



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/gecr.v2i2>
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School Counselors' Persuasive Communication in Shaping Students' Character at SMAN 38 Jakarta

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Abstract: Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers are one of the essential elements in student development across almost all school levels in Indonesia. BK teachers serve as "confidants" at school and act as second parents. This study aims to determine the forms of persuasive communication used by BK teachers in shaping positive student character at SMAN 38 Jakarta. The research utilizes Ivan Petrovich Pavlov's Behaviorism Theory. The results show a shift in the paradigm and role of BK teachers today compared to the past. While BK teachers were previously viewed as "School Police," they now serve as friends to students on one hand and as enforcers of discipline on the other. Consistency in rules and policies, along with their implementation, makes the task of BK teachers easier in shaping positive student character. Out of the four analyzed assumptions of Pavlov, this study finds that three assumptions can be implemented, while one assumption regarding internal thoughts can be disregarded; however, in this study, the students' internal thoughts are not ignored. BK teachers provide space and time for students to express their problems, act as good listeners, and offer solutions when needed. This approach has strengthened relationships and built positive student character, as students feel valued and heard.

Keywords: Persuasive Communication, Guidance and Counseling (BK) Teacher, Ivan Pavlov's Behaviorism, SMAN 38 Jakarta

INTRODUCTION

Persuasive communication is a form of communication aimed at influencing others so that their actions or behaviors align with the communicator's intent. This process involves

delivering messages that can alter, reinforce, or shape an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The primary goal of this approach is to gain the interlocutor's agreement or alignment with the conveyed message without any form of coercion. The term "persuasion" originates from the Latin word *persuasio*, which means to persuade or convince. A persuader is considered successful if they are able to influence the beliefs and expectations of others through explanations that outline the reasoning and benefits of a product or situation.

In the past, Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers were often associated with being the "School Police." However, over time, the role and image of BK teachers have been improved, beginning with the transition from Guidance and Counseling as "Bimbingan Penyuluhan" (BP) to "Bimbingan Konseling" (BK) (IDN Times, 2018). This shift carried consequences for their core function; while initially oriented toward enforcing student discipline, it has now transformed to focus more heavily on providing counseling to students. What was once widely known as the "School Police" has now shifted to become a "friend to students"—a trusted figure with whom students can feel free to share anything when facing problems they cannot disclose to anyone else except their teacher their Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher. If this kind of trust is established, the role shift is progressing well. The persuasive communication skills of BK teachers are required to build students' positive character, provided that the BK teacher can be a good companion and a safe space for students to share.

Why Character Matters for Future Success

Good character encompasses discipline, responsibility, integrity, cooperation, leadership, and empathy. Students with a strong character tend to be more capable of facing challenges, making the right decisions, and interacting effectively with others. Various studies show that academic achievement alone is insufficient to guarantee long-term success. The combination of intellectual ability and good character is the key for students to be able to adapt to a dynamic and complex world.

Character education aligns with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Undang Undang Sisdiknas). In Article 20, the term "character education" is indeed not explicitly written with the word "character." However, the concept, essence, and spirit of character education itself serve as the main foundation and ultimate goal of Indonesian national education. This is most clearly stated in Article 3 of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 regarding the Functions and Objectives of National Education: "National education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and dignified civilization of the nation in the context of educating the nation's life, aiming to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who have faith and piety to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens."

Why Persuasive Communication Matters

Persuasive communication is a form of communication aimed at influencing others so that their actions or behaviors align with the communicator's intent. This process involves delivering messages that can alter, reinforce, or shape a person's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The purpose of utilizing this method is to encourage the interlocutor to agree or concur with the conveyed message without any coercion. The term "persuasion" originates from the Latin word *persuasio*, which means to persuade or invite. A persuader is considered successful if they are able to influence the beliefs and expectations of others through explanations that outline the reasons and benefits of a certain product or situation. Character education aims to enhance and utilize knowledge, review and internalize, as well as personalize character values and noble morals, so that they manifest in daily behavior (Suarningsih et al., 2024).

Senior High School (SMA) plays a role not only in improving students' academic achievements but also as a primary means of character building. A strong character serves as an essential foundation for students' future success, whether in higher education, the professional world, or social life. Therefore, the character development of high school students must be a top priority that is balanced with academic achievement.

The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Supporting Students' Character Development

In the Indonesian education system, Guidance and Counseling (BK)—formerly known as Guidance and Counseling/Counseling (BP)—plays a vital role in supporting student development. Ideally, a BK/BP teacher has a comprehensive role that encompasses disciplinary enforcement, academic guidance, personal counseling, character development, as well as career guidance and goal tracking. In practice, however, this role is often eroded, with disciplinary enforcement becoming the main and more dominant focus.

In many schools across Indonesia, BK/BP teachers are often better known by students as "disciplinarians" rather than counselors. This disciplinary function pertains to the role of maintaining order and student compliance with school regulations. Ranging from handling tardiness and uniform violations to actions that breach school ethics, all of these often fall under the responsibility of the BK teacher. While this role is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment, overemphasizing the disciplinary aspect can overshadow other functions that should also be carried out.

Focusing solely on discipline can also lead to misconceptions among students regarding the function of the BK teacher. Students may feel reluctant or even afraid to approach the BK teacher, worrying that they might face sanctions or reprimands. This naturally hinders the role of the counselor, who should instead be a partner in students' self-development.

In addition to disciplinary enforcement, there are other strategic roles that BK teachers should ideally fulfill, particularly in career guidance and helping students cultivate their goals. At the Senior High School (SMA) or Vocational High School (SMK) level, career guidance is highly essential to assist students in understanding their potential, identifying their interests, and mapping out future plans that align with their talents and aspirations. In SMKs, for instance, BK teachers can guide students to understand various professions and career paths relevant to their majors. This study aims to examine teachers' persuasive communication in shaping students' positive character at SMAN 38 Jakarta.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Behaviorism Theory was developed by Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. The main concept of this theory is learning through the association between a neutral stimulus and a stimulus that produces an automatic response (Clark, 2004). Ivan Pavlov formulated this theory based on experiments with dogs that associated a bell with the provision of food. Classical conditioning theory, also known as Pavlovian conditioning, is a type of associative learning first demonstrated by Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov (in Hamzah, 2024). This theory explains how certain stimuli can trigger specific responses through pairing stimuli with particular events or outcomes. The assumptions of the theory are:

- 1) Behavior is a Result of Learning from the Environment (Behaviorism).

Pavlov assumed that most behaviors are not instinctive from birth, but are instead shaped by interactions with the environment. The primary focus of this theory is on the relationship between an external stimulus (input) and the resulting response (output).

2) The Relationship Between Stimulus and Response (S-R)

This theory assumes that the learning process occurs automatically through association. If two stimuli are presented together repeatedly, the brain will connect the two.

- a) Natural Stimulus: Food (Unconditioned Stimulus) naturally produces salivation (Unconditioned Response).
- b) Neutral Stimulus: Bell (initially produces no salivation).
- c) Result of Association: After continuous pairing, the bell alone (Conditioned Stimulus) can produce salivation (Conditioned Response).

3) Internal Mind (Consciousness) Can Be Ignored As a pioneer of behaviorism.

Pavlov (and his followers) assumed that to understand the learning process, we do not need to examine subjective mental processes or the internal mind. Directly observable behavior is the only valid element to measure.

4) Similarity of the Learning Process in Humans and Animals.

Pavlov assumed that the fundamental laws of learning apply equally to all living creatures. Therefore, experiments conducted on animals (in this case, dogs) can be used to explain and predict how humans learn, especially regarding the formation of habits, emotions, and phobias.

METHOD

This research is qualitative, using a constructivism paradigm (Samatan, 2017), a perspective which believes that reality or truth is not absolute (single), but rather constructed (shaped) by human thoughts, experiences, and social interactions. The research was conducted from April to June 2026 at SMAN 38 Jakarta. It was carried out through observation, interviews with guidance and counseling (BK) teachers, and documentation. The instrument used in this study was the researcher themselves (Samatan, 2018). The research was conducted in stages based on Miles and Huberman (1994; in Samatan, 2018), namely: [1] Data Collection; [2] Data Condensation: Sorting, simplifying, and discarding unimportant/irrelevant interview data; [3] Data Display: Organizing the sorted data into narrative text or matrices for easy reading; [4] Conclusion Drawing, which is formulating meaning from the data found in the field. The research results were compiled based on Miles and Huberman (1994), through the following stages: [1] Data Display; [2] Data Reduction; [3] Compilation and Conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Getting to Know SMAN 38 Jakarta

SMAN 38 Jakarta is located in the South Jakarta area, with the official address at Jl. Raya Lenteng Agung, Lenteng Agung, Jagakarsa District, South Jakarta City, D.K.I. Jakarta (Daftarsekolah.net, 2026).

SMA Negeri 38 South Jakarta was established between January 2, 1975, and 1979. It was initially a branch (*filial*) of SMAN 28 Jakarta, led by the late Mr. Drs. H. Djafar Komaruddin. Subsequently, from 1979 to 1981, it was led by the late Mr. T. Allin. On September 3, 1979, the school was officially renamed SMA Negeri 38 Jakarta based on Decree (SK) No. 0189a0/1979. The legalization by the Regional Office of the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kanwil Depdikbud*) took effect on September 3, 1979, occupying the building of SMAN 38 Jakarta on Jalan Raya Lenteng Agung, Jagakarsa, South Jakarta.

Guidance and Counseling (BK) Teachers at SMAN 38 Jakarta

There are four guidance and counseling (BK) teachers at SMAN 38 Jakarta, who are responsible for mentoring the students as a whole. The BK teaching staff consists of 3 females

and 1 male, managing a total student body of 747 students, comprising 331 males and 416 females (SMAN 38 Jakarta Website, 2026).

Functions and Roles of BK Teachers at SMAN 38 Jakarta

BK teachers play a vital role in the success of each student to ensure they can undergo the educational process at school smoothly. BK teachers are tasked with identifying and understanding student behavior, as well as providing counseling to help students overcome any academic or personal issues. Teachers who handle this responsibility typically have a background in education, social sciences, or psychology as a foundation for counseling their students.

The primary function of a BK teacher is to provide counseling services. These services encompass both individual and group counseling, aimed at helping students understand themselves, resolve issues, and make appropriate decisions.

Counseling in schools does not solely focus on students with behavioral problems. High-achieving students also frequently require guidance in determining choices for further education or talent development. BK teachers assist them in understanding their personal potential more objectively. Furthermore, the counseling function also includes information services, orientation, placement, and career guidance. All of these services are designed to ensure that students are better prepared to face educational and life challenges.

The Role of BK Teachers for Students

In addition to assisting with personal and social aspects, BK teachers also play a significant role in students' career planning (Hasibuan, 2018; Putri and Hayati, 2025). They provide information regarding majors, higher education choices, and the professional world. This mentorship helps students identify their interests and talents from an early stage, ensuring that their post-graduation decisions are more directed. BK teachers also help reduce students' confusion in determining the future of their education. In some schools, career guidance programs are conducted periodically through seminars, interest and talent tests, and group discussions. All of these activities aim to strengthen students' preparedness for life after high school. Specifically at SMAN 38 Jakarta, the career guidance program is carried out through regular classroom meetings. Furthermore, upon the request of a group or an individual student, BK teachers are always open and willing to accommodate those who request specific times for guidance and counseling sessions (Sari, 2026).

Division of Roles Among BK Teachers

Managing the capacity of BK teachers at SMAN 38 Jakarta with a total of 747 students across grades 10 to 12 is no easy task. Each student possesses a unique character and distinct issues, arising either internally from within themselves or externally from their family, school, and community environments. These include students who commit infractions—such as arriving late to school or disrupting their peers—as well as those experiencing a decline in academic performance. While some matters can be resolved through general guidance, other problems must be addressed on an individual basis.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the BK teacher team coordinates a division of roles to handle the entire student body. The BK teachers have agreed on a specific division of labor. Female BK teachers often serve as a source of support for students (especially female students) to consult on sensitive issues, such as physical changes (puberty), deep emotional problems, or interpersonal relationships. Female students generally feel safer and more understood when sharing with a fellow female teacher. Conversely, the male BK teacher tends to find it easier to approach male students, particularly those dealing with disciplinary issues, school brawls (*tawuran*), or hobby-related matters. Male students often feel more self-conscious or reluctant

to cry or show vulnerability in front of female teachers, making them more open to a male teacher.

Recognizing these behavioral tendencies, the sole male BK teacher at SMAN 38 Jakarta, Mr. Imam Syahrul Ramadhan, handles the male students in grades 10 and 11. Meanwhile, the female BK teachers, while maintaining overall supervision for grades 10, 11, and 12, focus more intensively on resolving issues for 12th-grade students who are nearing the completion of their high school education. These seniors consult on a wide range of matters, particularly regarding their higher education pathways—such as which universities to attend and which study programs to choose. According to a statement from one of the BK teachers, they receive 12th-grade students for consultations almost every day (Sari, 2026) as part of their final preparations before graduating and stepping into higher education.

Meanwhile, male guidance counselors primarily handle 10th and 11th-grade students, particularly regarding discipline, hobby guidance, and student brawls. However, according to Ramadhan (2026), no brawl incidents occurred during his tenure at SMAN 38 Jakarta. Early anticipation—through expanding extracurricular activities, continuous guidance, and strengthening discipline—serves as the primary approach taken by the school, with guidance counselors at the forefront. The order and discipline established by SMAN 38 Jakarta indirectly compel the students who chose this school to adapt to the existing regulations. Thus far, the guidance counselors have not found any cases of students deliberately violating the rules that have become an integral part of the school. Perhaps there are one to five students who could not follow the rules from the very beginning and, of their own accord, chose to look for another school; hence, no students were found intentionally breaking school regulations (Ramadhan, 2026).

Male guidance counselors are more oriented toward enforcing discipline among students, especially 10th graders who have just completed their lower secondary education and entered upper secondary school. The atmosphere of their previous schools often carries over, requiring them to adjust to the new school environment. Male guidance counselors also guide students to discover and pursue their hobbies through the extracurricular activities provided by the school. By pursuing their hobbies, it is expected that students can first spend their time at school on useful activities, thereby reducing unproductive actions that could harm themselves and others. Furthermore, students' personal maturity is monitored through various activities, and all homeroom teachers are actively involved in monitoring, guiding, and collaborating with the guidance counselors.

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Male guidance counselors are more oriented toward enforcing discipline among both male and female students, particularly tenth graders who have just completed their lower secondary education and transitioned to upper secondary education. The atmosphere from their previous schools often lingers, requiring them to adapt to the new school environment. Male guidance counselors also guide students to discover and pursue their hobbies through the

extracurricular activities provided by the school. By engaging in their hobbies, it is expected that students will primarily spend their school time on useful activities, thereby reducing unproductive actions that could harm themselves and others. Furthermore, students' personal maturity is monitored through various activities, and all homeroom teachers are actively involved in monitoring, guiding, and collaborating with the guidance counsellors.

Managing Messages in Guiding Students

A guidance counselor at SMAN 38 Jakarta stated that one of the aspects that must be structured is the management of messages delivered to students. Moreover, today's youth possess different characteristics compared to previous generations, necessitating message management that aligns with the traits of the generation being addressed.

Managing messages effectively is the primary key to directing students so that they not only listen but also understand and execute what is instructed. In educational psychology, good message management can trigger positive responses (as seen in conditioning principles) because it reduces student confusion.

Several tips shared by the guidance counselors regarding their students include:

- 1) Message structure
- 2) Concrete operational language
- 3) Confirmation of understanding
- 4) Consequences and reinforcement

First, message structure. Messages given to students are expected to have a clear and easily understood structure. A good message structure is one that is simple, includes pauses in speech, and is consistent. With a clear, simple, moderately paced, paused, and consistent message structure, students will be able to comprehend what the teacher is conveying.

Second, concrete operational language. According to Mr. Ramadhan (2026), a guidance counselor and the only male guidance counselor there, the language structure used should be realistic, the instructions must be actionable, and it should not lead to double interpretations by the students.

Third, confirmation of understanding. According to Mrs. Sari (2026), after providing guidance or answering questions from students during consultations, the guidance counselor confirms whether they understand what has been stated. If necessary, the student is asked to repeat the guidance given by the counselor. This approach reduces student errors in interpreting the messages conveyed by the guidance counselor.

Fourth, consequences and reinforcement. Regarding this point, according to Ramadhan (2026), a guidance counselor must convey directives--especially applicable rules--all of which have become official regulations and agreements of the school. This is because every student violation carries consequences for the student involved. Reinforcement is also provided from other sides and by other teachers, such as support from the Homeroom Teacher and directives from the Principal. In essence, directives from the guidance counselor for students who commit violations, for instance, will involve predetermined consequences. In addition, systemic reinforcement is necessary; for example, through school-wide rules that remain consistent over time. Consequently, the rules conveyed by the guidance counselor will match what the students hear from their Homeroom Teacher and the school administration as a whole.

Being a 'Listener' Rather Than Judging

One of the tips shared with the researcher is that guidance counselors, who were once perceived as the "School Police," must completely shift that perspective in their new role. The past approach--where students who committed violations were lectured endlessly, had their mistakes pointed out, and were denied the right to speak up or defend themselves--has now changed (Ratih, *Interview*, 2026). Guidance counselors have now become good listeners,

especially with the responsibility of supporting 10th and 11th-grade students. As a female guidance counselor, [it is evident that] many students--particularly those going through puberty and facing various internal and external conflicts within their families, school environments, and social circles--sometimes simply need someone to talk to. The guidance counselor is expected to be a trusted figure; hence, they must possess the ability to listen and be a good listener rather than judging (Ramadhan, *Interview*, 2026).

DISCUSSION

Analysis Based on Pavlov's Theory

Pavlov (1902) developed his theory through experiments on dogs. The dogs' responses to these experiments were considered analogous to human responses. The core assumptions of Pavlov's theory are as follows:

Behavior is a Result of Environmental Learning (Behaviorism)

Pavlov assumed that most behaviors are not instinctive from birth, but are rather shaped by interactions with the environment. The primary focus of this theory is the relationship between an external stimulus and the resulting response. Research conducted on guidance counselors at SMAN 38 Jakarta regarding building positive student attitudes indicates that students who choose SMAN 38 Jakarta as their place of learning after completing lower secondary education gradually adapt their behavior to match the values enforced at the school. In addition to learning upon entering the school, it is highly likely that before enrolling at SMAN 38 Jakarta, these students had already sought guidance by inquiring with peers currently attending or those who have graduated from the school. Consequently, adjustment becomes easier for them because they have learned from both their previous environment and the current environment of which they are now a part.

The Relationship Between Stimulus and Response (S-R)

This theory assumes that the learning process occurs automatically through association. If two stimuli are presented together repeatedly, the brain will link the two.

- 1) Natural Stimulus: Food (Unconditioned Stimulus) naturally produces salivation (Unconditioned Response).
- 2) Neutral Stimulus: A bell (initially produces no salivation).
- 3) Result of Association: After continuous pairing, the bell alone (Conditioned Stimulus) can produce salivation (Conditioned Response).

Based on these assumptions, the stimulus provided is a result of association--namely a conditioned learning process--which causes students to respond in accordance with the regulations at SMAN 38 Jakarta. Once these students become part of the school, they will naturally comply with all the rules enforced by the school administration, as this is further supported by the conditioning implemented.

Internal Mind (Consciousness) Can Be Ignored

Pavlov disregarded internal thoughts because, to him, only observable behavior can be measured. Consequently, there is no assessment of a person's underlying assumptions regarding whether they are pleased with their current actions or not. SMAN 38 Jakarta, however, applies observations to both behavior and the students' thoughts. This was noted by Mrs. Sari (*Interview*, 2026), who stated that guidance counselors at SMAN 38 Jakarta must be good listeners, demonstrating genuine teacher sincerity (Yani, 2022). Thus, students are given space to express whatever they need to convey to the counselor without any fear--such as the fear that confidential information will be leaked to the public. It is a strict commitment among the guidance counselors to maintain the confidentiality of student information, ensuring it is

not shared with others unless absolutely necessary, such as for advanced counseling or crucial matters involving parents where parental awareness is mandatory.

Similarity of Learning Processes in Humans and Animals

Pavlov assumed that the fundamental laws of learning apply equally to all living organisms. Therefore, experiments conducted on animals (in this case, dogs) can be used to explain and predict how humans learn, particularly in terms of habit formation, emotions, and phobias. Based on this assumption, the learning process implemented by SMAN 38 Jakarta enables students to understand what is permissible and what is forbidden. Hence, Pavlov's assumption regarding the similarity of learning processes between humans and animals remains applicable.

The learning process at SMAN 38 Jakarta implements several elements: consistency, habituation, and mutually agreed-upon rules executed uniformly by the management of SMAN 38 Jakarta. Therefore, students experience the enforcement of identical rules and receive the same information from both guidance counselors and homeroom teachers, as well as other faculty members. This consistency of rules allows students to form a habit of properly analyzing what they are permitted to do and what they must avoid.

CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that there has been a paradigm shift regarding the role of guidance counselors between the past and the present. While guidance counselors were once perceived as the "School Police," they now serve a dual role as both a friend to the students and an enforcer of discipline. The consistency of rules and policies, along with clear implementation starting from the Principal, teachers, and Homeroom Teachers, makes the task of guidance counselors easier in shaping positive student character. Four assumptions of Pavlov's Theory were analyzed in this study, namely: most behaviors are not instinctive from birth; the relationship between Stimulus and Response; the internal mind can be ignored; and the similarity of learning processes between humans and animals. This study found that three of these assumptions can be implemented. However, regarding the assumption that the internal mind can be ignored, this study revealed that the students' internal thoughts are not disregarded. This is demonstrated by providing time and space for students to express their problems to the guidance counselors, who act as good listeners and provide solutions when needed. This approach has strengthened relationships and built positive student character, as students feel valued and feel that they have someone who will listen to their problems.

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