EDUMASPUL:
Jurnal Pendidikan
P-ISSN 2548-8201 | E-ISSN 2580-0469

Vol. [10] No. [2] ([2026])Page 1639-1645
DOI: 10.33487/ edumaspul.v10i2.626.

The Role of School Counselors in Enhancing the Emotional Intelligence of Eighth-Grade Students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang

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Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
[10-08-2026]	[12-09-2026]	[16-09-2026]	[01-10-2026]

Abstract: *This study aims to describe the role of school counselors in enhancing the emotional intelligence of eighth-grade students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The participants consisted of one school counselor and five eighth-grade students. Data were collected through observation and interviews conducted in October and November 2026. The findings indicate that some students still experience difficulties in managing their emotions, particularly when interacting with peers. Excessive joking, teasing, and insensitive remarks often lead to misunderstandings, anger, and conflicts among students. To address these issues, the school counselor provides classroom guidance, individual counseling, and group counseling, as well as involves parents when further assistance is needed. These services help students recognize their emotions, control their reactions, understand others' feelings, and develop more positive social behaviors. Some students have begun to demonstrate changes, such as being more careful with their words, reducing teasing, and respecting their peers' feelings. However, consistent behavioral changes require ongoing guidance and support. This study highlights the important role of school counselors in supporting students' emotional development through continuous counseling services.*

Keywords: *school counselor, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, junior high school students, counseling services*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran guru bimbingan dan konseling (BK) dalam meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional siswa kelas VIII SMP Katolik St. Theresia Kupang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Informan penelitian terdiri atas satu guru BK dan lima siswa kelas VIII. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi dan wawancara pada Oktober hingga November 2026. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam mengelola emosi, terutama ketika berinteraksi dengan teman sebaya. Kebiasaan bercanda secara berlebihan, mengejek, dan mengucapkan perkataan yang kurang mempertimbangkan perasaan orang lain sering menimbulkan kesalahpahaman, kemarahan, dan konflik antarsiswa. Untuk menangani permasalahan tersebut, guru BK memberikan layanan bimbingan klasikal, konseling individual, dan konseling kelompok, serta melibatkan orang tua apabila diperlukan pendampingan lebih lanjut. Berbagai layanan tersebut membantu siswa mengenali emosi, mengendalikan respons, memahami perasaan orang lain, dan mengembangkan perilaku sosial yang lebih positif. Beberapa siswa mulai menunjukkan perubahan, seperti lebih berhati-hati dalam berbicara, mengurangi kebiasaan mengejek, dan menghargai perasaan teman. Meskipun demikian, perubahan perilaku secara konsisten masih membutuhkan bimbingan dan pendampingan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa guru BK memiliki peran penting dalam mendukung perkembangan kecerdasan emosional siswa melalui pelaksanaan layanan bimbingan dan konseling secara berkesinambungan.*

Kata kunci: *guru BK, kecerdasan emosional, pengelolaan emosi, siswa SMP, layanan bimbingan dan konseling*

CITATION:	First Author, A. A., Second Author, B. B., & Third Author, C. C. ([Year]). [Article title]. *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, [X]([X]), [xx–xx]. https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.vXiX.XXXX
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Introduction

Emotional intelligence is an important ability that needs to be developed during adolescence, particularly when individuals begin to experience changes in their personal and social lives. At this developmental stage, junior high school students begin to expand their relationships with peers, adapt to their social environment, and encounter various situations that require self-control. The inability to understand and manage emotions may affect how students respond to problems, communicate, and establish relationships with others. This condition makes emotional intelligence an important aspect of development that deserves attention within the educational environment.

Emotional intelligence is associated with an individual's ability to recognize their own emotions, regulate emotional reactions, understand other people's feelings, and establish positive interpersonal relationships. This ability not only helps individuals cope with stressful situations but also supports the development of social behaviors that are appropriate to their environment. Students who are able to understand their emotional states are expected to consider their actions before responding, avoid behaviors that may hurt others, and resolve disagreements more effectively. Conversely, limited emotional regulation skills may lead to misunderstandings, arguments, and difficulties in maintaining friendships.

The development of emotional intelligence among adolescents has become an important concern in educational and psychological research. Pedrini et al. (2022) examined school-based interventions aimed at developing emotional regulation skills among adolescent students. Their review demonstrated that educational environments have opportunities to support the development of emotional abilities through structured programs. Within the context of guidance and counseling, students' emotional development is also an important concern in the services provided by school counselors, particularly in helping students understand their behavior and establish healthy social relationships.

School counselors play an important role in assisting students in dealing with personal and social problems related to emotional development. This role can be carried out through classroom guidance, individual counseling, and group counseling services. Classroom guidance can be used to provide all students with an understanding of emotional regulation and respect for others. Individual counseling provides students with opportunities to discuss their personal problems, while group counseling allows students to receive assistance in addressing problems involving several individuals. The implementation of these services can be adjusted to students' characteristics and needs.

Research by Putri et al. (2022) on the efforts of school counselors to develop adolescents' emotions also highlights the importance of school counselor support in addressing students' emotional development. Nevertheless, discussions concerning the role of school counselors need to be continuously developed by considering the types of problems that actually arise in students' daily lives at school. One issue that deserves attention is the habit of teasing classmates under the assumption that it is merely a joke, even though such behavior may cause hurt feelings, sadness, and conflicts among students.

Based on observations conducted in October 2026 at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang, it was found that many eighth-grade students were still unable to understand and manage their emotions appropriately. This condition was evident in interactions among students, particularly when joking with their peers. A joke considered ordinary by one student sometimes caused another student to feel offended. When facing such situations, some students were unable to control their emotional reactions, which could lead to disagreements and arguments. In addition, students still demonstrated limited awareness of other people's feelings and insufficient consideration of how their words and actions affected their friendships.

To address these problems, the school counselor has provided classroom guidance on emotional regulation and appropriate boundaries when joking. Furthermore, individual and group counseling services have been provided to students directly experiencing these difficulties. The school counselor also involves parents when students require further assistance. Although some students have begun to demonstrate an awareness of the need to improve their behavior, others still require repeated guidance because their teasing habits have not been completely eliminated.

Based on these conditions, this study focuses specifically on the role of school counselors in helping students develop emotional intelligence by addressing problems arising from peer interactions. The research focuses not only on the types of counseling services provided but also on how school counselors help students recognize their mistakes, regulate their behavior, respect other people's feelings, and improve their social relationships. Accordingly, this study aims to describe the role of school counselors in enhancing the emotional intelligence of eighth-grade students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang. The findings are expected to provide an overview of how guidance and counseling services support students' emotional development and serve as a consideration for school

counselors in designing support programs that address students' needs.

Method

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was used to obtain an overview of the role of school counselors in enhancing students' emotional intelligence based on the conditions and experiences identified within the school environment. The study was conducted at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang from October to November 2026. Observations were carried out in October 2026, while interviews were conducted in November 2026.

Participants, Sample, or Data Sources

The participants in this study consisted of six individuals, namely one school counselor and five eighth-grade students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang. Participants were selected through purposive sampling by considering the relevance of their experiences and involvement in issues related to emotional regulation and the implementation of guidance and counseling services at school. The school counselor was selected as the primary participant because of their experience in providing assistance to students, while the five students were selected to obtain information about their experiences interacting with peers and participating in guidance and counseling services.

To maintain confidentiality, the school counselor was assigned the code GBK, while the five students were identified using the codes S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5. The research data were obtained from observations of students' emotional regulation and interviews with all participants.

Instruments and Measures

The data collection instruments used in this study consisted of observation and interview guidelines. Observations were conducted to examine students' emotional regulation in their daily activities within the school environment, particularly during interactions with peers. The aspects observed included the ability to control emotions, responses to jokes that hurt others' feelings, and students' behavior when dealing with misunderstandings.

Interviews were conducted systematically using questions tailored to the roles of each participant. The interview with the school counselor covered students' emotional abilities, commonly occurring problems, intervention efforts, types of counseling services provided, parental involvement, and behavioral changes following the services. Meanwhile, interviews with the five students focused on their experiences of teasing peers, their understanding of other people's feelings, their experiences participating in guidance and counseling services, and their efforts to improve their behavior.

Procedure and Research Ethics

The study was conducted through two stages of data collection. The first stage involved observations carried out in October 2026 to obtain an overview of the emotional intelligence of eighth-grade students within the school environment. The observations focused on students' behavior during interactions with peers, particularly when responding to jokes and misunderstandings. The second stage involved interviews conducted in November 2026 with one school counselor and five students. These interviews aimed to obtain more in-depth information about students' emotional difficulties and the assistance provided by the school counselor.

In presenting the research findings, students' identities were concealed by using participant codes. The information obtained was used for the preparation of this scientific article while preserving the original meaning of the participants' statements.

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed descriptively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, information obtained from observations and interviews was selected based on its relevance to the research objectives. The selected data were then grouped into several themes, namely students' emotional intelligence, the types of services provided by the school counselor, parental involvement, and students' behavioral changes following the services. Subsequently, the data were presented in narrative form to illustrate the connections between observational findings and interview results. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting all the categorized information to obtain an overview of the role of school counselors in helping students develop their emotional intelligence.

Results and Discussion

Results

The research findings were obtained through observations of eighth-grade students in October 2026 and interviews with one school counselor and five students in November 2026. Based on the categorization of information collected through these two data collection techniques, several main themes were identified, describing students' emotional intelligence and the role of the school counselor in providing guidance and support.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

No.	Research Aspect	Research Findings
1	Emotional intelligence	Students still experience difficulties in understanding and regulating their emotions when interacting with peers.

2	Emotional awareness and empathy	Students do not yet fully understand the effects of their actions on other people's feelings.
3	Classroom guidance	The school counselor provides materials on emotional regulation and appropriate boundaries when joking.
4	Individual and group counseling	The school counselor provides assistance according to the problems experienced by students.
5	Parental involvement	Parents are called to school when students require further intervention.
6	Behavioral changes	Students are beginning to recognize their mistakes and make efforts to improve their behavior, although continued guidance is still needed.

Students' Emotional Intelligence

Based on the observations and interviews, it was found that some eighth-grade students were still unable to understand and regulate their emotions appropriately. These problems were particularly evident in peer relationships, where students sometimes made jokes that hurt other people's feelings. Some students were unable to consider the impact of their words before expressing them, resulting in misunderstandings and disagreements.

The school counselor explained that emotional regulation problems frequently occurred when students interacted with their peers. Students sometimes considered teasing to be ordinary joking, whereas those who were targeted felt offended and angry. If not addressed promptly, these problems could escalate into arguments or physical fights.

These findings were further supported by interviews with the five students. S1 admitted to having teased a friend because they considered it a joke. S2 explained that they often followed the behavior of other students when their group started making fun of someone. S3 acknowledged having repeatedly teased a friend even though the targeted student had already expressed discomfort. Meanwhile, S4 and S5 also revealed that teasing had become a habitual part of their everyday social interactions.

Based on this information, the main problem identified was students' limited ability to recognize the effects of their behavior on other people's feelings. Students had not yet fully developed the ability to distinguish between acceptable jokes and remarks that could hurt their peers.

The Role of the School Counselor through Classroom Guidance Services

The school counselor provided classroom guidance services as an effort to help students understand the importance of emotional regulation and maintaining positive social relationships. The materials covered self-control when experiencing anger, respect for other people's feelings, and understanding appropriate boundaries when joking.

Based on the interview, the school counselor explained that classroom guidance was provided by visiting eighth-grade classes to deliver materials on emotional regulation. Students were encouraged not to react impulsively when confronted with remarks from peers that hurt their feelings.

The school counselor stated:

"I frequently visit each eighth-grade class to provide materials related to how to manage emotions appropriately."

All five students also acknowledged that they had received classroom guidance addressing the importance of respecting peers and maintaining appropriate behavior in social interactions. After receiving this guidance, they began to understand that jokes considered entertaining by one person might not create the same feelings for others.

Thus, classroom guidance services were used by the school counselor to provide students with an initial understanding of emotional regulation, awareness of other people's feelings, and appropriate behavior in peer relationships.

The Role of the School Counselor through Individual and Group Counseling

In addition to providing classroom guidance, the school counselor offered individual and group counseling to students experiencing difficulties with emotional regulation. Group counseling was provided when problems involved several students, whereas individual counseling was used to address issues requiring more personal discussion.

The school counselor explained that students experiencing problems were called in to receive guidance according to their individual circumstances. During this process, students were given opportunities to describe the problems they had experienced and reflect on their behavior.

The interview findings indicated that all five students had received assistance through counseling services. S1 and S2 reported having participated in both group and individual counseling because their teasing behavior continued to recur. S3 also received both types of counseling and had experienced parental involvement. Meanwhile, S4 and S5 explained that the school counselor provided counseling when teasing continued despite previous advice.

Initially, some students felt embarrassed and afraid when called to the counseling room. However, after participating in several counseling sessions, they gradually understood that the school

counselor provided guidance to help them improve their behavior rather than simply reprimand them.

These findings indicate that the school counselor addressed students' problems through counseling services tailored to the characteristics of each situation. Such assistance provided students with opportunities to recognize their mistakes and develop better ways of interacting with their peers.

Parental Involvement in Addressing Student Problems

The school counselor also involved parents when students' problems required further intervention. Parents were called to school when counseling services had not yet resulted in the expected behavioral changes or when students continued to require repeated guidance.

The school counselor explained that parental involvement aimed to ensure that families were aware of the problems their children experienced at school and could provide attention and guidance at home.

The interview findings revealed that S3 and S5 had experienced parental meetings related to their teasing behavior toward classmates. Both students explained that parental involvement helped them better understand the need to improve their behavior.

Thus, cooperation between the school counselor and parents became part of the student support process, particularly when the problems required continued attention and guidance.

Students' Behavioral Changes after Receiving Guidance and Counseling Services

Based on the interview with the school counselor, students who had received counseling services began to demonstrate changes in their understanding of their behavior and their ability to regulate emotions. Some students started recognizing their mistakes after receiving one or two counseling sessions, while others required repeated guidance.

The school counselor explained:

"Thus far, quite a number of the students I have assisted have begun to demonstrate positive changes."

These changes were also reflected in the statements made by the five students. S1 began making efforts to be more careful with their words and avoid making jokes about their friends' shortcomings. S2 tried to avoid following peers who were teasing others. S3 began attempting to control their behavior and became more cautious when speaking. S4 made efforts to reduce the habit of making fun of classmates, while S5 tried to respect other people's feelings and avoid joining peers who engaged in teasing.

Nevertheless, all five students acknowledged that breaking the habit of teasing was not easy. Such behavior sometimes still occurred spontaneously when they gathered with their peers. This condition indicates that awareness of inappropriate behavior has begun to develop, but applying self-control in everyday situations still requires practice and continued guidance.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the emotional intelligence of eighth-grade students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang still needs to be developed, particularly in terms of emotional regulation during interactions with peers. Based on the observations and interviews, it was found that some students were unable to distinguish between appropriate jokes and remarks that could hurt other people's feelings. The habit of teasing, giving nicknames, and making fun of classmates' shortcomings often resulted in misunderstandings, hurt feelings, anger, and even arguments. This condition indicates that students have not yet fully developed emotional awareness and the ability to regulate their responses when facing social situations. Furthermore, some students do not understand the impact of their behavior on other people's feelings and therefore continue to regard teasing as a form of entertainment in their social interactions.

Students' difficulties in regulating their emotions are also related to their ability to establish positive social relationships. When students are unable to consider other people's feelings before speaking or acting, their interactions with peers may potentially lead to conflict. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by De Neve et al. (2023), which examined the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation, learning engagement, and students' relationships with peers and teachers. These findings reinforce the results of the present study, indicating that emotional regulation is not only associated with managing personal feelings but also plays a role in establishing healthy social relationships within the school environment. The ability to understand one's own emotions and those of others is necessary for students to regulate their words, respect their peers' feelings, and avoid actions that may lead to disagreements.

The school counselor's efforts to address these problems were carried out through classroom guidance services for eighth-grade students. The materials focused on emotional regulation, understanding other people's feelings, and establishing appropriate boundaries when joking. These services served as a preventive measure to help students understand the importance of

regulating their behavior when interacting with peers. Through classroom guidance activities, students were encouraged to be more careful with their words and avoid making jokes about other people's shortcomings. These efforts are consistent with the research conducted by Pedrini et al. (2022), which demonstrated that school-based interventions can support the development of emotional regulation skills and adolescent mental health. Therefore, classroom guidance services can serve as a form of support that helps students understand the importance of emotional regulation in their daily lives.

In addition to classroom guidance, the school counselor also provided individual and group counseling services according to the problems experienced by students. Group counseling was provided when problems involved several students, while individual counseling was used to assist students who required more personalized support. Through these services, students were given opportunities to share their problems, reflect on their behavior, and recognize the consequences of their actions for others. This finding is related to the research conducted by Putri et al. (2022) on the efforts of school counselors to develop adolescents' emotional abilities. Their study highlights the role of school counselors in supporting students' emotional development through the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools.

The implementation of group counseling also provided students with opportunities to understand their peers' experiences and recognize that remarks considered jokes could cause sadness, embarrassment, or hurt feelings. This is consistent with the research conducted by Mariyani et al. (2024), which examined group counseling interventions to develop emotional regulation among junior high school students. The study illustrates that group counseling can be used as an intervention to help students develop their ability to recognize and regulate emotions. This connection indicates that the group counseling services provided by the school counselor at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang are relevant to efforts to develop students' emotional intelligence, particularly by increasing their awareness of their own behavior and other people's feelings.

Parental involvement was also part of the school counselor's efforts to address students who required further assistance. Based on the interview findings, parents were called to school when students' problems required additional attention or when counseling services needed to be provided repeatedly. Parental involvement was necessary to ensure that the guidance process did not take place solely within the school environment but was also supported through supervision and assistance at home. Cooperation between the school counselor and parents was expected to help students develop more positive habits in regulating their emotions and interacting with others. Thus, the development of emotional intelligence requires support from both the school and family environments.

Students' behavioral changes after receiving guidance and counseling services varied. Some students began making efforts to be more careful with their words, reduce teasing, avoid following their peers' negative behavior, and consider other people's feelings before speaking. Nevertheless, these changes were not yet fully consistent because some students still experienced difficulties in controlling habits that had become part of their everyday social interactions. The school counselor also explained that some students began to demonstrate changes after receiving one or two counseling sessions, while others continued to require repeated assistance. This condition indicates that the development of emotional intelligence is a process that requires time, habituation, and the involvement of various parties.

Overall, the research findings demonstrate that school counselors play a role in helping enhance students' emotional intelligence through classroom guidance, individual counseling, group counseling, and parental involvement. These services are intended to help students recognize their feelings, regulate their emotional responses, understand other people's feelings, and establish better social relationships.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that school counselors play a role in helping develop the emotional intelligence of eighth-grade students at St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang by providing services tailored to students' needs and problems. The findings indicate that some students still experience difficulties in understanding and regulating their emotions, particularly when interacting with peers. These problems are reflected in the habit of teasing, excessive joking, misunderstandings, and limited awareness of other people's feelings. The school counselor's efforts are carried out through classroom guidance, individual counseling, group counseling, and parental involvement for students who require further assistance.

After receiving guidance and counseling services, students began to demonstrate greater awareness of their mistakes and a willingness to improve their behavior, such as being more careful with their words, reducing teasing, and respecting their peers' feelings. Nevertheless, some students still require repeated guidance because their previous habits have not been completely eliminated. These findings indicate that the development of

emotional intelligence requires continuous guidance and counseling services, along with support from both the family and school environments.

Acknowledgment (Optional)

The authors would like to express their gratitude to St. Theresia Catholic Junior High School in Kupang, particularly the school counselor and eighth-grade students, who were willing to participate as informants and provide information throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to all parties who provided support during the implementation of the research and the preparation of this article.

Funding (Optional)

This research received no external funding from government institutions, private entities, or other organizations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest in the conduct of this research or the preparation of this article.

Author Contributions (Optional)

The author was responsible for the conceptualization of the research, development of the methodology, data collection, data management, analysis and interpretation of the research findings, preparation of the initial draft, and review and editing of the final manuscript.

Generative AI Disclosure

The author used generative artificial intelligence tools to assist with the preparation, translation, and language editing of the manuscript. The author remains fully responsible for the accuracy of the data, originality, integrity, interpretation of the research findings, and final content of the article.

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