

Research Article

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Optimization of Counseling Services for Early Childhood with Special Needs: A SWOT Analysis

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This research examines the development potential of guidance and counselling services for early childhood with special needs through a SWOT analysis and the IFAS and EFAS frameworks. The study aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing the effectiveness of these services.

Materials/methods. A qualitative method was used, incorporating document analysis and expert interviews to assess internal and external factors.

Results. The findings indicate that strong policy support, increasing awareness among educators, and available intervention programs serve as key strengths, while the lack of specialized counsellors, limited facilities, and low parental involvement remain significant weaknesses. Opportunities include professional training programs, technological advancements for digital counselling, and support from non-governmental organizations, whereas low public awareness, budget constraints, and the absence of standardized implementation pose critical threats. The results highlight that external factors have a greater impact than internal factors, emphasizing the need for strategic optimization.

Conclusion. This study implies that sustainable improvements require capacity-building, digital integration, parental engagement, and policy reinforcement to enhance inclusive education and ensure long-term program effectiveness.

1. Introduction

In the field of education, young children with special needs face more complex challenges compared to their peers. They require specialized approaches in academic, social, and emotional aspects to develop optimally. One approach that supports their development is guidance and counselling services, which play a crucial role in helping children with special needs overcome various barriers, both in formal education and in daily life (Börnert-Ringleb et al., 2021). However, in practice, several obstacles still hinder the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services for these children. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis is needed to identify optimal strategies for improving the quality of these services (Kumar et al., 2021). Guidance and counselling for young children with special needs aim to provide appropriate support tailored to their characteristics and challenges. These services are not limited to academic aspects but also include psychosocial support, social skills, and readiness to engage in broader environments. However, many educational institutions still lack effective guidance and counselling programs for children with special needs. Several factors, such as a shortage of professional counsellors, a lack of public awareness, and limited infrastructure, pose significant challenges to the implementation of these services (Keshf & Khanum, 2021). Therefore, this study examines how the optimization of guidance and counseling services can be achieved using SWOT analysis as a strategic approach.

The background of this research stems from the reality that guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs remain suboptimal in many educational institutions. Despite the existence of inclusive education policies, their implementation still faces various challenges, such as a lack of specialists trained to support children with special needs, limited access to resources, and insufficient synergy between schools, parents, and the community (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). By understanding the factors affecting the effectiveness of these services, this research aims to provide more applicable recommendations for educational stakeholders.

Previous studies have explored guidance and counselling services for children with special needs. De Wolf et al. (2024) discussed an individual-based guidance approach emphasizing the importance of personalized psychological assessments to provide interventions suited to each child's specific characteristics and needs. Chen et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of structured group counselling in improving communication and social interaction skills, particularly for children with autism spectrum disorder who struggle with interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Tutun et al. (2023) highlighted the role of technology by developing and testing an artificial intelligence (AI)-based application that supports psychological assessment and intervention, enhancing service efficiency and accessibility, especially in schools facing professional counsellor shortages. Garbacz et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of parental involvement, showing that active parental support in counselling programs significantly improves intervention outcomes through collaborative approaches between parents and counsellors. Additionally, Gan et al. (2023) explored the implementation of a holistic guidance model integrating psychological, pedagogical, and social aspects to address various challenges faced by children with special needs in school settings. These studies illustrate that integrating individual-based strategies, group counselling, technology utilization, parental involvement, and holistic guidance models can enhance the effectiveness of counselling services in supporting children with special needs to reach their full potential.

Based on previous research, guidance and counseling services for young children with special needs present both challenges and opportunities. Prior studies have shown that individual and group approaches have varying effectiveness depending on the child's needs and educational environment (Alam, 2022b). Additionally, integrating technology into guidance and counselling services is becoming increasingly relevant in improving the effectiveness of these programs. Therefore, this study combines various previously researched approaches into a more comprehensive model using SWOT analysis.

The novelty of this research lies in the strategic approach used to optimize guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs. While previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of specific counselling methods, this research offers a more holistic approach by considering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the implementation of these services. As a result, this study aims to provide more applicable and sustainable strategies for enhancing guidance and counselling services for children with special needs (Blewitt et al., 2021). It asserts that an effectively formulated research purpose statement must explicitly convey the study's rationale, objectives, and intended beneficiaries, prioritizing evidence-based practices, developmental suitability, and contextual significance. In the realm of guidance and counselling for children with exceptional needs, the purpose statement may be articulated as follows:

The objective of this project is to comprehensively investigate and assess options for improving guidance and counselling services for children with special needs in inclusive educational environments. This study, grounded in a developmental and ecological viewpoint (Blewitt et al., 2021), seeks to discover evidence-based strategies that enhance emotional, behavioural, and social development. It also underscores that school-based programs must be guided by developmental science and empirical research. The study seeks not only to describe existing practices but also to critically evaluate and enhance them using scientific evidence, ensuring that counseling interventions cater to the varied needs of children with special needs in development, while addressing obstacles to access and inclusion within school-based mental health systems. The objective aligns with Blewitt et al.'s advocacy for developmentally customized strategies that account for the distinct cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics of children with disabilities. The objective is not to implement a universal paradigm but to improve counseling through A primary focus of Blewitt et al.'s work, which is the advancement of equity in mental health assistance. The project attempts to address systemic challenges faced by children with special needs, including limited resources, insufficient trained personnel, and stigma. The objective corresponds with an ecological model, influenced by Bronfenbrenner and highlighted by Blewitt et al., which considers familial, educational, and communal factors affecting a child's development. The project will examine how guidance counsellors collaborate with parents, teachers, and experts to foster more supportive environments. Proposing comprehensive and pragmatic enhancements to existing guidance and counselling frameworks. tailored tactics that align with the developmental stage of each child. The research ultimately seeks to enhance the overall wellbeing and resilience of children with special needs by improving the quality, consistency, and cultural responsiveness of counselling services in educational institutions.

Building upon previous research findings and the proposed novelty, the primary reason for selecting this research theme is to bridge the gap between theory and practice in guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs (Camden & Silva, 2021). This study aims to identify existing issues and propose SWOT-based solutions applicable to various educational institutions. Through this approach, it is expected that guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs can be optimized to better support their development (Pfeiffer, 2021).

Overall, this study aims to examine the optimization of guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs using SWOT analysis. By adopting this approach, the research seeks to identify the strengths and opportunities that can be leveraged, as well as the weaknesses and threats that need to be addressed in the implementation of these services (Lee & Yoon, 2021). By synthesizing findings from previous research and highlighting new aspects that have not been extensively explored, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to improving the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in inclusive educational settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Counselling Services

The yearly increase in students seeking mental health and university counselling services (UCSs) with intricate demands is a worldwide worry for academics and practitioners (Auerbach et al., 2016; Rückert, 2015). University Counseling Services (UCSs) offer temporary, internal student support, encompassing interventions such as counselling conducted by accredited professionals (e.g., psychotherapists and clinical psychologists). They provide various support modalities, including face-to-face, online, individual, or group sessions to meet students' needs (Prince, 2015). The mental health of students in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has become a focal point of the political agenda, with the UK Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) endorsing the Compilation of institutional data regarding mental health services (Brown, 2016), and the UK University Mental Health Charter (Hughes & Spanner, 2019) advocating for higher education institutions to provide evidence-based therapies. The student population is expanding, resulting in a swift rise in the demand for help for students with mental health problems (Byrom, 2015; Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011). Additional issues arise from the complexities of adequately assessing student mental health (Broglia et al., 2021; Kreß et al., 2015; Prince, 2015). Universities positioned to serve students are encouraged to showcase the efficacy of their mental health services to tackle this issue (Broglia et al., 2018; Hughes & Spanner, 2019; Randall & Bewick, 2016). The significance of exhibiting clinical efficacy is delineated in the English National Health Service Talking Therapies program for anxiety and depression, formerly referred to as the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) program (Barkham et al., 2021; Clark, 2011), which seeks to enhance accessibility to treatment for prevalent mental health disorders (Department of Health, 2012). The formulation of best practice recommendations for psychiatric diseases asserts that practitioners must exhibit service efficacy (Cooper & Reeves, 2012), since ineffective interventions squander resources, impose undue demands on patients, and may inflict harm (Lilienfeld, 2007). However, there exists variability within mental health and urgent care services, with numerous providers facing heightened demand without adequate resources for expansion, resulting in challenges in showing efficacy (Thorley, 2017). Services without an outcome measure or restricted to solely pre- and post-assessments are challenging to maintain (Barkham et al., 2019; Clark, 2011).

2.2. Early Childhood Education

Marsh et al. (2017) define maker spaces as innovative, collaborative environments where children participate in experiential learning by utilising diverse tools, materials, and technology for design, experimentation, construction, and invention. These places are grounded on the tenets of the maker movement, which prioritizes experiential learning. Makerspaces in Early Childhood Education, as defined by Marsh et al. (2017), embody a vibrant convergence of play, creativity, and technology. These environments enable young learners to investigate, create, and acquire knowledge in profoundly engaging and developmentally suitable ways. They also facilitate the cultivation of 21st-century competencies from an early age, establishing a foundation for future learning in digital and analogue realms, including constructivism, constructionism, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Marsh et al. (2017) delineated four foundational areas of educational philosophies that inform both early childhood education and the methodologies employed by makerspaces: child-centeredness, playfulness, socioemotional development, and the empowerment of the child as an autonomous learner. The foundational and universally recognized ideas of early childhood education align closely with the methodologies advocated by makerspaces, so rendering the expansion of makerspace usage into early childhood environments a logical choice. An international initiative, "Makerspaces in the early years: enhancing digital literacy and creativity (MakeEY)," has been conducted across seven European nations (including Denmark, Finland, and Iceland) and the USA,

aimed at investigating the impact of integrating makerspaces within formal and informal educational environments to foster young children's digital literacy and creative design capabilities. Research indicates that the integration of makerspaces within children's educational environments promotes: 1) interest-driven maker agency; 2) collaborative utilization of their knowledge to enhance peer learning; 3) post-digital maker play, which traverses both digital and nondigital realms; and 4) the development of emergent maker literacies and citizenship (Marsh et al., 2018, 2019). Similarly, Hatzigianni et al. (2021) investigated young children's involvement in a digitally facilitated makerspace and discovered that they were entirely proficient in participating and contributing to the creation process utilizing technologies for 3D design and printing. A separate instance of integrating makerspaces in preschool environments investigated the educational opportunities presented by a making-oriented curriculum (Hachey et al., 2022).

2.3. Special Needs Education

The adherence of our educational system to the Standard Regulations for the equalization of individuals with disabilities and the Framework for Action in the education of individuals with special requirements underscores the necessity of establishing a distinct national educational policy and identifying practical solutions for: ensuring the right to education (all children must receive education within any community); guaranteeing genuine, unrestricted access to education (by creating facilities, opportunities, and conducive conditions in the educational sector); and equalizing opportunities for all learners (the needs, desires, and requirements of each individual hold equal significance to those of their peers, with the school obligated to provide the necessary resources for each learner). The notion of special educational needs (SEN) was included into UNESCO nomenclature in the 1990s as a complement to the focused approach of special education directed towards the child and the community (Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 1993). The typology of SEN categories encompasses: mental and behavioral illnesses, intellectual disabilities, physical impairments, visual impairments, auditory impairments, speech disorders, and learning disabilities. The idea of special educational needs (SEN) aims to eliminate the conventional categorization of children, advocating for individualized assessment and educational processes, as well as a multifaceted and dynamic understanding of the factors contributing to academic failure.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to analyze the optimization of guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs through a SWOT analysis. This approach was chosen as it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, explore various factors influencing service effectiveness, and provide strategic recommendations based on existing conditions. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis to understand how guidance and counselling services are implemented, the challenges encountered, and the optimal strategies that can be applied.

3.2. Research Participants and Data Collection

The research subjects consist of educators, counsellors, parents, and children with special needs in several inclusive schools in Indonesia. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the main criteria being individuals with experience in guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs. Additionally, this study involves experts in inclusive education and educational policy to gain broader perspectives on policies and the implementation of guidance and counselling services. The distribution of early childhood children with special needs in Banten Province reached 5,947 students in 2024, spread across urban and

district areas, specifically: Tangerang Regency with 1,495 students, Serang Regency with 922 students, Pandeglang Regency with 738 students, Lebak Regency with 828 students, Tangerang City with 614 students, South Tangerang City with 707 students, Serang City with 385 students, and Cilegon City with 258 students (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2024). This study collected data through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with educators, counsellors, parents, and children with special needs to gain insights into the implementation of guidance and counselling services and the challenges faced. The participatory observation allowed researchers to directly observe counselling activities in inclusive schools to understand the methods used and the interactions between counsellors, children with special needs, and other educators. Meanwhile, document analysis involved reviewing policies, service guidelines, and program evaluation reports implemented in inclusive schools to obtain relevant secondary data supporting the study's findings.

3.3. Data Analysis

To find the pros, cons, chances, and threats of guidance and counselling services for young children with special needs, the collected data were looked at using the SWOT method. Data reduction was the first step in the analysis process. This is where the data were sorted and put into groups based on how relevant they were to the SWOT analysis. After that, the statistics were shown in a descriptive way to make it easier to see how the factors were related to each other. The last step was to come to a conclusion. Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, the best strategies were made to improve the efficiency of guidance and counselling services in inclusive schools.

The study's methods should help us learn more about how to provide guidance and counseling services for young children with special needs, as well as the best ways to make these services more useful.

4. Results

The research findings indicate that guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs in Banten Province still face various challenges in their implementation. Based on observations in several inclusive schools, it was found that these services are not yet well-structured and have not become an integral part of the early childhood education curriculum (Zhao et al., 2022). Many schools still rely on classroom teachers to provide guidance and emotional support to children with special needs, despite their lack of specialized backgrounds in guidance and counselling. Additionally, the limited number of professional counsellors and the lack of supporting facilities pose significant obstacles to providing optimal services (Sorsdahl et al., 2021). Nevertheless, efforts are being made by various stakeholders, including local governments and educational organizations, to improve service quality through teacher training, additional resource provision, and strengthening inclusive education policies at the provincial level (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the facilities and infrastructure supporting school guidance and counselling services remain inadequate (Hoover & Bostic, 2021). Only a few schools have dedicated counselling rooms, while others still use classrooms or teachers' offices for guidance and counselling sessions. Some schools have begun adopting technological approaches in their counselling services, such as online consultations with professional counsellors; however, the implementation remains limited (Moeller et al., 2022).

The optimization strategy for guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs is based on the SWOT analysis, focusing on enhancing human resource capacity, leveraging technology, increasing parental involvement, and strengthening regulations and policies (Miller et al., 2022). Human resource capacity is improved through regular training for teachers and education personnel on counselling techniques and collaboration with universities or professional

institutions to engage competent experts. Technology utilisation serves as an innovative solution by developing digital platforms that enable online consultations with professional counsellors and AI-based applications for initial psychological assessments (Olawade et al., 2024). Additionally, increasing parental involvement is crucial in supporting children's development through educational workshops and forming parent communities for children with special needs to share experiences and solutions (Yulianti et al., 2022). From a policy perspective, advocating for clearer and measurable service standards by the government and educational institutions is a strategic step, accompanied by incentives for schools that successfully implement inclusive services effectively. With these strategies, guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs are expected to become more structured, effective, and sustainable (McCarthy et al., 2023).

The SWOT analysis of guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs in Banten Province highlights various aspects that influence the effectiveness of its implementation, covering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Muhayani, 2024). By understanding these factors, more optimal strategies can be designed to improve the effectiveness of these services in the Banten region. Based on the collected data, the SWOT analysis identifies the following factors:

Strengths are internal positive factors that provide advantages for an organization or program in achieving its objectives, such as resources, skills, or policies that support success (Zhang et al., 2022). The identified strengths include: 1) Support from inclusive education policies that mandate school guidance and counselling services (Mavropoulou et al., 2021). 2).Increasing awareness among educators regarding the importance of guidance and counselling services (Gimbert et al., 2023). 3). Some schools have educators who have received basic training in guiding children with special needs (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). 4).The availability of guidance modules and manuals developed by some educational institutions to assist teachers in providing counselling services (Figas et al., 2024). 5). There is a presence of several early intervention programs that help children with special needs develop their social and emotional skills (Saracho, 2023).

Weaknesses are internal factors that hinder or limit the achievement of objectives, such as a lack of resources, skills, or infrastructure that supports program or organizational effectiveness (Joshi et al., 2024). The identified weaknesses include: 1) The shortage of professional counsellors specialising in handling children with special needs (Litam & Lam, 2021). 2). Limited facilities and infrastructure for guidance and counselling services (Clark et al., 2023). 3) Lack of parental involvement in supporting school counselling programs (Clark et al., 2023). 4) The absence of standardised evaluation methods to measure the effectiveness of counselling services for children with special needs (De Los Reyes et al., 2022). 5) The lack of integration of counselling services with academic programs results in suboptimal interventions supporting children's learning processes (Peters-Corbett et al., 2024).

Opportunities are external factors that can be leveraged to support the achievement of objectives, such as technological advancements, government policies, or social trends that encourage growth and innovation (Qamruzzaman & Karim, 2024). The identified opportunities include: 1).The availability of training and certification programs for educators and counselors in inclusive education (Carballo et al., 2021). 2). Technological advancements enabling the development of digital counselling services, such as tele-counselling and interactive guidance applications (Muhammad & Arafat, 2024). 3).Support from various non-governmental organizations engaged in inclusive education (Adu-Baffoe & Bonney, 2021). 4). Increasing global awareness of the importance of inclusive education, providing more opportunities for collaboration with international institutions (Jadán-Guerrero et al., 2023). 5).Government initiatives to increase education budgets for children with special needs, including the development of guidance and counselling services (Shevlin & Banks, 2021).

Threats are external factors that potentially hinder or reduce the effectiveness of a program or organization, such as budget constraints, low public awareness, or unsupportive policies (Sawik, 2023). The identified threats include: 1). Low public awareness of the importance of guidance and counseling for children with special needs (Drigas et al., 2022). 2). Limited school budgets for developing guidance and counseling services (Hoover & Bostic, 2021). 3). The absence of standardized implementation guidelines for counseling services in each inclusive education institution (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2023). 4). The persistent social stigma regarding children with special needs, which may hinder their acceptance in school environments (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023). 5). Challenges in implementing inclusive education policies in various regions, especially in areas with limited access to professional staff and supporting technologies (Okoye et al., 2023).

By addressing these strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, a more comprehensive and effective strategy can be developed to optimize guidance and counseling services for early childhood children with special needs, ensuring better accessibility and quality in inclusive educational institutions.

4.1. SWOT Analysis

The following is the SWOT matrix table for guidance and counseling services for early childhood children with special needs:

Table 1. SWOT Analysis

Factor	Internal	External
		Opportunities
Strengths	1. Supportive, inclusive education policies.	1. Training and certification programs for educators and counselors.
	2. Increased awareness among educators.	2. Technological advancements enabling digital services.
	3. Availability of educators who have received basic training.	3. Support from non-governmental organizations in inclusive education.
	4. Availability of guidance modules and manuals.	4. Growing global awareness of inclusive education.
	5. Early intervention programs for children with special needs.	5. Initiatives to increase budgets for inclusive education.
		Threats
Weaknesses	1. Lack of professional counselors specializing in children with special needs.	1. Low public awareness of the importance of counselling services for children with special needs.
	2. Limited supporting facilities and infrastructure.	2. Budget constraints in schools for developing counselling services.
	3. Lack of parental involvement.	3. Absence of standardized implementation guidelines for counselling services in inclusive schools.
	4. No standardized evaluation methods for counseling services for children with special needs.	4. Persistent negative stigma towards children with special needs.
	5. Lack of integration between counselling services and academic programs.	5. Challenges in implementing inclusive policies in remote areas.

Employing this SWOT matrix allows for a more targeted optimization strategy for guiding and counseling services to improve the efficacy of services for early childhood children with special needs.

4.2. Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS Analysis)

The IFAS analysis is used to evaluate internal factors, which consist of strengths and weaknesses, in the guidance and counseling services for early childhood children with special needs. The following is the IFAS analysis table:

Table 2. IFAS Analysis

Internal Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Strengths			
1. Supportive policies for inclusive education.	0.15	4	0.60
2. Increased awareness among educators.	0.10	3	0.30
3. Availability of educators who have received basic training.	0.12	3	0.36
4. Availability of counselling modules and guidelines.	0.10	4	0.40
5. Presence of early intervention programs for children with special needs	0.13	3	0.39
Total Strengths	0.60		2.05
Weaknesses			
1. Lack of professional counsellors specializing in children with special needs	0.12	2	0.24
2. Limited facilities and supporting infrastructure.	0.15	2	0.30
3. Low parental involvement.	0.10	3	0.30
4. Absence of standardized evaluation methods for counseling services for children with special needs	0.08	2	0.16
5. Lack of integration between counseling services and academic programs.	0.10	2	0.20
Total Weaknesses			1.20
Overall Total			3.25

The IFAS study results demonstrate that guidance and counseling services for early childhood children with special needs exhibit considerable capabilities, achieving a total score of 2.05. This indicates the existence of legislative support, heightened awareness among educators, and the accessibility of intervention modules and programs. Nonetheless, significant deficiencies persist, shown in a total score of 1.15, encompassing a scarcity of trained counsellors, inadequate supporting facilities, and minimal parental engagement, which continue to hinder program delivery. The total IFAS score of 3.25 indicates that the internal factors of guidance and counselling services are relatively robust; however, enhancements are necessary for fortifying human resources, augmenting facilities, and integrating services with academic programs and parental engagement. This analysis provides a

basis for developing optimization strategies to improve the efficacy of guiding and counselling services in inclusive educational institutions.

4.3. EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) Analysis

The EFAS analysis is used to evaluate external factors, including opportunities and threats, in guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs. The following is the EFAS analysis table:

Table 3. EFAS Analysis

External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Opportunities			
1. Training and certification programs for educators and counsellors in inclusive education.	0.15	4	0.6
2. Technological advancements enable the development of digital-based counselling services	0.12	3	0.36
3. Support from various non-governmental organizations in the field of inclusive education.	0.10	3	0.30
4. Increasing public awareness of inclusive education	0.13	4	0.52
5. Government policies supporting guidance and counselling services in inclusive schools.	0.10	4	0.40
Total Opportunities	0.60		2.18
Threats			
1. Low public awareness of the importance of guidance and counseling for children with special needs	0.12	2	0.24
2. Limited school budgets for guidance and counselling services.	0.15	2	0.30
3. Lack of standardized implementation of guidance and counselling services across inclusive education institutions.	0.10	3	0.30
4. Shortage of professionals specializing in inclusive education	0.10	2	0.20
5. Insufficient policy support ensuring the sustainability of guidance and counseling programs in inclusive	0.08	3	0.24
Total Threats			1.28
Overall Total			3.46

The EFAS study results demonstrate that opportunity factors possess considerable potential in facilitating the advancement of guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs, yielding a total score of 2.18. This indicates the existence of numerous beneficial measures, including educator training programs, technology innovations in digital counseling services, and heightened public awareness alongside governmental policy endorsement for inclusive education. The total threat score of 1.28 underscores the presence of external obstacles that require attention, namely with constrained school finances, the absence of standardized implementation instructions, and the scarcity of qualified specialists. The total EFAS score of 3.46 indicates that external forces present more possibilities than risks. The development strategy for guidance and counselling services should concentrate on capitalizing on existing opportunities, including optimizing supportive policies, employing technology, and strengthening collaboration with diverse partners. This analysis provides a basis for developing adaptive ways to enhance the efficacy of guidance and counseling services in inclusive educational institutions.

5. Discussion

Analysis of IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) of Guidance and Counseling Services for Early Childhood with Special Needs. Based on the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) analysis, internal factors in guidance and counseling services for early childhood with special needs are categorized into strengths and weaknesses (Palah et al., 2022).

The analysis results indicate that the strength factors in guidance and counseling services have a total score of 2.05, reflecting significant potential for development. One of the key supporting factors is the presence of inclusive education policy support, with a score of 0.60, which mandates guidance and counselling services in inclusive schools, providing a strong foundation for implementation. Additionally, the increasing awareness of educators, with a score of 0.30, demonstrates an improved understanding among teachers regarding the importance of these services. The presence of educators who have received basic training in handling children with special needs (CSN), with a score of 0.36, also serves as a distinctive advantage, enabling more effective counseling services. Moreover, the availability of counseling modules and guidelines, with a score of 0.40, facilitates the provision of more structured services, while early intervention programs for CSN, with a score of 0.39, help children receive support from an early age, making it easier to address their needs appropriately. With this total score, it can be concluded that these strength factors can be optimally utilized to develop more effective, structured, and sustainable guidance and counselling services.

Despite the strengths in guidance and counseling services for early childhood with special needs, there are still several weaknesses that need to be addressed, with a total score of 1.20. One of the main challenges is the lack of professional counselors specializing in handling children with special needs (CSN), with a score of 0.24, which hinders the provision of optimal services. Additionally, the lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, with a score of 0.30, such as counseling rooms, therapy aids, and assistive technology, poses a challenge in delivering effective services. The low level of parental involvement, with a score of 0.30, is also a limiting factor, as parental support is crucial for the success of guidance and counseling programs. The absence of standardized evaluation methods for CSN counseling services, with a score of 0.16, leads to variations in service quality across different schools without clear success measures. Furthermore, the lack of integration between counseling services and academic programs, with a score of 0.20, results in these services often operating separately without synergy with the educational curriculum. Therefore, these weaknesses must be addressed promptly through strategies such as enhancing human resources, providing adequate facilities, and implementing more supportive policies to ensure that guidance and counseling services for CSN operate more effectively and sustainably.

With a total IFAS score of 3.25, it can be concluded that the strength factors in guidance and counseling services for early childhood with special needs are more dominant than the weaknesses. This indicates significant potential for optimizing service development in the future. However, despite the strengths, challenges remain that must be overcome to ensure these services function more effectively. Therefore, the primary strategic priorities should include strengthening professional capacity through specialized training for teachers and counsellors, improving facilities and infrastructure in inclusive schools, and encouraging active parental involvement in the counselling process. By implementing these strategies, guidance and counseling services for children with special needs can become more structured, integrated, and impactful in supporting early childhood development.

Analysis of EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) of Guidance and Counseling Services for Early Childhood with Special Needs. Based on the analysis of the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS), external factors in guidance and counseling services for early childhood with special needs are categorized into opportunities and threats (Murphy et al., 2024).

The analysis results indicate that the opportunity factors in developing guidance and counselling services for children with special needs have a total score of 2.18, signifying various opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of these services. One of the primary opportunities is the availability of training and certification programs for educators and counselors in inclusive education, which enhances competencies in handling children with special needs. Additionally, technological advancements provide opportunities to develop digital-based counselling services, such as online platforms and companion applications, making these services more accessible and flexible. Support from various non-governmental organizations also plays a crucial role in providing training, resources, and policy advocacy to support inclusive education. The increasing public awareness of the importance of inclusive education further promotes acceptance and support for guidance and counselling services across different educational settings. Moreover, government policies that increasingly favor inclusive education provide a legal framework and guidelines for managing these services. By leveraging these opportunities, the development of guidance and counseling services can be optimized, sustained, and have a broader impact on children with special needs.

The analysis also shows that the threat factors in developing guidance and counseling services for children with special needs have a total score of 1.28, indicating challenges that need to be anticipated to prevent hindrances to program effectiveness. One of the main threats is the low public awareness of the importance of these services, resulting in a lack of support for their implementation. Additionally, budget constraints in schools pose challenges in providing professional personnel, facilities, and adequate supporting technology. The absence of standardized implementation guidelines for guidance and counseling services also contributes to disparities in service quality across schools, making it difficult to ensure their overall effectiveness. The shortage of professionals specializing in inclusive education further exacerbates the situation, as children with special needs require tailored approaches. Furthermore, policy support that does not fully guarantee the sustainability of guidance and counselling programs in inclusive schools remains a significant obstacle. Therefore, appropriate strategies are needed to overcome these threats, such as increasing public outreach, strengthening policy advocacy, and developing sustainable funding programs to ensure that guidance and counseling services can operate optimally.

The total EFAS score of 3.46, with opportunities (2.18) outweighing threats (1.28), indicates that guidance and counselling services for early childhood with special needs have promising prospects for further development. The available opportunities, such as teacher training programs, technological advancements, and support from various stakeholders, can be key factors in expanding the reach of these services. Although challenges remain, such as budget limitations, lack of standardization, and a shortage of professionals specializing in inclusive education, these obstacles

can be addressed with the right strategies. Therefore, by maximizing opportunities and adopting adaptive approaches to various challenges, guidance and counseling services for children with special needs can continue to improve, providing a broader and more effective impact in supporting children's development.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis and the IFAS and EFAS calculations, guidance and counselling services for early childhood children with special needs have significant potential for development, despite facing various challenges. From an internal perspective, the strengths that contribute to the optimization of these services include the support of inclusive education policies, the increasing awareness of educators, and the availability of guidance modules and early intervention programs. However, weaknesses such as the lack of professional counsellors specialising in inclusive education, limited supporting facilities, and insufficient parental involvement remain obstacles that need to be addressed. From an external perspective, substantial opportunities can be leveraged, such as training and certification programs for educators, technological advancements enabling digital-based counselling services, and support from non-governmental organisations. However, several threats must be anticipated, including low public awareness of the importance of guidance and counselling for children with special needs, limited school budgets, and the absence of standardised implementation guidelines across inclusive educational institutions. The comparison between IFAS and EFAS results indicates that external factors have a greater influence than internal factors. Therefore, the success of guidance and counselling services for children with special needs largely depends on the ability of policymakers and educational institutions to capitalise on available opportunities while mitigating external threats. To optimise these services, several strategic measures should be implemented, including enhancing human resource capacity through training and certification, utilising technology for digital counselling services, increasing parental involvement in the guidance process, and strengthening regulations and policies to ensure the sustainability of this program. Through a systematic and collaborative approach involving the government, educators, parents, and various other stakeholders, guidance and counseling services for early childhood children with special needs can become more effective in supporting child development, improving the quality of inclusive education, and creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children without exception.

7. Suggestion

The following suggestions are proposed for consideration in future research. To begin with, the incorporation of a structured interview and self-report questionnaire will significantly contribute to the study's comprehensiveness. Furthermore, it is imperative to organize research and statistics orientations for students in order to enhance their knowledge of the subject matter. Additionally, a training orientation is required to ensure that all students and instructors are well-informed about the correct implementation and utilization of effective strategic planning into the instructional process by considering its media/ technology applied. Fourthly, the study suggests that it can be implemented in high school curricula so that students can develop a solid understanding of the research process prior to enrolling in subsequent programs.

8. Limitation

Despite the significance of the findings, the study is constrained by its focus to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats affecting the services quality especially on the guidance and counselling for the early childhood with special needs.

Declarations

Author Contributions. H.: Conceptualization, design, analysis, writing. S.A.A.: Editing/reviewing, supervision. U.: supervision, data acquisition, data analysis/ interpretation, statistical analysis. R. S. H.: Administration, technical or material support. All authors have read and approved the published on the final version of the article.

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Ethical Approval. All the participants in this study were notified of its intentions. Every participant has duly executed a confidentiality agreement and a data transfer form. Similarly, all data has been de-identified, ensuring the confidentiality of the participants.

Data Availability Statement. All data collecting and storage protocols were authorized by the Institutional Review Board as an exempt study for program enhancement. Participant identifiers were removed to ensure anonymity.

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