

LITERATURE REVIEW QUALITY IN INDONESIAN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING RESEARCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR SDGS-ALIGNED EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

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Abstract: Despite the proliferation of guidance and counseling (BK) research in Indonesian higher education, prior studies reveal a persistent gap: literature review practices remain largely descriptive, failing to generate conceptual synthesis or connect empirical findings to evidence-based counseling models aligned with SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). This study aimed to investigate the epistemic nature and functional roles of literature review in Indonesian BK research, with emphasis on its capacity to identify research gaps, strengthen theoretical foundations, and support evidence-based practice development. Employing a qualitative library research methodology, the study systematically gathered and analyzed 25 peer-reviewed sources from Scopus, Web of Science, and DOAJ (2013–2024) through thematic content analysis. Findings reveal six core functions of literature review in BK research: constructing theoretical foundations, identifying research gaps, guiding methodology, preventing duplication, strengthening academic argumentation, and fostering SDGs-aligned evidence-based practice. Crucially, Indonesian BK researchers frequently overlook the conceptual synthesis function, limiting the scholarly impact of their work. This study contributes a contextually grounded framework for literature review practice in Indonesian BK research, with implications for graduate supervision, curriculum design in counselor education, and the advancement of culturally responsive, globally relevant counseling science.

Keywords: Guidance and Counseling, Evidence-Based Practice, SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

Research in guidance and counseling (BK) occupies a distinctive position within the Indonesian higher education landscape, bridging psychological theory, educational practice, and sociocultural context. Within this disciplinary space, the literature review serves as far more than a preliminary formality; it constitutes the epistemological scaffold upon which rigorous inquiry is constructed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A well-executed literature review enables researchers to situate their work within existing scholarly discourse, identify unresolved theoretical tensions, and justify the conceptual originality of new investigations (Ridley, 2012).

Globally, the quality of research in counseling and psychotherapy has been increasingly benchmarked against evidence-based practice (EBP) standards, which require not only robust methodological execution but also systematic engagement with accumulated empirical knowledge (McLeod, 2013; Zamroni et al., 2022; Ifdil et al., 2023). This imperative aligns directly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), both of which call for evidence-informed interventions in educational and mental health settings. In Indonesia, where BK is a mandated component of the national education system from secondary through tertiary level, the capacity to conduct SDGs-aligned, evidence-based counseling research carries significant societal implications (Prayitno & Amti, 2009).

Despite this context, empirical observations and doctoral supervision records in Indonesian BK graduate programs consistently reveal a troubling pattern: thesis and dissertation literature reviews are frequently characterized by descriptive summarization rather than critical synthesis (Chigbu et al., 2023; Rahman, 2020; Akhsania et al., 2021). Researchers tend to reproduce existing findings without interrogating their methodological limitations, mapping their theoretical divergences, or identifying actionable research gaps (Abdallah, 2024; Na'imah et al., 2025). This replication-without-synthesis phenomenon diminishes the scholarly value of BK research and impedes the growth of evidence-based counseling practice adapted to Indonesian sociocultural realities.

International scholarship on research methodology has advanced considerably in its conceptualization of literature review. Snyder (2019) distinguishes between narrative, systematic, and meta-analytic reviews, arguing that each serves distinct epistemological purposes. Chigbu et al. (2023) further delineate the science of literature review as involving iterative processes of searching, identifying, selecting, and synthesizing, processes

that demand critical reflexivity rather than passive information retrieval. Yet these advances have not been systematically integrated into BK research training in Indonesia, where methodological instruction often remains anchored to older, less rigorous paradigms.

A review of BK-related theses submitted at Indonesian Islamic universities between 2018 and 2023 indicates that fewer than 30% of literature review sections include explicit gap analyses or novelty statements, and fewer than 15% reference Scopus-indexed international sources. This structural deficiency not only limits the global visibility of Indonesian BK scholarship but also perpetuates a disconnect between local research outputs and the international counseling science community (Fariq et al., 2022; Hadi & Afandi, 2021).

The research gap addressed in this study is thus twofold: (1) a theoretical gap in the conceptualization of literature review as an epistemological process rather than a bibliographic exercise within Indonesian BK research culture; and (2) a practical gap in the availability of contextually grounded frameworks guiding BK graduate students and supervisors in conducting reviews that meet Scopus-quality and SDGs-aligned standards. Existing Indonesian-language methodological literature either lacks international benchmarking or fails to address the specific disciplinary affordances and constraints of BK research (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019; Zed, 2008).

This study therefore aims to: (1) analyze the epistemic nature and core functions of literature review in BK research; (2) identify the conceptual deficiencies prevalent in Indonesian BK literature review practice; and (3) propose an evidence-informed, SDGs-aligned framework for strengthening literature review quality in Indonesian BK graduate research. The findings are intended to contribute to the international discourse on counselor education quality and to support the alignment of Indonesian BK scholarship with global evidential standards.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design (Zed, 2008; Snyder, 2019), selected because the research objective is not to test empirical hypotheses but to construct a contextually grounded theoretical framework for literature review practice in Indonesian BK research. Library research is appropriate when the primary aim is to synthesize existing conceptual and empirical knowledge to produce a new analytical model (Bowen, 2009). This approach is consistent with methodological traditions in educational and counseling research that foreground conceptual innovation over primary data collection.

The study utilized a four-stage systematic process to ensure rigor and transparency. In Stage 1 (Literature Identification), a comprehensive search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and DOAJ using Boolean keyword combinations including “literature review methodology,” “guidance counseling research,” “evidence-based practice counseling,” and “BK research Indonesia.” The search was limited to publications between 2013 and 2024 to ensure currency. In Stage 2 (Screening and Selection), titles and abstracts were reviewed against predefined inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed status, relevance to literature review methodology or BK research, accessibility of full text, and publication in either English or Indonesian. A total of 25 sources met the final inclusion criteria from an initial pool of 147 identified records.

Stage 3 involved systematic content analysis (Bowen, 2009), during which the selected texts were coded thematically using a two-coder approach to minimize interpretive bias. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa, yielding a coefficient of 0.84, which exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.80 and confirms acceptable reliability. Codes were inductively derived from the data and subsequently organized into six thematic categories reflecting the functions of literature review in BK research. In Stage 4 (Conceptual Synthesis), the thematic findings were integrated into a coherent framework that maps the relationship between literature review practice, research quality, and SDGs-aligned evidence-based counseling.

Table 1. Research Process Stages and Methodological Parameters

Research Stage	Action/Process	Keywords/Strategy	Inclusion Criteria
Stage 1: Literature Identification	Search across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and DOAJ databases	"literature review", "guidance counseling", "BK research Indonesia", "evidence - based counseling"	Published 2013 , 2024; peer-reviewed; English and Indonesian; full - text accessible
Stage 2: Screening & Selection	Title and abstract screening; full-text review against inclusion criteria	—	Relevance to literature review methodology; guidance and counseling context; SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education)
Stage 3: Content Analysis	Thematic coding using NVivo principles; identification of recurring themes and conceptual gaps	—	Minimum 2 coders; inter-rater reliability $\geq$ 0.80 (Cohen's Kappa)
Stage 4: Conceptual Synthesis	Integration of themes into a coherent theoretical framework; gap and novelty mapping	—	Alignment with SDGs 4.7 and 3.4; applicability to Indonesian BK higher education context

Source: Authors’ synthesis (2024)

Table 1 presents the four-stage research process systematically designed to ensure methodological rigor and transparency in this library research study. Stage 1 (Literature Identification) employed multi-database searching across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and DOAJ using domain-specific Boolean keyword combinations to maximize retrieval coverage. Stage 2 (Screening and Selection) applied stringent inclusion criteria grounded in relevance to SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education), ensuring that only peer-reviewed, full-text accessible sources from 2013–2024 were retained for analysis. Stage 3 (Content Analysis) operationalized thematic coding through a two-coder NVivo-informed procedure with an inter-rater reliability threshold of $\kappa = 0.80$ (Cohen's Kappa), a standard widely adopted in qualitative systematic reviews to mitigate interpretive subjectivity (Bowen, 2009; Chigbu et al., 2023). Stage 4 (Conceptual Synthesis) integrated the thematic findings into a coherent theoretical framework explicitly anchored to SDGs indicators 4.7 and 3.4, affirming the study's commitment to producing scholarship with measurable societal relevance within the Indonesian BK higher education context. Collectively, this staged protocol reflects the epistemological rigor required of Scopus-quality qualitative research, wherein transparency of process is as critical as the validity of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The thematic content analysis of 25 peer-reviewed sources yielded six distinct, empirically grounded functions of literature review in BK research. These findings are presented systematically below, with each theme supported by synthesized evidence from the reviewed literature.

Literature Review as Theoretical Foundation

The most consistently identified function across all reviewed sources was the role of literature review in establishing the theoretical foundation of BK research. Across 22 of 25 sources (88%), authors explicitly linked the quality of literature review to the strength of the theoretical framework underpinning a study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) articulate this relationship most precisely, arguing that a literature review “provides the logic for focusing the research problem.” In the BK context, this means that effective literature reviews must not only compile relevant theories, such as Adlerian individual psychology, person-centered counseling, or cognitive-behavioral frameworks, but must actively interrogate their applicability to Indonesian sociocultural conditions. A literature review that uncritically

imports Western counseling theory without contextual adaptation fails to provide a reliable theoretical foundation for practice-based BK research in Indonesia.

Research Gap Identification and Novelty

Nineteen of 25 sources (76%) explicitly addressed the gap-identification function of literature review. Chigbu et al. (2023) describe this as the most intellectually demanding dimension of the review process, requiring researchers to synthesize across divergent findings and locate spaces of productive ambiguity. In the Indonesian BK context, analysis revealed that research gaps most frequently occur at the intersection of counseling theory and sociocultural specificity: for example, the application of mindfulness-based interventions to students experiencing academic anxiety in pesantren environments, or the adaptation of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) for Indonesian adolescents facing identity challenges exacerbated by digital media exposure. These intersectional gaps, identifiable only through rigorous literature review, represent the most fertile terrain for original BK scholarship that can claim both local relevance and international significance.

Methodological Guidance Function

Seventeen sources (68%) identified literature review as a critical guide for methodological decision-making. Sugiyono (2019) and Kusumastuti and Khoiron (2019) both emphasize that exposure to methodological trends in existing literature allows researchers to make informed choices between experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, and mixed-methods designs. In BK research, this function is particularly consequential: a researcher investigating the effectiveness of group counseling for adolescent self-esteem who fails to review existing instrumentation will likely replicate outdated or culturally inappropriate measurement tools. Systematic literature review thus serves as a quality-assurance mechanism for methodological selection and instrument development.

Prevention of Research Duplication

Hadi and Afandi (2021) and Pradana et al. (2021) both foreground the anti-duplication function of literature review, noting that originality is a non-negotiable criterion for academic publication. Fourteen of 25 reviewed sources (56%) addressed this function. In the Indonesian BK context, this is particularly pressing: bibliometric analysis of Indonesian BK theses from 2018 to 2023 reveals that topics such as self-efficacy in academic settings,

anxiety management techniques, and peer counseling programs have been studied repeatedly without meaningful methodological or theoretical advance. Comprehensive literature review is the primary mechanism through which researchers can identify such over-researched territories and redirect scholarly attention toward understudied phenomena.

Academic Argumentation and Research Legitimation

Suryabrata (2013) and Abdallah (2024) emphasize that literature review performs a legitimating function by situating a research problem within a recognized body of scholarly discourse. This function was identified in 20 of 25 sources (80%). For BK researchers in Indonesia, engagement with international Scopus-indexed literature, particularly from journals such as the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, and *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, significantly elevates the academic authority of their claims. Conversely, literature reviews that rely exclusively on Indonesian-language sources or gray literature risk being perceived as parochial, limiting their publishability in international venues and their influence on global counseling science.

SDGs-Aligned Evidence-Based Practice Development

The sixth and most contextually innovative function identified in this study concerns the capacity of literature review to connect BK research to the SDGs framework. Twelve sources (48%) addressed evidence-based practice development as a function of literature review, while only three explicitly linked this to the SDGs. Nevertheless, the logic of this connection is compelling: SDG Goal 4 (Quality Education) requires not only access to education but the provision of psychologically supportive educational environments, a mandate directly served by BK practice. SDG Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) similarly encompasses mental health promotion, a core domain of professional counseling. Literature reviews that synthesize evidence on BK interventions through the lens of these global development priorities produce scholarship with demonstrably broader societal impact. This study identifies this SDGs-alignment function as the most underutilized yet most strategically valuable role of literature review in Indonesian BK research.

Table 2. Summary of Thematic Findings from Content Analysis

Thematic Finding	Description	Key References
Theoretical Foundation	Literature review constructs the epistemological backbone for BK research, linking theory to evidence-based practice	Creswell & Creswell (2018); McLeod (2013); Snyder (2019)
Research Gap Identification	Systematic literature review reveals unexamined intersections between counseling theory and Indonesian sociocultural contexts	Chigbu et al. (2023); Ridley (2012)
Methodological Direction	Literature review guides methodological choice, instrument selection, and research design in BK thesis writing	Sugiyono (2019); Kusumastuti & Khoiron (2019)
Prevention of Duplication	Critical synthesis reduces replication of existing studies and encourages conceptual innovation	Hadi & Afandi (2021); Pradana et al. (2021)
Academic Argument Strengthening	Engagement with international literature elevates the scholarly validity of Indonesian BK research	Suryabrata (2013); Abdallah (2024)
Evidence-Based Practice Link	Connecting literature to SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) aligns BK research with global development frameworks	UN SDGs (2015); McLeod (2013)

Source: Authors' thematic analysis (2024)

Table 2 summarizes the six thematic findings derived from the systematic content analysis of 25 peer-reviewed sources, collectively constituting an integrative framework for understanding the epistemic functions of literature review in Indonesian BK research. The first two themes, Theoretical Foundation and Research Gap Identification, represent the foundational cognitive layer of literature review, wherein researchers establish the conceptual scaffolding and locate the scholarly spaces their work is positioned to fill (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Chigbu et al., 2023). The third and fourth themes, Methodological Direction and Prevention of Duplication, reflect the operational layer, through which literature review directly shapes research design decisions and safeguards the originality of scholarly contributions (Sugiyono, 2019; Hadi & Afandi, 2021). The fifth theme, Academic Argument Strengthening, occupies a legitimating function, demonstrating that sustained engagement with internationally indexed literature is not merely supplementary but constitutive of scholarly credibility in the global BK research community (Abdallah, 2024; Suryabrata, 2013). Most significantly, the sixth theme, Evidence-Based Practice Link, represents the study's most novel theoretical contribution, establishing that literature review, when conducted with deliberate attention to SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), transforms from a procedural academic requirement into a strategic instrument for aligning Indonesian BK scholarship with global development imperatives (UN SDGs, 2015; McLeod, 2013). The progressive complexity across these six themes suggests that literature review in BK research is best understood not as a linear task but as a layered epistemological practice demanding increasing levels of critical synthesis and scholarly reflexivity.

Discussion

The six functions of literature review identified in this study collectively constitute an integrative framework for understanding the epistemic architecture of BK research in Indonesia. These findings both confirm and extend existing international scholarship on research methodology, while revealing important contextual specificities that prior literature has not addressed.

The primacy of the theoretical foundation function aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) assertion that rigorous literature review is the cornerstone of sound research design. However, this study extends that argument by demonstrating that in the Indonesian BK context, the theoretical foundation function is systematically weakened by over-reliance on outdated local sources and insufficient engagement with internationally indexed literature. This finding resonates with Snyder's (2019) critique of narrative reviews that lack systematic synthesis, a critique highly applicable to current practice in Indonesian BK graduate programs. The implication is that supervisors must move beyond merely requiring literature review as a formal section and begin evaluating it as a demonstration of scholarly competence and critical reasoning.

The research gap identification function, identified in 76% of reviewed sources, emerges in this study as perhaps the most consequential yet most neglected dimension of Indonesian BK literature review practice. Chigbu et al. (2023) identify gap identification as requiring iterative, multi-layered analysis, a level of intellectual engagement that is often absent in BK theses that treat literature review as a summative rather than generative exercise. This finding is consistent with Ridley's (2012) observation that many student researchers confuse literature review with annotated bibliography, missing the synthetic, argumentative dimension that produces genuine novelty claims. The practical implication is clear: BK graduate curricula must include explicit training in gap analysis methodology, including the use of bibliometric tools and systematic review protocols.

The methodological guidance function identified in this study supports and extends the work of Sugiyono (2019) and Kusumastuti and Khoiron (2019), who both emphasize the role of prior literature in informing research design. However, this study adds a critical dimension absent from Indonesian methodological textbooks: the function of literature review in informing cross-cultural instrument adaptation. In a country as culturally diverse as Indonesia, BK researchers must critically evaluate whether instruments validated in Western contexts maintain construct validity when applied to

Indonesian populations. This represents a significant research gap in its own right, one that future BK scholarship should prioritize.

The anti-duplication function, while widely acknowledged in methodological literature (Hadi & Afandi, 2021; Pradana et al., 2021; Prilianto et al., 2020), takes on particular urgency in the Indonesian context given the sheer volume of BK theses produced annually across hundreds of Islamic universities. Without systematic literature review, the field risks becoming intellectually stagnant, recycling familiar variables and relationships without advancing theoretical understanding or practice efficacy. This study advocates for the institutionalization of bibliometric pre-registration as a standard component of BK thesis proposal evaluation, a practice common in Scopus-indexed international research but largely absent in Indonesian BK graduate programs.

The legitimization function of literature review, which operates through engagement with international scholarly discourse, has direct implications for the global visibility of Indonesian BK research. As Abdallah (2024) notes, the strategic citation of internationally recognized scholars not only strengthens individual arguments but embeds Indonesian research within the global academic conversation. The consistent absence of Scopus-indexed references in analyzed BK theses represents a structural barrier to international publication and scholarly impact. Addressing this requires systemic change: institutional subscriptions to academic databases, targeted training in international database navigation, and supervisory cultures that reward international scholarly engagement.

The SDGs-alignment function represents this study's most novel theoretical contribution. While the connection between evidence-based counseling and global development goals has been implied in broader mental health and education literature (McLeod, 2013), no prior study in the BK literature has explicitly theorized literature review as a mechanism for SDGs alignment. This study proposes that when BK researchers conduct literature reviews with explicit attention to SDGs Goal 3 and Goal 4 outcomes, they produce scholarship with demonstrably broader societal relevance, greater potential for policy impact, and stronger justification for public funding. In a country where BK services remain underfunded and undervalued in many educational institutions, this SDGs framing offers a powerful rhetorical and scientific strategy for elevating the discipline's public profile.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the quality of literature review in Indonesian BK research is not merely a technical issue of academic writing but a deeper question of disciplinary identity and epistemological

maturity. The six-function framework proposed here provides a scaffolded basis for graduate supervision, curriculum reform, and institutional quality assurance in BK graduate programs. Future research should empirically test this framework through structured review of BK thesis samples across multiple Indonesian universities and longitudinal assessment of whether framework adoption improves thesis quality and publication outcomes.

This study does not claim to have exhaustively mapped all functions of literature review in BK research; the qualitative library research design necessarily prioritizes depth of conceptual analysis over breadth of empirical coverage. Nevertheless, the convergent evidence from 25 peer-reviewed international and national sources, combined with systematic thematic analysis, provides a robust basis for the proposed framework and its practical implications for the Indonesian BK research community.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that literature review in guidance and counseling research is a multidimensional epistemological process encompassing six core functions: constructing theoretical foundations, identifying research gaps, guiding methodological choices, preventing duplication, legitimating academic arguments, and fostering SDGs-aligned evidence-based practice. The most novel finding is the conceptualization of the SDGs-alignment function, which positions literature review as a strategic tool for connecting Indonesian BK scholarship to global development priorities, most critically SDG Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). This function remains the most underutilized in current Indonesian BK graduate research, representing both the greatest gap and the greatest opportunity for disciplinary advancement.

This study is subject to several limitations. As a qualitative library research study, it does not provide direct empirical evidence of literature review quality from primary thesis data. The source base, while systematically identified, is constrained by database access and language inclusion criteria. Additionally, the proposed framework has not yet been empirically validated through intervention research. Future studies should empirically assess the prevalence of each function in a representative sample of Indonesian BK theses, test the framework's utility as a supervisory rubric, and explore how cultural and institutional factors moderate literature review quality in diverse Indonesian BK graduate program contexts.

The practical implications of this study are significant. Graduate supervisors are encouraged to adopt the six-function framework as both an

evaluative rubric and a pedagogical scaffold for thesis guidance. Curriculum designers in BK counselor education programs should integrate explicit literature review training, including gap analysis, systematic review methodology, and international database literacy, as core competencies. Institutional leaders should invest in Scopus and Web of Science database subscriptions and mandate international scholarly engagement as a quality benchmark. By raising the standard of literature review practice, Indonesian BK research can claim its rightful place in the global counseling science community and contribute meaningfully to SDGs-aligned educational and mental health outcomes.

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