

Exploring the Role of Elementary School Teachers as Counselors: Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges in Student Support

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to delve into the changing role of elementary school teachers as counselors, examining attitudes, practices, and barriers to providing emotional and mental health support. This study, conducted at Medalsari Elementary School in the Karawang Regency, West Java, also emphasizes the need for teachers' involvement in cultivating and sustaining students' social-emotional health, particularly in rural areas where mental health professionals are scarce. The qualitative methodology of the study employs surveys and open-ended questions, which enable the exploration of teachers' understanding of counselling, the practices they utilise, and the barriers they face. Teachers know they have two jobs and one is critical, being a counselor as well as an educator, but it's hard to do both because there isn't enough time, training, or resources. Despite these challenges, teachers implement techniques such as speaking directly to students, practicing mindfulness, and approaching parents. The study highlights the need for enhanced professional development and organisational support to adequately integrate counselling into teachers' roles.

Keywords: elementary school teachers, counseling, social-emotional support, rural education, teacher training

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary school teachers now have more than just traditional teaching duties (Mursita et al., 2025). They also have a growing number of responsibilities intended to help students grow in all areas of their lives (Elihami & Melbourne, 2023). Teachers are now expected to give emotional and mental support, acting as unofficial counselors for their students (Awawda & Bashir, 2025). It's a shift that suggests more people are coming to understand just how critical students' social and emotional well-being is for their academic success and overall development (Mursita et al., 2024). As the first point of contact for students with personal problems, behavioral issues, or emotional concerns, teachers are empowered to handle such issues, a fortiori in the presence of trained counselors (Chan et al., 2021; Tnay et al., 2020).

The need for teachers to fill that dual role has grown more apparent in a country such as Indonesia, where rural and suburban schools may not have had many school counselors and other support services. "Teachers are students' first responders to health and safety, so they must balance their teaching job with providing guidance and emotional support. Nevertheless, integrating a counseling role into their normal teaching practices can become challenging, particularly for teachers who may not have received formal training in counseling skills or are unprepared to address the psychological needs of their students (Maclean & Law, 2022; Rojas-Andrade et al., 2024).

The current research seeks to examine these shifts in the role of elementary school teachers as counselors, paying attention to the studied setting. The study is conducted at Medalsari Elementary School, an elementary school in Karawang Regency, West Java, which provides a particular setting for exploring how teachers working in rural areas handle simultaneous teaching and counselling roles. Medalsari Elementary School, similar to many schools in rural areas of Indonesia, is facing some socioeconomic issues, including limited access to mental health resources and a lack of specialized counselors, and nuances in cultural perceptions of teachers' roles (Hirata & Ozawa, 2023). This varied environment can provide a rich ecosystem for educators to utilise innovative, flexible means to meet students' affective and learning needs (Zhou et al., 2024).

At Medalsari Elementary School, teachers frequently serve as a bridge between the school and the community, engaging students coping with trauma, family challenges or socio-economic stress. A lot of teachers will say that they personally don't feel well-trained or supported in their counseling duties, even though this is an important aspect of the job. They also report they do not have the time, resources, and support from their schools (Phan et al., 2025; Raphaelli-Hirsch et al., 2025). The purpose of the research is to explore how teachers at Medalsari Elementary School perceive their counseling roles, the actual techniques they use to provide emotional support, and the obstacles they encounter when addressing different psychological problems among their students.

Earlier research has consistently demonstrated that students' academic engagement, mental health, and resilience are heavily influenced by teachers' support (Granziera et al., 2022; Hendrickx et al., 2022). Studies demonstrate that when teachers provide emotional and social support, students show greater engagement, academic and emotional resilience, and emotion regulation, all resulting in higher levels of academic achievement (Koslouski & Stark, 2021; Lilly et al., 2023). However, the integration of counseling principles in educators' day-to-day work, particularly in elementary schools, remains curiously understudied within educational research (Maulana et al., 2025). Answering these questions, this study is interested in the specific case of Medalsari



Elementary School and the practical challenges of 'delivering' counselling support in a classroom setting.

This study provided a collective insight into the problems and possibilities of teachers functioning in both roles as teachers and counselors. In addition, results could have implications for how teacher education and school supports could be enhanced to help teachers manage their expanded roles. Lastly, this research initiative seeks to enrich global debates on primary school teacher development and to strengthen support for students, particularly in rural and marginalized areas in Indonesia.

METHOD

As we seek to explore how teachers can act as counselors, the methodology can be categorized as a qualitative research design with components of a descriptive case study. Information from Medalsari Elementary School reveals how teachers perceive things, what their practice looks like, and the constraints they encounter.

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges in performing counseling roles. The qualitative approach provided an in-depth understanding of teachers' lived experiences and the contextual realities influencing their dual functions as educators and informal counselors at Medalsari Elementary School, Kabupaten Regency, West Java.

Medalsari Elementary School is located in a semi-rural community in Karawang Regency, where the majority of residents depend on agriculture and small-scale trading as their primary livelihoods. The socio-economic condition of the community can be classified as lower-middle income, with limited access to specialized mental health and educational counseling services. Most local community health centers (puskesmas) provide only basic physical healthcare, leaving schools as the primary institutions supporting children's social and emotional development.

Culturally, teachers are regarded as moral and emotional figures, expected to guide students beyond academic instruction. This cultural expectation shapes the teacher's role as a de facto counselor, particularly in cases involving economic stress, family breakdown, bullying, or emotional dysregulation among students.

A total of 20 elementary school teachers participated in this study. The composition included 12 female and 8 male teachers, teaching grades I–VI. Participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 20 years (mean = 10.5 years), representing diverse professional stages novice, mid-career, and senior teachers. All participants held bachelor's degrees in education, and none had formal training in counseling or psychology. Recruitment used a purposive sampling technique, focusing on teachers directly involved in classroom instruction and student support. Participation was voluntary, and each teacher provided written informed consent prior to involvement.

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire divided into two sections:

1. Section A: Closed-ended questions on demographic data and perceptions of counseling.
→ These data were analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentage.
2. Section B: Open-ended questions exploring teachers' experiences, counseling strategies, perceived obstacles, and support systems.
→ Responses were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis.



The instrument was adapted from prior research on teacher–counseling roles (Chan et al., 2021; Maclean & Law, 2022; Tnay et al., 2020). Adaptations involved cultural-linguistic adjustments to reflect the Indonesian educational setting.

To ensure content and construct validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three expert validators, two in educational psychology and one in guidance and counseling from the State University of Jakarta. Each provided written feedback on the clarity, representativeness, and appropriateness of items. Revisions were made based on consensus to improve relevance, readability, and contextual fit.

A pilot test involving five elementary teachers from a nearby school (Medalsari State Elementary School 3, Karawang Regency) confirmed that all items were clear and understandable. Minor wording revisions were made prior to distribution. Data collection took place over two months (March–April 2025). All participants completed the questionnaire in Bahasa Indonesia during scheduled sessions at Medalsari State Elementary School.

To enrich responses and clarify ambiguities, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with five purposively selected teachers (based on varied years of experience). Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. All collected data were transcribed verbatim, coded, and entered into the NVivo database for analysis.

Data analysis followed the six phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), using NVivo 14 software for coding and theme organization.

1. Familiarization – Reading and re-reading transcripts and responses to gain a holistic understanding.
2. Initial Coding – Generating open codes line-by-line to capture key meaning units related to perceptions, practices, and challenges.
3. Searching for Themes – Grouping similar codes into potential subthemes such as “Role Perception,” “Barriers,” and “Support Strategies.”
4. Reviewing Themes – Cross-comparing emerging patterns with raw data to ensure internal coherence and consistency.
5. Defining and Naming Themes – Refining and clearly labeling final themes to capture the essence of teachers' counseling experiences.
6. Producing the Report – Integrating final themes into the research findings and discussion.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were also used to summarize quantitative survey items, providing a numerical overview. To enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, method triangulation was applied by cross-verifying:

1. Questionnaire responses (written data)
2. Interview transcripts (oral data)
3. School documentation (teacher rosters, activity logs, and student support notes)

This triangulation process ensured that the emerging themes were consistent across multiple data sources, strengthening the trustworthiness of the interpretations.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Jakarta. All participants signed written informed consent after being briefed about the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality assurances. Data anonymity was maintained by assigning coded identifiers (T1–T20) to all responses. All digital files were securely stored on password-protected drives and will be deleted five years after publication.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The objects of this study are the elementary school teachers at Medalsari Elementary School, Karawang Regency, West Java, with the focus problem being teacher counselors at the school. Overall, the teachers who responded to the survey taught at a range of experience levels, from first- or second-year teaching to 10 years or more. One of the most important pieces of information is the grade levels these teachers are working with. The teachers included in the study are primary school classroom and PAI (Pendidikan Agama Islam/Religious Education) teachers, at all levels of elementary school (Classes I-VI).

Conversely, teachers in our sample varied in years of experience, suggesting a shared perspective. Some of the teachers were new to their careers, while others had been in the profession for over a decade. This broad array of experience lent itself to various perspectives on how teachers at various points in their careers view the expansion of what they need to be doing.

Additionally, the survey aimed to identify the specific constraints that teachers encounter in a mountainous community such as Medalsari Elementary School, particularly in their roles as counselors. The fact that a large group of teachers works in this rural context and may be exposed to socio-economic conditions different from those of their urban peers is an aspect to consider when interpreting responses.

The finding of this study is that most teachers at Medalsari Elementary School are aware that counseling differs from traditional academic teaching and that social-emotional factors are also important for children, alongside the cognitive aspect. Regarding whether they perceive a difference between counseling and regular tuition, most teachers (75%) agree that counseling is more than giving academic advice. This suggests that the majority of teachers at Medalsari Elementary School recognize the importance of caring for students' psychological well-being, which, in turn, affects their academic achievement.

In addition, teachers at the counterpart Medalsari Elementary School have good knowledge of the types of problems that can be solved through counseling. When respondents were asked to indicate which types of student issues counseling is effective in addressing, more than 80% indicated that counseling helps address emotional, behavioral, and family concerns experienced by students that can negatively impact their academic engagement and well-being. Teachers' concern for students as human beings beyond test scores is a good sign that they are invested in and care for their kids beyond the classroom, after all.

While the majority of the teachers appeared to possess a holistic understanding of counseling, it is equally important to note that a few teachers expressed hesitation in translating this knowledge into practical strategies in class. This distance or gap between theoretical comprehension and actual practice emphasizes the necessity of training teachers in both roles.

Most teachers at Medalsari Elementary School acknowledged that their roles went beyond academic instruction and extended to offering emotional and social support. Approximately 75% of teachers agreed that counseling is distinct from regular teaching, emphasizing its importance in supporting students' psychological well-being, which, in turn, affects their academic performance.



“I know that my role as a teacher goes beyond academics. I feel I must care for my students' emotional health because it directly impacts their learning.” (T5, Interview)

This perception reflects a growing understanding among educators that emotional and social support is integral to student success. However, the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application was noted, with some teachers struggling to translate their awareness of the counseling role into effective classroom strategies.

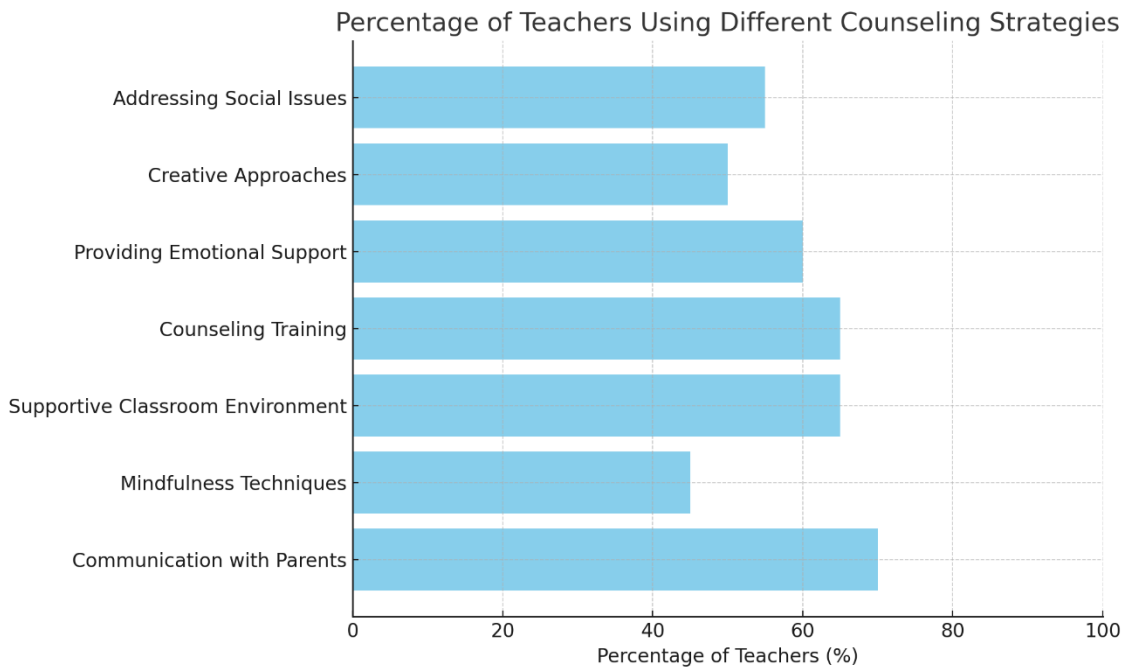
Teachers reported a range of strategies to provide emotional support, with the most commonly used strategies being communication with parents, mindfulness techniques, and creating a supportive classroom environment. The table below summarizes the percentage of teachers employing these strategies, along with the challenges they face.

Table 1.
 Analysis of Strategies, Challenges, and Practices Implemented by Teachers

Category	Strategies/Practices Implemented	Challenges Faced	Percentage of Users
Communication with Parents	Regular updates on students' emotional and academic development	Limited time to arrange meetings	70%
Mindfulness Techniques	Techniques like deep breathing and light meditation to reduce student anxiety	Not all teachers feel trained in mindfulness techniques	45%
Supportive Classroom Environment	Creating a safe space for students to share emotional concerns	Limited time for individual attention	65%
Counseling Training	Desire for further training in counseling skills	No formal counseling training provided by the school	65%
Providing Emotional Support	Offering emotional support during personal issues	Lack of resources to support counseling	60%
Creative Approaches	Using art, games, and group activities for emotional expression	Reluctance from some students to participate	50%
Addressing Social Issues	Direct conversations or group discussions about behavioral and social problems	Some students do not trust the teacher enough	55%



Chart 1.
Percentage of Teachers Using Different Counseling Strategies



The communication with parents was the most commonly used strategy, with 70% of teachers reporting its frequent use. This approach helps to bridge the gap between school and home life, providing a more holistic support system for students. However, time constraints often made it challenging for teachers to schedule and conduct these meetings.

“Talking to parents helps us understand the situation at home, but it’s hard to find time during school hours for these discussions. I wish we had more opportunities to meet with them.” (T8, Survey)

The use of mindfulness techniques by 45% of teachers shows promise in reducing student anxiety and improving focus. However, a lack of proper training hindered its widespread implementation. This highlights the need for professional development programs in mindfulness for teachers.

“I try to use deep breathing exercises with the students, but I am not confident in my skills. Some students respond well, but I feel I could do better with more training.” (T12, Interview)

The creation of a supportive classroom environment was another widely used strategy, with 65% of teachers prioritizing emotional safety. Teachers emphasized that a nurturing environment helps students feel more comfortable discussing their problems. However, limited time for individualized attention remains a significant barrier.

Teachers at Medalsari Elementary School consistently identified time constraints, a lack of counseling training, and resource scarcity as major barriers to fully integrating counseling into their roles. 60% of teachers reported they were not adequately trained to address students’ emotional needs, while 65% expressed a desire for more training in counseling skills.



“It’s difficult to provide emotional support with so little time. We’re expected to cover all the curriculum while also dealing with personal issues of the students.” (T3, Survey)

The lack of formal counseling training was another challenge, with many teachers relying on intuition rather than evidence-based counseling practices. As one teacher mentioned:

“I wish there were more opportunities for us to learn real counseling skills. Right now, we are just doing our best with what we know.” (T10, Interview)

In addition, the absence of dedicated mental health professionals (e.g., counselors, psychologists) at the school added pressure on teachers, as they were the first to notice signs of distress in students but lacked the tools and support to address these issues comprehensively.

The themes of role perception, strategies, and structural barriers are deeply interconnected. For example, their understanding of their role as counselors (a central theme) directly influenced how teachers implemented strategies such as mindfulness and parent communication. However, these strategies were often constrained by structural barriers, such as limited time and resources, which hindered their effectiveness.

“I want to help my students more emotionally, but when there’s no time left in the day, it’s hard to balance the teaching and counseling aspects.” (T6, Survey)

Moreover, the perception of their role as counselors was influenced by their professional development needs. Teachers who felt unprepared to handle students' emotional challenges were less likely to engage in deeper, more structured counseling activities. Therefore, addressing barriers to training and resources is critical to enhancing teachers' counseling roles.

Discussion

These findings underscore the importance of addressing the training gaps and resource deficiencies that rural schools face in integrating counseling into teachers' roles. To enhance the support teachers can provide to their students, it is recommended that:

1. Teacher training programs include formal counseling skills, such as active listening, mindfulness practices, and strategies for managing emotional distress.
2. Schools should allocate more time for counseling activities and reduce administrative burdens, allowing teachers to focus more on emotional support.
3. Community partnerships should be established to connect schools with external mental health professionals to provide additional support when needed.

Teachers at Medalsari Elementary School are fulfilling dual roles as educators and counselors despite significant challenges. The lack of formal training, time constraints, and limited resources hinder their ability to fully support students' emotional well-being. However, the strategies they employ, such as parent communication, mindfulness, and creating a supportive classroom environment, are valuable tools that need to be supported through targeted professional development and structural changes. Addressing these barriers is crucial for empowering teachers to effectively support their students' emotional and social development in rural educational settings.

Most teachers knew how important it was for them to be counselors. More than 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers are important in helping



students grow as people through counseling. This view aligns with a growing body of research showing the importance of teachers for both academic success and social-emotional growth in students (Chan et al., 2021; Granziera et al., 2022).

Teachers at Medalsari Elementary School play an important role as counselors, as many of their students face social and economic challenges. Because Medalsari Elementary School is in a rural area, many families may not be able to get mental health services, so teachers have to be the first line of defense against emotional and behavioral problems. Teachers are often the first to notice when a student is in trouble, like when they act differently, have emotional outbursts, or have trouble getting along with other students. So it's very important for teachers to see themselves as counselors so they can help students in the non-academic realm.

By taking on this responsibility, you recognize that students' social and emotional well-being has a direct impact on their capacity to learn and succeed in school. Teachers are increasingly considered crucial to a learner's all-around development (Hendrickx et al., 2022), and their support plays a pivotal role in influencing academic achievement, as well as in emotionally regulating and fostering resilience and psychological well-being.

In addition to how teaching and empathy may influence one another, were teachers' reports of various difficulties they had in counseling. The most frequent barriers were a lack of time, inadequate experience, and limited resources. For him, teaching was often a zero-sum game; the more time and energy it took to deliver lessons that sent his students' test scores above grade level, the less he had left over to attend to their emotional and psychological needs. A great many of the teachers described full days filled with academic instruction and little time to devote to counseling activities, without the sense that they should be devoting all their energy to helping students reach the goals established for each grade.

This is consistent with previously reported findings that limited time presents a barrier to quality counseling within schools. Participants at Medalsari Elementary School discussed that it can be tricky to do both at the same time; some of them often burned out and self-reported feeling too inadequate to meet the counselling part. Teachers also said they felt unprepared to tackle the emotional and psychological problems their students were encountering.

More than 60% of participants felt that counselling had not been given proper curricular space in teachers' education programme. It is particularly troubling because it also reveals a gap in teachers' preparation. Many teachers expressed an interest in being formally trained in counseling techniques, such as active listening, mind-body strategies and how to address typical behavior problems. Without such training, teachers utilize informal and intuition-based strategies that may or may not be efficient and effective at addressing students' demands.

Also, a lack of facilities was another barrier to proper counseling. The teachers at Medalsari Elementary School explained that special counsellors, psychiatrists and counselling tools are not available in the school. The absence of support only adds to the difficulty for teachers in supporting students who might require it.

In spite of these difficulties, the teachers at Medalsari Elementary School have responded to their students' emotional and social needs in resourceful ways. Regular reporting to parents was the most widely reported approach in the survey. Educators typically communicate with parents to update them on how their children are doing. This communication is important because it helps teachers understand students' home lives and address any issues that may adversely affect their well-being.



The teachers also use mindfulness techniques to teach students how to handle stress and control their emotions. Not all teachers knew how to use these techniques, but those who did reported that children who applied the strategies were more focused and less anxious. Mindfulness is garnering increasing recognition as a potentially useful tool in the promotion and protection of emotional well-being, particularly among children (Koslouski & Stark, 2021).

Many teachers have also made an effort to foster a caring classroom atmosphere, in which students can feel at ease expressing their fears (Hirata & Ozawa, 2023). The environment of trust and understanding that teachers can instill also makes it comfortable for young people to open up about emotional problems. In addition, this supportive climate empowers students to help when they seek it and to be vocal about their needs.

Findings from this study underscore the intricate support role that teachers play in young children's social and emotional lives. At Medalsari Elementary School, whilst teachers use a variety of methods to act as informal counselors, not all are successful in being informed counselors. This discussion goes to the very core of this issue as I have described in my research, poor preparedness, shortfall, and time deficit invested into the emotional situations of students. These are in line with other literature, which argues for teachers to have increased professional learning and systemic support.

The difference in maintaining frequent communication with parents, as shown by the 70% of teachers in Medalsari Elementary School, was consistent with other studies that highlighted how teachers enlist their parents' help from home to offer a complete support system for students (Granziera et al., 2022). And as the teachers of Medalsari Elementary School acknowledge, this is one challenge to implementing such an approach in most schools. This is evidenced by studies such as those of Reddy et al. (2021), which find that teachers in urban high-poverty schools face challenges in developing ties to parents due to time constraints. One solution for instruction could be the inclusion of effective communication tools to allow teachers to communicate with parents without it being a series of face-to-face encounters.

That 45% of teachers use mindfulness as a tool to teach students about controlling stress and emotions aligns with the growing body of research calling for such practices in education (Koslouski & Stark, 2021). But it is still a major obstacle that teachers are not trained in mindfulness approaches, as also identified in previous studies such as Maclean & Law (2022). The teacher may also not be confident on how to successfully integrate such approaches due to the lack of professional development (Perryman et al., 2025). An approach recommended in the literature is to provide educators with mindfulness-based training that targets these drivers to enhance the well-being of teachers and students (Patall et al., 2024). Additionally, the implementation of mindfulness might have been more refined and better integrated into everyday classroom activities had there been continuous practice and support.

The work of teachers who do try to foster safe and caring environments so that students can learn to articulate personal challenges clearly falls within a larger conversation about emotional safety and well-being at school. Research, including Chan et al. (2021) point out that students' feelings of regulation and social development rely on the encouragement of a positive climate. But the dilemma of managing logistics versus actually engaging 1:1 with a student isn't novel, especially in high-demand educational situations. According to the research, schools may identify ways to reduce teachers' administrative and other duties so they can better serve their students' emotional health (Tnay et al., 2020).



One of the major findings in this study is that teachers desire more training in counseling, with 65% admitting they are not equipped to deal with complex emotional or behavioral issues. This is in line with the assertion by Hirata & Ozawa (2023) that there is an increasing demand for the care of students with special needs, including those with developmental disorders. Nonetheless, teachers' emotional support remains crucial to students, particularly when formal counseling services are unavailable in certain settings. Expanding professional development opportunities, especially in counseling and mental health first aid, is one way to fill this gap in teacher preparation.

Offering personal support to individual students, as 60 per cent of the teachers in this study did, underscores the importance of teachers as amateur counselors. But the lack of sufficient resources and counselling training is an obstacle for teachers, as it makes it difficult for them to offer long-term emotional support. As indicated by the investigation of Nalipay et al. (2025), educators who are appropriately trained in mental health care are better able to meet students' emotional needs. Hence, equipping educators with a way to deal with this kind of experience may benefit students drastically.

The little greys' teacher, who creatively integrates other disciplines such as the arts and games into their lessons, is known to be one step ahead of the curve; 50% falling short. Evidence suggests that creative work encourages self-expression and serves as a way for students to cope with emotional difficulties (Koslouski & Stark, 2021). But not all group activities are equally effective, and some students refuse to even participate. As recommended by Salo et al. (2022), such creative problem-solving exercises need to be adapted to meet students' preferences and comfort levels. Teachers should be equipped with skill development sessions to create a broader, more engaging learning environment for all students through creative activities.

Lastly, sustained conversation or group discussion among teachers to address social and behavioral problems in the classroom is also consistent with earlier research by Hendrickx et al. (2022), who stress the significance of the quality of teacher-student relationships in dealing with behavior problems. This is especially powerful with regard to students' social-emotional growth. Nevertheless, some students express such reluctance to participate in discussions, which reduces the efficiency of this method. Teacher education should be extended to include how teachers can establish trust and rapport with their students, towards increased student involvement and free speech (Solberg et al., 2022).

The results of this study expand the body of knowledge that acknowledges the importance of teachers in providing students' social and emotional support. There are however, major obstacles: Lack of time, education and materials. Such struggles can be addressed through structural change, greater professional development for teachers, reduced administrative duties, and access to mental health resources. According to the literature, establishing an encouraging and well-trained teaching environment is also necessary for enhancing the well-being of students and teachers.



Table 2.
 Student Issues Addressed by Teachers and Counseling Strategies Used

Student Issues	Problem Description	Strategies Used by Teachers
Behavioral Problems (e.g., aggression, disruptive behavior)	Students display aggressive behavior, both physical and verbal, such as fighting, shouting, or disturbing classmates.	a. Teachers engage in direct conversations to identify the causes of the behavior and provide constructive feedback. b. Enforce stricter classroom rules to address the behavior. c. Teach positive ways to manage emotions.
Social Difficulties (e.g., difficulty interacting with peers)	Students struggle to interact with peers, leading to feelings of isolation or rejection within the group.	a. Teachers organize group discussions or social activities such as team games that teach cooperation and communication skills. b. Provide space for students to share experiences and listen to their peers.
Family Issues (e.g., divorce, family problems)	Students experiencing family issues, such as parental divorce or problems at home, which affect their emotional well-being.	a. Teachers have private conversations to listen to the student's feelings and provide emotional support. b. Teachers communicate with parents to better understand the situation and plan necessary support. c. Help students create plans to cope with the stress from family issues.
Stress and Anxiety (e.g., exams, life changes)	Students feel anxious before exams or experience major life changes, such as moving or family separation.	a. Teachers teach mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing and meditation to calm students' minds. b. Hold private conversations to reduce anxiety and provide emotional support. c. Offer support to build students' confidence before exams or life changes.
Academic Issues (e.g., learning difficulties, declining grades)	Students have difficulty understanding lessons or experience a decline in their academic performance, leading to frustration or stress.	a. Teachers provide emotional support and motivation to help students feel supported in their learning process.



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Offer additional time outside of class hours for individual or group tutoring. c. Adapt teaching methods to fit the learning styles of struggling students.
Mental Health Issues (e.g., depression, feelings of insecurity)	Students show signs of depression, anxiety, or feelings of insecurity, affecting their psychological well-being.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers have private conversations with students to provide emotional support and encourage them to talk about their feelings. b. If necessary, teachers refer students to school counselors or psychologists for further assistance. c. Create a safe classroom environment so students feel supported and accepted.
Physical Issues (e.g., accidents or illness)	Students experience accidents or illnesses that prevent them from participating in class activities normally.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers provide extra attention and ensure that students feel comfortable returning to class after recovery. b. Regular communication with parents to monitor the student's recovery progress. c. Help students readjust to the classroom environment, ensuring they do not feel isolated.

Behavioral problems often arise in the classroom, where students exhibit physical or verbal aggression, such as fighting or shouting at their peers. In response to this, the teachers at Medalsari Elementary School talk directly with students to find out why they act differently. These are meant to assist students in understanding why they're feeling what they're feeling and to recommend alternatives for expressing the emotions that led them into trouble. This method tends to take the form of harsher classroom rules as a means to manage behavior and promote good behavior. Research has also underpinned similar approaches, such as those presented by Hendrickx et al. (2022), which show that positive teacher-student relationships can predict lower rates of students' externalizing behaviors and better academic performance.

Some learners find it hard to communicate with other students so as not to be excluded from a group of friends. In Medalsari Elementary School, the teachers are dealing with this problem by having group discussions and social activities that can enhance student's communication & teamwork. Some teachers even enjoy playing group games that help students connect in an informal, fun way. This kind of tactic is similar to findings in Granziera et al. (2022), who show that students' engagement can be



enhanced and better social relationships fostered with teachers providing emotional and instructional support.

Students who labor under family-related problems, such as parental divorce or other domestic conflicts usually suffer from heavy emotional strains. Educators at Medalsari Elementary School do this by having private conversations with students to hear what they are feeling and offer emotional support. Teachers also often contact parents to find out more about the student's home life and try to provide a support based on this information. In other cases, teachers help their students develop plans to cope with the stress resulting from familial difficulties. Maclean & Law (2022) stress the significance of teachers in influencing students' mental health wellbeing, especially when these students confront personal adversities outside school.

It's common for students to face stress and anxiety, particularly during the lead up to exams as well as times of transition such as moving house or separation from family members. To calm those fears, teachers at Medalsari Elementary School employ mindfulness techniques-deep breathing and a little bit of meditation to ease the minds of nervous students. Also private conversations are held to provide emotional support, help them calm down and regain self-confidence. Research by Tnay et al. (2020) also demonstrates that teachers' emotional support is important in terms of assisting students to better regulate stress and boost student engagement with learning.

Problems with learning, such as difficulty following the lesson or failing to maintain good academic performance is another potential issue that may be encountered by some students. Medalsari Elementary School teachers offer counseling by talking to students face-to-face, since they know what academic issues students are facing and give them spirit for not giving up. Furthermore, teachers have special supplementary classes and tutoring hours outside normal class times. Methods from teaching are also repurposed to accommodate this aspect. Chan et al. (2021) observed that teacher emotional support enhances student engagement, which may help them to overcome academic challenges.

Factors such as low self-esteem and depression have led to a poor state of mind among students. As soon as symptoms of mental health problems appeared, the teachers at Medalsari Elementary School had private talks with students to hear their feelings and give emotional support. If needed, teachers refer students to in-school psychologists or counselors for additional assistance. Research by Rojas-Andrade et al. (2024) demonstrates the potential of teachers to identify symptoms of mental health disorders in their students, and to facilitate referrals for further treatment.

Children who are prone to accidents or illness need special focus from the teachers. The teachers of Medalsari Elementary School, make sure students with physical issues are not ashamed to come back to school after their recovery. Teachers are in constant contact with parents, to make certain that students get the followup care they need and a complete recovery (Rahim & Hulukati, 2021). Once students recover, teachers guide them back into classroom activities and making sure they don't feel isolated. Research by Salo et al. (2022) suggests that to emotional support from teachers at these times is key in helping students reintegrate into the classroom and reduce feelings of isolation.

Medalsari Elementary School teachers experience varied social and emotional problems of the students and have a number of counseling techniques to help students deal with these issues. In private conversations, meditative practices and social interactions-educators are doing what is needed to assist students in coping with their individual struggles. Teachers are not without time and training constraints, as well as a



scarcity of resources, but their intent to support students' emotional well-being is evident (Su et al., 2024). Hendrickx et al. (2022) and Granziera et al. (2022) who also find that teacher support can increase student engagement, reduce concern behavior, and foster students' social-emotional development. But in training teachers on counseling techniques, we need to shore up this area and provide more resources, as well as support teachers in doing a better job of attending to our students' social and emotional development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, elementary school teachers at Medalsari Elementary School in Karawang Regency recognize the importance of their dual role as informal educators and counselors in supporting students' social-emotional well-being. However, they face significant obstacles such as time constraints, lack of formal counseling training, and limited resources. Nonetheless, teachers implement a variety of strategies, including communicating with parents, using mindfulness techniques, and fostering a supportive classroom environment. The study emphasizes the need for better professional development and systemic support to strengthen teacher counseling competence. Implicitly, structural interventions and collaboration with external mental health workers are essential, particularly in rural schools with limited access to services. Thus, empowering teachers in counseling roles can significantly improve students' academic and psychosocial development.

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