



GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING MANAGEMENT STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' CHARACTER EDUCATION

Nur Istianah¹, Subaidi², Sukarman³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Jepara, Central Java, Indonesia

Email: nuristianah.2561@student.unisnu.ac.id¹, subaidi@unisnu.ac.id²,
pakar@unisnu.ac.id³

Abstract:

Education should not only transfer academic knowledge but also develop students' moral awareness, social responsibility, and character resilience. However, schools continue to face disciplinary problems, weak responsibility, and negative student behavior, while guidance and counseling services are often managed reactively and have not been fully integrated into a systematic managerial framework. This study aims to analyze guidance and counseling management in strengthening students' character education and to formulate an adaptive conceptual model based on the functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. This research employed a qualitative library research design. Data were collected through documentation of relevant books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and policy documents related to guidance and counseling management and character education. The data were analyzed using content analysis through data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The findings show that guidance and counseling management contributes to character strengthening through needs-based program planning, collaborative organization involving school stakeholders, direct implementation of individual, group, and classical services, and measurable evaluation of character outcomes. The literature also indicates that actuating is the most dominant aspect, while controlling and evaluation remain underdeveloped. The study proposes an adaptive, cyclical model consisting of value-based orientation, needs-based planning, system-based organizing, character-oriented actuating, and sustainable controlling. This model positions guidance and counseling as a strategic school system for developing discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and noble character.

Keywords: *Character Education; Guidance and Counseling Management; POAC; School Counseling; Student Character*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic arena for developing students' competencies and character as preparation for future life. Its function is not limited to the transmission of academic knowledge; it also includes the formation of moral values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and social concern. Character education is essential because students need moral, social, and emotional strength to face academic demands and the complexities of life in society. In this sense, character education moves beyond the cognitive domain and addresses the development of integrated human beings who are intellectually capable, morally grounded, and socially responsible (Isnaini, 2016).

In practice, the formation of students' character still faces serious challenges. Schools often encounter weak discipline, low responsibility, and various negative behaviors that indicate a gap between moral knowing and moral action. Students may understand what is considered good, yet they do not always internalize this knowledge into consistent behavior. The rapid changes in social and digital environments have also made character resilience increasingly important, as students are exposed to diverse influences that may weaken personal integrity and self-control (Maulidah et al., 2026).

Guidance and counseling services occupy a strategic position in responding to these challenges because they are directly concerned with students' personal, social, academic, and emotional development. Guidance and counseling are not only intended to solve individual problems, but also to prevent negative behavior, facilitate self-understanding, and promote positive character development. Through individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, and responsive services, school counselors can create reflective spaces that support students in building discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and noble character (Hidayat et al., 2020).

Despite this strategic role, the implementation of guidance and counseling in schools is often not optimal. In many cases, counseling services are carried out sporadically, incidentally, and reactively, mainly after student violations occur. This condition shows weaknesses in the managerial governance of guidance and counseling programs, especially in needs analysis, program organization, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous evaluation. Good management is needed so that guidance and counseling services are not merely administrative routines but become a systematic mechanism for strengthening students' character.

Previous studies demonstrate that guidance and counseling management contributes positively to students' character formation. The implementation of management functions in guidance and counseling can support character education when services are systematically planned, organized, implemented, and evaluated (Hidayat et al., 2020). Guidance and counseling management is also important for building students' confidence, discipline, and positive social values (Fitria & Septian, 2024). Counseling services can further be integrated with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in character-strengthening activities (Arsyad et al., 2026). However, many studies remain descriptive and focus mainly on the implementation of services, while the evaluation of measurable character outcomes and adaptive managerial strategies remains underdeveloped.

The research gap lies in three main issues. First, earlier studies often describe the implementation of guidance and counseling without analyzing concrete indicators of character outcomes such as discipline, integrity, responsibility, and social skills. Second, only limited research examines adaptive management strategies that enable guidance and counseling services to respond to changes in curriculum policy and student characteristics. Third, the relationship between the managerial competence of counselors and students' character outcomes has not been widely conceptualized in an integrated school management framework.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze guidance and counseling management in strengthening students' character education through the functions of planning, organizing, activating, and controlling. More specifically, this article examines how guidance and counseling programs are planned,

organized, implemented, and evaluated; how they contribute to the strengthening of character indicators; and how adaptive management strategies can be formulated to support school-based character education. The study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions by developing a conceptual model of guidance and counseling management that is systematic, collaborative, measurable, and adaptive to contemporary educational needs.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a library research design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding concepts, theories, and research findings related to guidance and counseling management and character education. Library research was used because the main data were obtained from written academic sources rather than field observation or experimental treatment. This design is relevant for formulating a conceptual model based on the synthesis of previous studies and theoretical arguments.

The data sources consisted of scientific books, national and international journal articles, theses, dissertations, and educational policy documents relevant to guidance and counseling management, POAC management functions, school counseling services, character education, and character-strengthening policies. The literature was selected based on topical relevance, conceptual contribution, and credibility. The study emphasized recent journal articles and current educational discussions, while foundational books were used to support core concepts.

Data were collected using documentation techniques. The documentation process included identifying relevant literature, classifying sources based on themes, recording important concepts and findings, comparing similarities and differences among studies, and mapping the contribution of each source to the development of the conceptual model. This technique was appropriate because the study did not involve direct respondents or field observations, but focused on systematic analysis of written sources.

Data analysis was conducted through content analysis. The analysis involved five steps: reducing data that were not directly related to the research focus, categorizing data into themes of planning, organizing, actuating, controlling, and character indicators, interpreting the meaning of each theme, comparing the findings with previous studies, and synthesizing the results into an adaptive conceptual model. The validity of the analysis was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing books, journal articles, theses, and policy documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Guidance and Counseling Management as a Systematic Service Framework

The literature shows that guidance and counseling are a unified educational service designed to help students understand themselves, adapt to their environment, and develop their potential optimally. Guidance refers to a systematic helping process that enables individuals to understand themselves and their environment. Counseling refers to an intensive interpersonal process between counselor and counselee aimed at facilitating behavioral change, decision-making, and personal development (Badrin & Ainur, 2024; Prayitno, 2018)

In the school context, guidance and counseling management can be understood as a systematic process for planning, organizing, implementing, evaluating, and developing counseling services. The purpose is to ensure that counseling services are effective, efficient, measurable, and responsive to students' developmental needs. This management process also enables counseling services to become an integral part of educational quality improvement and character development (Badrin & Ainur, 2024; Masbur & Nuzliah, 2017). The management framework most frequently used in the literature is POAC: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Planning requires counselors to define program objectives, identify students' needs, determine service priorities, formulate activities, and establish indicators of success. Organizing involves distributing tasks, coordinating personnel, arranging facilities, and building collaboration among counselors, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, principals, and parents. Actuating refers to the implementation of planned services, including individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, consultation, and responsive services. Controlling and evaluating focus on monitoring program implementation, measuring service effectiveness, identifying obstacles, and improving programs continuously (Badrin & Ainur, 2024; Masbur & Nuzliah, 2017).

Table 1. Management Functions in Guidance and Counseling Services

Function	Managerial focus	Character-oriented implementation	Expected contribution
Planning	Needs analysis, program objectives, priority services, measurable indicators	Mapping students' discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and social skills	Programs are relevant to real student needs and character targets
Organizing	Division of roles, coordination, schedules, facilities, stakeholder collaboration	Involving counselors, principals, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents	Whole-school support for consistent character reinforcement
Actuating	Implementation of individual, group, classical, and responsive services	Reflection, counseling dialogue, habituation, and moral decision-making activities	Internalization of positive values through direct experience
Controlling	Monitoring, evaluation, feedback, and program improvement	Assessment of behavioral change using objective character indicators	Sustainable improvement and accountable counseling services

Source: synthesized from guidance and counseling management literature (Badrin & Ainur, 2024; Masbur & Nuzliah, 2017)

Character Education and the Contribution of Counseling Services

Character education is a structured and systematic effort to internalize moral values so that students are able to think, feel, and act in accordance with noble values (Dwijayanti, 2021). Character education includes the cultivation of intelligence in thinking, appreciation in attitude, and practice in behavior in relation to God, oneself, society, and the environment (Nurmadiyah, 2018). In the Indonesian educational context, character education is closely connected with spiritual strength, self-control, personality, noble morals, and skills needed by individuals and society (Kemdikbud, 2019).

The analysis indicates that guidance and counseling services contribute to character education in ways that cannot be fully replaced by classroom instruction. Classroom learning often strengthens moral knowledge, but counseling services address the affective and behavioral dimensions more directly. Through counseling interaction, students are invited to reflect on their actions, recognize consequences, manage emotions, understand responsibilities, and make better choices. Character formation requires the transformation of moral knowing into moral feeling and moral action (Lickona, 2022). Several character indicators are repeatedly emphasized in the literature, including religiosity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and noble character. These indicators show that character education must be integrated into school culture, learning activities, and student development services rather than being treated as a separate program (Kemdikbud, 2019) (Lickona, 2022; Samani & Hariyanto, 2013).

Table 2. Character Indicators Strengthened through Guidance and Counseling Management

Character indicator	Behavioral expression	Guidance and counseling strategy
Religiosity	Respect for religious values, tolerance, and moral awareness	Value clarification, reflective guidance, and positive school culture
Honesty	Consistency between words, actions, and responsibility	Individual counseling, case reflection, and integrity-based habituation
Discipline	Compliance with rules, punctuality, and self-control	Classical guidance, behavioral contracts, and monitoring
Responsibility	Completing duties and accepting consequences	Group counseling, goal setting, and follow-up evaluation
Empathy and cooperation	Care for peers and constructive social interaction	Group guidance, peer support, and collaborative activities

Source: synthesized from character education and counseling literature (Dwijayanti, 2021) (Lickona, 2022; Samani & Hariyanto, 2020).

Dominance of Actuating and the Critical Gap in Evaluation

A key finding of the literature synthesis is the imbalance among the POAC functions. The actuating aspect is the most dominant focus in previous studies. This is understandable because the implementation of counseling services is the most visible part of school practice. Studies commonly discuss individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, responsive services, and behavior development activities as the main forms of character intervention (Arsyad et al., 2026; Hidayat et al., 2020; Rosyid et al., 2020)

However, the dominance of actuating also reveals a critical limitation. When guidance and counseling are understood mainly as service implementation, schools may neglect planning, organizing, and especially evaluation. Without clear planning, counseling activities may not be based on students' real character needs. Without strong organizing, collaboration among school stakeholders may become fragmented. Without evaluation, schools cannot determine whether counseling services actually produce measurable changes in students' character.

The most critical gap is found in controlling and evaluation. Many studies

state that guidance and counseling contribute to discipline, responsibility, or noble character, but they rarely explain how these outcomes are measured continuously and objectively. This gap shows the need for measurable indicators, behavior monitoring instruments, feedback mechanisms, and follow-up programs so that guidance and counseling management can become accountable and sustainable.

Adaptive Conceptual Model of Guidance and Counseling Management

Based on the synthesis of the literature, this study formulates an adaptive conceptual model of guidance and counseling management for strengthening students' character education. The model integrates five pillars: value-based orientation, needs-based planning, system-based organizing, character-oriented actuating, and sustainable controlling. These pillars are cyclical rather than linear, meaning that evaluation results should return to the planning stage and guide continuous program improvement.

The first pillar, value-based orientation, ensures that guidance and counseling programs are grounded in moral, religious, social, and national values. The second pillar, needs-based planning, requires counselors to design programs based on student needs and character problems identified through assessment. The third pillar, system-based organizing, positions guidance and counseling as a whole-school program involving counselors, principals, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, parents, and the broader school culture. The fourth pillar, character-oriented actuating, emphasizes the implementation of counseling services that intentionally internalize values through reflection, dialogue, and habituation. The fifth pillar, sustainable controlling, requires schools to evaluate outcomes using measurable character indicators and to improve programs continuously.

This model changes the old paradigm that guidance and counseling is merely a clinical support service for problematic students. Instead, it positions guidance and counseling as a strategic system for building a positive school culture. Counselors are not only problem solvers but also coordinators of character development. This model is adaptive because it can respond to curriculum changes, student needs, and social challenges. It also supports the development of holistic student profiles by connecting counseling services with school policies and character-strengthening programs.

Table 3. Adaptive Model of Guidance and Counseling Management for Character Education

Model pillar	Main principle	Operational strategy	Character outcome
Value-based orientation	Services are rooted in moral and educational values	Align counseling programs with religious, social, and school values	Moral awareness and integrity
Needs-based planning	Programs respond to actual student needs	Use needs assessment and character mapping	Relevant and targeted intervention
System-based organizing	Character development is a shared school responsibility	Build collaboration among counselors, teachers, principals, and parents	Consistent character reinforcement
Character-oriented actuating	Services internalize values through direct experience	Apply individual counseling, group	Positive behavior and self-control

		counseling, and classical guidance	
Sustainable controlling	Evaluation supports continuous improvement	Measure discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and follow-up progress	Accountable and sustainable character growth

Source: conceptual synthesis of this study based on POAC management and character education literature (Mulyasa, 2020; Samani & Hariyanto, 2020).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings strengthen the connection between educational management and character education. The POAC framework provides a managerial logic that enables character education to be planned, implemented, monitored, and improved systematically. Character education becomes more effective when it is integrated into all school activities and supported by consistent school management (Mulyasa, 2022; Samani & Hariyanto, 2013)

Practically, schools need to strengthen guidance and counseling programs in at least four ways. First, counseling planning should be based on a careful analysis of students' character needs. Second, school leaders should organize cross-role collaboration so that counselors do not work alone. Third, counseling implementation should intentionally connect services with character indicators. Fourth, evaluation instruments should be developed to measure changes in student behavior, such as improved discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and cooperation. Through these steps, guidance and counseling can become a center of positive school culture and a strategic instrument for preparing students with integrity.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of guidance and counseling management through planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling is vital for transforming counseling services from administrative and reactive activities into systematic and proactive character-strengthening programs. Planning based on students' real needs becomes the foundation of effective services, while organization through stakeholder collaboration ensures that character reinforcement is supported by the whole school community. Nevertheless, the literature shows that evaluation remains the weakest aspect and needs serious strengthening.

Guidance and counseling management contributes significantly to strengthening students' character indicators, especially discipline, responsibility, honesty, empathy, cooperation, and noble character. These contributions occur through counseling interactions, reflective dialogue, group dynamics, habituation, and follow-up services that help students transform moral knowledge into moral action. Therefore, character education cannot rely only on classroom instruction; it requires structured counseling support that addresses students' affective and behavioral development.

The adaptive model proposed in this article consists of value-based orientation, needs-based planning, system-based organizing, character-oriented actuating, and sustainable controlling. This model positions school counselors as strategic coordinators of character education and encourages schools to build measurable, collaborative, and sustainable guidance and counseling systems. Future studies should empirically test this model in different school contexts and

develop valid instruments for measuring character outcomes produced by guidance and counseling management

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