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Students' Perception and Understanding of the Urgency of Guidance and Counseling Services at School: A Study on Students of Islamic Junior High School

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Background: Students' perceptions of school guidance and counseling services significantly influence their willingness to seek professional support. However, many students continue to perceive school counselors primarily as disciplinary authorities, which limits the effectiveness of counseling services. **Objective:** This study aimed to explore students' perceptions, understanding, and expectations regarding the urgency of guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep. **Methods:** A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participants were purposively selected from Grade VIII students, and the data were analyzed through thematic analysis following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. **Results:** Three major themes emerged. First, most students understood guidance and counseling as professional support for personal, social, academic, and behavioral development, although some still associated it with disciplinary functions. Second, perceptions of school counselors were shaped by previous experiences, resulting in both positive views and the persistent "school police" stereotype. Third, students expected counseling services to become more accessible, preventive, developmental, and student-centered through stronger counselor-student relationships. **Conclusion:** Students' understanding of and direct experiences with school counselors substantially influence their trust in and utilization of counseling services. **Originality/Value:** This study offers novel qualitative empirical insights into the field of school guidance and counseling within Islamic secondary education by documenting students' nuanced perceptions, conceptual understanding, and the lingering 'school police' stereotype regarding the urgency and utilization of counseling services, which remain underexplored in contextual literature. This inquiry provides profound contextual perspectives and serves as a strategic reference that contributes to informed educational decision-making, the restructuring of preventive counseling programs, and the cultivation of responsive, student-centered counseling relationships in schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon that often occurs in the world of education is that people often determine, a child who studies in a school is said to be successful if he gets a diploma and good grades, without paying attention to the pro-visions or skills possessed by students (Lie et al., 2014). Of course, this is one of many phenomena in the world of education

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(Megawanti, 2015). The treatment of the learning curriculum in schools will bring changes to the progress of the world of education (Setiawati, 2022). This requires teachers to be more skillful in delivering a learning method.

Likewise, with guidance and counseling services, this effort cannot be separated from teaching and learning activities at school, because with guidance and counseling at school, students can recognize their potential and all the components that exist in themselves (Kurniati, 2018). Guidance and counseling are assistance services for students, both individually and in groups so that they are independent and can develop optimally, in personal, social, learning, and career guidance through various types of services and supporting activities based on applicable guidance and counseling implementation guidelines (Prayogi et al., 2023). Guidance and counseling is a proactive and systematic effort in facilitating students to achieve an optimal level of development, develop effective behavior, develop the environment, and improve the function or benefit of individuals in their environment.

All changes in behavior as described above are a process of individual development, namely the process of interaction between individuals and the environment through healthy and productive interactions. In the student learning process, every teacher has the desire that all students can get good learning results (Salsabila & Puspitasari, 2020). These expectations often run aground and cannot be realized, because they experience various learning difficulties. Guidance and counseling can provide services, namely personal, social, learning, and career services (Utomo et al., 2022). Guidance and counseling hold important duties and responsibilities to develop the environment, build dynamic interactions between individuals and the environment, teach individuals to develop change, and improve behavior. Guidance and counseling services are expected to help students in self-recognition, environmental recognition, and decision-making and provide direction for the development of students. Guidance and counseling services are not only for students with problems but for all students at school.

However, currently, students perceive school counselors as "school police", which is natural because these students may not understand the services and functions of guidance and counseling services at school. Therefore, students think that school counselors are school police, school counselors are strict, and often look for students' mistakes (Mange, 2019). School counselors are teachers and friends for students at school, following the services and functions of guidance and counseling services at school. Indeed, a school counselor is someone who tries to understand the problems that occur between students and other parties with problems, then the school counselor tries to build a bridge between the two parties, to deal with the problems that occur so that a good solution is found.

Therefore, an understanding of school counselors, services, and functions of guidance and counseling services in schools is very important, so that students know that school counselors in schools are teachers who can also be used as friends who provide guidance, direction, and improve behavior to students to achieve an optimal level of development. It is hoped that every problem that students encounter can be resolved with a good solution. Instead, students think that school counselors are "school police" or people who always look for student mistakes.

The job of a teacher is to provide students with learning that educates students through learning in the field of study (Illahi 2020). Meanwhile, the task of school counselors is not learning activities in the context of teaching scenes that are worthy of teachers as subject matter learning (Damayanti & Hasanambella, 2021), but expert services in the context of empowering students through guidance and counseling (Arrangement of Professional Education for School Counselors and Implementation of Guidance and Counseling in Formal Education Pathways, 2007).

The urgency of guidance and counseling services in schools is needed in every school, because of the many problems of students in schools. The magnitude of students' need for self-direction (Zubaidah & Utomo, 2021). This is following the objectives of guidance and counseling services, namely so that students can (1) develop all the potential and advantages possessed by students optimally; (2) plan study completion activities, career development, and life in the future; (3) adjust to the surrounding environment; (4) overcome obstacles and difficulties faced by students in personal, social, learning and career fields.

In addition, guidance and counseling also have functions that are no less important, namely (1) understanding, namely the function to help students to understand themselves and their environment; (2) prevention, namely the function to help students be able to prevent or avoid various problems that hinder their development; (3) alleviation, namely the function to help students overcome the problems they experience; (4) maintenance and development, namely the function to help students maintain and develop their various potentials and positive conditions; (5) advocacy, namely the function to help students obtain defense for their rights and interests that have received less attention.

However, there are still students who still think that school counselors in schools are "school police" or people who are always looking for student mistakes. Guidance and counseling teachers are not like that. Namely, guidance

and counseling teachers can provide four service components, namely (1) basic services; (2) responsive services; (3) individual planning; (4) system support.

The implementation of guidance and counseling can run well if students have a high interest in attending counseling guidance at school. This is influenced by perception, which is the ability to understand or respond, observe, view, or also defined as the process of remembering or identifying something because if perception is not accurate, it is impossible to communicate effectively. Perception also determines choosing a message and ignoring other messages.

Based on the background exposure above, it is necessary to conduct follow-up activities in the form of case studies to reveal existing problems. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of students about the urgency of guidance and counseling services at Mtsn Terate Pandian Sumenep. The focus of this study examines (1) what is the meaning of guidance and counseling services according to students at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep?; (2) how students respond to school counselors at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep?; (3) what are the expectations of students with school counselors at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep?. This research contributes to the enrichment and information of knowledge related to the urgency of guidance and counseling services in schools.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

In this research, the approach taken is qualitative. This means that the data collected is not in the form of numbers, but the data comes from interview scripts, field notes, personal documents, and anecdotal notes. So that the purpose of this qualitative research is to describe the empirical reality behind the phenomenon in depth, detail, and thoroughly. Therefore, the use of a qualitative approach in this study is to match the empirical reality with the applicable theory using descriptive methods.

This type of research is descriptive research. According to Whitney, the descriptive method is the search for facts with proper interpretation (Linarwati et al., 2016). Descriptive research studies problems in individual lives, as well as procedures that apply in individual lives and certain situations, including relationships, activities, attitudes, and views, as well as ongoing processes and influences of a phenomenon.

2.2 Researcher Presence

In this study, the researcher acts as a data collector and as an active instrument to collect data in the field. Therefore, the direct presence of researchers in the field is a measure of success to understand the case under study, so the direct and active involvement of researchers with informants or other data sources here will help in data collection.

2.3 Stages of Research

Moleong argues that "There are four stages of research implementation, namely: (1) pre-field stage, (2) fieldwork stage, (3) data analysis stage, (4) report writing stage". In this research, the stages taken are as follows:

- 1) The stage before going to the field, includes activities to determine the focus, adjusting the paradigm with theory, exploring research tools, including field observations and requesting permission from the subjects studied, consulting the research focus, and preparing a research proposal.
- 2) Fieldwork stage, including collecting materials related to student responses to the meaning of guidance and counseling services. The data was obtained by observation, interviews, and documentation to know the students' responses to the meaning of guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep.
- 3) Data analysis stage, including data analysis obtained through observation, documents, and in-depth interviews with class VIII students MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep. Then the data interpretation is carried out following the context of the problem under study and then checking the validity of the data by checking the data sources obtained and the method of obtaining data so that the data is truly valid as a basis and material for giving meaning to the data which is the process of determining in understanding the context of the research being studied.
- 4) The report writing stage, including the activity of compiling research results from all series of data collection activities to give meaning to the data.

2.4 Place and Time of Research

Selection and determination of the research location at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep because researchers have carried out teaching practice there for approximately one semester so researchers want to know more about

the usefulness of guidance and counseling services for students. In addition, the location is relatively close to the domicile of the researcher, so it is easy to reach and can be more efficient (time and cost). This research will be carried out for 1 month from May 04 - May 31, 2025.

2.5 Data Source

2.5.1 Primary Data

Primary data is data that can be obtained directly from the field or research site. Words and actions are data sources obtained from the field by observing or interviewing. Researchers use this data to obtain direct information about "perceptions and responses of students towards the meaning of guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep."

2.5.2 Secondary data

Secondary data is data obtained from cumulative records, and the frequency of student visits to the guidance and counseling service room. Secondary data can also be in the form of attachments such as cumulative data on students in schools, study results, and so on. Researchers use this secondary data to strengthen findings and complement information that has been collected through direct interviews with class VIII students at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep.

2.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is a very important step in research, therefore a researcher must be skilled in collecting data to obtain valid data. Data collection is a systematic and standardized procedure for obtaining the necessary data.

2.6.1 Direct Observation

Direct observation is a way of collecting data by using the eye without the help of other standard tools for this purpose. In daily activities, we always use our eyes to observe something. This observation is used for research that has been planned systematically about how "perceptions and responses Students against the meaning of guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep". The purpose of using this method is to record things, behavior, developments, and so on about student responses to the meaning of guidance and counseling services in schools when the incident occurs so as not to depend on data from one's memory. Direct observation can also obtain data from subjects who either cannot communicate verbally or who do not want to communicate verbally.

2.6.2 Interview

The interview is the process of obtaining information for research purposes utilizing a question and answers while meeting face-to-face between the questioner and the answerer using a tool called an interview guide. The purpose of the author using this method is to obtain clear and concrete data about student responses to the meaning of guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep. In this study, researchers will conduct interviews with class VIII students of MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep.

2.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of organizing and sorting data into patterns, categories, and basic description units so that themes can be found and working hypotheses can be formulated as suggested by the data.

From the above formulation, we can outline that data analysis intends to first organize the data. The data collected consists of direct observation and, interviews with students.

After data from the field is collected using the data collection methods above, the researcher will process and analyze the data using the analysis of the field of the Miles and Huberman model, which is carried out during data collection, and after completion of data collection within a certain period. During the interview, the researcher analyzed the interviewee's answer after analyzing it feels unsatisfactory, then the researcher will continue the question again until the data obtained is considered credible.

2.8 Data Checking and Validity Techniques

In this study, the data-checking technique carried out by researchers is by increasing persistence. Like checking the finished thesis again whether there is something wrong or not. By increasing persistence, researchers can double-check the data that researchers obtain. In addition, in this study to be more convincing about the validity of

the data obtained or this research so that it can be trusted (credibility), the researchers held certainty (conformability) by utilizing a member check, namely the process of checking the data obtained by the researcher to the data giver. The purpose of a member check is to find out how far the data obtained is following what is given by the data giver.

Researchers conducted member checks on MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep students after all the data was collected and analyzed. The trick is to collect students who have been interviewed in the classroom for 30 minutes to coincide with the break time. Then the researcher reads the data that has been obtained through interviews, then the researcher asks whether the statement read by the researcher wants to be reduced or added. And after that, MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep students said that the data obtained by researchers had been approved by students who were informants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Meaning of Counseling Guidance Services According to Students

On the first day, the researchers made observations everything was quite smooth because at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep researchers were welcomed by the principal, vice principal, and school counselors there. Researchers deliberately came early in the morning around 07.00 to make observations. Arriving there all students entered because according to the school counselor there, the entry time is 06.45. However, 2 students were late. From here then the researcher can obtain data to obtain as complete data as possible. The data obtained by researchers from observations are:

a) Guidance and Counseling services are Very Meaningful for Students

From the results of observations researchers can see that guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep are very meaningful to students, because some students come to the guidance and counseling service room and meet school counselors to solve the problems faced by students. This shows that guidance and counseling services are meaningful to students.

b) The Guidance and Counseling Service Room is a place to solve problems.

From the results of observations, researchers can also see that the guidance and counseling service room at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep is used as a place to solve problems if there are students who have problems. Whether it's related to violations of discipline, problems with teachers, or friends are all resolved in the guidance and counseling service room. The researchers observed many students who came to the guidance and counseling service room every break time.

c) School Counselors can be Good and Professional School Counselors.

d) School counselors must always be good school counselors so that they can be emulated by their students. During the observation, the researcher can directly see examples of good school counselors in this MTsN, for example, the school counselor is a disciplined person and very respectful of time. Before students enter the school counselor has come to school first it aims to serve students.

The next day the researcher was able to interview female students in class VIII-D. The researcher interviewed for 30 minutes when it was break time. The place that was used as an interview place was in front of the class there was a terrace where the researcher conducted interviews with students. From the results of the interview, the researcher can describe the research data as follows: According to students, guidance and counseling services at school are very meaningful because students are aware of the importance of school counselors at school.

According to students, guidance and counseling services at school are very meaningful because students are aware of the importance of school counselors at school. Because the school counselor at school can guide and direct students to positive things. Such as training students to be disciplined, responsible, independent, polite, and others.

The meaning of guidance and counseling services according to students is that school counselor's guide students which is carried out on an ongoing basis so that students can understand themselves, they can direct themselves, and can act reasonably. After the researcher was satisfied with the answer, the researcher asked the students what kind of acting reasonably. Then the student answered that he meant acting and following the rules, for example behaving well, so that the student did not deviate. Meanwhile, counseling is that school counselors can help students overcome the problems they face.

- a) Students said that the guidance and counseling service room at school is a room where students solve and overcome problems faced by students.

Students also explained that guidance and counseling services are an effort to deal with problematic students, especially those related to violations of school discipline. Through the guidance and counseling service approach, students prioritize healing efforts by using various existing services and techniques. Handling problematic students through guidance and counseling services does not use any form of sanction at all, but rather relies on the quality of a trusting interpersonal relationship between the school counselor and the problematic student (counselee), so that step by step the student can understand and accept himself and his environment, and can direct himself to achieve better self-adjustment.

- b) Some Students Understand the Definition of Guidance and Counseling Services

The researcher asked students about what the definition of guidance and counseling is that you know and then the students answered smoothly that according to students, guidance and counseling is a place to handle students. Guidance is assistance provided by school counselors to students regarding the problems they face so that students can direct themselves properly. Meanwhile, counseling is assistance provided by school counselors where students can solve the problems they face.

After that, the researcher asked where students could find out about the meaning of guidance and counseling. Then the student answered that he understood because, during the Student Orientation period, he was given material about the introduction to guidance and counseling services. That's where students can find out the meaning of guidance and counseling services.

However, some students do not understand the meaning of guidance and counseling services. After the researcher asked about the meaning of guidance and counseling, the student answered that guidance and counseling services are a place to handle problems. Then the researcher asked why students did not know about the correct understanding of guidance and counseling services the student only answered that he did not have guidance and counseling services at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep.

3.2.2 Student responses to school counselors

After researchers asked about students' responses to school counselors it turns out that according to students vary both positive and negative responses. The positive student responses to school counselors are:

- a) Some students are very happy with the presence of school counselors at school

Some students are very happy with the presence of school counselors at school because they can make school counselors friends to confide in. Students can confide in the school counselor at school for the problems they face. So that students can get the best solution with the guidance of the school counselor. All problems or complaints can be told to the school counselor, whether it concerns personal, social, learning, or career problems. And most importantly, students like school counselors because they can be trusted, and they keep students' secrets. In addition, they said that the school counselors at school are friendly, kind, disciplined, and firm, so students like them.

- b) The school counselor is indispensable in the school

Students also said that school counselors are very necessary for schools, especially MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep. Because school counselors can help students in overcoming any problems face, in contrast to subject teachers who only teach students materials but cannot help students if students have problems. In addition, school counselors can also teach students to be disciplined, assertive, responsible, and independent.

- c) Students Rarely Visit the Guidance and Counseling Room.

When the researcher asked whether students often visit the guidance and counseling service room, the student answered innocently that students still feel afraid and reluctant to always come to the guidance and counseling service room, but he admitted that he had been to the guidance and counseling service room to tell his problems to the school counselor to solve the problems he was facing. Likewise, with other students, they go to the guidance and counseling service room if they need direction and guidance from the school counselor for the problems they face.

This is contrary to the researcher's observation. Researchers asked students why every break time many students come to the guidance and counseling service room. Then the student explained that it turns out that on

average those who often come to the guidance and counseling service room are students who have many problems, especially those related to school or violating the rules. Even then, students do not come of their own accord but are called by the school counselor. However, some students come to the guidance and counseling service room of their own accord to get guidance or direction from the school counselor.

Students admit that they feel afraid when the school counselor calls them because students think they have violated school rules. This happens because students lack material about guidance and counseling services at school, so students do not fully know about the duties and functions of school counselors at school. On the other hand, some students who have many problems such as violating school rules, and deviant behavior never want to come to the guidance and counseling service room, unless the student is called by the school counselor.

d) Students say they are very happy with the school counselor

Many students say they are very happy with the school counselor at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep because he is patient, kind, disciplined, and firm. In addition, school counselors are also more familiar with students than subject teachers. After the students explained clearly their positive opinions of the school counselor, then the researcher asked what the students' responses about the school counselor were negative. Then the students explained it, namely:

a) School Counselors Do Not Teach or Enter Classes

Students said that at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep school counselors do not have teaching hours or enter classes, but sometimes school counselors enter to hold guidance in the school hall which is attended by student representatives from each class. This is done by school counselors to take preventive action against students. Therefore, there are still some students who do not understand the true meaning of guidance and counseling services.

When the school counselor delivers guidance material, on average, all students are very happy, because the material delivered by the school counselor is different from other knowledge. The material delivered by the school counselor is guidance and direction so that students become more independent in dealing with every problem they face, be it personal, social, learning, or career problems.

b) Students say that school counselors are school police.

Some students are not happy with school counselors and consider school counselors as "school police". However, those who think this way are students who have many problems, especially with school. For example, students who often skip school are called by the school counselor and asked why they skip school.

This makes students think that school counselors are school police or people who often ask about students' mistakes. Students also said that there were

Some of his friends consider school counselors as school police, but according to him, only some students often commit deviations at school and these students do not want to be directed to change their behavior for the better.

3.2.3 Student Expectations with the Presence of School Counselors

a) School counselors can guide and direct students.

Students' expectations with the presence of school counselors in schools are school counselors able to direct and guide students in achieving their developmental tasks optimally. School counselors can also take students to the school level they want according to their talents, and interests. So that students can become independent, disciplined, assertive, and responsible children.

b) School counselors do not yell or scold students.

Students also really hope that school counselors do not yell or scold students when students violate school rules because it makes students afraid and unhappy with school counselors. But if students commit violations, it is enough to be warned and given guidance and direction so that they do not violate again.

Then the researcher asked the students if they had ever been yelled at or scolded by the school counselor. If students answered never, then why do you hope that school counselors do not yell or scold students? then students answered I have never been yelled at or scolded by a school counselor but I have seen my friends scolded by school counselors because they often violate school rules.

c) School counselors can be more familiar with students.

Students hope that school counselors can be more familiar with students without having to reduce their authority as school counselors. Because if the school counselor is closer to the students, the school counselor will know the wishes and problems faced by students without having to ask but the students themselves will convey it. If school counselors can be more familiar with students, school counselors can find out the problems that students are experiencing.

In addition, students hope that the presence of school counselors at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep can make students become outstanding students. Because school counselors can also direct students to the next school level according to the talents and interests of the student.

d) School counselors can maintain their code of ethics as professional school counselors.

Students also hope that school counselors can be people who always maintain their code of ethics as school counselors. For example, school counselors must always maintain the most important confidentiality, because if school counselors keep secrets about the problems experienced by students, students will trust school counselors more. So that school counselors can easily understand the problems experienced by students. On the other hand, if the school counselor cannot keep a secret, the students will not trust the school counselor and will not tell the problems they are facing.

e) School counselors can be role models for students.

Students hope that the school counselor at school can set a good example for students, both in the form of behavior and speech. Because example if the school counselor is a disciplined person, students will try to be disciplined, but if the school counselor sets a bad example, students will also be more difficult to direct and guide in a better direction.

Students also hope that school counselors are always friendly, wise, disciplined, and firm. Because if that trait exists in a school counselor, many students will be happy with the school counselor in school, especially at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students generally understand guidance and counseling services as professional support that facilitates their personal, social, academic, and behavioral development. Most participants perceived school counselors as individuals who provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and assistance in solving various personal and learning problems. Nevertheless, some students continued to associate counseling services primarily with disciplinary functions, resulting in the persistent perception of school counselors as "school police." In addition, students expressed expectations that counseling services should become more preventive, developmental, accessible, and student-centered. These findings suggest that students' understanding of counseling services substantially shapes their perceptions of school counselors and influences their willingness to utilize counseling services.

The variation in students' perceptions appears to be closely related to their direct experiences with counseling practices in schools. Students who frequently interacted with counselors through supportive communication and developmental activities tended to develop positive perceptions, whereas those whose interactions occurred mainly during disciplinary situations were more likely to associate counseling with punishment (Auger et al., 2018; Strowig & Sheets, 1967). This finding indicates that students construct their understanding of counseling services through continuous interactions within the school environment rather than solely through formal explanations regarding counselors' professional roles. Consequently, strengthening positive counselor-student interactions becomes an important strategy for reducing misconceptions regarding school counseling services (Hadi et al., 2013).

These findings are consistent with the developmental perspective of guidance and counseling proposed by Kurniati (2018), who emphasizes that counseling services are designed to facilitate students' personal growth, self-understanding, and responsible decision-making throughout their developmental process. Similarly, Wu & Sun (2020) and Lai et al. (2020). argue that guidance and counseling should function proactively by facilitating developmental tasks, strengthening adaptive behavior, and promoting healthy interactions between students and their environment. The present findings reinforce these perspectives by demonstrating that students who possess a broader understanding of counseling functions tend to perceive counselors as trusted educational partners rather than

disciplinary authorities. Likewise, Prayogi et al. (2023) emphasize that guidance and counseling should assist students in overcoming developmental challenges through professional interventions that promote positive behavioral change, supporting the preventive and developmental orientation identified in this study.

The present findings also support previous studies concerning students' perceptions of guidance and counseling services. Haryati (2019) and Lase (2018) emphasize that guidance and counseling constitute an essential component of the educational process because they assist students in achieving their developmental tasks comprehensively (Arfasa & Weldmeskel, 2020; Saleh et al., 2021; Yakubu, 2026). Consistent with these perspectives, the present study demonstrates that students recognize counseling services as an important source of academic, personal, and social support. However, this study also reveals that positive perceptions coexist with persistent misconceptions regarding counselors' disciplinary roles. Unlike studies that primarily discuss the importance of counseling services conceptually, the present findings provide qualitative evidence illustrating how students simultaneously construct positive perceptions, negative stereotypes, and expectations for improving counseling services within the same educational context.

Previous studies generally focused on the functions, importance, or implementation of counseling services, whereas this study qualitatively explains how students' conceptual understanding influences their perceptions of school counselors and how these perceptions shape their expectations regarding future counseling practices. This integrated perspective contributes empirical evidence to the development of guidance and counseling literature, particularly within the context of Islamic junior secondary education.

Despite these findings, several contextual factors should also be considered when interpreting students' perceptions. Students' views may not be influenced solely by counseling services themselves but also by school disciplinary culture, communication patterns between teachers and students, previous counseling experiences, and the overall school climate (Borders & Drury, 1992; Huenergarde, 2018). These contextual conditions may strengthen or weaken students' trust in counseling services regardless of counselors' professional competence. Furthermore, because this study was conducted in one Islamic junior secondary school, the findings should be interpreted within the sociocultural characteristics of the research setting. Future studies conducted across different educational levels and institutional contexts may provide broader evidence regarding factors influencing students' perceptions of school counseling services.

This study suggests that students' understanding of guidance and counseling services constitutes the foundation for developing positive perceptions of school counselors. Positive perceptions subsequently strengthen students' trust and increase their willingness to utilize counseling services for personal, social, academic, and career development. Therefore, improving students' counseling literacy, strengthening counselor–student relationships, and expanding developmental counseling programs should become central strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of school guidance and counseling services and supporting students' holistic development.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study provide theoretical and practical implications for the study of students' perceptions, understanding, and expectations regarding the urgency of school guidance and counseling services by demonstrating that students' conceptual understanding and direct interactions with school counselors significantly influence their trust in and utilization of counseling services, wherein positive perceptions of developmental functions coexist with persistent "school police" stereotypes due to discipline-oriented interactions. The findings of this study fill a research gap (Practical Gap / Knowledge to Action Gap) regarding how the process of qualitative perception and expectation formation directly influences students' actual utilization of counseling services, particularly within Islamic junior high school settings.

4.2 Research Contributions

The findings of this study contribute as a new source of scientific knowledge in the field of School Guidance and Counseling by providing a new framework regarding the relationship between students' perceptions, conceptual understanding, and expectations regarding the urgency of counseling services that can be used to design and implement more responsive, preventive, developmental, and student-centered school counseling practices based on actual empirical evidence in the field.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several contextual and methodological limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted exclusively within a single Islamic junior high school (MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep). As a result, the empirical findings heavily reflect the unique sociocultural climate, school rules, and institutional dynamics of this particular environment, which may restrict the direct generalizability of the findings to general public secondary schools or non-Islamic educational contexts. Second, the participant pool was limited to Grade VIII students as the primary informants. Although this subgroup offered rich qualitative insights into middle school perceptions, it did not capture the distinct developmental experiences and counseling needs of students in lower (Grade VII) or upper (Grade IX) grade levels. Finally, the data collection relied solely on the student perspective. The study did not incorporate triangulated views from school counselors, subject teachers, or school principals, which could have provided a more balanced and systemic understanding of the administrative and operational challenges faced in delivering guidance services.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Based on these limitations and the core findings of the study, several directions are recommended for future research. First, scholars are encouraged to expand the geographical and institutional scope by conducting comparative multi-site studies across diverse settings, such as public middle schools, vocational institutions, and secular private schools, to examine how varying school climates influence student trust and perception. Second, future studies should adopt a multi-informant approach that integrates the perspectives of school counselors, teachers, school leaders, and parents alongside those of the students. Comparing these multi-stakeholder viewpoints will yield a more comprehensive understanding of systemic barriers to counseling accessibility. Lastly, researchers are advised to employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to quantitatively track changes in students' counseling literacy and willingness to seek help over time, particularly before and after the implementation of proactive, student-centered counseling programs.

6. CONCLUSION

The task of a school counselor is not a learning activity in the context of a teaching scene that is worthy of a teacher as a learning field of study, but an expert service in the context of empowering students through guidance and counseling. The results of this study researchers can conclude that (1) according to students, guidance and counseling services in schools are very meaningful because students are aware of the importance of school counselors in schools; (2) the meaning of guidance and counseling services for students is that school counselors always guide students which are carried out on an ongoing basis so that students can understand themselves so that they can direct themselves and can act naturally; (3) some students are very happy with the presence of school counselors in schools because they can make school counselors as students' confiding friends. Students can confide in the school counselor at school for the problems they face; (4) there are still students who think that school counselors are school police or people who often ask about students' mistakes; (5) students' expectations of the school counselor at school can direct and guide students in achieving their developmental tasks optimally.

With sufficient understanding of the duties and functions of school counselors in schools, students who think school counselors are school police will know that school counselors are not what students think but school counselors are people who will provide assistance and services for problems faced by students in dealing with personal, social, learning, and career problems. Research suggestions. Suggestions from the conclusions of this study include (1) school counselors can provide a clear understanding to students so that students understand and understand the duties, functions, and roles of school counselors in schools, especially at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep; (2) it is advisable to school counselors in helping students face every problem carried out on an ongoing basis and there is completeness so that students who get guidance can understand with certainty the duties and functions of school counselors in schools; (3) school counselors should take preventive steps to students who have problems in career selection; (4) school counselors can provide the widest possible time to students both who have problems or who do not have problems.

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Author Contribution Statement

All data that researchers describe in this article are truly the result of the data collection process at MTsN Terate Pandian Sumenep. Therefore, researchers guarantee and take full responsibility for all the data described in this article.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Generative AI tools ([OpenAI](#)) solely for language improvement, grammar checking, readability, and formatting. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and revised by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the final content, data interpretation, conclusions, and scientific integrity of the publication. AI was not used to generate, analyze, or interpret empirical data. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJGCS GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declared that they have no competing interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this article.

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