

Teachers' Perspective On Guidance and Counseling Best Practices in Islamic Early Childhood Education

Esya Anesty Mashudi¹, Fatihatusyidah², Yuli Nurmalasari³

¹PG PAUD Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

¹PGSD Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

³Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, University of Malaya, Malaysia

^{*}E-mail: esyaanesty@upi.edu

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Abstract. Teachers' Perspective On Guidance and Counseling Best Practices in Islamic Early Childhood Education. Guidance and counseling services primarily aim to anticipate any potential misbehavior at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level. Hence, it is necessary to design a comprehensive model of guidance and counseling which is philosophically, contextually, empirically, and culturally suit Indonesian system of formal education. The present study served as one of basic research which is attempted to depict early childhood teachers and educators' perspectives on the implementation of guidance and counseling services in Islamic early childhood education, represented by Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergarten (IK). Exploratory research method was applied by involving early childhood educators from eight RA and IK in Serang City. The data were collected using an open ended questionnaire, observation, interview, as well as documentation study, and analyzed using the interactive analysis model. The findings indicated that, in general, although participants in this study considered guidance and counseling services important for preschool children, they had not understood the best practice of the services in Islamic early childhood education. Following the findings, a perceived ideal guidance and counseling model that suitable for the Islamic early childhood education is the model which is based on Islamic values derived from Al Quran and Al Hadith.

Keywords: guidance and counseling, Islamic early childhood education

Abstrak. Perspektif Guru Terhadap Praktik Ideal Bimbingan dan Konseling dalam Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini. Layanan bimbingan dan konseling bertujuan untuk mengantisipasi perilaku yang tidak diinginkan di tingkat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD). Oleh karena itu, perlu dirancang suatu model bimbingan dan konseling yang secara filosofis, kontekstual, empiris, dan budaya sesuai dengan sistem pendidikan formal Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan salah satu penelitian dasar yang berupaya menggambarkan perspektif guru dan pendidik anak usia dini terhadap praktik baik bimbingan dan konseling di pendidikan anak usia dini Islam yang diwakili oleh Raudhatul Athfal (RA) dan Taman Kanak-Kanak Islam. Pendekatan penelitian kualitatif dengan metode eksploratoris diterapkan dalam penelitian ini. Subjek penelitian mencakup dua puluh empat orang guru RA dan TK Islam dari delapan RA dan TK Islam di Kota Serang, Banten. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner, observasi, wawancara, catatan lapangan, dan studi dokumentasi. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif dalam analisis data kualitatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa, meskipun peserta dalam penelitian ini menganggap layanan bimbingan dan konseling penting untuk anak usia prasekolah, namun mereka belum memahami terkait praktik baik bimbingan dan konseling di RA dan TKI. Model bimbingan dan konseling yang dianggap sesuai untuk diimplementasikan pada RA dan TKI adalah model yang berbasis pada nilai-nilai Islam baik yang bersumber dari Al Quran maupun Al Hadits.

Keywords: bimbingan dan konseling, raudhatul athfal, taman kanak-kanak islam

INTRODUCTION

The basic assumption that early childhood education (ECE) needs guidance and counseling services lies in the belief that today's ECE is equally important to elementary and secondary education levels. Early Childhood Education (ECE) becomes the foundation for character building, and even becomes an indicator of optimizing individual development tasks in the future (Tippett & Milford, 2017) Thus, teaching for ECE is not just about providing a learning experience. Moreover, through ECE the development of aspects of social skills, emotional abilities, and increasing self-confidence is one of the main functions in optimizing children's development in order to avoid the possibility of various developmental barriers (Essa, L & Burnham, 2020). Given the reality that the role of ECE as a foundation in preparing for the success of children's development, ideally teachers should be able to facilitate the child's learning process comprehensively like other levels of education.

Thus, it is not hyperbolic to state that ECE is equal to other education levels. As stated in Laws of Republic Indonesia Number 20/2003 (Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2003), this equality can be viewed from the legal perspective that early childhood education can be administered through formal, nonformal, and informal learning. While formal learning can take the form of kindergarten or other similar forms, nonformal learning can be in the form of playgroups or similar. Informal learning can be viewed in the form of Childcare.

Early childhood education covers three types of educational institutions, namely kindergarten, playgroup, and Childcare. Kindergarten (formal education) usually only accepts students aged 4-6 years old. Playgroup (nonformal education) only accepts students aged 2-4 years old, while Childcare (informal education) only accepts children aged two months to 2 years old (Dirjen Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2011).

There are variations in early childhood education institutions in the formal education system in Indonesia, therefore a culturally and value-sensitive guidance and counseling model is needed. Public kindergartens under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and culture may differ in terms of school management and reference values from Raudhatul Athfal which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Religion (Sujiono, 2011).

Today there are also variations of popular kindergartens in Indonesia, not only public parks, but also integrated Islamic kindergartens, bilingual kindergartens, and kindergartens with an international curriculum. Those kindergartens differ in the use of the curriculum, some use the national curriculum only, some use the national curriculum mixed with the curriculum of certain educational organizations, some use the national curriculum combined with the curriculum of certain religious organizations, and some use the curriculum of international institutions.

Previous basic research related to the implementation model of guidance and counseling services at the ECE level has been carried out to determine the perspective of early childhood educators in public kindergartens, international kindergartens (Anesty, Fatihaturrosyidah, & Putra, 2022; Clark & Amatea, 2004; Saleem & Rasheed, 2010). In the end, these studies are expected to have implications for the mechanism of guidance and counseling services at the ECE level, the context of the counselor's duties, expectations of counselor performance, and the ideal guidance and counseling service model based on best practices to be applied to all ECE institutions in Indonesia.

This study complements previous studies related to the perspective of early childhood educators on the implementation of guidance and counseling services at

various ECE institutions in Indonesia. In this study, the focus is on examining the teacher's perspective on the implications of best practice guidance and counseling in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergartens (IK), as an example of an ECE institution that uses an Islamic religion-based curriculum. Curriculum of Islamic kindergartens is prepared by the Integrated Islamic School Network (JSIT) while the Raudhatul Athfal curriculum is prepared by the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religion. However, there are several similarities in Islamic education practices in both of them (Zahra & Djamas, 2021).

However, any ECE institutions aims to provide supports and directions regarding children's development and growth. ECE is primarily oriented to a) train children's learning adaptation skills; b) improve children's verbal communication skills; c) introduce them to their surroundings (e.g., people, plants, animals) and d) to provide them with the foundation for their subsequent learning processes, such as basic reading, writing, and math (Syaodih & Agustin, 2018). In addition to teaching experience and skills, other factors that should be considered in ECE teachers and educators are attentiveness to children, interest in children's development, willingness to develop children's potential, and warmheartedness.

ECE aims to provide children with cognitive knowledge and focuses on preparing children's mental and physics to recognize their surroundings. The learning process in ECE is more familiar, communicative, and persuasive compared to higher educational levels. During the learning process, students are free from pressure and situations that may psychologically harm them. The learning conditions in ECE is designed primarily to provide children with a comfortable learning environment that allows them to express themselves more appropriately.

Despite their important roles, school counselors do not have an official structural position in Indonesian kindergarten. At this education level, guidance and counseling are more preventive and developmental. From a programmatic perspective, the guidance and counseling curriculum component an early childhood counselor needs to develop requires more time compared to those required by students in higher education levels. Otherwise, the component of individual student planning (comprising appraisal, advisement, and transition planning) and responsive service (i.e., counseling and consultation services) requires shorter time allocation (Kartadinata, 2008).

Currently, early childhood educators hold different perspectives regarding guidance and counseling at the ECE level. Most of them realize that guidance and counseling service is one of the points of accreditation. However, they still did not have any idea regarding the implementation of ideal guidance and counseling services in ECE (Mashudi & Rusmana, 2017).

Kindergarten teachers currently address children's developmental needs at the ECE level based on their development spectrum within the context of play that facilitates students' optimal personal development. In ECE levels, counselors could be appointed as roving counselors for a group of schools to help teachers develop a guidance program integrated with the learning process and handle students' behavioral issues as necessary using Direct Behavioral Consultation, among other approaches. In the context of early childhood education, direct behavioral consultation manifested in the form of advice and guidance providing activities by teachers as a consultant to students as a consultee. Hence, the implementation of guidance should be included with setting examples of good behavior from teachers to students.

Best practices of guidance and counseling in an educational institution need to be adjusted to the educational practices implemented in that institution (Anesty et al., 2022). The distinctive characteristics of educational values reflected in both intra and extra curricular activities will be taken into consideration in developing the ideal guidance and counseling model to be practiced at every education level. Thus, primarily focused on the early childhood educators' perspective on the urgency of guidance counseling implementation.

In this regard, Islamic early childhood education is shows a special characteristics of educational practices that differentiate it from other public schools. This characteristics are certainly influenced the perspective of educators who take part in Islamic early childhood education institutions (e.g. Raudhatul Athfal and Islamic Kindergartens) regarding the forms of guidance and counseling best practices that should be implemented in their institution.

Many studies emphasized expert' hypotheses and assumptions regarding guidance counseling models to be implemented in ECE level, which one is appropriate and inappropriate, effective and ineffective, recommended and not recommended for ECE level in general (Hasibuan, 2023; Habsoh, 2021; Amalia, 2020; Awlawi, 2018). However, studies that consider the perspectives of teachers or early childhood educators in developing an ideal guidance and counseling models in ECE level are very limited in number.

Therefore, the research problem is how to investigate educators' perspectives on the guidance and counseling best practices in Islamic early childhood education ?. The research results hopefully will bridge the gap between previous researches and the needs among practitioners, as well as become a basis for consideration in developing an ideal guidance and counseling model to be implemented at the ECE level.

This research problem is then formulated into two research questions as follow:

- a. What is early childhood educators' perception regarding current guidance and counseling practices in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergartens (IK)?
- b. What is the implication of early childhood educators' perception regarding guidance and counseling practices toward an ideal guidance and counseling model in Islamic early childhood education?

METHODS

The present study involved twenty-four early childhood teachers/educators from eight ECE institutions (Raudhatul Athfal and Islamic Kindergartens) in Serang City, Banten. An exploratory research method was applied in this study. In a qualitative study, the researchers served as the primary research instrument as they had control over the collected data. The data were collected using open-ended questionnaires, observation guidelines, interview guidelines, field notes, and documentation guidelines. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis, which consisting of three stages, data display, data reduction, and generalization.

Table 1. Data Collection Instrument

No	Research Question	Instrument	Code
1	What is early childhood educators' perception regarding current guidance and counseling practices in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergartens (IK)?	Teachers' perception questionnaire (open-ended)	APG

No	Research Question	Instrument	Code
		Teachers interview guideline	PWG
		Guidance and Counseling Observation Guideline	POILBK
		Field Note	CL
2	What is the implication of early childhood educators' perception regarding guidance and counseling practices toward an ideal guidance and counseling model in Islamic early childhood education?	Teachers' perception questionnaire (open ended)	APG
		Teachers interview guideline	PWG

RESULT

The data obtained from open-ended questionnaires and interviews were analyzed to depict early childhood educators' perception of guidance and counseling services in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergartens (IK).

The following Table 2 displays the questionnaire and interview results:

Table 2. Data Collection Results

No	Aspect of Inquiry	Indicator	Concluded Answer
1	Knowledge	Teachers know about guidance and counseling services	Teachers, in general, know what guidance and counseling services and who are responsible for providing the services to students
		Teachers know the foundation of guidance and counseling services.	Most teachers know that guidance and counseling service is one of the accreditation points, but do not know about the legal foundation that is Permendikbud number 111 years of 2014, and empirical foundation which highlighted the implementation of guidance and counseling services in formal education system of Indonesia.
		Teachers know the mechanism of guidance and counseling service in ECE.	Most teachers know that guidance and counseling services are important in ECE, yet they do not know the appropriate implementation that considered as best practice of guidance and counseling particularly in RA and IK which is have slightly different curriculum with public kindergarten.
2	Understanding	Teachers understand the legal basis of guidance and counseling services in ECE.	Teachers do not know any regulation that highlighting the urgency of guidance and counseling service in formal education, including kindergarten and RA.
		Teachers understand the empirical basis of the	Teachers do not know what is the need analysis process and result as the empirical basis of the guidance and counseling in ECE.

No	Aspect of Inquiry	Indicator	Concluded Answer
		implementation of guidance and counseling in ECE.	
		Teachers understand the difference in roles and functions of early childhood educators and counselors regarding the implementation of guidance and counseling in ECE.	Teachers understand the difference in role and functions of educators and counselors with respect to the guidance activities in ECE. Teachers admitted their limitations in handling various preschool children's personal, social, career, and academic problems.
3	Opinion	Teachers have a clear opinion (agree/disagree) about the implementation of guidance and counseling in ECE.	Teachers strongly agree with the implementation of guidance and counseling in ECE. They also pointed out the importance of guidance and counseling services for preschool children.
		Teachers have a clear opinion about the importance of guidance and counseling in ECE.	Teachers support the implementation of guidance and counseling at ECE level to be carried out by the authorized personel who have competence in conducting guidance and counseling service program and activities, especially those that require psychoeducational approach like family counseling and children counseling.
		Teachers have a clear opinion about the role and functions of roving counselor in ECE.	Teachers do not know about roving counselors as they think children counselors or psychologists are responsible for providing counseling services in ECE.
4	Belief	Educators believe in the current guidance and counseling services they have carried out.	Teachers do not believe in the validity of guidance and counseling currently implemented in their school, they need a clear boundary between the learning process and guidance process.
		Teachers show belief in their performance in solving preschool children's problems.	Teachers show belief and success in overcoming preschool children's developmental problems. But they are afraid to handle several problems related to psychological or mental disorder or how to handle maladjustment children who needs psychotherapeutic intervention.
		Teachers show belief in the authenticity of guidance and counseling problems in their schools.	All teachers participated in this study did not know any document about guidance programs in their schools.
5	Experience	Teachers have adequate experiences to implement guidance activities for personal social, academic, and career aspects.	Teachers have adequate experiences to teach and guide preschool children to achieve their developmental task and autonomy regarding personal, social, academic, and career aspects.
		Teachers have experiences of collaborating with professional counselors in	Most teachers have experiences of working with psychologist and parenting expert, but not with professional counselors. The

No	Aspect of Inquiry	Indicator	Concluded Answer
		solving preschool children's problems.	collaboration is mainly in administrating psychological tests and conducting parenting seminar.
		Teachers have experiences of participating in ECE institutional accreditation preparatory team.	All teachers in this study have experiences of participating in ECE institutional accreditation preparatory team that discusses about guidance activities.

Summary of responses to open-ended questionnaires represents some teachers' views of the current implementation of guidance and counseling in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Islamic Kindergartens (IK).

- a. Perspective 1: Guidance services were provided by the classroom teacher. Their implementations are integrated with learning processes at school. Guidance services can also be carried out during play activities.
- b. Perspective 2: Teachers are not allowed to carry out a counseling process; only child psychologist is allowed to perform counseling activities.
- c. Perspective 3: Teachers find out the importance of guidance and counseling services for preschool children and regret the fact that counselors do not have a structural position in ECE
- d. Perspective 4: Teachers never know about roving counselors and their duties and argues that schools cannot afford to pay their services unless they receive the government's aids.
- e. Perspective 5: Teachers do not know about the guidance curriculum for Kindergarten students. There are no specific references for guidance service standards. The purposes of guidance service are similar to the classroom learning purposes and are formulated based on the curriculum 2013 from the Ministry of National Education.

Analysis of teacher perspectives on the implementation of guidance and counseling services in ECE results in valuable implications for the development of an ideal guidance and counseling model in ECE. An ideal model in this context refers to a legally, theoretically, and empirically compliant model. The implications are described as follow:

- a. Implication 1: A guidance and counseling model in ECE needs to contain a work mechanism (i.e., need analysis, program design, service strategy, evaluation system, and follow up) that suits ECE scope.
- b. Implication 2: Guidance and counseling in ECE needs to set a clear boundary among roles of personnels involved in guidance and counseling services (i.e., classroom teacher, class assistant, counselors, principal, psychologist, and parents). In addition, the guidance and counseling model also needs to include a clear, understandable referral procedure.
- c. Implication 3: the guidance and counseling model in ECE should serve as a reference to design an academic work that can be proposed into law protecting and regulating the structural position of counselors in ECE and their roles, functions, and duties.
- d. Implication 4: the guidance and counseling implementation model in ECE needs to clarify the main roles, functions, and duties of a roving counselor, especially in

assisting teachers design a guidance program that is integrated with the learning process and handling children's misbehaviors.

- e. Implication 5: guidance and counseling model in ECE needs to describe the guidance curriculum used to design a guidance program at ECE level. Such curriculum should cover the components of guidance curriculum, its purposes and competence standard used as a reference in formulating needs analysis instrument and in determining appropriate strategies for early childhood guidance activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Though not explicitly stated in the open-ended questionnaire, we captured teachers' implicit expression during the interview that the counselor's position in ECE "is not too important" as teachers alone are considered enough to handle children's educational problems or when it is related to psychological issues, it is enough to ask nearby child psychologist. However, the drawback of psychologist consultation is its cost-prohibitive tariffs. Therefore, during the interview, teachers implicitly ask whether the counselor service is more affordable than the psychologist.

In general, a view refers to one's visual perception of how an object looks in terms of spatial features. In social science, perspective is defined as a certain point of view used to see a certain phenomenon (Charon, 2012). According to Charon (2012) perspective is related to the conceptual framework, assumption device, values and ideas affecting one's perception and behaviors in certain situations. Furthermore, research shows that perception can be the main framework in shaping individual ways of thinking about a phenomenon that is experienced and even being observed (Mannion et al., 2017)

One's perspective is established by knowledge, understanding, opinion, belief, and experience. Thus, early childhood educators' perspective on the urgency of guidance and counseling is formed by their knowledge, understanding, opinion, belief, and experience related to the implementation of guidance and counseling in ECE. Their knowledge and understanding of the implementation of guidance and counseling services in ECE is mainly obtained during their study at university. Furthermore, the knowledge of ECE educators is partly obtained from the reality of the field, namely the existence of problems or obstacles that require facilitation in the form of guidance and counseling services.

Their opinion about the implementation of guidance and counseling services generally emerges from their experience of receiving guidance and counseling services at high school levels. As they view school counselors as "school police" whose duty is to punish students, they consider early childhood counselors responsible for handling disobedient children. Furthermore, functionally, Guidance and Counseling services provide services that are not only curative to deal with problematic students, but the function of prevention and development is something that cannot be ignored.

Early childhood educators' beliefs about guidance and counseling services are affected by the success in changing children's behaviors or solving children's problems. Most teachers believe that guidance and counseling are curative instead of developmental preventive. This is because the achievement of behavioral changes in individuals tends to be easily seen through curative services compared to preventive and developmental services. This is what later became one of the forming assumptions of ECE educators that guidance and counseling services only focused on curative matters. Moreover, preventive-developmental services basically provide more benefits that can continuously optimize the development of students (Tseng & Biagioli, 2009).

Most early childhood educators' experiences of implementing guidance and counseling services are personal experiences obtained during high school levels, where they engage in academic consultations or even receive punishment imposed by the school counselors. Other experiences are indirectly obtained from others, such as family members who work as school counselors. Experience itself is a dimension of individual learning which is then used as a material in forming patterns of thinking. Thus, the reality of the various perceptions of ECE educators towards guidance and counseling services for early childhood tends to be limited and ignores their theoretical ideals.

Early childhood educators' knowledge, understanding, opinion, belief, and experiences shape and affect their perspective on the current implementation of guidance and counseling model in their institution and the ideal guidance and counseling model for ECE. When referring to the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services at the Early Childhood Education level, ideally counselors have an integrated role through ECE educators in their implementation (Yang & Li, 2020).

Counselors do not have a structural position in Indonesian ECE. At this education level, guidance and counseling are more preventive and developmental. From a programmatic perspective, the guidance and counseling curriculum component an early childhood counselor needs to develop requires more time than those required by students in higher education levels. Otherwise, the component of individual student planning (comprising appraisal, advisement, and transition planning) and responsive service (i.e., counseling and consultation services) requires shorter time allocation (Nurihsan, 2018). Knowledge and awareness of various parties, especially ECE educators who have direct practical roles need to work in an integrated manner with counselors. The performance in question focuses on the creation of Guidance and Counseling service programs that comprehensively meet the needs and functions of preventive, developmental, curative and remedial. This is based on the reality that even early childhood cannot be free from various problems, obstacles and needs that are identified with optimizing the completion of their developmental tasks (Buss, Warren, & Horton, 2015).

Teachers can be overwhelmed when they are faced to particular problems of children, they seriously need professional helper. And when it came to conduct a psychoeducational intervention, teachers need a consultant in order to conduct the intervention properly.

Islamic KG and RA requires guidance and counseling as one of the services in schools as an effort to shape children behavior in the process of adjusting into social environment so that they can develop according to their interests and talents also reach their fully potential as a muslim, this is linear with the main purpose of guidance and counseling which is facilitate students to reach their fully potentials and develop optimally in every aspect of personal, social, academic and career (Nurihsan, 2018; Surya, 2008; Susanto, 2015; Syaodih & Agustin, 2018).

However, a family counseling sometimes have to be held behalf on children needs and it was better to be facilitated by a professional counselor as a leader. Carter and Evans (2008) suggest that if student problems are motivated by critical family issues, SBFC can provide one to six family counseling sessions aimed at improving student functioning at school. Scheduling family counseling sessions usually intersects with the school system such as curricular considerations, class and school agendas, and parents' busy schedules.

Counseling services in ECE mainly aim to provide consultation for teachers and parents to handle preschool children's disruptive behaviors. Hurlock (1994) states that emotional development often occurs in childhood, including anger, fear, jealousy,

curiosity, envy, sadness, and compassion. Mappiare (1984) views preschool age as a (1) pre-group age, (2) period of discovery and exploration, (3) period of facing difficulties, and (4) period considered less attracting.

Guidance and counseling in ECE, according to Syaodih and Agustin (2018), should be implemented according to the following principles:

- a. Guidance is an important part of the educational process.
- b. Guidance should be given to all children, not only those with problems.
- c. Guidance is a process integrated into all educational activities.
- d. Guidance should be children (client)-centered.
- e. Guidance activities should cover all children's abilities and developmental aspects.
- f. Guidance should begin by identifying children's needs.
- g. Guidance should be flexibly adjusted to children's needs and development.
- h. The guidance and counseling processes should involve parents.
- i. It is important to have effective communication to communicate children's problems in a safe and comfortable situation.
- j. Guidance should be performed optimally by early childhood educators before referring the case to other professionals.
- k. The guidance should be provided in a continuous manner.

In ECE, guidance activities are integrated with the learning process. However, professionals are required when a counseling process is needed. Therefore, to prevent task overlap between early childhood educators and other professionals (e.g, counselors or psychologist), it is necessary to specify the limitation for the educators in carrying out the guidance and counseling services in ECE (Syaodih & Agustin, 2018). The limitation may include the followings:

- a. The law legally separates the professions of early childhood educators and early childhood counselors. Due to the absence of structural positions for early childhood counselors, early childhood educators should only provide guidance services, not counseling services.
- b. Guidance services by early childhood educators should be limited to stimulating children's development and helping to solve children's educational problems, while therapeutic or clinical problems should be referred to other professionals.
- c. The guidance service provided by educators is strictly time-limited as it is done along with the learning process. The guidance service does not have a specific, stand-alone schedule and is integrated into the learning process.

Children's developmental needs at the ECE level are handled by the teachers based on their development spectrum within the context of play that facilitates students' optimal personal development. This means, teachers can deal with guidance providing activity but not counseling. Through play activities that are tailored to the child's developmental level, various techniques and objectives as well as the functions of Guidance and Counseling services can be internalized. Educational play activities can be optimized by integrating the goals of preventive-developmental counseling services. This, of course, is adjusted to the context of the problems and needs of children in ECE schools. For optimization, counselors have an important role through integrated advocacy and consultation services with ECE educators (Gencoglu, Demirtas-Zorbaz, Demircioglu, & Ekin, 2019). Several researches and books imply that a kindergarten teacher can be

functioned as a counselor (Napitupulu, 2019; Rozikan, 2018), paraprofessional counselor (El Fiah, 2017) non-professional counselor (Rahmi, 2021). However, the unclear role boundaries often make teachers experience confusion regarding their role in the implementation of guidance and counseling programs at the early childhood education level.

However, counselors could productively engage in ECE by serving as a roving counselor for a group of schools to help teachers develop a guidance program integrated with the learning process and handle students' behavioral issues as necessary using Direct Behavioral Consultation, among other approaches. A clear policy and regulation about official and structural position of children/school/guidance counselor in ECE level in Indonesia is urgently needed. This should become a notification for policy maker or government itself. Furthermore, technically counselors divide their integration work areas based on the distribution of ECE locations. Thus, the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services in ECE will be more relevant to be implemented (Alizamar, Ifdil, & Afdal, 2017).

Roving Counselor or visiting counselor is expected not only a term or imaginative figure, it should be a real person doing a real task which is stated officially in the regulation. A children/school/guidance counselor in Islamic KG and RA, must be a Muslim with a capacity of giving good example for children in accordance with Al Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet.

Guidance and counseling approaches/strategies/methods/techniques which are conducted in Islamic KG and RA should be not contradictive with Islam syariaah. Counselor should be very conscientious about it.

Guidance and counseling service activities that have been carried out at Islamic KG and RA consist of stages of planning, management and supervision, service and evaluation. The guidance and counseling program in ECE should be a positively beneficial program, not merely reactive and corrective efforts (Susanto, 2015). From ECE to university levels, a continuous guidance program may exhibit more satisfying results than merely an accidental program. This refers to the purpose of the Guidance and Counseling service program which is ideally implemented in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Comprehensive is defined as a service that is systemically able to address various gaps and needs of students from the ECE education level to university to achieve optimal development standards. While holistic means the involvement of various stakeholders in each school as a collaborative effort in facilitating the achievement of optimal student development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

The program focus may vary, depending on the children's needs or developmental stage. Therefore, guidance and counseling in ECE should focus on children's unique identity and characters, in addition to their growth and cognitive competence. To optimize the focus of the developed program, it is important to pay attention to the process of gathering information on the needs and problems of students. The process of gathering information on the needs and problems of students is a very crucial first step in developing a comprehensive Guidance and Counseling program at the level of Early Childhood Education.

ECE should initiate a search for identity as early as possible because children's understanding of their identity may help them adapt to their surroundings. Children's discovery of their identity is helpful to develop aptitude, interest, and potentials (El fiah, 2017; Izzaty, Astuti, & Cholimah, 2017; Putro & Suyadi, 2016). To realize the plan, assessment activities that are oriented to the talents, interests and potential of children are

important things to do. Technically, counselors have a role in this situation, through mentoring activities and are integrated and collaborative with ECE educators.

It should be asserted that guidance and counseling services in ECE are not only given to those with behavioral problems but also all children in their developmental and growth process. Thus, the counseling should not only focus on overcoming students' misbehaviors but also on optimizing children's growth and development. This view emphasizes the provision of preventive services that focus on mental health and self-development instead of services highlighting psychotherapy or diagnosis of misbehaviors.

Mental health experts have become increasingly aware of the importance of early identification of children's misbehaviors. Through such identification, children are expected to be able to avoid learning difficulties or mental problems. The most appropriate time to carry out the identification is during the early childhood period. Individuals with early identification of misbehaviors or learning difficulties could be treated as early as possible, allowing more optimal development.

According to Indonesian Ministry of Health (as cited in Mashudi, 2016), screening activities refer to a process designed to identify potential learning or developmental problems. A screening instrument should be timely and easily managed to identify children who require more assessments. It is an important stage in the entire ECE program as a positive developmental and academic outcome is associated with the early identification of a problem.

The screening process of early childhood development can be used to meet guidance and counseling service needs since it covers a range of aspects, including physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and personality aspects. Various instruments can be used for screening purposes, including the developmental pre-screening questionnaire developed by the Department of Health of the Republic of Indonesia. Counselors and teachers can also formulate their own screening instrument based on their student's academic, career, personal, and social aspects the students should achieve through a guidance activity. Nine aspects serve as the basis for the development of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs from kindergarten to senior high school levels.

Several limitations encountered in this research are related to the absence of measurement data on initial knowledge regarding best practices of guidance and counseling at ECE level which effects standard knowledge of research participants, in this case early childhood educators, in viewing guidance and counseling services as appropriate.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn. (1) in general, early childhood educators in this study view guidance and counseling service as important for preschool-aged children. However, they had not understood the mechanism in implementing the guidance and counseling and the individual who should provide the services (2) It is necessary to design a guidance and counseling model which has strong basis referring to Al Qur'an and Al Hadith.

The policymakers, in this case, are recommended to provide a position at the provincial or municipal level for roving counselors to help early childhood educators perform guidance and counseling services in ECE. The visit schedule, duties, and responsibilities of roving counselors in each school group are regulated by the

policymakers. Further research is expected to take the perspective of early childhood educators into consideration in designing appropriate guidance and counseling model to be implemented in the field of Islamic early childhood education. Apart from that, formulation of education and training model to enhance Kindergarten teachers' skills in providing guidance services can also become a future researches option.

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