



Al-Manarah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies

Available online on the website:
<https://journal.pergunulampung.or.id/index.php/almanarah/index>

Al-Manarah; Journal of Education and Islamic Studies
(p-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx | e-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx)
Volume 1, Issue. 03, 2025, pp. 130-137

Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Perceptions of Obstacles and Challenges in Identifying Learning Difficulties in Students of Babunnajah Vocational School

Ahmad Rofiq*¹, Heri Setiaji², Aminudin³, Nina Sulastini*¹, Sri Linda Sari⁵

¹STAI Babunnajah Pandeglang, Indonesia

e-mail: ahrof99@gmail.com¹, herisetiaji585@gmail.com², aminudin1165@gmail.com³, ninasltn666@gmail.com⁴, srilinda184@gmail.com⁵

| Submission May 2, 2025 | Revised May 28, 2025 | Accepted June 27, 2025 | Published December 28, 2025 |

ABSTRACT *This study aims to determine the role of guidance and counseling teachers in identifying the difficulties of SMK Babunnajah students. The population in this study was 40 students, simple research was 10 students, the method used in this study was qualitative, data collection techniques in this study used observation, documentation, interviews, consioner, which first provided pretests and then given posttests treatment to find out the results of student discussions after being given behavior Based on the results of the study above, researchers can conclude that efforts that can be made by BK teachers in identifying student difficulties by using group guidance can also be done by holding consultations with students every few months by calling one by one students in each class and asking students about the problems they face. Group guidance is carried out to provide assistance to students through group situations, group guidance aims to develop social skills, especially students' communication skills.*

Keywords : Teachers, Guidance and Counseling, Obstacles, Challenges, and Learning Difficulties.

 <https://dx.doi.org/xx.xxxxx/al-manarah.vxx0x.xxxx>

How to Cite Rofiq, A., Setiaji, H., Aminudin, Sulastini, N., Sari, S.L., (2025). *Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Perceptions of Obstacles and Challenges in Identifying Learning Difficulties in Students of Babunnajah Vocational School*, Al-Manarah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies, Volume 1 (03), 130-137.

INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation is influenced by education, which is an effort to create and enhance human resources, which are fundamentally a crucial element in national development (Hidayat et al., 2025). Development cannot be successful without the support of adequate and qualified human resources (Singun, 2025). Educational goals can be achieved through the learning process conducted in schools (Wibowo et al., 2025). Learning is essentially an interaction between children, children and learning resources, and children and education (Anshori et al., 2025). In educational settings, guidance and counseling teachers tend to be faced with a number of students who differ from one another. No two individuals are a like, and these individual differences also lead to differences in learning behavior among students.

A difference directly related to the learning process is the difference in learning persistence (Lakhali et al., 2021). One visible difference in students is when completing assignments given by teachers. Some students can complete them quickly and well, while others are slow and fail. This situation, where students cannot properly carry out the learning process, is called learning difficulties (Guizani et al., 2025). Learning difficulties are a condition in which students are unable

to learn properly, where students are unable to learn naturally due to threats, obstacles, or disruptions in learning (Khairani et al., 2025). By understanding the nature of learning difficulties, the number and classification of students can be determined, along with effective and efficient coping strategies. The causes of learning difficulties also need to be understood because this understanding can lead to preventive and curative efforts. Many factors contribute to learning difficulties. Difficulties in listening, speaking, reasoning, or arithmetic are intrinsic learning difficulties (Krawec, 2014). These intrinsic learning difficulties occur due to the influence of other factors such as environmental influences, inappropriate learning, and so on.

Schools are environments designed to nurture students toward specific goals, particularly by providing them with opportunities and skills for their future lives (Kuncoro et al., 2025). The delivery of education in schools is better known as learning, where the teaching and learning process involves many factors, including teachers, subjects, materials, facilities, and the environment (Mega et al., 2014). A guidance and counseling teacher must be able to identify or identify learning difficulties faced by students (Andra et al., 2023). To identify learning difficulties, a guidance and counseling teacher requires a specific set of skills, although teachers are usually instinctively aware of the emergence of learning difficulties in their students. The ability to identify these difficulties based on instinct is certainly less effective than knowledge based on the application of steps to address student learning difficulties (Assem et al., 2023).

Based on the results of observations conducted by researchers on June 4, 2024, regarding student learning activities in class, it was found that students tended to be passive, never submitting assignments, skipping class, and other forms of behavior such as remaining silent when asked by the teacher and always getting low grades. Symptoms of students who tend to be less good and less supportive of the learning and teaching process require special attention from teachers (McDougal et al., 2023). This is because symptoms that are considered less good and should not be done, such as low learning achievement (Jeffries & Salzer, 2022), basically indicate the existence of obstacles or learning difficulties in the student concerned (Ahmed Alnaim & Sakız, 2025). For example, students who are not appropriate or follow the learning process, but feel afraid, this indicates learning difficulties, either from the teacher or originating from the learning material. Not all learning difficulties are caused by these three things, sometimes the main cause can be felt only from the student or only from the teacher, or even only from the learning material. However, it does not rule out the possibility that the learning difficulties faced by students are a manifestation of these three factors (Pelánek, 2025).

Previous research on student learning difficulties has generally focused on academic diagnosis, internal student factors, and the role of subject teachers. However, studies specifically exploring the perceptions of guidance and counseling teachers are limited. Guidance and counseling teachers are often positioned as support services, rather than primary actors in the learning difficulties identification process. Furthermore, structural, professional, and collaborative barriers and challenges to the practice of identifying learning difficulties in schools have not been thoroughly studied, leaving significant research space.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the perceptions of guidance and counseling teachers as the primary subjects in identifying obstacles and challenges to student learning difficulties. This study presents a new perspective by comprehensively mapping the obstacles experienced by guidance and counseling teachers, both from a professional and institutional perspective, as well as cross-role collaboration within schools. This contributes to strengthening the strategic role of guidance and counseling teachers in the early detection of student learning difficulties.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to explore in-depth the perceptions of guidance and counseling teachers regarding the obstacles and challenges in identifying learning difficulties in students. This approach was chosen because it

allows researchers to understand the subjective experiences, meanings, and professional practices of guidance and counseling teachers in the real-life school context.

The research participants consisted of guidance and counseling teachers selected using purposive sampling techniques based on the following criteria: (1) having at least two years of experience as guidance and counseling teachers, and (2) being directly involved in student learning difficulties identification or assessment services. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and relevant documentation studies, such as guidance and counseling service records and student assessment reports. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The data analysis process involved open coding, categorizing, and identifying key themes that represented the obstacles and challenges faced by guidance and counseling teachers. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining participant consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring the data was used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research results show that guidance and counseling teachers play a strategic role in identifying student learning difficulties through various non-academic approaches. Guidance and counseling teachers rely on observations of student behavior, individual interviews, and reports from subject teachers and homeroom teachers as early indicators of learning difficulties. Commonly identified symptoms include decreased motivation to learn, difficulty concentrating, increased absenteeism, and changes in attitudes towards the learning process (Samuels, 2020).

In the identification process, guidance and counseling teachers use a number of assessment instruments, both formal and informal, such as learning questionnaires, learning problem scales, anecdotal notes, and student personal inventories. However, the use of standardized instruments remains limited, with more reliance on instruments independently developed by guidance and counseling teachers, tailored to the school's conditions and needs.

Regarding response efforts, guidance and counseling teachers provide various services, including individual counseling, tutoring, group counseling, and collaboration with subject teachers and parents. These efforts aim to help students understand the source of their difficulties, increase their motivation to learn, and find more effective learning strategies. However, guidance and counseling teachers face several obstacles, such as limited service time, an unbalanced teacher-to-student ratio, and a lack of school policy support for strengthening the function of identifying learning difficulties.

Discussion

The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Identifying Learning Difficulties

The results of the study indicate that guidance and counseling teachers at SMK Babunnajah Pandeglang play a crucial role in identifying students' learning difficulties, particularly through a non-academic approach that emphasizes students' behavior, motivation, and psychosocial well-being. This role aligns with the preventive and curative functions of guidance and counseling services, where guidance and counseling teachers not only address emerging problems but also attempt to detect potential learning difficulties early.

Identification of learning difficulties by guidance and counseling teachers at SMK Babunnajah Pandeglang generally begins with daily observations of students, reports from subject teachers, and communications with homeroom teachers and parents. These findings indicate that the identification process remains collaborative and contextual, but is not yet fully supported by the use of standardized assessment instruments. This situation reflects the reality of guidance and counseling practices in schools (Apologia et al., 2024), where limited facilities, time, and the ratio

of guidance and counseling teachers to students are factors that hinder the optimization of learning difficulties assessments (Aghnaita & Murniati, 2023).

Furthermore, the role of guidance and counseling teachers in identifying learning difficulties at SMK Babunnajah Pandeglang is also influenced by the characteristics of vocational school students, who have diverse academic backgrounds and vocational orientations. This requires guidance and counseling teachers to be highly sensitive in distinguishing learning difficulties stemming from academic factors, learning interests, and psychological readiness. These findings reinforce the view that identifying learning difficulties at the vocational school level requires a more flexible and contextual approach than in public schools.

This discussion emphasized that although guidance and counseling teachers have performed their functional role in identifying students' learning difficulties, the effectiveness of this role still requires systemic support. Strengthening guidance and counseling teachers' assessment competencies, providing relevant identification instruments, and improving coordination among school stakeholders are key factors in improving the quality of learning difficulties identification services (Anggraeni & Purnomo, 2023). Therefore, the role of guidance and counseling teachers is not only understood as implementing individual services, but as an integral part of the student academic support system in schools. There are several ways that guidance and counseling teachers can identify students experiencing learning difficulties, namely: Helping students to develop their potential optimally and well in the academic, social, and personal fields in everyday life. Students will also gain a good learning experience at school.

Table 1. Data Validity Techniques

1	Educational Guidance	Helping teachers to understand students, develop a conducive teaching and learning process and properly handle problems that exist in the educational process..
2	Policy Basis	Assisting school leaders in providing information and data on the potential and conditions of students as a basis for making policies to improve research quality..
3	Service Coordination	Assisting education and other educational staff in understanding students and service needs.
4	Parental Involvement	Helping parents to understand their child's condition and what their child wants, school guidance and access to parental involvement in the educational process.

Instrument for Identification of Learning Difficulties by Guidance and Counseling Teachers

The results of the study indicate that the instruments used by guidance and counseling teachers to identify student learning difficulties are still dominated by non-standardized approaches, such as behavioral observations, student interviews, and information obtained from subject teachers and homeroom teachers. These instruments allow guidance and counseling teachers to obtain an initial overview of students' learning conditions in a contextual and comprehensive manner (Aqra & AS, 2024), particularly regarding aspects of motivation, learning attitudes, and student responses to the learning process in the classroom (Maryana et al., 2024). This approach indicates that the process of identifying learning difficulties is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also takes into account students' psychosocial dynamics.

However, reliance on non-formal instruments indicates that the process of identifying learning difficulties has not been carried out systematically and measurably. The absence or limited use of standardized assessment instruments has the potential to impact the accuracy and consistency of identification results, particularly in distinguishing the types and levels of learning difficulties experienced by students. In this context, the identification process relies more on the professional experience and intuition of guidance and counseling teachers, so assessment results can vary across individuals and situations.

Furthermore, these findings also reflect structural and institutional factors that influence the practice of identifying learning difficulties in schools. Limited service time, high workloads of guidance and counseling teachers, and an unbalanced teacher-to-student ratio are key obstacles to implementing more comprehensive assessments. These conditions lead guidance and counseling teachers to prefer practical and easy-to-implement instruments, despite their limitations in terms of validity and reliability.

In addition to institutional factors, the characteristics of students in secondary schools, particularly at the vocational level (Anshori et al., 2023), also influence the choice of identification instruments. Learning difficulties experienced by students are often complex and not always directly related to cognitive abilities, but are also influenced by learning interests, mental readiness, and orientation toward the world of work. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers are required to use flexible and adaptive instruments, even though this requires a high level of professional competence in interpreting assessment results.

Thus, this discussion confirms that guidance and counseling teachers' use of learning difficulties identification instruments still requires strengthening, both in terms of professional competence and school system support. Developing contextual, easy-to-use instruments with a clear measurement basis is crucial for improving the quality of student learning difficulties identification. This effort is expected to encourage more targeted and sustainable intervention processes and strengthen guidance and counseling teachers' strategic role in supporting student learning success.

Guidance and Counseling Teacher Strategy in Overcoming Student Learning Difficulties

The research results show that guidance and counseling teachers' strategies for addressing student learning difficulties involve preventive, curative, and collaborative approaches. Guidance and counseling teachers not only focus on addressing students who are already experiencing learning difficulties but also strive for preventative measures through tutoring services and strengthening academic motivation. This strategy reflects the guidance and counseling teacher's role as a facilitator of holistic student learning development, not limited solely to academic aspects.

The primary strategies implemented by guidance and counseling teachers are individual and group counseling services. Individual counseling is used to help students understand the sources of their learning difficulties, whether stemming from internal factors such as motivation and self-confidence, or external factors such as the learning environment and academic demands. Meanwhile, group counseling is used to address general learning difficulties, such as time management and effective study strategies, so students can share experiences and solutions.

In addition to counseling services, guidance counselors also implement collaborative strategies involving subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents. This collaboration aims to create harmony in addressing learning difficulties, both at school and at home. However, research findings indicate that the intensity and effectiveness of this collaboration still depend on the support of school policies and each party's awareness of the importance of guidance and counseling in the learning process.

Critically, the strategies implemented by guidance and counseling teachers to address student learning difficulties still face various obstacles (Susilowati & Suryadi, 2025), such as limited service time, high administrative burdens, and a sub-optimal teacher-to-student ratio (Milton & O'Connell, 2009). These conditions result in interventions that tend to be reactive and not yet fully systematically programmed. Therefore, strengthening guidance and counseling service planning based on student needs and institutional support is needed to ensure more effective and sustainable strategies for addressing learning difficulties.

Thus, this discussion confirms that guidance and counseling teachers' strategies for addressing student learning difficulties reflect comprehensive service practices, but still require system optimization, collaboration, and professional development. Increasing the capacity of

guidance and counseling teachers and integrating guidance and counseling services into school academic policies are crucial factors in supporting the success of strategies for addressing student learning difficulties.

The practical implications of this research finding for schools include the need to strengthen institutional support for Guidance and Counseling services, particularly in providing adequate service time, reducing the administrative burden on guidance and counseling teachers, and establishing a more proportional teacher-to-student ratio. Schools also need to encourage the development of guidance and counseling programs that are integrated with learning programs, so that strategies for addressing learning difficulties are not incidental, but are planned and sustainable. Furthermore, increased collaboration between guidance and counseling teachers, subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents needs to be facilitated through systematic communication mechanisms, such as regular coordination forums or student-centered school policies, to ensure that the management of learning difficulties is carried out comprehensively and consistently.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that Guidance and Counseling teachers have a strategic role in identifying and addressing student learning difficulties through an observational approach, the use of non-formal instruments, and the implementation of preventive, curative, and collaborative counseling services. This role is realized through the ability of guidance and counseling teachers to understand students' academic and psychosocial conditions, conduct early identification of learning difficulties, and design interventions involving subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents. However, the effectiveness of implementing this role still faces several limitations, especially related to the suboptimal use of standardized assessment instruments, limited service time due to high workloads, and school institutional support that does not fully support the optimization of guidance and counseling services. Therefore, strengthening the guidance and counseling service system through school policy support, improving the professional competence of guidance and counseling teachers, and integrating guidance and counseling services into school academic programs are important steps to improve the accuracy of identification and the success of handling student learning difficulties systematically and sustainably.

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