

THE USE OF CASE CONFERENCES IN RESOLVING BULLYING PROBLEMS AMONG STUDENTS AT MTS LABORATORY OF UIN SUMATERA UTARA MEDAN

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the implementation of case conferences in addressing students' learning difficulties and bullying behavior at the MTs Laboratory of Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving guidance and counseling teachers, the school principal, and students as informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and inductive-deductive conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that case conferences were implemented through systematic stages, namely planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-up, and reporting. The implementation was associated with positive changes, including students' increased learning motivation, improved concentration during lessons, reduced recurrence of bullying behaviors, and better participation in academic activities. These improvements were identified based on participants' perceptions, behavioral observations, and guidance and counseling documentation. Overall, the findings suggest that case conferences functioned as a collaborative guidance and counseling strategy that supported problem handling related to bullying and learning difficulties within the school context, while fostering a safer and more conducive learning environment.

Keywords: Case Conference; Guidance; Counseling Teacher; Bullying; Learning Activities

A. Introduction

National education had a strategic role in shaping the quality of Indonesia's human resources comprehensively, encompassing intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual aspects. Education was not only understood as a process of knowledge transfer, but also as a conscious and planned effort to develop students' character, attitudes, and behavior so that they were able to participate responsibly in social life. This perspective was aligned with the mandate of the National Education System Law (UUSPN) Number 20 of 2003, which affirmed that national education functioned to develop capabilities and to shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation, and aimed to develop students' potential so that they became individuals who were faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possessed noble character, were healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and responsible as citizens. Thus,

educational success was not only measured by academic achievement, but also by the holistic formation of students' behavior and character.

Schools, as formal educational institutions, played a central role in realizing the objectives of national education. Schools did not only function as places where teaching and learning activities took place in classrooms, but also as social environments that contributed to the formation of students' personalities, attitudes, and behaviors. Through interactions occurring within the school environment, students learned to recognize social values, norms, responsibilities, and appropriate ways of behaving in accordance with their surroundings. Therefore, the educational process in schools ideally included balanced development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In this context, teachers were required not only to possess pedagogical competence in delivering subject matter, but also professional and social competence in assisting students in dealing with various problems that could hinder their optimal development.

In practice, students in schools were frequently confronted with various problems related to both learning processes and social behavior. Issues such as low learning motivation, lack of discipline, non-compliance with school regulations, and truancy behavior were still commonly found in educational settings. Truancy behavior, which was understood as students' absence from scheduled instructional hours, could be influenced by various factors, including dislike of certain subjects, lack of emotional closeness with teachers, academic pressure, and conflicts with peers. If such conditions were not addressed appropriately, students were likely to experience learning gaps, declining academic performance, and obstacles in achieving optimal learning development.

In addition to learning-related problems, rapid technological development and social change also exerted significant impacts on students' behavior. One phenomenon that had increasingly emerged in school environments was bullying behavior. Bullying was defined as aggressive behavior carried out intentionally and repeatedly, whether in physical, verbal, social, or digital forms, toward individuals in a weaker position. This behavior not only caused short-term effects, but also had the potential to result in long-term consequences for victims' psychological, social, and academic conditions, such as decreased self-confidence, increased anxiety and stress, disrupted social relationships, and reduced learning motivation and academic achievement (Putri et al., 2024)

Bullying behavior could manifest in various forms, including verbal bullying, social bullying, physical bullying, cyberbullying, academic bullying, and culture-based bullying rooted in differences in identity, individual characteristics, and prevailing cultural norms and values (Paulina et al., 2025). The phenomenon of bullying did not occur in isolation, but was influenced by the interaction of various internal and external factors. Internal factors included low empathy, weak emotional regulation, and aggressive tendencies within students. Meanwhile, external factors encompassed family parenting patterns, peer influence, school climate, and exposure to digital media, which could reinforce aggressive behavior if not accompanied by adequate supervision and guidance (Arditha et al., 2023). The complexity of these factors positioned bullying as an educational problem that required systematic, integrated, and sustainable handling.

In addressing bullying issues within the school environment, guidance and counseling (BK) teachers held a highly strategic role. BK teachers were responsible for providing guidance and counseling services to help students understand themselves, identify the problems they faced, and develop the ability to overcome personal, social,

and learning-related difficulties. Through guidance and counseling services, students were expected to achieve optimal development and adapt positively to their school environment. BK teachers also functioned as educators, counselors, motivators, and facilitators who accompanied students throughout their psychosocial development process (Fuadi & Suryanto, 2021).

One guidance and counseling service strategy that was relevant in addressing student problems, particularly bullying behavior, was the case conference. A case conference was a collaborative effort involving various relevant parties, such as BK teachers, homeroom teachers, school authorities, and other related stakeholders, to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding of students' problems. Through this forum, data and information related to students were discussed in an integrated manner so that coordinated, effective, and efficient intervention steps could be formulated (Rachmawati et al., 2025). The case conference approach enabled student problem-solving to be conducted comprehensively, not only focusing on individuals, but also considering environmental contexts influencing student behavior.

Based on preliminary observations at MTs Laboratorium UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, it was found that some students still exhibited bullying behaviors, such as mocking and humiliating peers, spreading gossip, social exclusion, making threats, and engaging in mild physical actions. Although BK teachers had implemented various intervention efforts through guidance and counseling services, such bullying behaviors tended to recur. This condition indicated that the handling efforts had not been fully optimal, due to factors such as time constraints, BK teachers' workload, and the complexity of student problems requiring cross-party approaches.

Based on these conditions, a more structured, collaborative, and comprehensive guidance and counseling service approach was required to address bullying problems among students. Therefore, this study was focused on the use of case conferences as one of the guidance and counseling service strategies in resolving bullying issues among students. This study was expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of case conferences and their contribution to creating a safe, conducive school environment that supported students' optimal development.

Although previous studies have discussed bullying prevention and the role of guidance and counseling services in schools, limited attention has been given to the procedural implementation of case conferences as a collaborative intervention strategy for bullying management. In particular, there is still a lack of empirical descriptions regarding stakeholder coordination, follow-up mechanisms, and sustainability of case conference outcomes within school settings. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing an in-depth description of how case conferences are implemented, coordinated, and followed up in addressing bullying problems at the school level.

B. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to comprehensively understand and describe the implementation of case conferences in addressing students' bullying behavior at the MTs Laboratory of UIN Sumatera Utara Medan. This approach was selected because the phenomenon under investigation was complex,

contextual, and closely related to participants' experiences, interactions, and constructed meanings within the school setting (Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in a natural setting, with the researchers serving as the primary instruments, and focused on describing the process of case conference implementation through inductive analysis of written narratives and observed behaviors (Moleong, 2019; Bogdan & Biklen, 2022).

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the handling of students' bullying cases through case conferences. The participants consisted of one school principal, two guidance and counseling teachers, three subject or homeroom teachers, and six students who were involved in bullying cases as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses. This sampling strategy was intended to obtain comprehensive data from multiple perspectives relevant to the implementation and impact of case conferences in addressing bullying behavior (Spradley & Syahrudin, 2017).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and understanding of the case conference process, while observations focused on students' behavioral changes and problem-handling practices within the school environment. Document analysis included guidance and counseling service records, case conference reports, and other relevant school documents. The use of multiple data sources and techniques enabled methodological triangulation to strengthen data credibility.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed due to the involvement of minors and the sensitive nature of bullying issues. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the school authorities. Informed consent was secured from teachers and parents or guardians of student participants, and assent was obtained from the students. Participants were informed of the study objectives, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any stage. All personal data were anonymized and used solely for academic purposes.

Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, credibility was enhanced through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents, as well as member checking with key informants. Peer debriefing was carried out with fellow researchers to minimize bias, and an audit trail was maintained to document the research procedures and analytical decisions, thereby supporting the dependability and confirmability of the study (Moleong, 2019).

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

The results of the study indicated that the implementation of case conferences at MTs Laboratory of UINSU Medan was conducted as a response to the needs of students who experienced difficulties in learning activities and bullying behavior. The identified

problems included difficulties in following lessons, low learning motivation, limited concentration during classroom activities, ineffective study time management, and the emergence of bullying behavior that negatively affected the learning process and students' social interactions within the school environment. These conditions were identified based on interviews with guidance and counseling teachers and students, classroom observations, and guidance and counseling service records, and became the basis for implementing case conferences as a structured and comprehensive form of intervention.

The implementation of case conferences was adjusted to the type and level of problems experienced by students. Based on field findings, this service was provided to students whose problems could not be resolved through individual counseling or conventional group counseling services. Case conferences focused on students who experienced disruptions in learning activities related to bullying behavior, thereby requiring integrated handling involving multiple parties to obtain appropriate and sustainable solutions.

The findings also showed that case conferences involved several parties who were directly related to students' problems. These parties included the students concerned, guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents or guardians. Case conference activities were conducted in the guidance and counseling room in a safe, calm, and conducive atmosphere to support open communication. The implementation time was adjusted to the needs of case resolution, with an average duration of approximately two hours per session, as documented in the guidance and counseling service records.

Furthermore, the implementation of case conferences followed systematic stages, namely planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-up, and reporting. At the planning stage, guidance and counseling teachers determined the cases to be discussed, identified the participants involved, arranged the schedule of activities, and prepared materials and supporting facilities. The implementation stage included opening the session, jointly discussing the case, formulating agreements, and drawing conclusions. Subsequently, the evaluation stage was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the activity, the follow-up stage ensured that the agreed interventions were implemented, and the reporting stage served as formal documentation of the case conference implementation.

The results of interviews with students indicated perceived positive changes following participation in case conferences. Students reported that they felt helped in understanding the problems they experienced, were more aware of the consequences of bullying behavior, and experienced increased motivation and concentration in learning. Teachers' observations and guidance and counseling documentation also indicated reduced disruptive behavior during lessons and improved student participation in learning activities after the implementation of case conferences. These findings suggest

that case conferences contributed to addressing disruptions in learning activities and bullying behavior, as well as supporting improvements in students' academic engagement within the school context.

To strengthen the credibility of these findings, several trustworthiness strategies were applied. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data, classroom observations, and guidance and counseling documents to ensure consistency across sources. Member checking was carried out by confirming key findings with guidance and counseling teachers and selected students. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with fellow researchers to refine interpretations and minimize potential bias. An audit trail was maintained to document data collection procedures and analytical decisions, thereby supporting the dependability and confirmability of the findings.

The use of case conferences at MTs Laboratory of UINSU Medan demonstrated that guidance and counseling services played a strategic role in resolving bullying problems among students. Bullying is an aggressive behavior that has negative impacts on students' psychological, social, and academic conditions if not handled properly (Yuliani et al., 2024). These impacts include decreased learning motivation, reduced sense of safety, and diminished quality of social interactions within the school environment. Case conferences became a relevant approach because they allowed bullying problems to be discussed comprehensively by involving related parties. This collaborative approach aligns with the view that effective handling of bullying requires cooperation among schools, families, and students' social environments (Rigby, 2018). However, these findings are context-specific and reflect the implementation of case conferences at MTs Laboratory of UINSU Medan; therefore, conclusions should be interpreted within this particular school setting.

2. Discussion

The implementation of case conferences provided a safe space for students who were victims of bullying to express their experiences and problems. This process helped students feel heard and valued, which positively affected their emotional and psychological conditions. The support provided through the case conference forum strengthened students' sense of safety at school. This finding was consistent with research indicating that structured school-based interventions were able to reduce the negative psychological impacts of bullying (Zhao et al., 2024). Thus, case conferences functioned as both a recovery mechanism and a form of protection for students' well-being.

Case conferences also played an important role in identifying the factors underlying bullying behavior in greater depth. Through discussions involving guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and parents, schools were able to understand the background of bullying behavior from both individual and environmental aspects. This comprehensive understanding enabled the formulation of appropriate and sustainable solutions. This was in line with the findings

of Nastiti and Fitriana (2024), who emphasized that bullying intervention should be based on a thorough analysis of students' conditions and their social contexts.

The role of guidance and counseling teachers in case conferences became a key factor in the success of this service. Guidance and counseling teachers acted as facilitators who directed the course of discussions, maintained case confidentiality, and ensured that each party understood their roles and responsibilities. Professional competence was essential to ensure that the case conference process ran systematically and in a conducive manner. This was consistent with the opinion of Gysbers and Henderson (2020), who stated that school counselors must possess coordinative and interpersonal skills in handling complex cases, including bullying problems.

Parental involvement in case conferences further strengthened the effectiveness of bullying intervention. Support from families helped students receive positive reinforcement in the home environment, enabling behavioral changes to occur consistently. Collaboration between schools and parents created continuity in student guidance. This finding was in line with the perspective of Swearer and Hymel (2021), who emphasized that bullying interventions were more effective when they involved students' closest support systems, particularly families.

In addition to being curative, case conferences also had a preventive function in preventing the recurrence of bullying behavior in schools. The agreements and commitments generated in case conferences served as guidelines for all parties in monitoring and mentoring students. A safe and supportive school environment could be realized when all school members shared collective awareness of the dangers of bullying. This was consistent with Rigby's (2018) view that bullying prevention required a collective approach and consistent school policies.

Interviews with students also indicated that case conferences helped them cope with the impacts of bullying and refocus on learning activities. Students felt more motivated, confident, and able to engage in social interactions more effectively. These findings supported the results of research by Putra et al. (2025), which stated that school-based counseling interventions were able to improve adjustment and social well-being among students who were victims of bullying. Thus, case conferences made a positive contribution to students' academic and social development.

Based on the above discussion, it could be concluded that the use of case conferences at MTs Laboratory of UINSU Medan was effective in addressing bullying problems among students. This service enabled problem handling to be carried out collaboratively, systematically, and sustainably. Theoretical support and previous research reinforced that case conferences constituted a relevant guidance and counseling service strategy for creating a safe school environment free from bullying behavior (Swearer & Hymel, 2021).

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of case conferences at MTs Laboratory of Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan functioned as a collaborative guidance and counseling strategy in addressing students' bullying

problems and learning difficulties. The case conference process was implemented through systematic stages planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-up, and reporting which enabled coordinated problem handling involving guidance and counseling teachers, school principals, subject and homeroom teachers, parents, and students. This collaborative mechanism supported a comprehensive understanding of students' problems by integrating individual, social, and environmental perspectives.

Within the school context, the findings indicate that the implementation of case conferences was associated with positive changes in students' learning-related behaviors and social interactions. These changes were identified through participants' narratives, behavioral observations, and guidance and counseling records, including increased learning motivation, improved classroom concentration, reduced recurrence of bullying behavior, and greater participation in learning activities. In addition, case conferences provided a safe and supportive forum for students to express their experiences, contributing to their emotional well-being and sense of security. However, as this study was conducted in a single school using a descriptive qualitative approach, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific and not generalized beyond similar educational settings.

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