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Humanistic leadership in the transformation of elementary school guidance and counseling service management

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Abstract
Educational transformation in the Education 5.0 era requires guidance and counseling service management that is adaptive, empathetic, and student-centered, especially in elementary schools where specialized counseling teachers are not structurally available. This study aims to describe the role of humanistic leadership in transforming the management of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach at SDN 18 Deteng-Deteng by collecting data through interviews, observation, and documentation involving the principal and classroom teachers. Data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that the principal's humanistic leadership creates a school climate characterized by empathy, open communication, respect for individual dignity, participatory decision making, and emotional support for teachers and students. Classroom teachers felt more valued and were encouraged to respond to students' individual needs through reflective dialogue, collaboration, and the use of simple digital tools such as WhatsApp, Google Forms, and student progress sheets. The study concludes that humanistic leadership is an important relational foundation for transforming elementary school guidance and counseling services into a more responsive, collaborative, and civilized management practice.

Abstrak
Transformasi pendidikan pada era Education 5.0 menuntut pengelolaan layanan bimbingan dan konseling yang adaptif, empatik, dan berpusat pada peserta didik, terutama di sekolah dasar yang belum memiliki guru bimbingan dan konseling secara struktural. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan peran kepemimpinan humanistik dalam transformasi manajemen layanan bimbingan dan konseling di sekolah dasar. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif di SDN 18 Deteng-Deteng dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap kepala sekolah dan guru kelas. Data dianalisis secara tematik melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan simpulan, sedangkan kredibilitas data diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan humanistik kepala sekolah membentuk iklim sekolah yang empatik, komunikatif, menghargai martabat individu, partisipatif, dan memberi dukungan emosional bagi guru serta peserta didik. Guru kelas merasa lebih dihargai dan terdorong merespons kebutuhan individual peserta didik melalui dialog reflektif, kolaborasi, serta pemanfaatan teknologi sederhana seperti WhatsApp, Google Forms, dan lembar perkembangan siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan humanistik menjadi fondasi relasional penting dalam mentransformasikan layanan bimbingan dan konseling sekolah dasar menjadi praktik manajemen yang responsif, kolaboratif, dan berkeadaban.

Keywords: humanistic leadership; management transformation; guidance and counseling; classroom teachers; elementary schools

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1. Introduction

The transformation of twenty-first-century education places elementary schools in a strategic position to prepare students who are not only academically competent but also socially, emotionally, and morally mature. In this context, guidance and counseling services should be understood as an integral part of school management because they help students recognize their potential, adapt to the learning environment, build healthy social relationships, and overcome learning as well as personal development difficulties. At the elementary school level, the need for guidance and counseling services becomes increasingly urgent because students are in a foundational stage of character formation and socio-emotional development. However, many elementary schools in Indonesia do not yet have specialized guidance and counseling teachers, so classroom teachers often carry out counseling functions under the coordination and leadership of the principal.

Previous studies indicate that the implementation of guidance and counseling in elementary schools is generally conducted through classroom learning, habituation activities, student development records, and teacher assistance when students face academic, behavioral, or social problems. Amala and Kaltsum (2021) found that classroom teachers play an important role in implementing guidance and counseling functions, particularly in building student discipline. Mulyati and Kamaruddin (2020) also emphasized that teachers serve as the closest educational actors to students and are therefore able to identify student problems earlier. Prawita et al. (2023) further showed that guidance and counseling in elementary schools supports students' developmental tasks when it is integrated into learning and school activities. These findings are strengthened by Tumanggor (2020), who explained that principal leadership influences the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services through policy direction, supervision, and support for teachers.

Nevertheless, the transformation of guidance and counseling services cannot be understood merely as the addition of programs or the use of technology. Education 5.0 emphasizes the integration of technology and human values in order to create a learning ecosystem that is adaptive, inclusive, and centered on human dignity (Ahmad et al., 2023). Therefore, the principal's leadership becomes a crucial factor in ensuring that guidance and counseling services remain oriented toward empathy, care, participation, and student well-being. Humanistic leadership is relevant to this need because it views teachers and students as whole persons with emotional, social, intellectual, and moral dimensions. Noddings (2013) stressed that caring relationships are central to education, while Maslow (1970) explained that individual growth requires the fulfillment of basic psychological and social needs. In school management, leadership that emphasizes care, collaboration, and shared values can strengthen teacher motivation and student development (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2001).

The research gap found in previous studies is the limited discussion that specifically positions the principal's humanistic leadership as the basis for transforming the management of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools, especially in schools that do not have structural guidance and counseling teachers. Most prior studies have discussed the role of classroom teachers, the importance of counseling services, or principal leadership in general. This study offers novelty by highlighting how humanistic leadership values, such as empathy, open communication, respect for individual dignity, participation, collaboration, and the humane use of simple digital technology, become the managerial foundation for strengthening guidance and counseling services in elementary schools. Thus, this study supports previous findings on the importance of guidance and counseling services but also extends them by placing humanistic leadership as the key approach for managing service transformation.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe the role of humanistic leadership in transforming the management of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools. Specifically, this study explains how principals demonstrate humanistic leadership values, how classroom teachers implement guidance and counseling functions in the absence of specialized counselors, and how simple digital tools support more adaptive and student-centered guidance services. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of educational management and humanistic leadership studies, and practically to provide direction for principals and classroom teachers in organizing guidance and counseling services that are responsive to the needs of elementary school students.

2. Research Methods

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach because the focus was to understand in depth the practice of humanistic leadership in managing guidance and counseling services in an elementary school context. This approach was considered appropriate because the research object was related to leadership behavior, school climate, teacher experience, and service management practices that needed to be explored naturally. The research was conducted at SDN 18 Deteng-Deteng, with the principal and classroom teachers serving as the main sources of data because they were directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating guidance and counseling functions in the school.

The informants were selected purposively by considering their direct involvement in the management and implementation of guidance and counseling services. The main informants consisted of the principal and classroom teachers who handled student development, classroom guidance, habituation activities, communication with parents, and the follow-up of students' academic and behavioral problems. The selection of informants was based on the consideration that they possessed relevant experience and knowledge regarding the transformation of guidance and counseling services in an elementary school without specialized counseling teachers.

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore the understanding, experiences, strategies, and reflections of the principal and classroom teachers regarding the implementation of humanistic leadership values in guidance and counseling services. Observations were conducted to identify leadership behavior, teacher-student interaction, communication patterns, and school practices that reflected empathy, openness, participation, and respect for student dignity. Documentation was carried out by reviewing student progress records, school activity documents, communication records, and other documents related to the implementation of guidance and counseling services.

The main research instrument was the researcher, supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation review guidelines. Data credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation by comparing information obtained from the principal, classroom teachers, observation results, and school documents. Data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the data were selected and organized according to the research focus on humanistic leadership and service management transformation. In the display stage, the data were arranged in narrative form and grouped into major themes. In the conclusion drawing stage, the findings were interpreted to explain the meaning of humanistic leadership in transforming the management of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings show that the principal's humanistic leadership played an important role in shaping the direction of guidance and counseling service transformation at SDN 18 Deteng-Deteng. The transformation did not occur through a separate structural unit, but through a management pattern that strengthened classroom teachers as the main actors of student assistance. The principal built an empathetic school climate, encouraged open communication, respected the dignity of teachers and students, involved teachers in decision making, and promoted the use of simple digital tools to support student progress monitoring. The main findings of this study are presented in Table 1.

T Table 1. Findings on the implementation of humanistic leadership in guidance and counseling services

No	Finding aspect	School practice	Managerial implication
1	Empathy and emotional support	The principal listens to the concerns of teachers and students and provides support when teachers face student problems.	Teachers feel psychologically safe and become more patient in addressing students' individual needs.
2	Open communication	The principal builds informal dialogue and joint reflection with classroom teachers regarding students' learning progress, behavior, and well-being.	Student problems are identified, discussed, and followed up more quickly through collaboration between the principal and classroom teachers.
3	Respect for individual dignity	Teachers and students are viewed as whole persons with emotional, social, moral, and academic needs.	The school climate becomes more inclusive, appreciative of differences, and student-centered.
4	Participation and collaboration	Classroom teachers are involved in decision making related to student assistance, character habituation, and communication with parents.	Guidance and counseling services become a collective responsibility of the school community.
5	Use of simple technology	WhatsApp, Google Forms, and student progress sheets are used for communication, reporting, and monitoring student development.	Services become faster, better documented, and more responsive without losing the humanistic touch.

The first finding indicates that humanistic leadership was reflected in the principal's ability to build empathetic relationships with teachers and students. The principal did not merely assign administrative tasks, but also listened to teachers' difficulties when dealing with student problems, provided emotional support, and encouraged teachers to understand each student's condition more patiently. This practice shows that guidance and counseling service management in elementary schools requires more than technical procedures; it requires a caring climate that strengthens teachers' psychological safety. This finding is consistent with Noddings (2013), who emphasized that caring relationships are the foundation of educational interaction. In addition, Maslow's (1970) view of human needs helps explain that students and teachers are able to grow optimally when their sense of safety, belonging, and appreciation is fulfilled.

The second finding shows that open communication and informal reflective meetings became important means for transforming guidance and counseling services. The principal routinely created space for classroom teachers to discuss student learning development, behavioral changes, and socio-emotional conditions. This communication enabled student problems to be identified earlier and followed up collaboratively. In this regard, the principal's role was not limited to supervision but also functioned as a facilitator of reflection and collective problem solving. This finding supports Sergiovanni's (2001) idea that effective school leadership is built on shared values, moral commitment, and community building. It also aligns with Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), who stated that leadership emphasizing collaboration and support has a positive effect on teacher motivation and school improvement.

The third finding reveals that classroom teachers became the central actors in guidance and counseling services because the school did not have specialized guidance and counseling teachers. Classroom teachers carried out assistance functions by observing student behavior, giving personal advice, building communication with parents, and integrating character guidance into daily learning. The principal's humanistic leadership strengthened the teachers' role because they felt trusted, supported, and involved in student service management. This finding is in line with Amala and Kaltsum (2021), who explained that elementary school teachers can perform guidance and counseling functions through classroom activities and habituation. It is also supported by Mulyati and Kamaruddin (2020), who emphasized that the teacher's closeness to students enables early identification of student needs.

The fourth finding shows that the use of simple digital tools, such as WhatsApp, Google Forms, and student progress sheets, helped the school monitor student conditions more regularly. These tools were used to facilitate communication among teachers, the principal, and parents, as well as to record student academic, behavioral, and emotional development. However, the use of technology in this study was not intended to replace human relationships. Instead, technology served as a medium to strengthen empathy, speed up communication, and improve documentation. This finding is consistent with the idea of Education 5.0, which emphasizes that technology should be used to support human-centered education (Ahmad et al., 2023). Therefore, humanistic leadership ensures that digitalization remains aligned with the values of care, responsiveness, and student dignity.

Conceptually, the findings of this study show that humanistic leadership functions as a bridge between the structural limitations of guidance and counseling services and the real needs of students in elementary schools. In the absence of specialized counseling teachers, the principal's leadership becomes the key to organizing classroom teachers, building a supportive climate, and creating simple but consistent management mechanisms. This finding strengthens Gibson and Mitchell's (2016) view that effective counseling is not determined only by techniques, but also by the quality of relationships and a climate of care. Thus, the transformation of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools should not rely solely on formal policies, but must be supported by leadership practices that humanize teachers and students.

The practical implication of this study is that principals need to design simple but sustainable mechanisms for managing guidance and counseling services, such as classroom teacher reflection forums, student development records, parent communication systems, and collaborative follow-up procedures. Classroom teachers also need to be supported through mentoring, reflective dialogue, and the provision of easy-to-use monitoring instruments. At the policy level, elementary schools can develop a humanistic guidance and counseling management model that combines character education, socio-emotional support, parent communication, and simple digital documentation. Therefore, humanistic leadership is not only a leadership style but also a managerial strategy for building guidance and counseling services that are adaptive, collaborative, and student-centered.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that humanistic leadership is an important foundation for transforming the management of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools. Principals who demonstrate empathy, open communication, respect for individual dignity, participation, collaboration, and humane use of simple digital technology are able to create a school climate that supports classroom teachers in carrying out guidance

and counseling functions. The novelty of this study lies in the finding that the transformation of guidance and counseling services in elementary schools without specialized counseling teachers can be strengthened through humanistic leadership that positions classroom teachers as the main actors of student assistance. The implication of this study is that elementary school principals need to develop consistent, reflective, and collaborative management mechanisms so that guidance and counseling services can respond to students' academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional needs. Future research may expand the study to different school contexts or develop a more systematic humanistic leadership-based guidance and counseling management model for elementary schools.

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