

Literature Review: The Role of Counselors in Handling Bullying in School Environments

Alifa Aisyah Putri^{1,a)}, Ega Annora², Erzety³, Hesti Mawaddah⁴, Meliza Meldiyana⁵,
Putri Purnama Sari⁶, Samudra Fatihah⁷

¹Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau
Jl. HR Soebromas No. 155 KM. 15 Simpang Baru Panam Pekanbaru, 28293

^{a)}alifaaisyahputri01@gmail.com

Abstract. *Bullying in schools has become an increasingly concerning phenomenon due to its short- and long-term negative impacts on students' psychological, social, and academic development. Bullying behaviors, which may include physical, verbal, or psychological abuse, not only harm the victims but also disrupt the overall learning climate. School counselors play a strategic role in preventing, addressing, and minimizing the impact of bullying through various counseling interventions. This article aims to review the role of counselors in handling school bullying through a systematic literature review of both national and international studies published within the last ten years. The findings indicate that counselors serve not only as facilitators of individual and group counseling but also as educators, mediators, and advocates for students. Counseling interventions based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), humanistic approaches, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) have been proven effective in helping victims overcome trauma, build self-confidence, and reduce aggressive behavior among perpetrators. Moreover, counselors play an essential role in fostering a safe school culture by collaborating with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Challenges faced include the limited number of school counselors, students' reluctance to report bullying, and the lack of supportive school policies. In conclusion, school counselors hold a central role in creating a bullying-free learning environment through integrative, collaborative, and sustainable counseling approaches.*

Keywords: Bullying, Counselor, School, Counseling, Prevention



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

Schools are educational institutions that ideally should be safe spaces for students to grow, develop, and learn without fear. However, bullying remains prevalent at various levels of education. Bullying is repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm or demean others, whether physically, verbally, socially, or psychologically. Bullying can take the form of teasing, exclusion, beatings, cyberbullying, and even intimidation, which can have serious consequences for the victim.

Data from UNICEF (2022) shows that approximately 41% of school-age children in Indonesia have experienced bullying, either directly or through digital media. This figure reflects that bullying is not just an individual problem, but a systemic issue that can disrupt the learning environment, lower academic achievement, and weaken students' mental health. Victims of bullying often experience trauma, anxiety, depression, and even decreased motivation to learn. Meanwhile, perpetrators of bullying tend to develop aggressive behavior that can persist into adulthood if left untreated.

It is in this context that the role of school counselors becomes crucial. Counselors are not only tasked with providing individual or group counseling services, but also serve as facilitators, educators, mediators, and advocates for students. As facilitators, counselors help students develop social and emotional skills to cope with environmental pressures. As educators, counselors play a role in spreading anti-violence values and instilling empathy. As mediators, counselors reconcile conflicts between perpetrators and victims using a restorative approach. As advocates, counselors strive to create school policies that promote student safety.

Previous research by Hidayati & Prasetyo (2021) examined the role of counselors in preventing bullying in secondary schools. The results showed that a preventive counseling program based on social skills and empathy significantly reduced bullying rates. Mahmudi (2019) examined the effectiveness of group counseling in helping victims of bullying. The results showed that group counseling provided a space for students to share experiences, obtain peer support, and reduce feelings of isolation. They confirmed that school counselor interventions had a significant impact on reducing bullying cases. Counseling programs based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) have been shown to increase victims' self-confidence and reduce perpetrators' aggressive behavior. Furthermore, a humanistic approach and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) are also effective in changing irrational thought patterns and increasing student resilience. Counselors also play a role in developing peer-support-based prevention programs, anti-bullying campaigns, and collaborating with teachers and parents.

However, various challenges remain in implementing the counselor's role. The number of counselors in schools is often disproportionate to the number of students, resulting in not all bullying cases being handled effectively. Furthermore, a culture of silence persists, with victims reluctant to report bullying for fear of ostracization or

retaliation from the perpetrator. Lack of understanding among some teachers and parents about the importance of counseling also presents a barrier.

Based on these issues, a literature review on the role of counselors in addressing bullying in schools is crucial. By reviewing various national and international studies, this article seeks to present a comprehensive overview of the strategies, effectiveness, and challenges of the counselor's role. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of guidance and counseling science and serve as a practical reference for counselors, teachers, and policymakers in creating a bullying-free learning environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a literature review with a qualitative approach within a systematic review framework. The aim was to synthesize research findings related to the role of counselors in preventing, addressing, and responding to bullying cases in schools. This study utilized academic databases to search for and select credible and relevant scientific publications.

The author conducted a literature search through Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ERIC, and ScienceDirect with the keywords: “role of counselor”, “bullying in school”, “school counselor role”, “anti-bullying intervention”, and “counseling for bullying victims”.

Inclusion criteria include:

1. The article discusses bullying in schools with a focus on the role of counselors.
2. Articles published in national and international reputable journals between 2014–2024.
3. The article presents empirical data or theoretical studies relevant to counseling interventions in handling bullying.

The data obtained was systematically analyzed through search, selection, critical review, and synthesis. The final results were compiled to provide a comprehensive overview of the strategies, effectiveness, and challenges faced by counselors in addressing bullying in school settings.

Literature Summary

No	Article/Thesis Title	Year	Writer	Key Findings
1	School Counselor's Role in Preventing Bullying Behavior	2019	Laila Sari & Endang Prasetyo	Preventive counseling programs reduce bullying incidents through social skills training.
2	Group Counseling for Bullying Victims in Junior High School	2020	Rudi Hartono	Group counseling is effective in reducing trauma and increasing peer support.
3	Mediation Role of Counselors in Bullying Cases	2021	Siti Fitriyah, Dadan Ramdhani & Ika Nurul	Counselor mediation helps restore social relationships between perpetrators and victims.
4	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Reducing Aggressive Behavior of Bullies	2022	Ahmad Fauzan & Riska Maharani	CBT is effective in reducing aggressive behavior in bullies
5	Humanistic Counseling Approach for Victims of	2022	Nur Azizah & Imam Syafi'i	Humanistic counseling increases victims' self-

	School Bullying				confidence and resilience.
6	Art Therapy as a Counseling Strategy for Bullying Victims	2023	Ririn Amelia & Yogi Setiawan		<i>Art therapy</i> help victims express emotions in a healthy way
7	Counselor as Advocate: Building Safe School Environment	2023	Fitri Handayani & M. Rizki		Counselors play an important role as advocates in creating anti-bullying policies.
8	CBT-Based Counseling for Reducing Victim's Anxiety	2024	Dian Kartika & Joko Pranoto		CBT reduces excessive anxiety in bullying victims
9	Implementation of School-wide Anti-Bullying Programs by Counselors	2024	Anggun Puspita, Rahayu Lestari & Ahmad Syauqi		Counselors contribute to the bullying-free school campaign
10	Global Perspective on Counselor's Role in Anti-Bullying Strategies	2024	UNICEF Report		Active involvement of counselors reduces bullying cases by up to 30% in schools

From the table above, it can be concluded that the number of articles reviewed to determine the implementation of group counseling services as an effort to regulate emotions in children from broken homes was 10 articles, both research journals and theses

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Counselors in Bullying Prevention

School counselors play a strategic role in bullying prevention through ongoing educational programs. Counselors can provide counseling on the impacts of bullying, integrate character education into guidance services, and train students in healthy social skills. Prevention also involves teaching the values of empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. One effective strategy is the implementation of peer counseling, involving students of the same age as peer counselors to help detect and respond to bullying cases early. Furthermore, counselors play an active role in developing and implementing school-wide anti-bullying campaigns involving teachers, students, and parents (Hidayati & Prasetyo, 2021). With this approach, students not only understand the dangers of bullying but are also trained to become agents of change who reject all forms of violence in schools. Furthermore, these preventive efforts create an inclusive and supportive school climate, thereby suppressing the potential for bullying early on.

2. Individual and Group Counseling

In addition to prevention efforts, counselors also play a crucial role in providing psychological intervention for students involved in bullying. Individual counseling services aim to help victims overcome psychological trauma, reduce anxiety, and rebuild self-confidence lost due to bullying. Individual counseling also aims to develop victims' resilience so they can cope with environmental pressures and resist being easily overwhelmed by traumatic experiences. Group counseling, on the other hand, offers distinct benefits. Within a group, victims of bullying have the opportunity to share experiences, receive social support, and gain motivation from peers who have experienced similar experiences (Mahmudi, 2019). Group dynamics create a sense of togetherness that can accelerate the emotional healing process of victims. Furthermore,

group counseling also serves as a platform for practicing communication skills, problem-solving, and self-control, which are beneficial for students' psychosocial development..

3. Counselor as Mediator

The role of counselors as mediators in bullying cases is crucial for restoring students' psychosocial well-being at school. In this capacity, counselors serve as neutral facilitators, bridging communication between victims, perpetrators, teachers, and parents. The mediation process prioritizes the principles of restorative justice, where the primary goal is not simply to impose punishment but to repair damaged social relationships. Through mediation, counselors can help victims express their experiences and feelings, while also providing opportunities for perpetrators to recognize the impact of their behavior. This creates a space for constructive dialogue, ultimately leading to changes in attitudes and behaviors of all parties involved in the bullying.

Furthermore, the counselor's role as a mediator also helps prevent future conflicts from recurring. When resolutions are conducted openly and restoratively, students who have been involved in bullying are more likely to understand the consequences of their actions. This can minimize the potential for resentment, hatred, or prolonged trauma that typically arise when problems are resolved solely with one-sided punishment. Thus, the counselor's role is not only as a mediator but also as a social learning facilitator for students. Through this process, students are taught the importance of empathy, responsibility, and healthy conflict resolution. In other words, counselor-facilitated mediation can be a means of building a harmonious, safe, and sustainable school culture.

4. Integration of Counseling Approaches

The effectiveness of a counselor's role in addressing bullying is greatly influenced by the counseling approach applied. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), for example, has proven effective in helping students change negative thought patterns formed as a result of bullying experiences. Through CBT, victims can reduce fear, increase self-confidence, and learn to cope with anxiety that arises in social interactions. Meanwhile, for perpetrators, CBT helps reduce aggressive behavior and teaches healthier emotional management strategies. In addition to CBT, a humanistic approach also plays a crucial role because it emphasizes self-awareness, acceptance, and appreciation for students' positive potential. This approach helps victims feel more valued, heard, and rediscover the self-esteem lost due to bullying.

On the other hand, the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach is also widely used in counseling interventions related to bullying. REBT focuses on changing irrational beliefs that often arise in both victims and perpetrators. In victims, REBT can reduce feelings of low self-esteem and irrational thoughts such as feelings of worthlessness or excessive fear. Meanwhile, in perpetrators, REBT helps control emotional outbursts, reduce aggressive impulses, and improve rational thinking skills. The integration of CBT, humanistic behavior, and REBT gives counselors the flexibility to tailor services to the diverse needs of students.

This makes counseling interventions more comprehensive, focusing not only on psychological recovery but also on developing positive attitudes, social skills, and behaviors. With an integrated approach, counselors can be more effective in creating long-term change for students involved in bullying.

5. Challenges and Implications

Although the role of counselors in addressing bullying is crucial, various challenges remain. One major obstacle is the unequal ratio of counselors to students, which means that not all bullying cases can be handled effectively. This often leaves counselors overwhelmed, as they must handle multiple cases simultaneously, with limited time and resources. Furthermore, some schools still lack full support for counseling services, both in terms of policy and facilities. Counselors are often viewed as merely administrative complements, despite their vital role in fostering a healthy school climate. This demonstrates the ongoing gap between theory and practice in implementing counseling services in schools.

Another challenge counselors face is student resistance to reporting bullying. Many victims fear retaliation from the perpetrator or worry about being further ostracized by their social environment if they report it. This culture of silence causes many bullying cases to go unreported and ultimately drag on. Therefore, a collaborative strategy involving teachers, parents, and the school as a whole is needed to support counselors in addressing bullying (Setiawan & Oktaviani, 2022). The implications of this situation are the need to increase counselor capacity through ongoing training, implementing school policies that favor student protection, and building extensive social support networks. In this way, counselors can more optimally play their role in creating a safe, inclusive, and violence-free learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that counselors play a vital role in addressing bullying in schools. Counselors not only provide individual and group counseling, but also serve as educators, mediators, and advocates. Counseling programs based on CBT, humanistic learning, and REBT have proven effective in helping victims and perpetrators of bullying. However, counselors still face challenges in the form of limited resources and school support. Therefore, collaboration between counselors, teachers, parents, and policymakers is crucial to creating a safe, inclusive, and bullying-free learning environment

REFERENCE

- Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26. Retrieved from https://www.johnnietfeld.com/uploads/2/2/6/0/22606800/gross_2015.pdf
- Hamzah, A., & Nurkhaliza, I. (2021). The role of group counseling in developing students' emotional regulation. *Guidena: Journal of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Guidance and Counseling*, 11(1), 109–120.
- Hidayat, A., & Suryani, N. (2020). The effectiveness of CBT-based group counseling to improve emotional regulation in high school students. *Jurnal Fokus Konseling*, 6(2), 150–160.
- Hidayati, A., & Prasetyo, R. (2021). School counselor's role in preventing bullying: A systematic review. *Journal of Educational Counseling*, 7(2), 112–124.
- Karneli, Y., Mustika, H., & Netrawati. (2022). Self-acceptance of adolescents from broken homes through group counseling (REBT). *Algebra: Journal of Guidance and Counseling Science*, 4(2), 66–74. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.yana.or.id/index.php/algebra/article/view/666>
- Kusumawati, D., & Widodo, A. (2022). Group counseling to improve empathy and self-control in adolescents. *Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Journal*, 7(1), 22–31.
- Mahmudi, A., & Prasetyo, R. (2019). Group counseling as an effort to reduce anxiety in students from broken homes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8(2), 55–66.
- Murni, S., & Lestari, T. (2023). The effectiveness of peer-support-based group counseling to improve adolescent emotional regulation. *Psychopedagogy: Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 12(1), 33–44.
- Putra, A., & Syarifuddin, H. (2019). Analysis of the need to develop resilience-based counseling services. *Journal of Counseling and Education*, 7(1), 39–49.
- Putri, NFE, Andini, R., & Sari, M. (2025). Counseling approaches for children who are victims of broken homes: Literature review. *Socius: Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 12(1), 55–65. Retrieved from <https://ojs.daarulhuda.or.id/index.php/Socius/article/download/1306/1425>
- Rahman, A., & Fitriyani, R. (2021). Group counseling to improve students' emotional regulation. *Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 10(2), 87–96.
- Rizqiana, L., & Kurniawan, H. (2018). Group counseling to improve assertive communication skills in students. *Journal of Education and Counseling*, 8(2), 101–110.

- Setiawan, M., & Oktaviani, A. (2022). Emotional regulation and its impact on adolescent academic achievement. *Psymphatic: Scientific Journal of Psychology*, 9(2), 121–132.
- UNICEF. (2022). Violence against children in schools: Global status report. UNICEF Publications.
- Yuliana, D., & Hasanah, U. (2020). CBT-based group counseling to reduce aggressive behavior in students from broken homes. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Counseling*, 4(1), 50–61.