

Enhancing Learning Processes: The Impact of Guidance and Counseling Programs on Visually Impaired High School Students

Imam Yuwono* and Utomo

Department of Special Needs Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia

Abstract: This study examines the role and effect of a guidance and counseling program on the learning processes of visually impaired students within an inclusive educational environment. The study investigates the implementation of principles and services offered by the program to address the specific needs of visually impaired students. The study was conducted in several senior high schools that provide inclusive education in Bandung and its surrounding areas. The study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to align with the characteristics of the challenges faced by visually impaired students.

The findings reveal various difficulties visually impaired students encounter during their learning processes. In response, teachers and counselors provide guidance and counseling interventions to support students in overcoming these challenges. The programs implemented address the immediate educational obstacles and foster students' self-confidence, encouraging their pursuit of higher education opportunities, such as entering university.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by shedding light on the significance of guidance and counseling programs tailored to visually impaired high school students' unique needs. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating comprehensive support systems within inclusive educational settings to enhance visually impaired students' learning experiences and outcomes. The study's implications highlight the potential for further research and the need for policymakers and educational institutions to prioritize developing and implementing effective guidance and counseling programs for visually impaired students.

Keywords: Visually impaired students, guidance and counseling programs, inclusive education, learning processes, higher education opportunities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past four to five decades, significant endeavors have been undertaken to enhance the accessibility of education for all children. These efforts have been the product of extensive discussions, conferences, declarations, and conventions, all with the overarching goal of promoting inclusive education and fostering behavioral transformations that can lead to practical consensus. Despite these concerted efforts, the reality in many countries is that only 50-60% of children without disabilities and a mere 2-3% of children with disabilities have the opportunity to attend school [1].

The government has established legislation addressing inclusive education in Indonesia, underscoring its commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities for all children. This commitment is further exemplified by the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of National Education, the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Directorate of Special Educational Needs. These entities have collaboratively developed a

comprehensive policy framework to support special educational needs programs and ensure the implementation of inclusive education practices.

The realization of the benefits of inclusive education in Indonesia is of paramount importance. This stems from the fundamental principle that all human beings possess equal rights and obligations. Moreover, the concept of inclusivity is reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which affirms that individuals with disabilities have the same rights and obligations to live and develop following their potential within society.

Based on the policy mentioned above, it becomes evident that inclusive education is not only an international concern but also a national priority in Indonesia. The government's commitment to ensuring inclusive education reflects its desire to uphold the rights of children with special educational needs. Despite the relatively small number of children with such needs, the government remains steadfast in recognizing and safeguarding their rights. However, the Directorate of Special Educational Needs data in 2007 indicated that only 24.7% of children with special needs received formal education. This means that out of 318,600 children with disabilities in Indonesia, only 78,698 were accessing formal education.

*Address correspondence to this author at the Department of Special Needs Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, 70123, Indonesia; Tel: +6205113304914; E-mail: yuwonoulm@gmail.com

Consequently, the right to education for 65.3% of children with special needs remains unfulfilled. Moreover, these figures are predicted to increase, considering the low percentage of children attending school (just 0.7% of the total population) and the limited availability of comprehensive data.

Among the population of children with permanent special needs in Indonesia, those with blindness or visual impairment constitute the majority. Empirical evidence demonstrates that visually impaired children are the most prevalent group within the inclusive education system. In Indonesia, the journey towards inclusive education began in 1978 with the introduction of integrated education for blind students. Since then, many visually impaired students have completed their education in mainstream schools. This achievement is supported by several arguments highlighting the ability of visually impaired students to thrive in inclusive educational settings.

Firstly, from an academic perspective, visual impairment does not pose a significant obstacle for blind students to enroll in mainstream schools. Hardman [2] states that visually impaired students exhibit intellectual capacities comparable to non-disabled peers. Any hindrance they might encounter would primarily affect their cognitive function development.

Secondly, regarding social skills, the reduced visual function does not significantly impact the social development of blind students. They can develop and refine their social skills within the inclusive school environment.

Thirdly, regarding mobility, inclusive education offers visually impaired students valuable opportunities to enhance their mobility alongside their non-disabled peers. This inclusive environment facilitates basic orientation and movement, contributing to visually impaired students' overall growth and independence.

Inclusion is an ideological framework that encompasses the collective responsibility of the entire school community, including principals, teachers, school administration officers, students, and parents, to provide education for all students and ensure their holistic development. It goes beyond simply enrolling students with special educational needs in public schools; it represents a broader concept. Inclusion can only be effectively implemented when the entire school community comprehends and embraces the presence of these students.

According to UNESCO [3], the term "inclusion" can have different interpretations in various countries. It is sometimes associated with students who live in marginalized or disadvantaged conditions. However, it commonly refers to integrating students with disabilities or special educational needs into mainstream schools.

According to Nakata [4], the education system for children with disabilities in Japan encompasses three distinct approaches: segregation, integration, and inclusion. Segregation education involves two types: specialized schools for students with special educational needs and teachers who instruct children with chronic illnesses at hospitals or homes. Integration education allows children with disabilities to attend mainstream schools without specific modifications in the school environment. Lastly, inclusion education can be implemented in two ways: through special classes or by integrating students with disabilities into regular classes within mainstream schools. In the case of inclusion education, parents have the autonomy to decide which educational setting best suits their child's needs.

According to Koestler [5], an individual is legally blind if their visual acuity in the best Seeing Eye, even with vision correction, is 20/200 or less. Alternatively, if their visual field is restricted to a maximum angular distance of 20 degrees, they are also classified as legally blind. This restriction applies to individuals with more than 20/200 central visual acuity but with a visual field defect in their better eye. In such cases, the peripheral field is contracted to the extent that the widest diameter of their visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.

In the given definition, the measurement of visual acuity is based on a distance of 20 feet or 6 meters. This means that a person's visual acuity is assessed by their ability to see clearly at this distance. On the other hand, 200 feet or 60 meters is the distance at which individuals with normal eyesight can read the largest letter on the Snellen eye chart, which serves as a reference point for determining visual acuity.

In this context, Angular distance refers to an individual's capacity to perceive objects from the side. It indicates the extent to which someone can see objects away from their central field of vision.

Guidance and counseling are interventions that can effectively support individuals in implementing behavioral changes [6]. The concept of guidance and counseling can be further elucidated as follows:

Guidance and counseling is a process aimed at assisting and supporting individuals. Central to this principle is the notion that the individual seeking guidance and counseling (the counselee) recognizes the importance and necessity of such support, making it relevant to their specific needs. It is crucial to emphasize that providing guidance and counseling services should not be imposed upon the counselee but rather sought by them willingly. However, coercion may be necessary when the counselee is not proactive in seeking help. In such cases, the benefits of guidance and counseling can help alleviate any feelings of coercion experienced by the counselee.

The primary objective of guidance and counseling is to facilitate the counselee's journey towards independence, particularly in realizing their full potential. Through guidance and counseling services, the counselee is anticipated to develop independent behaviors and adopt personal values. Furthermore, emotional independence is also emphasized as a desired outcome. According to Sternberg et al. [7], the focus of guidance and counseling is directed toward nurturing individuals who are psychologically and socially healthy, capable of making informed decisions, and actively pursuing their chosen career path. Additionally, the service aims to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to become productive and valuable members of society through education.

A guidance and counseling service serves as a means to support the counselee in several aspects: (a) gaining a comprehensive understanding of oneself and the surrounding environment, (b) fostering a clear vision, motivation, and positive attitude, and developing the necessary abilities and skills to make plans and decisions in various domains such as personal, social, academic, and career aspirations, and (c) cultivating a sense of responsibility and problem-solving capabilities.

The counselor, in their role as the provider of assistance and the counselee as the recipient of support, exemplifies the specialized nature of guidance and counseling as a distinct service within the field of education. It is a profession that requires specialized training and expertise in guidance and counseling.

As mentioned earlier, the primary objective of guidance and counseling is to foster the development of independence in the counselee. This independence encompasses the ability to self-help and take

responsibility for one's actions. A self-reliant individual can plan, make, and implement decisions across various domains, including personal-social, academic, and career.

Additionally, guidance and counseling, along with education in general, strive to facilitate the optimal growth and development of counselees or students, considering their potential and the resources available to them. The ultimate goal is to support individuals in reaching their full potential within their given circumstances and to enhance their overall well-being and success.

Guidance and counseling serve multiple functions: prevention and development, understanding and receiving, adjustment and distribution, and reparation and recovery.

Regarding prevention and development, guidance and counseling are crucial in facilitating a comprehensive and balanced developmental process for the counselee. It equips individuals with the necessary skills to navigate challenges and obstacles that may hinder their development.

Understanding and receiving involves aiding the counselee in understanding themselves accurately, including their potential, capabilities, attitudes, and environment, such as their school, family, and society. This process also fosters a positive self-perception and outlook toward their surroundings.

Guidance and counseling further serve the function of adjustment and distribution, which aims to assist the counselee in adapting to their dynamic environment constructively. This involves developing strategies and skills to effectively cope with changes and maintain a healthy balance between different aspects of their life.

Additionally, for counselees facing more serious challenges such as conflicts, stress, or psychological conditions, the reparation and recovery function of guidance and counseling comes into play. It involves providing specialized support and interventions to help individuals overcome these difficulties and regain their well-being.

It is important to note that guidance and counseling for visually impaired students follow a similar framework to that provided for students in general. This emphasizes the shared human qualities and similarities, highlighting that individuals have more commonalities than differences regardless of physical, sensory, or intellectual abilities [8].

Previous studies regarding the impact of guidance and counseling programs on visually impaired high school students, such as Azwar [9], determine the role of guidance counseling teachers in developing students' social dimensions, starting with the adjustment process at school. It highlights the positive impact of these programs on the social dimensions development of visually impaired high school students.

Meanwhile, Wolffe and Erin [10] focus on an overview of the legislative and programmatic initiatives that impact providing services to students with visual impairments as they transition from secondary school settings to adult roles and responsibilities. It emphasizes the need for targeted support services to address visually impaired students' unique challenges during this transition period.

Furthermore, through an integrative literature review, Manitsa and Doikou [11] state that students with visual impairments often experience emotional problems and struggle to form and maintain social relationships. The social support provided to these students by staff members and their peers in educational institutions may positively impact their academic learning and socioemotional development.

Also, Lund and Cmar [12] highlight the need to teach vocational skills, particularly job search skills, to youth with visual impairments and to support their completion of post-secondary education. The findings highlight the role of counseling in helping students with visual impairments navigate career-related decisions and transitions beyond high school.

Based on previous studies mentioned above, there are limited studies that examine the specific impact of guidance and counseling on the learning processes of visually impaired high school students: While the importance of guidance and counseling programs for promoting inclusive education and supporting the overall development of visually impaired students has been recognized, there is the specific impact of these programs on the learning processes of visually impaired high school students. This includes understanding how guidance and counseling interventions can enhance academic achievement, learning strategies, study skills, and overall educational outcomes for visually impaired high school students.

This study aims to examine the implementation of guidance and counseling principles within the learning process of visually impaired students in an inclusive

educational setting. Additionally, it seeks to investigate the provision and utilization of guidance and counseling services specifically designed for visually impaired students.

The study will analyze how guidance and counseling principles are put into practice to support the educational journey of visually impaired students within an inclusive environment. It will explore the strategies, approaches, and interventions employed by educators, counselors, and other stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of guidance and counseling programs for these students.

Furthermore, the study will investigate the availability, accessibility, and quality of guidance and counseling services tailored to the needs of visually impaired students. It will examine the extent to which visually impaired students utilize these services and explore the factors that may facilitate or hinder their access to and engagement with guidance and counseling support.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of guidance and counseling principles and services, this study aims to provide insights into the strengths, challenges, and potential areas for improvement in supporting the learning processes of visually impaired students within an inclusive educational setting. The findings of this study can inform educational practitioners, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders in enhancing the provision and effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs for visually impaired students, ultimately promoting their holistic development and educational success.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive research method to comprehensively examine and analyze several aspects related to the education of visually impaired students within an inclusive educational setting. The following aspects were investigated:

- 1) The study aimed to identify and understand the challenges visually impaired students face when they receive education in an inclusive educational setting. By examining these challenges, the research sought to gain insights into the difficulties and obstacles visually impaired students encounter in their educational journey.

- 2) Another important focus of the study was to explore the implementation of guidance and counseling principles by teachers during the learning process of visually impaired students in an inclusive education setting. The research investigated how teachers integrate guidance and counseling approaches to support visually impaired students' academic, social, and emotional development.
- 3) Additionally, the study investigated the implementation of guidance and counseling services provided by counselors specifically for visually impaired students within an inclusive educational setting. It aimed to explore the role of counselors in addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by visually impaired students, as well as the strategies they employ to promote their overall well-being.
- 4) The research also aimed to identify and understand the specific needs of visually impaired students regarding guidance and counseling services in an inclusive educational setting. It sought to explore the support and interventions required by visually impaired students to enhance their educational experience and promote their holistic development.
- 5) Moreover, the study examined various guidance and counseling programs and strategies implemented to meet the specific needs of visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting. It aimed to analyze the effectiveness of these programs and strategies in facilitating visually impaired students' learning, social integration, and personal growth.
- 6) Finally, the study sought to assess the contribution of implementing guidance and counseling principles to the learning activities of visually impaired students within an inclusive educational setting. It aimed to explore how integrating guidance and counseling practices positively influences visually impaired students' academic achievements, self-confidence, and overall well-being.

The empirical results were then analyzed using guidance and counseling concepts within an inclusive educational setting for visually impaired students. Based on this empirical-conceptual analysis, guidance

and counseling programs and intervention strategies were formulated for visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. A quantitative approach was used to investigate the respondents' experiences regarding implementing inclusive education. This quantitative approach provided a foundation for expanding the qualitative study.

A descriptive method was used to describe and analyze the following aspects of an inclusive education setting: 1) the problems facing visually impaired students when they are educated; (2) the implementation of guidance and counseling principles conducted by teachers in the learning process of visually impaired students; (3) the implementation of guidance and counseling services conducted by counselors for visually impaired; (4) the needs of visually impaired students regarding guidance and counseling services; (5) the guidance and counseling programs and strategies to facilitate the needs of visually impaired students; and (6) the contribution of the implementation of the principles of guidance and counseling to the learning activities of visually impaired students.

To further enrich the quantitative data, a qualitative approach was used to investigate the respondents' experiences in the implementation of inclusive education. This approach is the background to expanding the qualitative study.

This approach involved field observations and interviews with the respondents. As Nasution [13] suggests, a comprehensive qualitative study involves observing individuals within their environment, understanding their language, and interpreting their surroundings.

The study used a purposive sampling method to select the subjects, including visually impaired students, teachers, and counselors from senior high schools in and around Bandung, the capital of West Java province in Indonesia. Participants were selected based on their diverse characteristics, elements, and values relevant to the educational experiences of visually impaired students within an inclusive high school setting. The subjects of this study included those possessing various characteristics, elements, and values related to the activities of visually impaired

students in education, especially in an inclusive educational setting at the high school level. The subjects were visually impaired students and their teachers and counselors at senior high schools providing inclusive education in and around Bandung. By employing this sampling method, the study ensured that the participants represented a range of perspectives and experiences necessary for gaining comprehensive insights into the role and impact of guidance and counseling programs in the context of inclusive education for visually impaired students at the high school level.

The results of the empirical analysis were then analyzed using the guidance and counseling concepts in the inclusive educational setting for visually impaired students. From this empirical–conceptual analysis, guidance and counseling programs and intervention strategies for visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting were formulated.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Problems Encountered by Visually Impaired Students when Receiving Education in an Inclusive Educational Setting

Visually impaired students encounter four significant challenges when receiving education in an inclusive educational setting. These challenges encompass the following areas: lessons and explanations provided by teachers, accessibility of the learning environment and resources, mobility in interacting with teachers and peers, and the treatment experienced within the learning environment.

During lessons, visually impaired students struggle to understand and follow teachers' explanations across various subjects. To overcome this issue, students employ strategies such as writing down explanations using a stylus or pen or recording the teachers' lessons with tape recorders. If there are aspects they struggle to comprehend, they typically seek assistance from friends, often after the lesson concludes. Students may also schedule appointments with readers, seek help from dormitory caregivers, or attempt to tackle the task independently.

Regarding the accessibility of the learning environment, nearly all students (93%) make concerted efforts to overcome the challenges associated with using school facilities. They seek assistance and strive to address problems on their own. The absence of braille books or learning materials is not seen as an

insurmountable obstacle for visually impaired students. They can usually borrow books and materials, relying on class readers or friends to read them aloud.

Regarding interaction with peers, most visually impaired students (87%) undertake various efforts to overcome difficulties in conveying their ideas and thoughts to friends. They consider friends a valuable outlet for expressing emotions and engaging in discussions. They also rely on friends as a source of support, and if they encounter communication problems, they actively seek ways to overcome them.

Regarding social adjustment, most visually impaired students (73%) expect that the services provided by their teachers will assist them in addressing social challenges. However, only 40% of visually impaired students believe their teachers adequately provided this support. Nevertheless, the majority (93%) perceive that teachers' services will positively impact their social adjustment.

3.2. Guidance and Counseling Services Performed by Counselors in the Learning Process

The study identified four primary types of assistance for visually impaired students: basic service, responsive service, individual planning service, and system support service. The basic service focuses on creating an inclusive and supportive environment within the school community, raising awareness about the challenges visually impaired students face, and ensuring accessibility in the learning environment through collaboration with staff.

The responsive service addresses immediate concerns by providing individual counseling to help visually impaired students cope with emotional, social, and academic challenges. Group counseling sessions and peer support programs are also offered to encourage interaction and mutual support.

The individual planning service involves close collaboration between counselors and visually impaired students to create personalized plans and goals, including career exploration and individualized education plans.

The system support service aims to enhance the overall guidance and counseling system by advocating for visually impaired students' needs and ensuring adequate resources and support services are available through collaboration with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Professional development activities

are utilized to enhance counselors' skills in effectively serving visually impaired students.

Overall, visually impaired students demonstrated resourcefulness and resilience in navigating the obstacles they face within inclusive educational settings. They employ various strategies, seek support from friends and educators, and actively adapt to ensure their educational experience is inclusive and fruitful.

3.3. Guidance and Counseling Needs of Visually Impaired Students

The study found that fulfilling the guidance and counseling needs of visually impaired students revolves around three key aspects: materials, services, and accessibility. The students expressed a desire for materials that improve their self-assessment and boost their confidence, ultimately supporting their goal of living independently. Regarding accessibility, most visually impaired students expressed their ability to navigate independently to counseling rooms, while some agreed that they required minimal assistance from teachers. Additionally, more than half of these students expressed a need for group counseling to address difficulties effectively. Although the visually impaired students perceived easy access to guidance and counseling services, they reported infrequent encounters despite facing various challenges in academic, personal, social, and career domains.

3.4. The Guidance and Counseling Programs and Intervention Strategies

In the inclusive educational settings under study, the visually impaired students received learning tutorials akin to their sighted peers. The guidance and counseling services encompass various programs and intervention strategies to cater to the specific needs of visually impaired students.

The existing personal and social guidance program aims to boost self-confidence and adaptive behavior among visually impaired students, helping them recognize opportunities within their developmental environment.

The academic guidance program available assists students in overcoming learning-related challenges and provides support in accessing books and reference materials. This program is also intended to encourage students to stay motivated when facing difficulties in the learning process.

3.5. The Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Principles to Assist in the Learning Process of Visually Impaired Students in an Inclusive Educational Setting

Implementing guidance and counseling in the learning process of visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting encompasses ten key aspects: confidentiality, voluntarism, openness, activity, independence, contemporaneity, dynamism, coherence, harmony, expertise, and overhand.

Regarding confidentiality, most teachers (73%) recognize the importance of keeping the information shared by visually impaired students confidential. They understand that such information is personal and should not be disclosed. Additionally, 91% of teachers express their availability to provide guidance and counseling support to visually impaired students anytime. Most teachers (77%) do not feel interrupted when these students seek guidance and counseling, and they are prompt in attending to their needs. Moreover, nearly all teachers (96%) have had experience teaching visually impaired students and treating them like any other student.

Regarding implementing guidance and counseling, most teachers (82%) actively encourage visually impaired students to participate in these services. They aim to foster independent and creative behavior among these students and provide necessary support without creating excessive emotional dependence (as acknowledged by 77% of teachers). Many teachers (77%) also try to apply the principles of guidance and counseling to address the specific challenges visually impaired students face. Additionally, 86% of teachers tailor their approaches based on the student's developmental stage.

Regarding integrating educational services at school, most teachers (91%) believe that guidance and counseling programs complement other school services. The guidance and counseling services work harmoniously with other school support systems. Furthermore, many teachers (68%) believe that visually impaired students benefit from the guidance and counseling services offered at school.

Most teachers (86%) perceive appropriately trained educators delivering guidance and counseling services. They have confidence in the expertise of these professionals. However, a lower percentage of teachers (40%) report accepting visually impaired students from other schools, indicating that most

visually impaired students attending their school are not transfers.

In summary, these findings highlight the importance of maintaining confidentiality, promoting voluntary participation, fostering independence, and aligning guidance and counseling services with the overall educational support system to enhance the learning experience of visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Guidance and Counseling Services are Performed by Counselors in the Learning Process of Visually Impaired Students in an Inclusive Educational Setting

In implementing guidance and counseling for visually impaired students, counselors utilize four main services: basic service, responsive service, individual planning service, and system support service.

The basic service that counselors provide involves creating a supportive and inclusive environment for visually impaired students. This includes raising awareness among teachers, students, and the school community about visually impaired students' unique needs and challenges. Counselors also collaborate with teachers and other staff members to ensure that the learning environment is accessible and accommodating for these students.

The responsive service counselors offer addresses immediate concerns and issues that visually impaired students face. Counselors provide individual counseling and support to help students cope with emotional, social, and academic challenges. They also facilitate group counseling sessions or peer support programs to encourage interaction and mutual support among visually impaired students.

The individual planning service involves working closely with visually impaired students to develop personalized plans and goals. Counselors assess students' strengths, interests, and aspirations to assist in career exploration and decision-making. They guide in developing individualized education plans (IEPs) and transition plans to help visually impaired students successfully navigate their educational journey and transition to post-secondary education or employment.

The system supports service counselors provide aims to improve the overall guidance and counseling system for visually impaired students in the inclusive

educational setting. Counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to advocate for visually impaired students' needs and ensure appropriate resources and support services are available. They also participate in professional development activities to enhance their knowledge and skills in serving visually impaired students effectively.

By utilizing these four services, counselors are crucial in promoting visually impaired students' holistic development and well-being in an inclusive educational setting.

4.2. The Needs of Visually Impaired Students Regarding Guidance and Counseling in an Inclusive Educational Setting

Fulfilling the needs of visually impaired students regarding guidance and counseling involves three key aspects: materials, services, and accessibility.

Visually impaired students expect that the materials provided in guidance and counseling will improve their self-assessment, enabling them to feel more capable and confident. They believe that enhancing their self-assessment and gaining confidence will ultimately support their goal of living independently.

Regarding accessibility, most visually impaired students can independently navigate to the guidance and counseling rooms, with only a few requiring assistance from a teacher. More than half of these students express the need for group guidance and counseling when they encounter difficulties.

Although visually impaired students in the participating schools perceive that they have easy access to guidance and counseling services offered by their counselors, they report infrequent encounters despite experiencing various challenges, be their academic, personal, social, or related career information.

Therefore, addressing the needs of visually impaired students in the context of guidance and counseling should encompass appropriate materials that enhance self-assessment and confidence-building, ensuring accessible and inclusive services and actively engaging visually impaired students in group counseling sessions to address their unique challenges effectively. Additionally, it is crucial for counselors to proactively reach out to visually impaired students, recognizing and addressing their diverse needs across academic, personal, social, and career domains.

4.3. Guidance and Counseling Programs and Intervention Strategies to Facilitate the Needs of Visually Impaired Students in an Inclusive Educational Setting

In an inclusive educational setting, visually impaired students receive learning tutorials similar to those provided to other students. The guidance and counseling services offered to visually impaired students encompass various programs and intervention strategies, including:

- 1) Personal and social guidance program: This program aims to help visually impaired students understand their position and recognize the opportunities within their developmental environment. It promotes self-confidence and adaptive behavior among students.
- 2) Academic guidance program: This program assists students in solving learning-related problems or difficulties. It also supports them in finding and utilizing books and reference materials. Additionally, the program helps increase students' motivation when they encounter challenges in the learning process.
- 3) Career guidance program: This program provides visually impaired students with information about universities, the enrollment process, and different learning styles. Counselors advise students on suitable job options for visually impaired individuals, such as telephone operators, translators, teachers, massage therapists, musicians, and farmers. These occupations are feasible for visually impaired individuals if they receive education aligned with their interests and abilities.

Three important points have been identified in this study regarding intervention strategies for guidance and counseling. Firstly, counselors strive to enhance their ability to recognize students' problems and needs effectively. Secondly, teachers aim to identify the underlying causes of students' challenges. Lastly, schools collaborate with parents, orientation teachers, social workers, or doctors to address technical issues related to visual impairment that may impact students' education.

By implementing these programs and intervention strategies, guidance and counseling services can better support the specific needs of visually impaired students in an inclusive educational setting.

4.4. The Contribution of Guidance and Counseling for Visually Impaired Students' Learning Activities

Implementing guidance and counseling principles has yielded positive contributions to visually impaired students, as evidenced by interviews and observations. Visually impaired students express their satisfaction with the guidance and counseling provided by their teachers, highlighting their positive impact on their educational experience. They feel comfortable learning in an inclusive classroom environment, attributing this to the teachers' commitment to maintaining confidentiality. Moreover, they feel respected and valued as they are actively encouraged to participate in classroom activities. The support extended by the entire school community further motivates these students to engage in their learning journey.

These positive experiences have a profound psychological impact on visually impaired students. They develop a positive self-assessment, feeling more capable and confident in their abilities. As a result, they are motivated to become more independent and self-reliant, equipping themselves to face future challenges with determination and resilience.

5. CONCLUSION

This research sheds light on the challenges visually impaired students face in mainstream schools and emphasizes the significance of guidance and counseling services in addressing their unique needs. Visually impaired students encounter various difficulties in the learning process, including understanding visual-based explanations and accessing learning materials. The study highlights the teachers' perspective, emphasizing the importance of conducting assessments before teaching visually impaired students and implementing guidance and counseling principles rooted in integrity and harmony.

The guidance and counseling services offered to visually impaired students are similar to those provided to sighted students, yet they are still perceived as beneficial by the visually impaired individuals. These services encompass personal-social, academic, and career guidance to resolve personal, social, academic, and career-related difficulties. The interviews and observations emphasize that visually impaired students expect timely and effective problem-solving support from their teachers.

Moreover, implementing guidance and counseling principles positively contributes to visually impaired

students' experiences in inclusive schools. The guidance and counseling programs enable visually impaired students to develop independence and strive for a better future by creating a safe and comfortable learning environment and fostering motivation and self-confidence.

6. LIMITATIONS

While this study on guidance and counseling for visually impaired students in inclusive schools offers valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. These include the small sample size, which may not fully represent diverse experiences, limited generalizability to different contexts, and potential biases introduced by self-reporting. Time constraints and external factors, such as government policies and funding, further impact the scope and applicability of the findings. Nonetheless, this research is a foundation for future studies, inspiring further exploration and improvement in guidance and counseling practices for visually impaired students. Addressing these limitations will enable researchers to develop comprehensive strategies that enhance learning experiences and overall well-being for visually impaired students in mainstream schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank the Indonesian government and the University administration for their support in publishing our research findings.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Not applicable.

CONSENT

Not applicable.

RESEARCH ETHICS AND POLICIES

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies, have been completely observed by the authors.

REFERENCES

- [1] Skjorten MD, Johnsen BH, Eds. Pendidikan Kebutuhan Khusus, Sebuah Pengantar. Oslo: Unipub forlag 2003.
- [2] Hardman ML. Inclusion: Issues of Educating Students with Disabilities in Regular Education Settings. [Internet]. ERIC 1993. Available from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED370342>
- [3] UNESCO. Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All [Internet]. Vol. 53, Unesco. Paris; 2005. Available from: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines_for_Inclusion_UNESCO_2006.pdf
- [4] Nakata H. Educational Cooperation Bases System Construction Project, Implementation Report. Center for Research on International Cooperation in Educational Development (CRICED), University of Tsukuba, Japan 2003.
- [5] Koesler FA. The unseen minority: A social history of blindness in the United States. American Foundation for the Blind 2004.
- [6] Jepsen DA. Developmental Counseling. *Encycl Appl Psychol Three-Volume Set 2004*; 601-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-12-657410-3/00545-6>
- [7] Sternberg RJ, Reznitskaya A, Jarvin L. Teaching for wisdom: what matters is not just what students know, but how they use it. *London Rev Educ*. 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14748460701440830>
- [8] Vash LC, Crewe MN. *Psychology of Disability*. Psychology of Disability. Springer publishing company 2003.
- [9] Azwar B. The Role of The Counseling Teacher In Developing The Social Dimensions of Children With Special Needs. *Munaddhomah J Manaj Pendidik Islam 2022*; 3(2): 126-38. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v3i2.238>
- [10] Wolffe KE, Erin J. Transition education for adolescents who are blind or have low vision. In: *Handbook of Adolescent Transition Education for Youth with Disabilities*. Routledge 2012; pp. 439-57.
- [11] Manitsa I, Doikou M. Social support for students with visual impairments in educational institutions: An integrative literature review. *Br J Vis Impair* 2022; 40(1): 29-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0264619620941885>
- [12] Lund EM, Cmar JL. A Systematic Review of Factors Related to Employment in Transition-Age Youth With Visual Impairments. *Rehabil Psychol* 2020; 65(2): 122. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rep0000303>
- [13] Nasution S. *Metode Research*. Bandung: Jemmars 1982.