at MTs Ulumul Qur'an are organized into various forms, among others:Individual counseling, which are private sessions to handle students' personal problems. Group counseling, to discuss shared issues such as self-confidence, cooperation, or social conflict. Classical guidance, in the form of counseling inside the classroom or during school activities, including flag ceremonies. Consultation, open to teachers, parents, and students.Case conferences, for handling complex cases together with homeroom teachers and the principal. Referral services, for students requiring advanced professional assistance. Orientation and information services, delivered during new student orientation activities, motivational seminars, and social education. To meet students' diverse needs, BK services are applied in various forms, ranging from classroom guidance curricula and individual or group counseling to school-wide initiatives and collaborative referral services (Xiong et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2021).

Not only waiting for students to come for consultation, BK teachers also remain active in reaching out to students in classrooms and school activities. BK teachers are also involved in: Direct observation of student behavioral changes, peer conflict mediation, mentoring bullying victims and perpetrators, conducting routine counseling sessions, and compiling monthly and annual guidance programs. In implementation, BK teachers also take on a very active role within the classroom through the delivery of guidance materials, leadership, and close collaboration with subject teachers to realize social justice for students (Eberts & Graham, 2022; DeVoss & Surmitis, 2016; Lin, 2024).

BK services receive full support from the principal, both in terms of policy, facilities, and training. The principal provides a comfortable counseling space, encourages collaboration between BK teachers and homeroom teachers, and ensures these services are integrated into the school agenda. Collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents is also conducted actively, especially in handling cases requiring a comprehensive approach. The effectiveness of this service is certainly inseparable from the full support of the principal and cross-sectoral cooperation involving administrators, parents, and the community (Solmonson, 2024).

For the development of guidance and counseling activities, evaluations must continue to be held. The forms of service evaluation are conducted routinely through case reflections, periodic reports, and the creation of student and teacher satisfaction questionnaires regarding guidance and counseling services. From the evaluations conducted, BK teachers formulate future service development plans and make innovations such as creating an online suggestion box to reach students reluctant to speak directly, digital counseling systems, peer counselor establishment, and routine collaboration with internal psychologists. As an effort toward continuous improvement, BK services are routinely evaluated based on student perception and satisfaction levels, and continue to innovate to answer the dynamic challenges of the times (Wangid et al., 2025).

Counseling Teachers' Efforts in Handling Adolescent Mental Health Disorders Due to Bullying

Counseling teachers at MTs Ulumul Qur'an play a vital role in mentoring students experiencing mental health disorders due to bullying. They function not only as listeners, but also as facilitators of emotional recovery, solution directors, and liaisons with the school and family. This role is important because many student victims of bullying tend to shut themselves in and harbor emotional pressure in silence. In bullying prevention and recovery efforts, counseling teachers have a vital role to detect,mentor, and build trust relationships with victims to enhance student self-resilience (Karadaş et al., 2026).

In handling students psychologically impacted, counseling teachers apply a systematic approach, including: Initial assessment of students' mental conditions through observation and informal conversations. Periodic individual and group counseling to provide expression space and emotional support. Motivation and self-confidence strengthening, including simple emotional management exercises such as relaxation techniques and reflection. Value education, using an Islamic character approach as a foundation to build understanding and empathy. Post-counseling monitoring to ensure students' conditions improve sustainably. To support this, schools apply a systematic approach through comprehensive psychological handling strategies, such as providing coping skill training, participation in support groups, and structured developmental guidance programs (Nen & Weldemeskel, 2025; Kvarme et al., 2016).

One of the strengths of counseling teachers' efforts at MTs Ulumul Qur'an is the ability to build cross-party cooperation.In handling serious cases, BK teachers involve: Homeroom teachers for additional classroom observation, parents for home-side approaches, the principal for policy support, and external psychologists if professional handling is truly needed. Although efforts have been running well, several challenges remain, such as: Stigma from students who still consider visiting the BK office to mean "there is a big problem" or "being weak." The lack of victims' courage to speak up directly, causing cases to often be uncovered only when they have become severe. Resource limitations, including specialized professional staff like school psychologists. However, the effectiveness of handling these cases heavily depends on cross-party cooperation between teachers,

parents, and school counselors in formulating flexible strategies considering the complexity of group dynamics in the field (Al-Raggad, 2023; Franck, 2024).

Innovations and strategy development are ultimately needed as a response to existing challenges. Innovations that have been designed include digital suggestion boxes to reach students who are uncomfortable speaking directly, peer counseling by forming peer support groups trained in basic empathy, training non-BK teachers to be more sensitive to students' emotional shifts, and student-centered preventive activities such as anti-bullying campaigns and mental health seminars. Therefore, various innovations continue to be developed, including the implementation of whole-school prevention models, the integration of social-emotional learning, and periodic evaluations to address conventional bullying and cyberbullying challenges sustainably (Elbedour et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Guidance and Counseling (BK) services at MTs Ulumul Qur'an Bojongsari, Depok, have been running actively and in a structured manner through individual counseling, group counseling, and responsive services to support student well-being. However, the school still faces real challenges in the form of bullying phenomena, both verbal and social exclusion, originating from differences in physical appearance, voice, or introverted personalities. These conditions trigger serious psychological pressure and mental health disorders in students, such as anxiety, decreased learning motivation, social withdrawal, and loss of self-confidence for both victims and perpetrators. BK teachers hold a central role as recovery facilitators, initial screeners, and emotional companions through assessment, counseling, and collaboration with parents. Nevertheless, obstacles such as social stigma, limited facilities, and a culture of silence among students still require the strengthening of early detection systems and comprehensive approaches from all components of the madrasah.

As a follow-up to these findings, the researcher provides strategic recommendations for various related parties. For BK teachers, it is recommended to enhance proactive approaches, utilize student-friendly online counseling media, and establish trained peer support groups. Management and school principals need to provide strong structural support,present access to external professional consultations, and integrate mental health education and anti-bullying campaigns into school activities. Parents are urged to be more responsive to their children's emotional changes, build empathetic communication at home, and collaborate closely with the madrasah. Meanwhile, for future researchers, it is recommended to develop research using quantitative approaches to measure the effectiveness of counseling services or expand the scope of comparison to other educational levels.

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