

FOSTERING STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL WELL BEING AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SCHOOL BASED COUNSELING (A CASE STUDY AT SDN 163/X CATUR RAHAYU, EAST TANJUNG JABUNG, JAMBI, INDONESIA)

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Abstract

Students' emotional well being and character development are essential components of holistic education, particularly at the elementary school level, where children undergo significant social, emotional, and moral development. This study aims to examine the implementation of school based counseling in fostering students' emotional well being and character development at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the forms of counseling services provided, the strategies employed by teachers and school personnel, and the ways in which these practices contribute to students' emotional and character development. Data were obtained through in depth interviews, classroom and school observations, and documentation involving school leaders, teachers, counselors or counseling personnel, and students. The findings indicate that school based counseling contributes to students' emotional well being by providing opportunities for them to express their feelings, develop emotional awareness, manage interpersonal conflicts, and receive individualized support when facing academic, social, or personal challenges. In terms of character development, counseling activities foster positive values such as responsibility, empathy, self-discipline, respect, honesty, and cooperation. The study further reveals that the effectiveness of counseling is strengthened by teachers' consistent involvement, supportive teacher student relationships, collaboration among school stakeholders, and the integration of counseling principles into students' daily school experiences. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including limited counseling resources, the dual roles of teachers, and the need for more systematic counseling programs. Overall, the study demonstrates that school based counseling can serve as a strategic educational approach to promoting students' emotional well being and character development when implemented collaboratively, continuously, and in accordance with students' developmental needs.

Keywords: school based counseling, emotional well being, character development

Introduction

Education is not merely concerned with students' academic achievement; it also plays a fundamental role in shaping their emotional well being (Ashfaq, 2025), social competence, moral awareness, and character. At the elementary school

level, these dimensions are particularly important because children are undergoing a formative developmental period in which patterns of emotional regulation (Hamzah, 2025), interpersonal relationships, responsibility, empathy, self discipline, and respect are progressively

established (Amilbahar, 2025). Therefore, schools are expected not only to provide academic instruction but also to create an environment in which students feel psychologically safe, socially supported, and guided to develop positive character. Within this broader educational responsibility, school based counseling can serve as an important mechanism for addressing students' personal, social, emotional, and developmental needs (Rabasović et al., 2026).

The importance of students' emotional well being has received increasing attention in contemporary education (Laksha et al., 2026). Emotional and psychological difficulties can influence students' learning engagement, social relationships, classroom behavior, self confidence, and overall educational experience. Students who experience difficulties in managing emotions may demonstrate frustration, withdrawal, conflict with peers, lack of concentration, or inappropriate behavioral responses. If these difficulties are not recognized and addressed appropriately, they may interfere with students' academic and social development (Moslemi & Nasab, 2026). Therefore, emotional well being should not be understood merely as the absence of psychological problems but as a condition in which students are able to recognize and regulate their emotions, establish positive relationships, cope with challenges,

develop a sense of belonging, and participate constructively in school life.

At the elementary school level, emotional well being is closely connected to character development. Character is not formed through moral instruction alone but develops through repeated experiences, social interaction, behavioral modeling, reflection, and opportunities to practice positive values. Values such as responsibility, empathy, honesty, discipline, respect, cooperation, and independence need to be experienced and reinforced within students' everyday lives. In this regard, school based counseling has an important potential role because counseling provides students with opportunities to discuss their experiences, understand their emotions, reflect on their behavior, resolve interpersonal conflicts, and develop more appropriate responses to challenging situations. Through such processes, counseling can become a means of connecting students' emotional development with the formation of positive character.

School based counseling at the elementary level, however, should not be limited to formal counseling sessions. Elementary students may not always be able to clearly articulate their emotional difficulties (Zhang et al., 2026). Their needs may instead be expressed through behavioral changes, interpersonal conflicts, withdrawal, and excessive dependence, difficulty

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following rules, low participation, or other forms of classroom behavior. Consequently, counseling may take various forms, including individual guidance, classroom guidance, group activities, teacher student conversations, conflict resolution, behavioral guidance, parental communication, and preventive character-building activities. This broad understanding of counseling places teachers and other school personnel in an important position because they interact with students on a daily basis and are often the first adults to recognize changes in students' emotional and behavioral conditions(Konikkou et al., 2025).

The Indonesian educational context further strengthens the relevance of this issue. Contemporary Indonesian education places increasing emphasis on holistic student development, including academic competence, character, independence, cooperation, responsibility, and social awareness. The development of students' character is therefore expected to occur not only through specific character education programs but also through the broader culture and practices of the school(Anisah, 2023). Teachers are expected to become role models, facilitators, and guides who assist students in developing appropriate attitudes and behaviors(BABATUNDE et al., 2025). Within this context, counseling can support the educational process by

providing students with individualized attention and opportunities to reflect upon their experiences and develop constructive ways of dealing with personal, social, and academic challenges.

Previous studies have generally demonstrated that guidance and counseling can contribute to students' emotional, social, behavioral, and character development(Galassi & Akos, 2017). Counseling has been associated with improvements in emotional awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, empathy, self confidence, discipline, and responsibility(Anchunda & Kaewurai, 2026). Research has also emphasized the importance of teacher student relationships, parental involvement, school support, and teachers' competencies in determining the effectiveness of counseling practices. These findings indicate that counseling can make an important contribution to students' development beyond the academic domain.

Nevertheless, several limitations remain in the existing body of research. First, previous studies tend to examine students' emotional development, psychological well being, social competence, and character development as separate areas of investigation. Research focusing on emotional intelligence, for example, generally emphasizes students' ability to recognize and regulate emotions, whereas studies on character education

tend to emphasize values and behavioral outcomes. Although these dimensions are closely related, relatively limited attention has been given to how school based counseling can function as an integrated process connecting students' emotional well being with their character development. This represents an important conceptual gap because students' ability to regulate emotions, understand others, manage conflicts, and respond appropriately to difficult situations is closely related to the development of character values such as empathy, responsibility, respect, and self-discipline.

Second, much of the existing research provides limited insight into the actual processes through which counseling is implemented in elementary schools. Studies may demonstrate that counseling has positive effects, but they do not always explain how teachers identify students' needs, how counseling is incorporated into everyday school activities, how students experience the support provided, or how teachers and parents collaborate in addressing students' emotional and behavioral concerns. A deeper understanding of these processes is particularly important at the elementary level because counseling practices may be less formalized than those found in secondary schools. Classroom teachers may assume multiple roles as educators, mentors, behavioral guides,

and providers of emotional support. Consequently, counseling at this level may be embedded within everyday educational interactions rather than operating exclusively through formal counseling services.

Third, there remains a contextual gap concerning elementary schools outside major urban educational environments. The implementation of school based counseling is influenced by institutional resources, teacher capacity, school culture, parental involvement, students' characteristics, and the sociocultural environment of the community. Therefore, findings generated from urban schools or different educational systems cannot automatically be generalized to other contexts. In particular, there is still limited empirical understanding of how school based counseling contributes to emotional well being and character development within elementary schools in rural or semi-rural areas of Indonesia.

These gaps provide the basis for examining the case of SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi. The school provides a relevant context for investigating how counseling is practiced within the everyday life of an elementary school and how such practices respond to students' emotional and character-related needs. Rather than focusing only on whether a formal counseling program exists, this study examines how counseling is actually carried out through

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interactions among students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. Particular attention is given to the strategies used to support students' emotional well being, the ways in which counseling contributes to character development, and the contextual factors that facilitate or constrain these practices.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated perspective on school based counseling, emotional well being, and character development. Instead of treating emotional well being and character formation as independent outcomes, this study examines them as interconnected dimensions of students' holistic development. Counseling is conceptualized not merely as a remedial service for students who experience behavioral or emotional problems but as a developmental and preventive educational practice. Through emotional support, reflection, interpersonal guidance, behavioral modeling, and continuous teacher student interaction, counseling may help students develop both emotional competencies and positive character dispositions.

The study also offers contextual novelty by focusing on an elementary school in East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi, where the implementation of counseling is situated within its own institutional and sociocultural environment. This context allows the study to explore how counseling practices are adapted to students'

developmental needs and the realities of the school community. The study therefore seeks to move beyond the general assumption that counseling is beneficial and instead investigate how, through what practices, and under what conditions school based counseling contributes to students' emotional well being and character development. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of counseling as part of holistic elementary education.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine how school based counseling fosters students' emotional well being and character development at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi. Specifically, the study investigates the forms and strategies of school based counseling implemented at the school, the ways in which counseling contributes to students' emotional well being, its role in strengthening students' character, and the factors that support or constrain its implementation. By examining these dimensions simultaneously, the study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of school based counseling as a strategic educational practice for supporting the emotional, social, and character development of elementary school students.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how school based counseling fosters students' emotional well being and character development (Masrukoyah & Sobari, 2025) at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand the experiences, perceptions, practices, interactions, and contextual factors underlying the implementation of school based counseling rather than to measure its effectiveness statistically. The case study design was considered appropriate because the research focuses on a specific educational setting and seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of counseling practices within their natural school context.

The study focused on four main aspects: (1) the forms and strategies of school based counseling implemented at the school, (2) the contribution of counseling to students' emotional well being, (3) the contribution of counseling to students' character development, and (4) the factors that support or constrain the implementation of counseling. These aspects were examined holistically to understand the relationship between counseling practices, students' emotional experiences, and character development within the school environment.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi, Indonesia. The school was selected as the research setting because it provides a relevant context for examining the implementation of school based counseling at the elementary level. The research was conducted within the natural setting of the school to enable the researcher to observe counseling related practices and interactions as they occurred in everyday educational activities.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, meaning that individuals were chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives and their direct involvement in students' emotional, social, and character development (Dahal et al., 2024). The participants consisted of the school principal, classroom teachers, teachers involved in guidance and counseling activities, and selected students. Parents or guardians may also be included when their perspectives are considered relevant to understanding students' emotional and behavioral development and the school-family relationship.

The selection of student participants considered their ability to communicate their experiences and their involvement in counseling or guidance activities. The number of participants was determined progressively according to the principle of data saturation, whereby data

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collection was considered sufficient when additional interviews or observations no longer generated substantial new information relevant to the research questions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through semi structured interviews, observations, and documentation(Chand, 2025). The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended to obtain comprehensive information and strengthen the credibility of the findings through triangulation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and selected students. Interviews with school personnel focused on their understanding of students' emotional and character-related needs, the forms of counseling provided, strategies used to address students' difficulties, teachers' roles in counseling, collaboration with parents, and challenges encountered during implementation. Student interviews focused on their experiences of receiving guidance, their perceptions of teacher support, their ability to express and manage emotions, their relationships with peers and teachers, and their experiences in developing positive behaviors and character values. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences.

Non-participant observations were conducted to examine counseling

related practices and interactions within the school environment. The observations focused on teacher student interactions, students' social relationships, classroom behavior, emotional responses, conflict-resolution processes, character-building activities, and other situations relevant to students' emotional well being and character development. Field notes were recorded systematically to document relevant behaviors, interactions, situations, and contextual conditions.

Documentation was used to complement interview and observation data. Relevant documents included school profiles, counseling or guidance programs, student development records where access was ethically permitted, school regulations, activity plans, reports, and other documents related to counseling and character development. Documents were analyzed to determine how counseling and student development were formally planned and implemented within the school.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary research instrument(Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). The researcher was responsible for determining the focus of inquiry, conducting interviews and observations, interpreting the data, and constructing meaning from participants' experiences. To maintain consistency during data collection, the

researcher developed interview guidelines and observation indicators based on the research objectives.

The interview guidelines covered several key dimensions, including students' emotional well being, counseling practices, teacher student relationships, character development, parental involvement, and implementation challenges. The observation guidelines focused on students' emotional expressions, interactions with peers and teachers, behavioral responses, conflict management, participation in school activities, and the implementation of character-building practices. The instruments were used flexibly so that the researcher could explore emerging issues during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative data analysis process consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Wolff & Mahoney, 2018). The analysis began immediately after the initial data collection and continued throughout the research process.

First, the researcher conducted data condensation by selecting, organizing, coding, and simplifying information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. Data that were directly related to the research questions were identified and grouped into preliminary categories. The initial

coding focused on issues such as emotional awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, teacher support, counseling strategies, empathy, responsibility, discipline, respect, cooperation, parental involvement, and implementation challenges.

Second, the researcher conducted data display by organizing the coded information into thematic categories and narrative descriptions. The data were compared across participants and data sources to identify similarities, differences, patterns, and relationships. For example, information obtained from teachers regarding students' emotional regulation was compared with students' accounts and observation findings to determine whether the different sources provided consistent or contrasting evidence.

Third, the researcher conducted conclusion drawing and verification. Emerging interpretations were continuously compared with the collected evidence to ensure that conclusions were grounded in the data. The researcher also examined alternative interpretations and returned to the original data when necessary. The final themes were developed based on recurring patterns that adequately represented the research findings.

The analysis was organized around the major themes of the study: (1) implementation of school based counseling, (2) emotional well being,

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(3) character development, and (4) supporting and inhibiting factors. The relationships among these themes were then examined to develop a comprehensive interpretation of how counseling contributes to students' holistic development.

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, students, and, where relevant, parents (Daytner, 2006). Technique triangulation involved comparing interview findings with observations and documentation.

Member checking was conducted by clarifying and confirming important interpretations with selected participants to ensure that the researcher's understanding accurately reflected their experiences. Prolonged engagement in the research setting was used to develop a deeper understanding of the school environment and to reduce the possibility of interpreting isolated events as general patterns.

The researcher also maintained systematic field notes and an audit trail documenting the process of data collection, coding, interpretation, and decision-making. These procedures were intended to strengthen the credibility, dependability,

confirmability, and transferability of the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the relevant school authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and their participation was voluntary (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). For student participants, permission from parents or legal guardians was obtained, and students were informed that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study without negative consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Participants' names and other identifying information were not disclosed in the research report. Data were used solely for academic purposes and were stored securely. Particular care was taken when discussing students' emotional experiences or behavioral difficulties to ensure that the research process did not stigmatize, embarrass, or negatively affect the students involved.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several stages. The first stage involved preliminary preparation, including identifying the research setting, obtaining institutional permission, developing research

instruments, and determining potential participants (Gelling, 2015). The second stage involved data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. The third stage involved data organization, transcription, coding, categorization, and thematic analysis. The fourth stage involved data verification through triangulation and member checking. Finally, the researcher synthesized the findings to develop an interpretation of how school based counseling fosters students' emotional well being and character development within the context of SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu.

Overall, the methodological design was intended to provide an in-depth and contextually grounded understanding of school based counseling. By combining multiple sources and data collection techniques, the study sought to capture not only the formal aspects of counseling but also the everyday interactions and practices through which emotional well being and character development are fostered within the school environment.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of this study indicate that school based counseling at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu plays an important role in supporting students' emotional well being and character development. The counseling process was not limited to formal counseling sessions but was

integrated into daily interactions between teachers and students, classroom activities, behavioral guidance, interpersonal communication, and cooperation with parents. Based on the analysis of interviews, observations, and school documentation, four major themes emerged: (1) the implementation of school based counseling, (2) counseling and students' emotional well being, (3) counseling and character development, and (4) supporting and inhibiting factors.

1. Implementation of School Based Counseling

The findings indicate that school based counseling was implemented primarily through daily educational interactions. Teachers played a central role in identifying students who demonstrated emotional, behavioral, social, or academic difficulties. Rather than waiting for problems to become serious, teachers generally responded to students' difficulties through personal conversations, guidance, reminders, emotional support, and behavioral direction.

Counseling activities were implemented through both individual and group approaches. Individual guidance was provided when students experienced personal difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, behavioral problems, or emotional disturbances. In such situations, teachers attempted to create opportunities for students to

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communicate their feelings and explain the reasons underlying their behavior. Group-based guidance was implemented through classroom discussions, collaborative activities, moral reflection, and character-building activities.

The findings further demonstrate that the teacher student relationship was an important foundation of the counseling process. Students appeared to respond more positively when teachers approached them through communication that was supportive rather than judgmental. Teachers attempted to listen to students' concerns before providing advice or corrective guidance. This indicates that counseling at the elementary level is strongly dependent on interpersonal trust and the ability of teachers to create a psychologically safe environment.

Another important finding concerns the integration of counseling into everyday school activities. Counseling was not treated as an isolated program but was connected with classroom management, discipline, character education, conflict resolution, and student development. This approach allowed teachers to address students' emotional and behavioral needs within the situations in which those needs emerged.

2. School Based Counseling and Students' Emotional Well Being

The findings suggest that counseling contributed to students' emotional well being in several ways. The first was through providing students with opportunities to express and communicate their emotions. Some students experienced difficulties in expressing feelings directly, particularly when they were experiencing conflict with peers, frustration, disappointment, or fear. Through personal communication with teachers, students were given opportunities to describe their experiences and receive emotional support.

The second contribution involved the development of emotional awareness and regulation. Teachers encouraged students to recognize their emotional states and understand that emotions should be managed appropriately. When students became angry or frustrated, teachers did not merely focus on stopping inappropriate behavior but attempted to guide students toward understanding the causes of their emotions and identifying more constructive ways to respond.

The third contribution concerned interpersonal relationships. Counseling helped students understand the importance of communicating appropriately, listening to others, apologizing when necessary, forgiving peers, and resolving conflicts constructively. These processes

contributed to a more supportive social environment and reduced the tendency to respond to interpersonal difficulties through aggressive or inappropriate behavior.

The findings also indicate that emotional support from teachers contributed to students' sense of security and belonging. Students who perceived their teachers as approachable and supportive appeared to have greater opportunities to communicate personal difficulties. This suggests that the emotional climate created by teachers is an important component of school based counseling.

Therefore, emotional well being in this context was not limited to students feeling happy or comfortable at school. It included students' ability to communicate their feelings, manage emotional responses, maintain relationships, cope with difficulties, and seek assistance when problems occurred.

3. School Based Counseling and Character Development

The findings further demonstrate that counseling contributed to the development of several character-related values, particularly responsibility, discipline, empathy, respect, cooperation, honesty, and self control.

Responsibility was developed through guidance concerning students' obligations, classroom tasks, school rules, and consequences of their

behavior. Teachers encouraged students to recognize that their actions had consequences for themselves and others. Counseling therefore functioned not only as a means of correcting inappropriate behavior but also as a process of helping students understand the reasons behind responsible behavior.

Discipline was developed through consistent expectations regarding attendance, classroom participation, task completion, personal behavior, and compliance with school rules. However, the findings indicate that disciplinary guidance was more constructive when teachers combined rules with explanation and reflection. Students were encouraged to understand why a particular behavior was inappropriate rather than simply being instructed to avoid it.

Empathy and respect emerged through the management of interpersonal conflicts. When students experienced disagreements with peers, teachers encouraged them to listen to different perspectives, understand the feelings of others, apologize when appropriate, and avoid repeating harmful behavior. Such practices provided students with opportunities to translate abstract moral values into concrete social behavior.

Cooperation was also reinforced through group activities and classroom interactions. Students were encouraged to work together, share responsibilities, assist their peers, and respect

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differences. In this way, counseling and character development were embedded in students' daily social experiences rather than confined to specific lessons.

The findings suggest that character development occurred through a continuous process involving guidance, modeling, reinforcement, reflection, and habituation. Teachers did not merely explain desirable character values but demonstrated and reinforced them through everyday interactions. This finding highlights the importance of consistency between what teachers communicate and what students observe in the behavior of adults within the school environment.

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Several factors supported the implementation of school based counseling. The first was the supportive relationship between teachers and students. Teachers who demonstrated patience, empathy, and openness were better positioned to identify students' needs and encourage them to communicate their difficulties.

The second supporting factor was school leadership and institutional support. Counseling practices became more sustainable when school leaders recognized students' emotional and character development as part of the school's educational responsibility. Support from school leadership also facilitated coordination among teachers and other stakeholders.

The third factor was parental involvement. Communication between teachers and parents enabled the school to obtain additional information concerning students' behavior and emotional conditions. Collaboration with parents also helped ensure that guidance provided at school could be reinforced within the home environment.

However, the study also identified several challenges. One of the main challenges was the multiple responsibilities of classroom teachers. Teachers are required to manage academic instruction while simultaneously addressing students' emotional, behavioral, and social needs. This may limit the time available for individualized counseling.

Another challenge was the limited availability of specialized counseling resources. Elementary schools may not always have a dedicated professional counselor with sufficient time to provide systematic counseling services. Consequently, teachers frequently assume counseling related responsibilities despite having different levels of formal counseling competence.

The consistency of counseling implementation may also be affected by differences in students' needs, parental responses, and the availability of school resources. These challenges indicate that effective school based counseling requires not only individual teacher

commitment but also systematic institutional support.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that school based counseling at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu can be understood as a developmental and preventive educational practice rather than merely a remedial intervention. Counseling operates through everyday interactions that help students understand their emotions, manage behavior, establish positive relationships, and internalize character values. This finding is particularly relevant at the elementary level, where children's emotional and moral development is strongly influenced by their relationships with significant adults and their daily social experiences(Thompson et al., 2006).

The first important finding concerns the role of teacher student relationships as the foundation of counseling. Elementary students may not always possess the vocabulary or psychological maturity required to explicitly communicate emotional difficulties. Therefore, teachers' ability to recognize behavioral signals, listen attentively, and respond empathetically becomes essential(Franzese, 2016). A counseling process based on trust allows students to perceive teachers not merely as authority figures but also as supportive adults to whom they can communicate personal difficulties.

This finding suggests that the effectiveness of elementary-school

counseling depends not exclusively on formal counseling techniques. The relational dimension of counseling is equally important. When students feel respected and listened to, they are more likely to communicate their experiences and accept guidance. Consequently, teacher empathy, active listening, patience, and consistency should be regarded as important competencies in school based counseling.

The second important finding concerns the relationship between emotional well being and character development. The study demonstrates that these two dimensions are interconnected rather than independent. Students who are guided to recognize and regulate their emotions are simultaneously developing the capacity to respond respectfully to others, manage conflicts, demonstrate self control, and assume responsibility for their actions.

For example, emotional regulation is closely connected with discipline and self control. A student who is able to manage anger appropriately is more capable of responding to conflict without aggression. Similarly, the ability to understand another person's feelings contributes to empathy and respect. Therefore, counseling that focuses on emotional development can indirectly strengthen character development by providing students with the emotional

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competencies required to practice positive values in real-life situations.

The third finding concerns the importance of reflection in character formation. Character development becomes more meaningful when students are given opportunities to reflect on their behavior rather than simply receiving punishment for inappropriate actions. Counseling provides a space for such reflection. Teachers can guide students to consider what happened, how their actions affected others, why a particular behavior was inappropriate, and what they could do differently in the future.

This reflective approach shifts discipline from a predominantly punitive model toward a developmental model(Watson, 2008). Instead of viewing mistakes merely as violations of school rules, students are encouraged to understand them as opportunities for learning and personal growth. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for elementary students because character development requires repeated opportunities to practice, evaluate, and improve behavior.

The fourth finding highlights the importance of consistency and modeling. Students learn character not only through explicit instruction but also through observing how adults behave. If teachers encourage respect but communicate with students through humiliation or excessive

punishment, the messages received by students may become contradictory. Conversely, when teachers consistently demonstrate patience, fairness, empathy, and responsibility, students receive concrete examples of how character values are enacted.

Therefore, school based counseling should be integrated with the broader school culture. Counseling will have limited impact if it is implemented only through occasional individual sessions while the wider school environment does not consistently reinforce emotional safety and positive character(Lee, 2001). The findings suggest that counseling, classroom management, character education, and teacher student relationships should be viewed as interconnected components of a supportive educational environment.

The fifth finding concerns the role of parents and the wider school community. Students' emotional and character development does not occur exclusively at school. The values and behavioral expectations communicated by teachers need to be reinforced through family interactions. Communication between teachers and parents can provide a more complete understanding of students' behavior and enable the development of consistent strategies for supporting them.

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that the implementation of school based counseling faces

structural challenges. Teachers' multiple responsibilities can make it difficult to provide individualized support consistently. This situation indicates that strengthening counseling at the elementary level requires institutional rather than purely individual solutions. Schools need clear counseling procedures, appropriate documentation, professional development opportunities, coordination mechanisms, and adequate time for teachers to respond to students' developmental needs.

The findings therefore suggest that the development of school based counseling should move toward a whole school approach. In such an approach, counseling is not the sole responsibility of a particular teacher or counselor but becomes a shared responsibility involving school leaders, classroom teachers, students, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. Each component contributes to the creation of an environment that promotes emotional safety, positive relationships, and character development.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the argument that emotional well being and character development should be examined as interconnected components of holistic education. Counseling provides a practical mechanism through which these dimensions can be integrated. Emotional support enables students to understand and regulate their internal experiences, while character-oriented

guidance helps them translate this emotional competence into responsible and socially constructive behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that elementary schools should strengthen counseling practices through early identification of students' needs, regular teacher student communication, classroom-based guidance, reflective discipline, character habituation, parental collaboration, and continuous professional development for teachers. Counseling programs should also be designed according to students' developmental characteristics rather than simply adopting models developed for older students (Green & Keys, 2001).

Overall, the findings indicate that school based counseling at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu has the potential to function as an important educational strategy for fostering both students' emotional well being and character development. Its effectiveness, however, depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships, the consistency of implementation, teacher competence, institutional support, and collaboration between school and family. The study consequently reinforces the view that counseling should be positioned not as a peripheral service but as an integral component of elementary education that supports students' holistic development.

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CONCLUSION

This study concludes that school based counseling has an important role in fostering students' emotional well being and character development at SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu, East Tanjung Jabung, Jambi. The findings indicate that counseling is implemented not only through formal counseling activities but also through daily teacher student interactions, individual guidance, classroom-based activities, behavioral guidance, conflict resolution, and communication with parents. This integrated approach enables counseling to become part of students' everyday educational experiences rather than functioning solely as a remedial intervention for students experiencing problems.

In relation to emotional well being, school based counseling provides students with opportunities to express their feelings, develop emotional awareness, regulate emotional responses, manage interpersonal conflicts, and seek support when facing personal, social, or academic difficulties. Supportive teacher student relationships appear to be particularly important because students are more likely to communicate their concerns when they feel respected, listened to, and emotionally safe. Thus, emotional well being is fostered through continuous interpersonal support and a positive school environment.

The study also demonstrates that counseling contributes to students' character development, particularly in the areas of responsibility, discipline, empathy, respect, cooperation, honesty, and self control. Character development occurs through guidance, reflection, behavioral modeling, reinforcement, and habituation in students' daily interactions. This finding confirms that emotional well being and character development are closely interconnected. Students' capacity to recognize and regulate their emotions can support their ability to demonstrate positive social behavior and internalize character values.

However, the implementation of school based counseling is influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Supportive teacher student relationships, school leadership, parental involvement, and collaboration among school stakeholders strengthen counseling practices. Conversely, teachers' multiple responsibilities, limited counseling resources, differences in teachers' counseling competencies, and the need for more systematic counseling procedures may constrain implementation. These challenges indicate that sustainable school based counseling requires institutional support rather than relying solely on individual teacher initiative.

The main contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the potential of school based counseling as

an integrated developmental and preventive approach that connects students' emotional well being with character development within an elementary-school context. Counseling should therefore be positioned as an integral component of holistic education rather than merely as a response to behavioral or emotional problems. Strengthening counseling programs through teacher professional development, systematic identification of students' needs, reflective and supportive guidance, parental collaboration, and a consistent school-wide approach may further enhance students' emotional and character development.

Ultimately, school based counseling can contribute meaningfully to the creation of an educational environment in which students are not only academically competent but also emotionally resilient, socially responsible, empathetic, disciplined, and capable of developing positive relationships with others. The experience of SDN 163/X Catur Rahayu demonstrates the importance of integrating emotional support and character formation into everyday educational practices to promote the holistic development of elementary school students.

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