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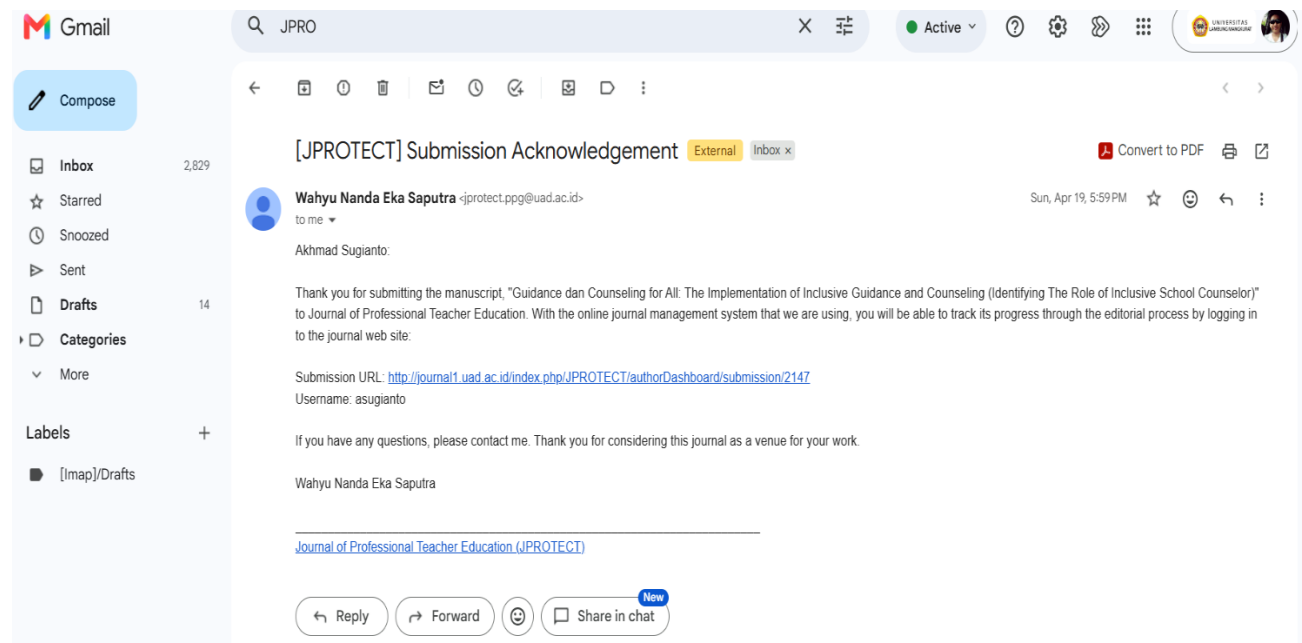
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Journal of Professional Teacher Education <jprotecpptg@uad.ac.id> to me

Sat, May 30, 10:49 AM

Akhmad Sugianto:

We have reached a decision regarding your submission to Journal of Professional Teacher Education, "Guidance dan Counseling for All: The Implementation of Inclusive Guidance and Counseling (Identifying The Role of Inclusive School Counselor)".

Our decision is: Revisions Required

Reviewer A:
Recommendation: Revisions Required

How is the suitability of the title with the content of the article?

The title is overly broad and grammatically inconsistent with the article's actual focus, which primarily examines the roles and practices of school counselors in inclusive education rather than "Guidance and Counseling for All," so the title should be revised to more precisely reflect the study scope and variables.

How does an abstract summarise an article clearly and effectively?

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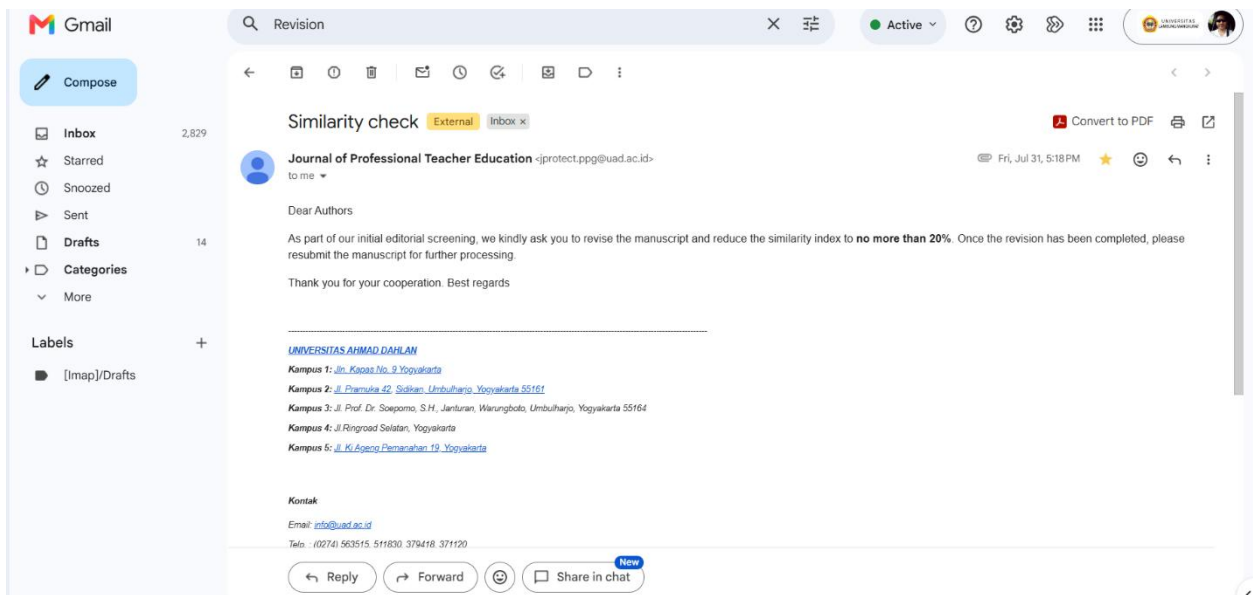
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The roles and practices of professional school counselors in inclusive education

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Letter of Acceptance

Date: June 02, 2026

The editorial team of the Journal of Professional Teacher Education has received an article with the following information.

Author : Akhmad Sugianto, Amka, Agus Pratomo Andi Widodo, Fairus Niratama, Yuli Yanti
Title : The Roles and Practices of School Counselors in Inclusive Education
Afiliation : Universitas Lambung Mangkurat

After a thorough review and in accordance with the journal's editorial and publication guidelines, we are pleased to confirm that the article has met the necessary requirements and is scheduled for publication in Volume 4, Number 1, June 2026 of the Journal of Professional Teacher Education.

This statement is officially issued as proof of acceptance and forthcoming publication. It may be used by the authors for administrative or academic purposes as needed.

In addition, the authors are required to pay the Article Processing Charge (APC) of IDR 500,000. The payment should be transferred to the following account:

Bank: BRI
Account Name: Wahyu Nanda Eka Saputra
Account Number: 3065 0103 8174 535

Sincerely,
Editor in Chief

Dr. Wahyu Nanda Eka Saputra, M.Pd., Kons

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The roles and practices of professional school counselors in inclusive education

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ABSTRACT

School counselors help all students, including those with special needs, grow and develop as much as they can. School counselors face difficulties in carrying out inclusive guidance and counseling practice because they don't have enough knowledge or understanding about the roles and responsibilities of inclusive school counselors. This situation impacts how guidance and counseling services are planned and improved for every student. This study looks at what school counselors do in schools when they work with everyone, including all students. This study employed a qualitative research design. The group included nine people from three different senior high schools located in Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, Indonesia. Data was gathered using interviews, observations, and written records. The findings revealed that the roles of inclusive school counselors include: (a) identifying students with special needs through needs assessment procedures; (b) Creating programs to help students with special needs reach their full potential; (c) implementing guidance and counseling programs or services for students with special needs; (d) collaborating with various stakeholders within the framework of inclusive education; and (e) conducting continuous evaluations of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive educational settings. Based on these findings, the roles of inclusive school counselors have been implemented in accordance with the key aspects identified in this study to optimize service delivery for all students. The study recommends that educational institutions provide professional development and Training programs that help school counselors develop their skills to better support inclusive education. This helps in setting up inclusive guidance and counseling services and improves teamwork and cooperation among the people involved.

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1. Introduction

Education is a basic right that should be available to everyone, no matter their physical, mental, social, or emotional situation. As human rights and social justice ideas have grown, many countries' education systems have started to become more inclusive (Hajisoteriou & Sorkos, 2023). Inclusive education means that all students, including those who need special support, learn together in the same school system as their classmates. This method tries to give everyone the same chance to learn and build a place where every student can reach their best possible abilities (Hartvigsen & Gaakedal, 2023). Furthermore, inclusive education seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination make sure everyone has access to education and equal chances to reach their full potential (Amka, 2026).

The emergence of inclusive education represents a response to the principle of Education for All. This concept signifies a transformation toward an educational system that is open, accessible, welcoming to all individuals without exception (Benavot et al., 2022). Educational openness serves as the foundation for implementing a rational, equitable, and an inclusive education system that supports all students, including those who need special educational assistance (Rice et al., 2023). Inclusive education includes students with disabilities as well as those who come from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. It is seen as a way of teaching that allows all children, including those who need special support in learning, to study together in the same school setting (Eaude, 2025).

Inclusive education focuses on the idea that every child should be included, without exception, has an equal right to access education within an equitable learning environment. The schools implementing inclusive education with adequately trained teachers and sufficient facilities were able to build a more welcoming and encouraging place for everyone to learn (Opoku-Nkoom & Ackah-Jnr, 2023). This approach eliminates discriminatory practices against Students who need extra help in school are focused on creating a learning environment that can adapt to different abilities and needs (Igacon et al., 2022). This idea matches the values of humanity and social justice, which believe that the right to education is a basic right for every person, including those who need special education support.

In order for inclusive education to work well in regular schools, it needs help from several important parts. These components include: (a) the participation of all learners, (b) a shared learning environment, and (c) Educational services designed to meet the specific needs of each learner (Hannam & May, 2022). Student diversity within schools directly influences both learning processes and personal development, thereby necessitating specialized support from educational institutions. A big part of helping learners grow is having guidance and counseling services available. Guidance and counseling are an important part of the education system and help students grow and develop in the best way possible.

School counselors are responsible for providing guidance and counseling services to help learners develop to their fullest potential (Kjelling & Markeng, 2025). This perspective is reinforced by the explanation that guidance and counseling within inclusive education constitute a developmental and An approach that includes everyone and meets the needs of all learners in a fair and inclusive way, without separating or treating anyone differently (Lalani & Panjwani, 2025). Therefore, inclusive education seeks to ensure equal opportunities for every learner to develop their potential. Learners with physical, emotional, mental, or social differences, Students with special educational needs have the right to join an inclusive education system that supports them based on their unique needs and abilities.

Guidance and counseling is a specialized profession that cannot be performed by personnel lacking the required competencies and qualifications. In terms of roles and performance expectations, school counselors differ significantly from subject teachers (Mogra, 2025). Although both are recognized as educators, counseling services focus on fostering students' independence in decision-making, whereas instructional activities are primarily oriented toward academic learning. Consequently, issues related to learners' internal conditions and personal adjustment fall within the domain of guidance and counseling services, including support for learners with permanent special educational needs.

The implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling can be realized through several key strategies, namely: (1) program planning based on needs assessment, (2) enhancement of counselors' competencies through specialized training, (3) interdisciplinary collaboration among counselors, special education teachers, and psychologists, and (4) continuous evaluation. The effectiveness of counseling services in inclusive schools is largely determined by active collaboration among school counselors, classroom teachers, and parents in providing ongoing support to learners (Osbeck et al., 2025).

In reality, schools often struggle with providing proper guidance and counseling for students who have special educational needs. One major issue is the lack of clear and structured guidelines for developing inclusive education programs, resulting in service implementation that tends to remain general and does not completely follow the rules of inclusive guidance and counseling. This condition is affected by several things. First, there is no standard way to set up inclusive guidance

and counseling in schools. Second, teacher education schools in Indonesia aren't doing enough to prepare future counselors to help students with special educational needs. Third, counselors aren't placed in inclusive learning environments as much as they should be. This study looks at how guidance and counseling help in inclusive schools based on these conditions

2. Method

2.1. Research design

The study uses a descriptive method based on qualitative analysis. The use of descriptive qualitative research aims to reveal phenomena that emerge from various sources, which can also be referred to as a phenomenological type of research. A descriptive qualitative method is a type of research where the information gathered is made up of words and pictures instead of numbers. This kind of information can come from interviews, written observations, pictures, videos, personal papers, written notes or reminders, and other types of records.

This study aims to explain and explore how guidance and counseling teachers are involved in inclusive education, using a descriptive qualitative method. This approach, characterized by its descriptive qualitative nature, is intended to examine and clarify the existence of phenomena occurring within society. These phenomena or social realities indicate that descriptive qualitative methods can serve as procedures for addressing the problems under investigation. The issues explored in this study are based on facts that exist and are observable within the community.

2.2. Participants of research

In qualitative research, the main data comes from words and actions, while other things like documents and materials are extra data. The data sources used in this study are: a). Primary data, which is information gathered through detailed interviews and direct observation of the people involved, specifically guidance and counseling teachers who have implemented inclusive guidance and counseling practices in schools, and b) Secondary data, namely data sources that are not obtained directly but provide additional information to support the primary data. These sources include papers and records about how schools have set up and carried out inclusive guidance and counseling services, such as service plans, annual and semester programs, and reports on the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs. The study looked at how inclusive guidance and counseling programs were put into place. It took place at three schools: State Senior High School 1 Barabai, State Senior High School 2 Barabai, and State Senior High School 4 Barabai.

Table 1. Respondents and research site

School	Respondents
State Senior High School 1 Barabai	3
State Senior High School 2 Barabai	3
State Senior High School 4 Barabai	3
Total	9

2.3. Data collection tools

The researcher used three methods to collect data: interviews, observations, and record-keeping. The study looked at five main areas: a) understanding the needs for the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (b) creating a plan for the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (c) carrying out the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (d) how guidance and counseling teachers work together to provide inclusive services, and (e) checking on the program regularly to see how it's doing. Table 2 shows the rules for collecting data in this study, covering the methods, people involved, and key points checked at every step of data collection. The table also shows how interviews (I), observations (O), and documentation (D) were used in a planned way to collect detailed information on the five key areas of the inclusive guidance and counseling program.

Table 2. Data collection guidelines

Problem aspect	Problem focus	Indicator	Data collection tools			Data sources
			I	O	D	
Implementation of Inclusive Guidance and Counseling in Schools	The Role and Practices of School Counselor in Inclusive Education:	Needs assessment in inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√	√	√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher Student Parents
		Planning of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√	√	√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher
		Implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√		√	
		Collaboration of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive services	√		√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher Student Parents
		Ongoing evaluation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√		√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher

2.4. Research Procedure

Qualitative research methods collect descriptive information through words, either written or spoken, that come from people's actions and what they do. This study uses a qualitative method because the topics are not about numbers, but instead focus on giving clear and detailed explanations and gathering deep insights from the main subjects of the research.

This research is divided into seven steps of qualitative inquiry: first, identifying the problem, then setting boundaries for the problem, next deciding on the research focus, followed by carrying out the research, then organizing and analyzing the data, developing new ideas or theories from the findings, and finally sharing the results of the study. The connection between the three stages of the process and the seven steps in qualitative research is shown in Figure 1.

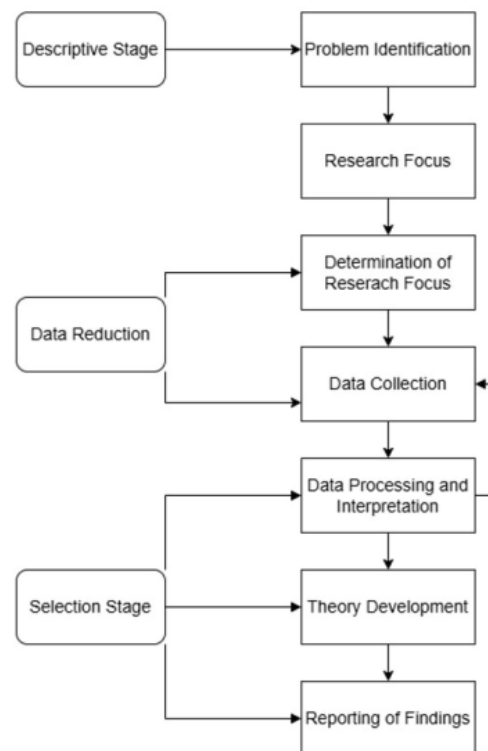


Fig. 1. Research stages

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in qualitative research is a careful way of looking at the information gathered to understand how different parts connect with each other and with the bigger picture, so that categories or types can be created (Elva & Murhayati, 2025). In essence, qualitative data analysis is a process that begins during data collection in the field and continues through intensive analysis after all data have been gathered (Nurrisa & Hermina, 2025).

The data analysis method used in this study is the Miles and Huberman interactive model. This model has three steps: reducing the data, showing the data, and drawing conclusions or checking the data. The selection of this technique is intended to enable the researcher to categorize the collected data or in other words, to identify and examine the relationships among the categories that emerge from the data collection process. The data analysis stages of this research are shown in Figure 2.

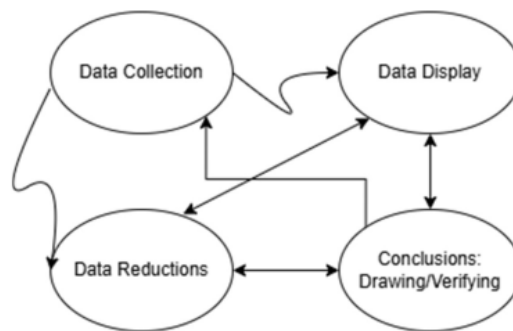


Fig. 2. Data analysis stages

3. Results and Discussion

Unique in terms of social, economic, cultural, and physical conditions. In relation to physical conditions, guidance and counseling teachers (counselors) recognize that inclusive schools accommodate students from diverse backgrounds, including both students with disabilities and those without. Furthermore, guidance and counseling within the context of inclusive education can be described as a process of assistance carried out by a guidance and counseling teacher (counselor) for clients with special needs as well as non-disabled students, aimed at jointly resolving problems based on the principle of independence. This matches another study, which says that guidance and counseling for kids with special needs is given to help them get to know themselves better, accept their situation honestly, know their strengths and weaknesses, and make choices that fit their abilities (Asriyanti & Janah, 2019).

The role of guidance and counseling teachers in this study refers to their involvement in providing counseling services to students who have special needs, whether those needs are temporary or long-term. Five key areas are looked at when considering the role of guidance and counseling in inclusive education at schools. These areas include: (a) the ways counselors use to find out about students' special needs (b) creating programs to help students with special needs reach their full potential, (c) putting guidance and counseling services into action for students with special needs, (d) how counselors work together with others in inclusive education, and (e) checking and improving the guidance and counseling programs over time in inclusive environments. The research results are shown for each of these areas.

3.1. The methods used by counselors in identifying students with special needs

Based on the information shared by the guidance and counseling teachers at each school, it was found that at State Senior High School 1 Barabai, all three counselors who were interviewed said that they understand students with special needs by assessing their situations using results from professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, or other medical experts, as recorded in official reports. These reports are sent directly by the parents or guardians, and they also give more details to help understand the results better. In this process, collaboration with parents or guardians is essential. The delivery of the reports is also accompanied by a special education teacher, enabling

them to better understand the students' characteristics. After gaining this understanding, counselors identify service needs using the need analysis instrument, with its administration supported by the special education teacher.

At State Senior High School 2 Barabai, the needs assessment conducted by counselors involves understanding the initial condition of students with special needs through reports or examination results from professionals, which are expected to accurately represent the students' characteristics. To complement the data, counselors also ask parents or guardians to complete a specific instrument designed to capture the characteristics of students with special needs, thereby providing additional baseline information. This process is closely related to the identification of students' needs within inclusive counseling services. Needs identification is conducted using the same instrument applied in other schools, namely the need analysis of students, administered directly by the counselors. Counselors also emphasize the importance of collaboration with parents in understanding the students' initial conditions.

Meanwhile, at State Senior High School 4 Barabai, counselors place strong emphasis on understanding the condition and characteristics of students with special needs before conducting needs identification. This is carried out through direct interviews with parents using open-ended and flexible questions. Counselors also highlighted the need for a specific instrument that can assist in understanding the students' initial conditions, which could be completed by parents or the students themselves. Ongoing collaboration is maintained to ensure a deeper understanding of the students' conditions, and the identification of counseling service needs can be supported by parental involvement.

A big challenge in doing needs assessments for counseling services for students with special needs is that there aren't specific tools available for counselors to properly understand the students' characteristics and situations. Because of this, counselors usually use broad evaluation methods or casual observations that might not truly reflect the different needs and skills of students who require special attention. This limit can make the assessment process less accurate and stop the creation of personalized counseling plans that properly deal with students' academic, social, emotional, and behavior-related issues.

3.2. Program planning aimed at developing the potential of students with special needs

In each school, guidance and counseling teachers design inclusive counseling programs both annual and semester-based—grounded in the results of students' needs assessments, aligned with existing operational guidelines for counseling services, and supplemented with specific provisions for students with special needs. The inclusive counseling program includes basic services, individual planning and specialized services, services that respond to needs, and support for the system.

Basic services are given in an organized way, either in group settings or through classroom guidance, aimed at developing students' skills, knowledge, personal and social attitudes, as well as learning and career competencies. These services are provided directly through classroom or group guidance, and indirectly through media such as videos or problem boxes. Responsive services are intended for students who require immediate counseling support, ensuring that the issues they face are promptly addressed and resolved. Techniques used in responsive services include consultation, individual counseling, and group counseling.

Individual planning and specialization services emphasize students' planning in academic, social, and career domains. Common techniques employed include discussion, consultation, collaboration, and advocacy. Meanwhile, system support refers to indirect services provided to students, where counseling teachers collaborate with other professionals to optimize students' potential. Based on the respondents' explanations, counseling teachers collaborate with school principals, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, special education teachers (specifically at SMA 1 Barabai), parents or guardians, and professionals such as doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and licensed counselors in administering assessment instruments.

3.3. Providing guidance and counseling services for students who have special needs

As outlined in the second aspect, namely program planning, the three schools involved in this study demonstrate similarities in implementing guidance and counseling services to support inclusive education within their respective institutions. In terms of the basic service component, the

respondents deliver their services using a classical guidance strategy, namely providing verbal information to each class regarding the diversity of students in the school, which must be accepted and respected by all learners.

Responsive services are provided by offering chances for students with special needs and their parents to meet with counselors or consultants who can help with the students' growth and progress at school. Meanwhile, individual planning services are carried out by giving students with special needs and their parents the chance to take part in counseling or discussions about the students' future education plans after they finish their current school. System support is done by working together with the school to create inclusive programs for students who have special needs. It also involves giving advice to the school or parents to work with other professionals, like therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, or other experts, to help these students grow and develop as much as possible. School counselors provide guidance and counseling by using two methods: talking directly with students and using media like videos, pictures, and teaching tools.

All the people involved said they don't have a deep understanding of the different types of disabilities, which makes it harder for them to help students with special needs properly. School counselors haven't developed particular skills to offer counseling to students who have special needs, which affects how well the counseling services work.

3.4. Collaboration of counselors in inclusive education

School counselors work together with others in inclusive education to support students. This teamwork includes counselors, classroom teachers, special education teachers, parents, and outside experts like psychologists, therapists, and doctors. They all help in a way that supports each other and makes things easier for students. The key parts of this partnership involve figuring out what students need (needs assessment), as well as creating, carrying out, and checking how well inclusive counseling programs work in schools. Collaboration also extends to system-level support to create a supportive learning environment. Based on the findings from three schools, it was revealed that school counselors have engaged in collaboration with various parties to support inclusive counseling programs. The detailed findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Collaboration of school counselors in inclusive education

School	Collaboration
State Senior High School 1 Barabai	The school counselor collaborates with the principal, special education teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.
State Senior High School 2 Barabai	The school counselor works together with the principal, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents or guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.
State Senior High School 4 Barabai	The school counselor collaborates with the principal, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.

Respondents from each school emphasized the importance of collaboration between school counselors and subject teachers, homeroom teachers, principals, experts, and parents. This collaboration contributes to the development of a comprehensive support system in delivering inclusive counseling services to students. However, respondents also identified several challenges, such as uncooperative parents, the limited availability of experts (e.g., psychiatrists and psychologists), which constrains effective collaboration, and the absence of special education teachers to assist counselors in understanding students with special needs.

3.5. Ongoing evaluation of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive settings

Continuous evaluation in inclusive guidance and counseling programs is important to make sure the services are effective, fair, and meet the needs of every student. By using a methodical and based-on-theory way, evaluation can act as a useful tool to keep improving the quality of guidance and counseling services over time. The findings from three participating schools indicate that all schools conducted evaluations of the implemented programs through focus group discussions (FGDs) with colleagues. Following the evaluation process, the results were compiled into a report and submitted to the school principal as the responsible authority.

48 The evaluation addressed three main aspects. The evaluation looked at the skills of inclusive guidance and counseling teachers, as well as the availability of buildings and equipment that help students with special needs, and school policy support for inclusive counseling programs. The process evaluation included the approaches and counseling techniques employed, the methods and media used in delivering basic services, adaptive approaches for students with special needs, and strategies for creating a supportive and inclusive school environment. The output evaluation covered the achievement of program objectives, reflected in changes in counselees' cognitive and behavioral domains. Cognitive changes were indicated by

3.6. The evolving role of counselors in implementing inclusive guidance and counseling

27 The findings demonstrate that the role of school counselors in inclusive education extends beyond traditional counseling services. Inclusive school counselors function as needs assessors, program planners, service providers, collaborative partners, and evaluators within a continuous cycle of inclusive guidance and counseling. This integrated role highlights that effective inclusive counseling depends not on isolated interventions but on a systematic and collaborative process that supports equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Understanding different student needs is the key to inclusive education. Inclusive education is meant for a wide variety of special needs, including those that come from inside or outside a person, and these needs can be either long-term or short-term. It's important to use it in schools because it helps reach the country's education goals. The 28 Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) in England lists ten main reasons for supporting inclusive education: (1) every child has the right to learn with others; (2) 16 dren shouldn't be separated from others just because they have disabilities, as that's unfair; (3) students with special needs who were in separate schools want those systems to end; (4) there's no good reason to separate children with disabilities, since everyone has both strengths and weaknesses; (5) research shows that students with special needs do better in regular schools than in separate ones, both academically and socially; (6) any teaching method used in separate schools can also work in regular schools; (7) with enough support, inclusive education uses learning resources more effectively; (8) separating children can lead to prejudice and anxiety; (9) all children need education that helps them live in normal society; and (10) only inclusive systems can reduce fear, help kids make friends, and encourage respect and understanding (Margas, 2023; Nurwan, 2019; Wang et al., 2025).

20 In Indonesia, inclusive education is defined by the Minister of National Education's Regulation No.70 of 2009. This regulation describes inclusive education as a way of providing education that gives every student, including those with disabilities or special talents, the chance to learn together with their classmates in the same school setting. This definition matches what others have said, which explains inclusive education as a system that brings together children who have some difficulties and other children, without focusing on their differences. This means that school systems need to give every student the same chance to take part in a common learning setting, without any exceptions. (Denny et al., 2026; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; She et al., 2025).

One of the most important people schools need to have is guidance and counseling teachers, because they work directly with students to help them deal with their growth and development issues. Although the skills of guidance and counseling teachers in teaching, personal growth, social interaction, and career development don't directly include long-term inclusive aspects, they are still expected to help all students grow and develop. This means that no matter what situation students are in, those who need counseling should get the right help (Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2024; Mudhar et al., 2024).

A big part of guidance and counseling in making education more inclusive is helping teachers and school staff really understand what each student needs, especially those who have special needs (Durdukoca, 2021; Majoko, 2019). Counselors are trained to identify students' characteristics and requirements, enabling them to provide appropriate support through adaptive strategies and learning methods (Fadilah et al., 2024). It's important to make sure that students who 42 need special support are not just allowed to be in the school, but also have the chance to take part in learning and activities. In the context of inclusive education, counselors must collaborate with various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and related institutions, to design and implement appropriate learning and 2 intervention plans (Vlachou, 2004). In this regard, counselors act as communication bridges to ensure that all aspects of students' needs are addressed.

Achieving optimal development requires guidance and counseling from teachers who can facilitate the resolution of developmental challenges faced by students with special needs (Al Khalifa, 2024; Siamlalan et al., 2025; Syafiulia & Maadad, 2026). Their roles include: (1) implementing counseling services tailored to students' abilities, talents, interests, and specific conditions, as well as classifying students into suitable activity and self-development groups; (2) providing direction and motivation for active participation in group activities and personal development; (3) delivering guidance related to gender roles adapted to students' characteristics and helping them understand social roles within the community; and (4) assisting students, including those with special needs, in career selection by facilitating self-understanding, environmental awareness, decision-making, planning, and career-oriented activities (Durdukoca, 2021; Materechera, 2020; Utami & Ubaidillah, 2025).

Guidance and counseling teachers, also called counselors, are expected to have the right skills and abilities to help provide counseling services in schools that include all students, whether they have special needs or not (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Alborn, 2017). Without these skills, they won't be able to do their jobs well, according to Aminah et al. in 2021. So, counselors need to keep improving their skills to give the best help to students who have special needs. Following this, Government Regulation No.70 of 2009 requires that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) be created for students who have special needs, and also that special assistant teachers be provided. These teachers can come from special schools or from regular schools where they have received special training. This shows how important it is for guidance and counseling teachers to be part of inclusive education (Nehez & Blossing, 2022).

These roles include: (a) identifying students with special needs through needs assessment; (b) planning programs aimed at developing students' potential; (c) implementing guidance and counseling services; (d) collaborating with stakeholders in inclusive education; and (e) conducting continuous evaluation of counseling programs. This is consistent with Esengulova et al. (2025; Hashmi et al., 2024; Mierrina, 2018; Sedláčková et al., 2025). A guidance and counseling teacher plays a key role in inclusive education by following five main steps: first, they check what students need, then they plan a program based on those needs, next they carry out the program, they work with others to support students, and finally they keep checking how well the program is working and make changes if needed (Ali et al., 2024; Burns, 2020; Burns, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Guidance and counseling teachers act as important helpers, encouraging and guiding all students, including those who need special support, to grow, become more independent, and fit in better with others at school. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers play an important role in making sure inclusive guidance and counseling services are carried out properly. The job of inclusive guidance and counseling teachers in schools is to offer guidance and counseling services in a way that makes sure students with special needs get the support they need. This is done by: first, finding out which students have special needs through special steps to check their needs; second, making plans that help develop the abilities of those students; and third, actually providing the guidance and counseling services to those students, collaborating with various stakeholders within the framework of inclusive education; and conducting continuous evaluations of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive educational settings.

In practice, guidance and counseling teachers engage in collaborative efforts as part of the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating inclusive guidance and counseling programs. This teamwork includes school principals, special education teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and other related professionals. Continuous checks are done to make sure that each program's goals are being met properly. These points show how important it is for guidance and counseling teachers to be involved in making inclusive education work. Guidance and counseling services that take students' different needs into account can help them better understand themselves and the world around them. Ultimately, such services contribute to the development of an Indonesian generation that is characterized by strong moral values, intellectual competence, independence, and resilience.

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Declarations

- Autor contribution** : The he first author contributed to the development of the research instruments, conducted interview data collection, analyzed the interview data, prepared the data reports, and sought journal publication for the research findings. The second author contributed to the collection of observational data, the processing of observational data, and the reporting of observational results. The third author contributed to the collection of documentation data, the processing of documentation data, and the reporting of documentation findings. The fourth author contributed by carrying out data reduction and conducting a theoretical review to verify the research findings. The fifth author was responsible for designing the research results and composing the discussion of the findings.
- Funding statement** : This study was conducted independently and did not receive any funding or grants from any source.
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The roles and practices of school counselors in inclusive education

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Counseling services

ABSTRACT

School counselors play a crucial role in facilitating the optimal development of all students, including students with special needs, without exception. Based on field observations, school counselors encounter challenges in implementing inclusive guidance and counseling practices due to limited knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of inclusive school counselors. This situation affects the optimization of guidance and counseling services provided to all students. Therefore, this study aims to describe the roles and practices of inclusive school counselors in schools. This study employed a qualitative research design. The participants consisted of nine individuals from three senior high schools in Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings revealed that the roles of inclusive school counselors include: (a) identifying students with special needs through needs assessment procedures; (b) planning programs aimed at developing the potential of students with special needs; (c) implementing guidance and counseling programs or services for students with special needs; (d) collaborating with various stakeholders within the framework of inclusive education; and (e) conducting continuous evaluations of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive educational settings. Based on these findings, the roles of inclusive school counselors have been implemented in accordance with the key aspects identified in this study to optimize service delivery for all students. The study recommends that educational institutions provide professional development and training programs to enhance the competencies of inclusive school counselors. Furthermore, schools should improve facilities and resources that support the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling services and strengthen collaborative practices among relevant stakeholders.

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed for every individual regardless of differences in physical, intellectual, social, or emotional conditions. Along with the advancement of human rights and social justice paradigms, educational systems in various countries have increasingly shifted toward more inclusive approaches (Hajisoteriou & Sorkos, 2023). Inclusive education places all learners, including those with special educational needs, within the same educational system as their peers. This approach aims to provide equal learning opportunities and create an environment that supports the optimal development of each learner's potential (Hartvigsen & Haakedal, 2023). Furthermore, inclusive education seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination

in access to education and to establish equal opportunities for every individual to develop to their fullest potential (Amka, 2026).

The emergence of inclusive education represents a response to the principle of Education for All. This concept signifies a transformation toward an educational system that is open, accessible, and welcoming to all individuals without exception (Benavot et al., 2022). Educational openness serves as the foundation for implementing a rational, equitable, and non-discriminatory educational system, including for learners with special educational needs (Rice et al., 2023). Inclusive education encompasses not only learners with disabilities but also those from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. It is understood as an educational system that enables all children, including those with special educational needs, to learn together within the same educational environment (Eaude, 2025).

Inclusive education emphasizes the principle that every child, without exception, has an equal right to access education within an equitable learning environment. The schools implementing inclusive education with adequately trained teachers and sufficient facilities were able to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners (Opoku-Nkoom & Ackah-Jnr, 2023). This approach eliminates discriminatory practices against learners with special educational needs and strives to establish a learning system that is responsive to the diverse abilities of students (Deacon et al., 2022). Such a concept aligns with the values of humanity and social justice, which regard the right to education as an inherent right of every individual, including learners with special educational needs.

The implementation of inclusive education in formal schools requires the support of various essential components to function effectively. These components include: (a) the participation of all learners, (b) a shared learning environment, and (c) educational services tailored to the individual needs of learners (Hannam & May, 2022). Student diversity within schools directly influences both learning processes and personal development, thereby necessitating specialized support from educational institutions. One of the key components contributing to learners' development is guidance and counseling services. As an integral part of the educational system, guidance and counseling play a strategic role in facilitating the optimal development of all learners.

The provision of guidance and counseling services aimed at supporting the optimal development of learners is the responsibility of school counselors (Kjelling & Markeng, 2025). This perspective is reinforced by the explanation that guidance and counseling within inclusive education constitute a developmental and integrative approach designed to meet the learning needs of all learners without discrimination or segregation (Lalani & Panjwani, 2025). Therefore, inclusive education seeks to ensure equal opportunities for every learner to develop their potential. Learners with physical, emotional, mental, or social differences, including those with special educational needs, have the right to participate in inclusive education according to their individual needs and capabilities.

Guidance and counseling is a specialized profession that cannot be performed by personnel lacking the required competencies and qualifications. In terms of roles and performance expectations, school counselors differ significantly from subject teachers (Mogra, 2025). Although both are recognized as educators, counseling services focus on fostering students' independence in decision-making, whereas instructional activities are primarily oriented toward academic learning. Consequently, issues related to learners' internal conditions and personal adjustment fall within the domain of guidance and counseling services, including support for learners with permanent special educational needs.

The implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling can be realized through several key strategies, namely: (1) program planning based on needs assessment, (2) enhancement of counselors' competencies through specialized training, (3) interdisciplinary collaboration among counselors, special education teachers, and psychologists, and (4) continuous evaluation. The effectiveness of counseling services in inclusive schools is largely determined by active collaboration among school counselors, classroom teachers, and parents in providing ongoing support to learners (Osbeck et al., 2025).

However, in practice, guidance and counseling services for learners with special educational needs in schools continue to face several challenges. One major issue is the lack of clear and

structured guidelines for developing inclusive education programs, resulting in service implementation that tends to remain general and does not fully apply the principles of inclusive guidance and counseling. This condition is influenced by several factors, including the absence of a standardized model for implementing inclusive guidance and counseling in schools, the insufficient preparation of prospective counselors by teacher education institutions in Indonesia to address the needs of learners with special educational needs, and the limited formal placement of counselors within inclusive educational settings. Based on these conditions, this study aims to examine the role of guidance and counseling in inclusive schools.

2. Method

2.1. Research design

The method employed in this study is descriptive with a qualitative approach. The use of descriptive qualitative research aims to reveal phenomena that emerge from various sources, which can also be referred to as a phenomenological type of research. A descriptive qualitative approach is a research approach in which the data collected are in the form of words and images rather than numbers. Such data may be obtained from interviews, field notes, photographs, video recordings, personal documents, notes or memos, and other forms of documentation.

This study seeks to describe and understand the implementation and role of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive education through a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach, characterized by its descriptive qualitative nature, is intended to examine and clarify the existence of phenomena occurring within society. These phenomena or social realities indicate that descriptive qualitative methods can serve as procedures for addressing the problems under investigation. The issues explored in this study are based on facts that exist and are observable within the community.

2.2. Participants of research

The primary sources of data in qualitative research are words and actions, while the rest constitute supplementary data such as documents and other materials. The data sources employed in this study include: a). Primary data, namely data obtained from in-depth interviews and direct observations of informants, specifically guidance and counseling teachers who have implemented inclusive guidance and counseling practices in schools, and b) Secondary data, namely data sources that are not obtained directly but provide additional information to support the primary data. These sources include documentation related to the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling services in schools, such as service plans, annual and semester programs, and reports on the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs. The study was conducted at three schools: State Senior High School 1 Barabai, State Senior High School 2 Barabai, and State Senior High School 4 Barabai.

Table 1. Respondents and research site

School	Respondents
State Senior High School 1 Barabai	3
State Senior High School 2 Barabai	3
State Senior High School 4 Barabai	3
Total	9

2.3. Data collection tools

The researcher employed three data collection techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation. The study focused on examining five key aspects: (a) the needs assessment of the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (b) the planning of the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (c) the implementation of the inclusive guidance and counseling program, (d) the collaboration of guidance and counseling teachers in delivering inclusive services, and (e) the ongoing evaluation of the inclusive guidance and counseling program. Table 2 presents the data collection guidelines for this study, including the techniques, participants, and indicators used at each stage of data collection. The table also illustrates how interviews (I), observations (O), and documentation (D) were systematically used to gather comprehensive information on the five aspects of the inclusive guidance and counseling program.

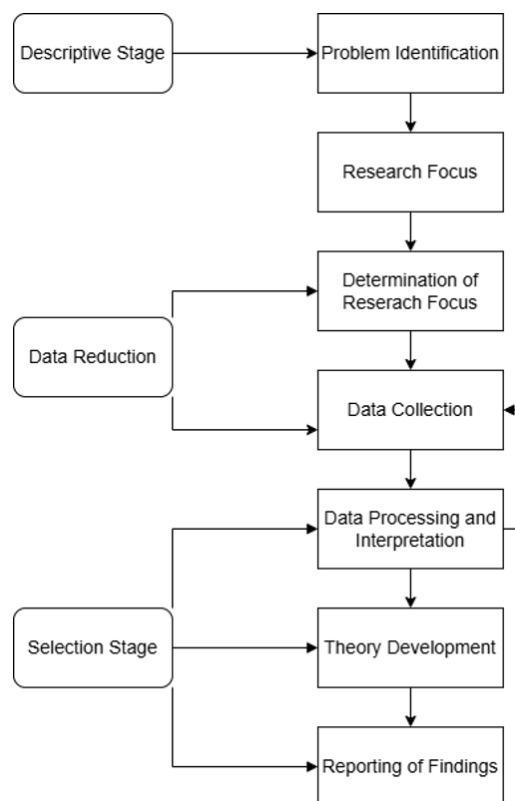
Table 2. Data collection guidelines

Problem aspect	Problem focus	Indicator	Data collection tools			Data sources
			I	O	D	
Implementation of Inclusive Guidance and Counseling in Schools	The Role and Practices of School Counselor in Inclusive Education:	Needs assessment in inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√	√	√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher Student Parents
		Planning of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√	√	√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher
		Implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√		√	
		Collaboration of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive services	√		√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher Student Parents
		Ongoing evaluation of inclusive guidance and counseling programs	√		√	School Principals Counselor Subject Teacher

2.4. Research Procedure

The qualitative research procedures generate descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from observed individuals and their behaviors. The analysis in this study employs a qualitative approach, as the issues addressed are not concerned with numerical data but rather aim to provide clear and detailed descriptions and to obtain in-depth data from the research focus.

Specifically, the stages of this research are outlined in seven steps of qualitative inquiry: problem identification, problem delimitation, determination of research focus, research implementation, data processing and interpretation, theory generation, and research reporting. The relationship between the three process stages and the seven steps of qualitative research is illustrated in the following Figure 1.

**Fig. 1.** Research stages

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in qualitative research is a systematic process aimed at identifying the interrelated components between parts and the whole of the collected data to produce classifications or typologies (Elva & Murhayati, 2025). In essence, qualitative data analysis is a process that begins during data collection in the field and continues through intensive analysis after all data have been gathered (Nurrisa & Hermina, 2025).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is the Miles and Huberman interactive model. This model consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or data verification. The selection of this technique is intended to enable the researcher to categorize the collected data, or in other words, to identify and examine the relationships among the categories that emerge from the data collection process. The data analysis stages of this research are shown in Figure 2.

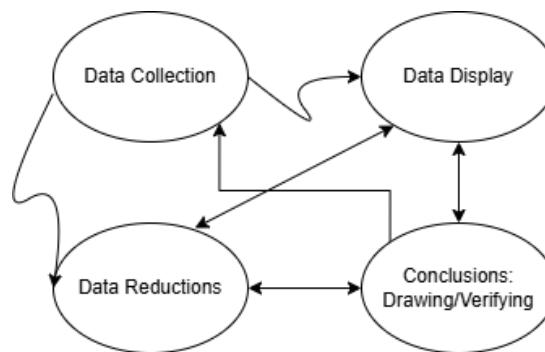


Fig. 2. Data analysis stages

3. Results and Discussion

Unique in terms of social, economic, cultural, and physical conditions. In relation to physical conditions, guidance and counseling teachers (counselors) recognize that inclusive schools accommodate students from diverse backgrounds, including both students with disabilities and those without. Furthermore, guidance and counseling within the context of inclusive education can be described as a process of assistance carried out by a guidance and counseling teacher (counselor) for clients with special needs as well as non-disabled students, aimed at jointly resolving problems based on the principle of independence. This is in line with another research, that guidance and counseling for children with special needs are provided to help them better understand themselves, accept their condition openly, recognize their strengths and limitations, and direct themselves according to their abilities (Asriyanti & Janah, 2019).

The role of guidance and counseling teachers referred to in this study involves their actions or participation in delivering counseling services to students with special needs, whether temporary or permanent. Five aspects are examined in relation to the role of guidance and counseling in inclusive education at schools, namely: (a) the methods used by counselors in identifying students with special needs (needs assessment), (b) program planning aimed at developing the potential of students with special needs, (c) the implementation of guidance and counseling services for students with special needs, (d) collaboration of counselors in inclusive education, and (e) ongoing evaluation of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive settings. The research findings are presented based on each of these aspects.

3.1. The methods used by counselors in identifying students with special needs

Based on the findings from guidance and counseling teachers in each participating school, it was found that at State Senior High School 1 Barabai, all three counselors who served as respondents stated that understanding students with special needs is carried out through an assessment of the students' conditions based on examination results from professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, or other medical personnel, as documented in formal reports. These reports are submitted directly by parents or guardians, who also provide further explanation to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the results. In this process, collaboration with parents or guardians

is essential. The delivery of the reports is also accompanied by a special education teacher, enabling them to better understand the students' characteristics. After gaining this understanding, counselors identify service needs using the need analysis instrument, with its administration supported by the special education teacher.

At State Senior High School 2 Barabai, the needs assessment conducted by counselors involves understanding the initial condition of students with special needs through reports or examination results from professionals, which are expected to accurately represent the students' characteristics. To complement the data, counselors also ask parents or guardians to complete a specific instrument designed to capture the characteristics of students with special needs, thereby providing additional baseline information. This process is closely related to the identification of students' needs within inclusive counseling services. Needs identification is conducted using the same instrument applied in other schools, namely the need analysis of students, administered directly by the counselors. Counselors also emphasize the importance of collaboration with parents in understanding the students' initial conditions.

Meanwhile, at State Senior High School 4 Barabai, counselors place strong emphasis on understanding the condition and characteristics of students with special needs before conducting needs identification. This is carried out through direct interviews with parents using open-ended and flexible questions. Counselors also highlighted the need for a specific instrument that can assist in understanding the students' initial conditions, which could be completed by parents or the students themselves. Ongoing collaboration is maintained to ensure a deeper understanding of the students' conditions, and the identification of counseling service needs can be supported by parental involvement.

A major constraint in conducting needs assessments in counseling services for students with special needs is the absence of specific instruments available to counselors to adequately understand the characteristics and conditions of these students. As a result, counselors often rely on general assessment tools or informal observations that may not accurately capture the diverse needs and abilities of students with special needs. This limitation can reduce the accuracy of the assessment process and hinder the development of individualized counseling interventions that effectively address students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

3.2. Program planning aimed at developing the potential of students with special needs

In each school, guidance and counseling teachers design inclusive counseling programs both annual and semester-based—grounded in the results of students' needs assessments, aligned with existing operational guidelines for counseling services, and supplemented with specific provisions for students with special needs. The components developed within the inclusive counseling program include basic services, individual planning and specialization services, responsive services, and system support.

Basic services are delivered in a structured manner, either in group settings or through classroom guidance, aimed at developing students' skills, knowledge, personal and social attitudes, as well as learning and career competencies. These services are provided directly through classroom or group guidance, and indirectly through media such as videos or problem boxes. Responsive services are intended for students who require immediate counseling support, ensuring that the issues they face are promptly addressed and resolved. Techniques used in responsive services include consultation, individual counseling, and group counseling.

Individual planning and specialization services emphasize students' planning in academic, social, and career domains. Common techniques employed include discussion, consultation, collaboration, and advocacy. Meanwhile, system support refers to indirect services provided to students, where counseling teachers collaborate with other professionals to optimize students' potential. Based on the respondents' explanations, counseling teachers collaborate with school principals, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, special education teachers (specifically at SMA 1 Barabai), parents or guardians, and professionals such as doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and licensed counselors in administering assessment instruments.

3.3. The implementation of guidance and counseling services for students with special needs

As outlined in the second aspect, namely program planning, the three schools involved in this study demonstrate similarities in implementing guidance and counseling services to support inclusive education within their respective institutions. In terms of the basic service component, the respondents deliver their services using a classical guidance strategy, namely providing verbal information to each class regarding the diversity of students in the school, which must be accepted and respected by all learners.

Responsive services are carried out by providing opportunities for students with special needs and their parents to engage in counseling or consultation related to the students' development at school. Meanwhile, individual planning services are implemented by offering opportunities for students with special needs and their parents to participate in counseling or consultation concerning the students' future educational pathways after graduating from their current school. System support is conducted through coordination with the school in developing inclusive programs for students with special needs, as well as by providing recommendations to the school or parents to collaborate with other professionals so that students can develop more optimally, such as therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, or other relevant experts in handling and supporting the development of students with special needs. In delivering guidance and counseling services, school counselors employ two approaches: direct interaction and the use of media, such as videos, images, and instructional aids.

In the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling services for students with special needs, all respondents indicated that they do not yet possess an in-depth understanding of the various characteristics of disabilities, which affects their ability to effectively approach counselees. Furthermore, school counselors have not yet acquired specific competencies in providing counseling services for students with special needs, which in turn influences the effectiveness of the counseling services delivered.

3.4. Collaboration of counselors in inclusive education

Collaboration among school counselors in inclusive education involves a synergistic partnership between counselors and other stakeholders, including classroom or subject teachers, special education teachers, parents, and external professionals (such as psychologists, therapists, and medical practitioners). The main aspects of this collaboration include the identification of students' needs (needs assessment), as well as the planning, implementation, and evaluation of inclusive counseling programs that have been carried out in schools. Collaboration also extends to system-level support to create a supportive learning environment. Based on the findings from three schools, it was revealed that school counselors have engaged in collaboration with various parties to support inclusive counseling programs. The detailed findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Collaboration of school counselors in inclusive education

School	Collaboration
State Senior High School 1 Barabai	The school counselor collaborates with the principal, special education teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.
State Senior High School 2 Barabai	The school counselor collaborates with the principal, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.
State Senior High School 4 Barabai	The school counselor collaborates with the principal, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and the School Counselor Teachers' Association.

Respondents from each school emphasized the importance of collaboration between school counselors and subject teachers, homeroom teachers, principals, experts, and parents. This collaboration contributes to the development of a comprehensive support system in delivering inclusive counseling services to students. However, respondents also identified several challenges, such as uncooperative parents, the limited availability of experts (e.g., psychiatrists and psychologists), which constrains effective collaboration, and the absence of special education teachers to assist counselors in understanding students with special needs.

3.5. Ongoing evaluation of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive settings

Continuous evaluation in inclusive guidance and counseling programs is a crucial process to ensure services that are effective, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all students. Through a systematic and theory-based approach, evaluation can serve as a strategic tool for continuously improving the quality of guidance and counseling services. The findings from three participating schools indicate that all schools conducted evaluations of the implemented programs through focus group discussions (FGDs) with colleagues. Following the evaluation process, the results were compiled into a report and submitted to the school principal as the responsible authority.

The evaluation addressed three main aspects. The input evaluation focused on the competencies of inclusive guidance and counseling teachers, the availability of facilities and infrastructure supporting students with special needs, and school policy support for inclusive counseling programs. The process evaluation included the approaches and counseling techniques employed, the methods and media used in delivering basic services, adaptive approaches for students with special needs, and strategies for creating a supportive and inclusive school environment. The output evaluation covered the achievement of program objectives, reflected in changes in counselees' cognitive and behavioral domains. Cognitive changes were indicated by

3.6. The evolving role of counselors in implementing inclusive guidance and counseling

The findings demonstrate that the role of school counselors in inclusive education extends beyond traditional counseling services. Inclusive school counselors function as needs assessors, program planners, service providers, collaborative partners, and evaluators within a continuous cycle of inclusive guidance and counseling. This integrated role highlights that effective inclusive counseling depends not on isolated interventions but on a systematic and collaborative process that supports equitable educational opportunities for all students.

The recognition of diverse student needs constitutes the essence of inclusive education. Inclusive education is oriented toward a broad range of special needs, encompassing those arising from both internal and external factors, which may be either permanent or temporary in nature. Its implementation in schools is essential as an effort to achieve national education goals. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) in England identifies ten underlying reasons for inclusive education: (1) all children have the right to learn together; (2) children should not be treated in a discriminatory manner by being separated from others due to disabilities; (3) prospective students with special needs who have experienced segregated education demand the abolition of such systems; (4) there is no valid justification for segregating the education of children with disabilities, as every individual possesses both strengths and limitations; (5) numerous studies indicate that the academic and social achievements of students with special needs in integrated schools are better than those in segregated settings; (6) there is no instructional practice in segregated schools that cannot be implemented in regular schools; (7) with strong commitment and support, inclusive education is more efficient in the use of learning resources; (8) segregated systems may foster prejudice and anxiety among children; (9) all children require education that prepares them to live within a typical social environment; and (10) only inclusive systems have the potential to reduce fear, build friendships, and promote mutual respect and understanding (Margas, 2023; Nurwan, 2019; Wang et al., 2025).

About the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia, Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 70 of 2009 defines inclusive education as a system of educational provision that offers opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities and those with exceptional intelligence and/or talents, to participate in learning within the same educational environment as their peers. This definition is consistent with other statements, who describes inclusive education as a system that integrates children with certain limitations and other children without considering their differences (Garnida, 2016). This implies that educational systems must provide equal opportunities for all learners, without exception, to participate in a shared learning environment (Denny et al., 2026; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; She et al., 2025).

One of the key human resources that schools must prepare is guidance and counseling teachers, who are directly involved in addressing students' developmental challenges. Although the competencies of guidance and counseling teachers pedagogical, personal, social, and professional do not explicitly include permanent inclusive elements, they are expected to facilitate the development

of all students. This means that regardless of students' conditions, those requiring counseling services should receive appropriate support (Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2024; Mudhar et al., 2024).

One of the primary roles of guidance and counseling in enhancing inclusive education is developing a deep understanding of students' needs, including those with special needs (Durdukoca, 2021; Majoko, 2019). Counselors are trained to identify students' characteristics and requirements, enabling them to provide appropriate support through adaptive strategies and learning methods (Fadilah et al., 2024). This is crucial to ensure that students with special needs are not only accepted within the school environment but are also able to actively participate in the learning process. In the context of inclusive education, counselors must collaborate with various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and related institutions, to design and implement appropriate learning and intervention plans (Vlachou, 2004). In this regard, counselors act as communication bridges to ensure that all aspects of students' needs are addressed.

Achieving optimal development requires guidance and counseling from teachers who can facilitate the resolution of developmental challenges faced by students with special needs (Al Khalifa, 2024; Siamlaran et al., 2025; Syafiulia & Maadad, 2026). Their roles include: (1) implementing counseling services tailored to students' abilities, talents, interests, and specific conditions, as well as classifying students into suitable activity and self-development groups; (2) providing direction and motivation for active participation in group activities and personal development; (3) delivering guidance related to gender roles adapted to students' characteristics and helping them understand social roles within the community; and (4) assisting students, including those with special needs, in career selection by facilitating self-understanding, environmental awareness, decision-making, planning, and career-oriented activities (Durdukoca, 2021; Materechera, 2020; Utami & Ubaidillah, 2025).

Guidance and counseling teachers (counselors) are therefore expected to possess the skills and competencies necessary to support the implementation of counseling services within inclusive educational settings (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Alborno, 2017). Without such competencies, they cannot effectively perform their duties (Aminah et al., 2021). Consequently, counselors must continuously develop their skills to provide optimal services for students with special needs. In line with this, Government Regulation No. 70 of 2009 mandates the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs and the provision of special assistant teachers, either from special schools or from regular schools with specialized training. This underscores the critical role of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive education (Nehez & Blossing, 2022).

These roles include: (a) identifying students with special needs through needs assessment; (b) planning programs aimed at developing students' potential; (c) implementing guidance and counseling services; (d) collaborating with stakeholders in inclusive education; and (e) conducting continuous evaluation of counseling programs. This is consistent with Esengulova et al. (2025; Hashmi et al., 2024; Mierrina, 2018; Sedláčková et al., 2025), who outlines five key stages in the role of guidance and counseling teachers in inclusive education: needs assessment, program planning, program implementation, collaboration, and ongoing evaluation (Ali et al., 2024; Burns, 2020; Burns, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Guidance and counseling teachers play a strategic role as facilitators, motivators, and mentors who support all students, including those with special needs, in developing their potential, fostering independence, and adapting socially and emotionally within the school environment. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers hold a pivotal position in the implementation of inclusive guidance and counseling services. The role of inclusive guidance and counseling teachers in schools is expected to be realized through the provision of guidance and counseling services based on: (a) identifying students with special needs through needs assessment procedures; (b) planning programs aimed at developing the potential of students with special needs; (c) implementing guidance and counseling programs and services for students with special needs; (d) collaborating with various stakeholders within the framework of inclusive education; and (e) conducting continuous evaluations of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive educational settings.

In practice, guidance and counseling teachers engage in collaborative efforts as part of the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating inclusive guidance and counseling programs. Such collaboration involves school principals, special education teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and other relevant professionals. Continuous evaluation is conducted to ensure that the objectives of each program are effectively achieved. These considerations highlight the significance of guidance and counseling teachers' roles in the implementation of inclusive education. Guidance and counseling services that are responsive to students' diverse needs can facilitate a deeper understanding of themselves and their environment. Ultimately, such services contribute to the development of an Indonesian generation that is characterized by strong moral values, intellectual competence, independence, and resilience.

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Declarations

- Author contribution** : The he first author contributed to the development of the research instruments, conducted interview data collection, analyzed the interview data, prepared the data reports, and sought journal publication for the research findings. The second author contributed to the collection of observational data, the processing of observational data, and the reporting of observational results. The third author contributed to the collection of documentation data, the processing of documentation data, and the reporting of documentation findings. The fourth author contributed by carrying out data reduction and conducting a theoretical review to verify the research findings. The fifth author was responsible for designing the research results and composing the discussion of the findings.
- Funding statement** : This study was conducted independently and did not receive any funding or grants from any source.
- Conflict of interest** : The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.
- Additional information** : Understood, there is no additional information available for this paper.

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