

# NURTURING FUTURE CITIZENS: CHARACTER, CIVIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN GROWTH

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**Educational Sovereignty: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Digital Learning Innovation**

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# Contents

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|    | <b>Contributors</b>                                                                                                                                                             | ix  |
|    | <b>Acknowledgments</b>                                                                                                                                                          | xix |
|    | <b>Preface</b>                                                                                                                                                                  | xx  |
|    | <b>Introduction</b>                                                                                                                                                             | 1   |
| 1. | Gross National Happiness and Emotional Intelligence: A Bhutanese Model of Compassionate Leadership<br><i>Sonam Choden, Yeshi Samdrup</i>                                        | 7   |
| 2. | The Mandala Model: A Conceptual Framework for Preserving Cultural Identity in Local Culture-Based Elementary School Teacher Education<br><i>Ayu Titis Rukmana Sari, Wahyudi</i> | 23  |
| 3. | Leading by Example: The Principal's Role in Coordinated Anti-Bullying Programmes at SMP Azmania Ponorogo<br><i>Citra Atmawijaya, Ardhana Januar Mabardhani, Sulton</i>          | 51  |
| 4. | Civic Character in the Digital Age: A Systematic Review of Strategies for Strengthening Civic Disposition<br><i>Regina Santi, Ambiro Puji Asmaroini, and Sunarto</i>            | 63  |
| 5. | Integrating STEM and STEAM Education to Create Innovative Learning in the Digital Era<br><i>Nayla Safirotu Khoir, Dinda Hafna Sari</i>                                          | 75  |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 6.  | Implementation of Digital Literacy to Form National Insight in the Era of the Industrial Revolution<br><i>Muhammad Zabal Alfarid Piko Nugroho, Sutrisno, Ambiro Puji Asmaroini</i>                                                                                                        | 95  |
| 7.  | A Synergy of Restorative Pedagogy: The Collaboration Model Between Guidance and Counseling Teachers and Subject Teachers in Internalizing Pancasila Values to Prevent Student Verbal Violence<br><i>Muhammad Tegar Trisutrisno, Sulton, and Sunarto</i>                                   | 109 |
| 8.  | A Synthesis of Ethos and Techne: Integrating Qur'anic Values and Science-Technology Education for Character Fortification and Contemporary Democratic Citizenship<br><i>Dila Purwitasari, Sulton, and Ardhana Januar Mahardhani</i>                                                       | 145 |
| 9.  | Epistemological Horizons and Methodological Rigour in Culture-Based Education: A Decennial Systematic Review of Global Trends, Theoretical Fragmentation, and Research Gaps<br><i>M. Zainudin, Rahmatika Dewi, Mario Damanik, Muhammad Rijal, Hakis, M. Ali Ghufron, Thorida Nur Asih</i> | 172 |
| 10. | Reconstructing Primary Teacher Education for Global Citizenship: Globalizing Pedagogy through Local Epistemologies<br><i>Heni Marpuah</i>                                                                                                                                                 | 210 |
| 11. | Cultivating Democratic Values through Social Media: A Case Study of Digital Democracy Practice among Junior Secondary Students at SMP Negeri 3 Ponorogo<br><i>Adel Permana, Hadi Cahyono, and Ambiro Puji Asmaroini</i>                                                                   | 225 |
| 12. | Nourishing Minds: Strategies to Strengthen Students' Thinking Power through Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Program<br><i>Misya Wahyu Registiningrum, Sutrisno, and Hadi Cahyono</i>                                                                                                     | 247 |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |     |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 13. | The Impact of Nature-Based Learning on Strengthening Students' Civic Confidence at SMPN 2 Balong<br><i>Evik Syah Rahayu, Hadi Cahyono, and Sutrisno</i>                                                                                                          | 277 |
| 14. | Innovating the Merdeka Curriculum: Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications for Improving Education Quality in Indonesian Schools<br><i>Siti Nur Khotimah, Anni Nurfaizga, and Sukiman</i>                                                                    | 299 |
| 15. | Understanding Student Motivation Problems in Classroom Learning Activities: A Literature Review of Causes, Consequences, and Strategies<br><i>Salma Nayla Puspita Sari, Nadia Eka Nartika Sari, Yogi Restuning Tinulatsih, and Arsentia Ariel Gilang Samudra</i> | 329 |
| 16. | Exploring Perceptions of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Training Among Non-Pedagogical Trained Lecturers in FELCRA College<br><i>Syazwani Arbaiyah Mohd Shabir</i>                                                                                                | 348 |
| 17. | The Role of Counseling Services in Promoting Gender Equality in Educational Settings: A Systematic Literature Review<br><i>Nur Sholehab Dian Saputri, Muhammad Rizky Nur Prakoso</i>                                                                             | 376 |
| 18. | Beyond Subject Mastery: Teachers' Academic and Professional Competencies for Quality Learning in the Digital Era<br><i>Nayla Az Zahra</i>                                                                                                                        | 404 |
| 19. | Reconstructing the Theology of Work as a Pedagogical Foundation for Christian Education: Integrating Faith, Character, and Competence<br><i>Talizaro Tafonao, Abraham Marsal Sakati, Desy Mintin, and Eriyani Mendrofa</i>                                       | 430 |
| 20. | Social Transformation Through Community-Based Inclusive Education: The Contribution of Paulo Freire's Grand Theory in the Context of Community Education                                                                                                         | 477 |

*Amisha, Ismah Andini Putri, Warhamni, Indi Julianti, Fauzan Hidayatullah*

21. Mapping Global Citizenship Awareness among Civic Education Students: A Quantitative Analysis at Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri  
*Muhammad Nanang Ramadhan, Agus Widodo, Yunita Dwi Pristiani, and Afrika Sutri Astria* 499
22. Internalizing Love for the Homeland through Prayer: Civic Disposition and Religious Practice in the Wahidiyah Youth Congregation  
*Achmad Fadlil Kurniawan, Nursalim, and Wikan Sasmita* 527
23. Instagram as a Digital Civic Space: Civic Engagement among Civic Education Students in the Algorithmic Era  
*Imam Baihaqi* 554
24. The Representation of Indonesian Unity in the Lafran Film: Cinematic Narrative as a Pedagogical Resource for Pancasila and Civic Education  
*Ade Irfan Maulana, Nursalim, and Wikan Sasmita* 581
25. From Student to Teacher: Student Onboarding and Professional Identity Formation in Early Childhood Education  
*Aziera Naquiah Mohamad Kamal* 618
26. Understanding Adolescent Smoking Behaviour and the Role of Guidance and Counselling Teachers in Vocational Schools  
*Dimas Febri Wicaksono, Atrup, Galang Surya Gumilang* 641
27. Educating the Civic Soul: The Implementation of Character Education Based on Divine Values in the Perspective of Pancasila and Citizenship Education at MTsN 5 Kediri  
*Nurul Hidayah* 665

|     |                                                                                                                                                                             |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 28. | Gamifying Civic Learning: Kahoot!-Based Interactive Media and the Reconstruction of Learning Motivation in Vocational Pancasila Education<br><i>Herdian Tria Wulan Sari</i> | 710 |
| 29. | Sportsmanship and the Soul of the Nation: Pancasila, Fair Play, and Character Formation in Student Futsal Tournaments in Kediri, Indonesia<br><i>Ignasius Koo Boo</i>       | 747 |
|     | <b>Index</b>                                                                                                                                                                | 782 |

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We are also deeply thankful to all the institutions and universities of the contributors, particularly Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri and various partner institutions across Indonesia, for creating a vibrant and supportive scholarly ecosystem. The outstanding quality of the research and chapters in this volume is a direct result of the conducive academic environment, collaborative spirit, and intellectual dynamism nurtured within these campuses.

Special appreciation goes to the contributors for their expertise, dedication, and high-quality contributions. Their efforts in producing insightful and impactful work on regional issues are greatly appreciated.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks go to our families for their endless patience, understanding, and support throughout the preparation of this volume.

# Preface

This volume began with a question that recurs in staff rooms, faculty meetings, and policy consultations across the region: what, precisely, are schools for? The answers on offer are rarely in open conflict, but they pull in different directions. One emphasises measurable achievement; another, employability; another, moral and civic formation. The contributors to this book were invited on the premise that these are not alternatives to be ranked but dimensions of a single task, and that the task is best examined where it is actually carried out, in particular classrooms, with particular students, under particular constraints.

The chapters that follow are drawn from research conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bhutan. They range across curriculum reform, guidance and counselling, teacher preparation, religious and moral education, inclusive schooling, and the uses and hazards of digital media. Some report small qualitative studies in a single school; others synthesise a decade of international literature. What they share is a refusal to treat character and citizenship as topics to be covered rather than capacities to be formed.

Assembling a collection of this breadth involves compromise. Contributors work in different scholarly traditions and write from different disciplinary vocabularies, and the editors have chosen to preserve that variety rather than impose a uniform theoretical idiom. What has been standardised is the architecture of each chapter, so that a reader may move between them without relearning the structure each time, and so that claims, evidence, and implications remain distinguishable from one another.

The editors are conscious that a volume of this kind is a snapshot rather than a settlement. Several chapters identify gaps in their own evidence and name them plainly. We regard this as a strength. A field that reports only its successes teaches very little; one that is candid about what remains unresolved leaves something usable for those who come next.

We offer this book to teachers, teacher educators, counsellors, school leaders, postgraduate students, and policymakers, in the hope that it proves useful to the work they are already doing.

Izharulhak Saiful Hafni  
on behalf of The Editors  
Kediri, 2026

# Introduction

Education is never merely a technical enterprise. Behind every curriculum document, every lesson plan, and every classroom routine lies an implicit answer to a much older question: what kind of human being, and what kind of citizen, are we trying to bring into the world? This volume takes that question as its point of departure. *Nurturing Future Citizens: Character, Civic Education and Human Growth* gathers the work of scholars, teacher educators, classroom practitioners, and counsellors who share a common conviction, namely that character formation, civic capability, and human flourishing are not separate agendas competing for space in an already crowded school day, but three dimensions of a single educational task.

The urgency of that task is not difficult to demonstrate. Across Southeast Asia and beyond, education systems are being asked to respond simultaneously to demographic transition, rapid digitalisation, widening inequality, ecological pressure, and a marked erosion of public trust in shared democratic institutions. Indonesian schools, in particular, have absorbed a succession of ambitious reforms within a comparatively short period, from the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum and its emphasis on differentiated, student-centred learning, to large-scale social policies such as the national free nutritious meal programme, whose educational consequences are only begin-

ning to be understood. At the same time, teachers confront the everyday realities of adolescent risk behaviour, bullying, chronic absenteeism, low motivation, and the difficulty of making abstract civic ideals meaningful to young people whose primary experience of the public sphere is mediated by a smartphone screen.

It would be tempting to treat these as separate problems requiring separate specialist remedies. The chapters collected here suggest otherwise. Read together, they make a cumulative argument: that the quality of civic life in a society is closely bound to the quality of care, recognition, and moral formation that its schools are able to offer. A student who is hungry cannot concentrate; a student who feels unseen will not speak; a student who has never been invited to disagree respectfully will not know how to do so as an adult. Civic education, on this account, begins long before the formal study of constitutions and institutions, and it extends well beyond the boundaries of any single subject.

### ***The Scope and Structure of the Volume***

The volume brings together contributions from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bhutan, together with studies whose frame of reference is explicitly global. This comparative breadth is deliberate. It allows the reader to see how a shared set of concerns is refracted through very different national philosophies of education, and it guards against the assumption that any single model of civic formation is universally applicable. The chapters vary considerably in method, encompassing systematic literature reviews, classroom experiments, correlational studies, qualitative case studies, narrative and discourse analysis, and conceptual model-building. That methodological plurality is itself instructive, since it reflects the genuinely interdisciplinary character of the field.

Although the chapters may be read in any order, several thematic clusters emerge.

The first cluster addresses the philosophical and spiritual foundations of character education. Chapters in this group examine the Bhu-

tanese articulation of Gross National Happiness and emotional intelligence as a model of compassionate leadership, the synthesis of Qur'anic ethos and scientific and technological competence as a foundation for democratic citizenship, the reconstruction of a theology of work as a pedagogical basis for Christian education, the cultivation of moral character through Aqidah–Akhlaq instruction, the relevance of prophetic educational philosophy to lifelong learning, and the implementation of character education grounded in Divine values within the framework of Pancasila and citizenship education. What unites these otherwise distinct traditions is a refusal to treat values as a decorative supplement to instruction. In each case, the ethical and spiritual dimension is presented as constitutive of educational purpose rather than incidental to it.

A second cluster concerns culture, identity, and the politics of locality. Here the reader will find a conceptual framework for preserving cultural identity in local culture-based elementary teacher education, a decennial systematic review mapping the theoretical fragmentation and methodological state of culture-based education research worldwide, a quantitative mapping of global citizenship awareness among civic education students, an account of the campus as a site where national integration is practised, and an analysis of cinematic narrative as a pedagogical resource for teaching national unity. Collectively, these chapters interrogate the relationship between the local and the global, and they resist the false choice between cultural rootedness and cosmopolitan openness.

A third cluster turns to curriculum, pedagogy, and instructional innovation. Contributors examine the opportunities and constraints of the Merdeka Curriculum, the integration of STEM and STEAM approaches, gamified civic learning through interactive quiz platforms, the demonstration method as a means of making abstract civic concepts visible, cooperative learning structures in the primary classroom, nature-based learning as a route to civic confidence, role-playing as a vehicle for understanding diversity, and the use of social media and Instagram as sites of authentic democratic practice. These

chapters share a practical orientation. They report what was attempted, what changed, and what did not, and they are candid about the conditions under which promising methods fail.

A fourth cluster is concerned with care, wellbeing, and inclusion. It includes studies of the free nutritious meal programme and its relationship to cognition, concentration, memory, and higher-order thinking; anti-drug education as character formation; adolescent smoking behaviour and the role of guidance and counselling teachers; the effectiveness of behaviour contracts in reducing truancy; counselling services as an instrument of gender equality; the psychological and social consequences of alcohol consumption among students; the learning motivation of children left behind by migrant workers; traditional play as a medium for building self-esteem; the cultivation of nationalist behaviour among students with intellectual disabilities; and the contribution of Freirean thought to community-based inclusive education. These chapters make visible a truth that policy discourse often obscures, namely that inclusion is not achieved by declaration but by the patient, unglamorous work of adjusting institutions to the actual lives of the young people within them.

A fifth cluster attends to teachers themselves, both as professionals and as persons, and to the digital conditions under which they now work. Contributors consider academic and professional competencies in the digital era, teachers as motivators and the constraints they face, the formation of professional identity during the transition from student to teacher in early childhood education, perceptions of outcome-based education among lecturers without pedagogical training, strategies for fostering students' confidence in expressing their opinions, parental digital literacy in the face of synthetic media, and the ethical governance of artificial intelligence. Taken together, they insist that no reform can outrun the capacity, wellbeing, and moral seriousness of the teaching workforce charged with enacting it.

## ***A Word on Method and Ambition***

The editors have not sought to impose a single theoretical orthodoxy on the contributors. Readers will encounter human capital theory alongside critical pedagogy, ecological systems theory alongside Islamic and Christian anthropologies of the person, and quantitative measures of learning outcomes alongside close qualitative attention to a handful of student voices. This is not eclecticism for its own sake. It reflects a judgement that the questions at stake are too large to be settled from within any one paradigm, and that premature convergence would impoverish rather than strengthen the field.

At the same time, the volume does not pretend to neutrality about its central commitment. Each chapter, in its own idiom, affirms that education is an act of hope directed toward a shared future. The classroom is treated here as a rehearsal space for citizenship, a place where young people practise the dispositions of listening, reasoning, disagreeing, caring, and acting together long before they are asked to exercise them in the wider polity. If that rehearsal is neglected, no amount of later civic instruction will compensate.

Several limitations should be acknowledged at the outset. Many of the empirical studies collected here are small in scale and situated in particular schools, districts, or institutions. Their findings are offered as grounded illumination rather than as generalisable claims, and readers are encouraged to treat them as invitations to comparison rather than as settled conclusions. Longitudinal evidence remains scarce across the field, and several contributors note explicitly that the durability of the effects they report is unknown. These gaps are stated openly, and the concluding sections of individual chapters identify them as priorities for subsequent inquiry.

## ***An Invitation***

This book is intended for a mixed readership. Teacher educators and postgraduate students will find conceptual frameworks and methodological models they can adapt. Practising teachers and school leaders

will find concrete accounts of interventions attempted under recognisable constraints. Policymakers will find evidence bearing directly on current reform agendas, together with reminders of the implementation realities that determine whether policy intentions survive contact with the classroom. Researchers will find an agenda of open questions.

The editors offer this collection in the spirit of continuing conversation rather than final statement. The nurturing of future citizens is not a project any single volume, institution, or generation can complete. It is handed on. What these chapters demonstrate is that the work is being taken up seriously, in many places at once, by scholars and practitioners who believe that how we teach the young is among the most consequential decisions a society makes about itself.

**Dr. Yunita Dwi Pristiani**

Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri

*Kediri, 2026*

# 17 The Role of Counseling Services in Promoting Gender Equality in Educational Settings: A Systematic Literature Review

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Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge within educational settings despite intensifying global efforts to promote inclusive and equitable education. Counseling services have been recognized as a strategic mechanism for fostering gender equality; however, the evidence regarding their roles and effectiveness remains fragmented across disparate studies and contexts. This chapter identifies, analyzes, and synthesizes prior research on the role of counseling services in promoting gender equality in educational environments, employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach that adheres to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Drawing on ten studies meeting the inclusion criteria, the thematic synthesis reveals three interconnected themes: gender-responsive counseling practices; gender bias and competency gaps within the counseling profession itself; and the intersectionality of gender, race, and social class in educational justice. The findings indicate that gender-responsive counseling can reduce

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stereotypes, support identity development, and expand students' academic and career aspirations, yet its effectiveness is frequently constrained by counselors' limited gender competence and by institutional barriers. Furthermore, an intersectional approach emerges as essential for addressing the diverse experiences of students and reducing structural inequalities. These findings contribute to the development of feminist counseling theory and social learning theory, while offering practical implications for counselors, educational institutions, and policymakers seeking to design more inclusive and gender-responsive guidance systems.

## **Keywords**

counseling services; gender equality; school guidance; systematic literature review; educational settings; gender-responsive practice; student well-being

## **Introduction**

Education plays a strategic role in shaping values, attitudes, and individual development in an optimal way, irrespective of background or gender. Yet a substantial body of research indicates that educational environments remain spaces in which gender stereotypes and inequalities are reproduced through learning processes, social interactions, and institutional culture. These inequalities do not always manifest as direct discrimination but frequently emerge through differing expectations for men and women, gender-influenced selection of academic fields, and constrained opportunities to develop potential equally—disrupting students' learning experiences, academic choices, and career development (Nurmansyah et al., 2025; Stewart et al., 2021). Educational institutions, in other words, do not always function as gender-neutral spaces (Ain & Khasanah, 2025).

Gender equality in education constitutes a global concern occupying a prominent place within international development agendas, most notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly Goal 4 on inclusive and quality education and Goal 5 on gender

equality. Nevertheless, research continues to show that education systems face persistent challenges in creating genuinely equitable learning environments. Gender inequality manifests not only in access to education but through teaching practices, teacher–student interactions, subject selection, and institutional cultures that indirectly reproduce gender stereotypes. Nurmansyah et al. (2025) argue that educational structures, including teacher-education curricula, retain the potential to perpetuate patriarchal values influencing the educational process, a finding aligned with Stewart et al.'s (2021) systematic review showing that educational interventions aimed at shifting gender stereotypes often yield mixed and suboptimal results absent accompanying changes in broader institutional factors. In the Indonesian context, the 2025 Gender Inequality Index (GII) stands at 0.402, an improvement of 0.019 points over the previous year (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025), indicating incremental progress alongside persistent disparity across the index's constituent indicators.

This incremental national progress, while encouraging, masks considerable variation across the specific indicators that comprise the composite GII measure, including maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates, parliamentary representation, educational attainment, and labour-force participation. Disaggregating national-level progress in this way is important for the present chapter's focus because it clarifies that aggregate improvement in Indonesia's gender inequality standing does not necessarily imply uniform improvement across the educational-attainment and labour-market-participation indicators most directly relevant to the role of school-based counseling services examined in this chapter; a national GII improvement driven primarily by gains in indicators unrelated to education, for instance, would carry different implications for counseling policy than an improvement driven specifically by narrowing educational or career-related gender gaps.

The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM) 2025 further documents that gender gaps in learning outcomes persist

across countries: in reading proficiency, only 87 male students globally reach the minimum competency level for every 100 female students. Bullying trends present a concerning counterpoint, with the prevalence of bullying against female students increasing in 34 of 66 studied countries during 2018–2022, compared with increases among male students in only 22 countries; female students are additionally reported to be more vulnerable to cyberbullying, attributable to higher intensity of social media use (UNESCO, 2025). Gender equality issues in educational settings, in short, seldom manifest as explicit discrimination, emerging instead through practices normalized as social and cultural convention—differing expectations, gender-based labeling, and a scarcity of gender-responsive services. Irawan et al. (2024) find that the scarcity of gender-sensitive counseling services at Indonesian universities contributes to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles among students, suggesting that services intended as tools of empowerment may inadvertently reproduce the very norms that limit individual development when designed without gender sensitivity.

The juxtaposition of these two UNESCO findings—a reading-proficiency gap disadvantaging male students alongside a bullying-prevalence gap disadvantaging female students—illustrates a broader point directly relevant to this chapter's central argument: gender-based educational disadvantage is not unidirectional, and effective gender-responsive counseling must therefore be attentive to the specific, sometimes counterintuitive ways gender shapes different students' experiences and vulnerabilities, rather than operating from a single, uniform assumption about which gender group requires greater counseling attention in any given domain. This bidirectional pattern reinforces the theoretical case, developed further in this chapter's conceptual foundations, for grounding counseling practice in careful, context-specific assessment of gender-related needs rather than in generalized assumptions carried over from one educational domain or national context to another.

Within this context, counselors occupy a strategic position as agents of change capable of fostering a more inclusive educational environment. Khowatim (2020) emphasizes that counselors are key actors in multicultural education, responsible for upholding principles of equality and social justice, while Simons et al. (2022) document meaningful variation in counselors' capabilities regarding gender identity issues—spanning knowledge, skills, and potential bias. Erdmann et al. (2023), by contrast, find that counseling programmes designed with a gender perspective can increase female students' participation and academic persistence in fields traditionally dominated by men, suggesting that gender-responsive counseling services can meaningfully shape students' academic development and career choices.

Multiple studies have examined the relationship between education and shifts in gender norms with mixed results. Guthridge et al. (2022), through a systematic review of 78 studies, find that education-based gender interventions do not consistently produce significant change. Simons and Lab (2021) highlight school counselors' role in advocating for students from gender minority groups; Putri et al. (2024) demonstrate that multicultural peer counseling effectively enhances students' gender sensitivity; Wilujeng et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of a multicultural counseling approach in supporting gender equality in schools; and feminist counseling has been shown to help students resolve gender-related issues and improve self-esteem (Saputri, 2017). Despite this accumulating evidence, empirical findings regarding counseling services' role in promoting gender equality remain scattered and have not been systematically synthesized—particularly with respect to intervention models, programme effectiveness, implementation barriers, and best practices.

In light of this gap, this chapter aims to identify and synthesize research findings on the role of counseling services in promoting gender equality in educational settings through a Systematic Literature Review. Theoretically, the chapter contributes to the development of

feminist counseling theory and social learning theory within the context of gender equality; in practice, its findings are intended to inform recommendations for counselors, schools, and policymakers seeking to develop inclusive, gender-responsive guidance and counseling services.

The urgency of this synthesis is further underscored by the accelerating global attention to school-based mental health and psychosocial support services, within which counseling has come to occupy an increasingly central institutional role across many national education systems. As schools worldwide expand counseling provision in response to growing recognition of students' psychosocial needs, the question of whether such expanded provision is designed with adequate attention to gender equality becomes correspondingly more consequential: counseling services expanded without explicit gender-responsive design risk simply scaling up whatever gender biases and blind spots already exist within the counseling profession, rather than correcting them. This dynamic lends particular timeliness to the systematic synthesis this chapter undertakes, since the evidence base regarding counseling's gender-equality function must inform this broader, ongoing expansion of school counseling provision if that expansion is to advance rather than inadvertently undermine gender-equitable educational outcomes.

This chapter proceeds by first developing the theoretical framework, integrating feminist counseling theory, social learning theory, intersectionality, and organizational gatekeeping theory, through which the reviewed evidence is interpreted. It then specifies the systematic review methodology, adhering to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, before presenting the thematic synthesis organized around gender-responsive counseling practices, gender bias within the counseling profession, and the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. The discussion reads these themes against the chapter's theoretical framework, and the chapter concludes by drawing out implications for counselor education, institutional policy, and future research, with particular attention throughout to the transferability of a

predominantly United States-based evidence base to the Indonesian context.

Framing the synthesis around an explicit, multi-theory framework distinguishes this review from a purely descriptive cataloguing of prior findings. Rather than simply reporting what the reviewed studies found, the chapter reads those findings through a set of theoretical lenses each of which illuminates a distinct dimension of how counseling relates to gender equality: feminist counseling theory clarifies counseling's structural function, social learning theory its modeling function, intersectionality its attention to overlapping identities, and organizational gatekeeping theory the specific behavioural mechanisms through which inequality is reproduced in routine practice. This theoretically integrated reading is, the chapter argues, more analytically productive than any single lens applied in isolation.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations**

This chapter draws on two principal theoretical frameworks. Feminist counseling theory positions counseling as a site not merely of individual psychological support but of structural critique, in which counselors actively work to recognize and challenge the social structures perpetuating gender inequality rather than treating gender-related distress as a purely individual concern. Social learning theory, meanwhile, positions counselors as role models whose behaviour and interactions shape students' internalized understanding of gender norms through observational learning (Khowatim, 2020; Nurman-syah et al., 2025). Feminist counseling theory's insistence on structural, rather than purely individual, analysis carries a specific methodological implication for this chapter's synthesis: studies examined below are read not only for what they reveal about individual counselor–student interactions but for what they reveal about the broader institutional and social structures within which those interactions are embedded, consistent with feminist counseling theory's foundational premise that individual-level distress and individual-level counseling response cannot be fully understood in isolation from the structural

conditions that produce and sustain gender inequality in the first place.

A third conceptual thread—intersectionality—emerges as a critical lens through which to understand why gender-focused interventions alone often yield limited impact. Intersectionality theory holds that gender cannot be meaningfully understood in isolation from other social identities, particularly race and socioeconomic status, since individuals' experiences of inequality are shaped by the interaction of multiple, overlapping identity categories rather than by any single category in isolation. This theoretical integration is significant because it reframes the counselor's role: rather than functioning as a gender-neutral service provider, the counselor is understood as an actor embedded within—and potentially reproducing—the very institutional structures that generate inequality, a tension explored in depth within this chapter's findings.

### ***Organizational Gatekeeping Theory\****

A further theoretical resource relevant to this chapter's synthesis concerns organizational gatekeeping theory, which examines how institutional actors and processes control access to resources, opportunities, and support within organizations. Applied to school counseling specifically, gatekeeping theory illuminates how counselors' informal decisions—which students receive proactive outreach, which career pathways are actively suggested, which concerns are treated as urgent versus routine—function as consequential gatekeeping moments capable of either expanding or constraining students' opportunities along gendered lines, often without any single decision rising to the level of overt or intentional discrimination. This theoretical framework is particularly valuable for interpreting findings, discussed later in this chapter, regarding gendered gatekeeping in support systems for reproductive health information and the differential responses counseling students exhibit toward gendered dating-violence scenarios: both findings reflect gatekeeping dynamics operating beneath the threshold of deliberate bias, embedded instead within routine, taken-for-granted counseling practice.

Gatekeeping theory further distinguishes between two related but analytically separable mechanisms: resource gatekeeping, concerning unequal distribution of concrete support such as referrals, information, or programme access, and attentional gatekeeping, concerning unequal allocation of counselors' time, concern, and proactive outreach. This distinction proves useful for organizing this chapter's findings, since several of the studies reviewed below—Bellas et al.'s (2024) work on reproductive-health information access and Eme-lianchik-Key et al.'s (2023) work on differential concern for dating-violence victims—map onto resource and attentional gatekeeping respectively, suggesting that gender-related gatekeeping in school counseling operates through multiple, distinct behavioural channels rather than a single unified mechanism, a nuance with direct implications for how counselor training interventions should be designed to address each channel specifically.

## **Research Context**

This review is situated within the broader international context of formal educational institutions, spanning secondary school through higher education, in which counseling services form part of the institutional infrastructure for student support. The population of interest encompasses students and counseling staff, while the conceptual focus concerns the roles, models, and approaches through which counseling services engage with gender equality issues. Although the majority of reviewed studies originate from the United States, the chapter's findings hold relevance for the Indonesian context discussed within its introduction, given shared concerns regarding gender-responsive service provision, counselor competency, and institutional gender norms within educational settings. The educational levels represented within the reviewed literature span primary school through higher education and workplace-adjacent nonformal educational settings such as day camps, providing a reasonably broad, if geographically concentrated, picture of how gender and counseling intersect across the full arc of formal and nonformal education.

The predominance of United States-based studies within the reviewed literature reflects, in part, the comparatively mature institutionalization of school counseling as a distinct, professionally regulated occupation within the American education system, alongside the correspondingly larger volume of published research examining that profession's practices and outcomes. This concentration carries direct implications for how this chapter's findings should be read within the Indonesian context introduced above: while the underlying theoretical mechanisms—feminist counseling theory, social learning theory, intersectionality, and organizational gatekeeping—are conceptually portable across national contexts, the specific institutional arrangements through which school counseling operates in Indonesia differ meaningfully from the American context, including differences in counselor training pathways, caseload structures, and the degree of professional autonomy counselors are afforded within school administrative hierarchies. In Indonesia, school counseling (*bimbingan dan konseling*) is typically integrated within a broader student-guidance function that combines academic, personal-social, and career counseling responsibilities within a single counselor role, often serving considerably larger student caseloads than is typical within the more specialized American school counseling model—a structural difference that may itself shape how much individualized, gender-responsive attention any single counselor is practically able to provide, independent of that counselor's theoretical knowledge or personal commitment to gender equality. These contextual differences are revisited in this chapter's discussion of limitations and future research directions.

## **Research Methodology**

This chapter adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design fully adherent to the 2020 Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as formulated by Page et al. (2021). The PCC (Population, Concept, Context) frame-

work served as the operational foundation for formulating the research questions: Population (P) comprising students and counseling staff in formal educational institutions; Concept (C) referring to the roles, models, and approaches of counseling services in relation to gender equality issues; and Context (Co) comprising the formal educational environment, ranging from secondary school to higher education.

The systematic literature search was conducted in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), selected for its comprehensive, relevant indexing of literature in education, psychology, and guidance and counseling. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language articles published between 2020 and 2026 and available in full text, using a Boolean search string combining terms related to gender equality ("gender equality" OR "gender equity" OR "gender discrimination" OR "gender bias" OR "gender stereotypes" OR sexism OR "gender-based violence"), counseling (counseling OR counselling OR counselor\\* OR counsellor\\* OR "school counseling" OR "guidance and counseling"), and educational setting (school\\* OR student\\* OR education\\* OR university OR college).

This Boolean search strategy was deliberately constructed to balance comprehensiveness against precision: the inclusion of both American (counselor) and British/Commonwealth (counsellor) spelling variants, together with wildcard truncation, was designed to capture the full range of terminology used across the international counseling literature, while the requirement that all three concept clusters (gender, counseling, education) appear together was designed to exclude studies addressing gender equality in non-educational contexts or counseling services unrelated to gender-equality concerns. The single-database search strategy, relying exclusively on ERIC, represents a deliberate methodological choice prioritizing depth of coverage within the specific disciplinary intersection of education, psychology, and counseling over the broader but potentially less precisely targeted coverage a multi-database search strategy spanning general

academic databases might have produced; this choice is revisited as a limitation within this chapter's discussion.

Articles were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria established prior to the search process to minimize selection bias, spanning language (English only), year of publication (2020–2026), document type (peer-reviewed journal articles only, excluding books, editorials, reports, theses, and conference proceedings), main topic (counseling services specifically within the context of gender equality), setting (formal educational settings), accessibility (full text available), and duplication (one version per study). A total of ten studies met the inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the review, reflecting a growing scholarly interest in the relationship between counseling services and gender equality within educational settings across the 2020–2026 period. A limitation of this design, discussed further below, is the geographic concentration of the reviewed literature within the United States, which constrains direct generalizability to other national contexts.

Adherence to the PRISMA 2020 framework serves not merely as a procedural formality but as a safeguard for the transparency and reproducibility of the review. By pre-specifying the population, concept, and context of interest, the Boolean search string, the databases searched, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria before conducting the search, the review reduces the scope for the kind of post hoc selection that can otherwise bias a literature synthesis toward a reviewer's prior expectations. The explicit documentation of these choices additionally allows subsequent researchers to assess the review's coverage, to identify where its boundaries were drawn, and to extend or revise the synthesis as the evidence base grows.

That said, the methodological choices made here involve genuine trade-offs that qualify the review's conclusions and are treated candidly rather than minimized. The restriction to peer-reviewed, English-language articles, while appropriate for ensuring a baseline of scholarly quality and comparability, systematically excludes grey literature, non-English scholarship, and the practitioner knowledge that

circulates outside formal publication, all of which may be especially relevant to the Indonesian and broader non-Western contexts the chapter seeks ultimately to inform. The reliance on a single database, ERIC, likewise prioritizes precision within the education-psychology-counseling intersection at the cost of the broader coverage a multi-database strategy would afford. These boundaries do not invalidate the synthesis but do define its scope, and the geographic concentration of the resulting evidence base within the United States is best understood as partly a consequence of exactly these choices.

## Findings

### *Theme 1: Gender-Responsive Counseling Practices\**

The first theme highlights the role of gender-responsive counseling in providing both psychological support and empowerment for individuals experiencing gender-related inequities. Using an autoethnographic approach grounded in Black Feminist Thought, Tillery (2025) demonstrates how Black female students often experience adultification bias, whereby they are perceived as more mature than their age and consequently receive less protection and support, underscoring the importance of counselors' capacity to recognize subtle forms of gender-based oppression.

Similarly, Bellas et al. (2024) identify gendered gatekeeping within school support systems for girls experiencing early menarche in Australian primary schools; although support resources were available, access to reproductive health information and assistance was often constrained by gender-related stigma and social norms, limiting school counselors' involvement. In the higher education context, Barbosa-Silva et al. (2026) find that gender-sensitive career counseling enhanced self-efficacy, career aspirations, and coping strategies among Brazilian women pursuing STEM careers. Taken together, these studies suggest that gender-responsive counseling extends beyond individual support, requiring intentional efforts to recognize and challenge the social structures perpetuating gender inequality.

Considered as a set, the three studies grounding this first theme span markedly different educational levels—primary schooling (Bellas et al., 2024), secondary schooling (Tillery, 2025), and higher education (Barbosa-Silva et al., 2026)—yet converge on a shared underlying finding: gender-responsive counseling functions effectively only when counselors possess both the awareness to recognize gender-specific student needs and the institutional latitude to act on that awareness. Where either awareness or institutional latitude is absent, as in the constrained reproductive-health support documented by Bellas et al. (2024), gender-responsive counseling's potential benefits are correspondingly attenuated regardless of counselors' individual goodwill. This cross-level convergence strengthens confidence that the theme's core finding—that gender-responsive counseling requires active, structurally supported intervention rather than passive availability of services—reflects a genuine pattern extending across the educational lifespan rather than an artifact specific to any single schooling level.

### ***Theme 2: Gender Bias and Competency Gaps in the Counseling Profession\****

The second theme highlights that the counseling profession itself is not entirely free of gender bias, at both organizational and practice levels. Holland Iantosca and Lemke (2022) identify a "glass escalator" phenomenon among school counselors, whereby male counselors were more likely than female counterparts to receive encouragement and opportunities to pursue leadership positions—suggesting that even within a female-dominated profession, gender inequalities may continue to be reproduced through organizational structures and societal expectations.

At the professional-training level, Emelianchik-Key et al. (2023) find that counseling students responded differently to teen dating violence scenarios depending on victim gender, with female victims generally perceived as requiring greater concern and intervention than male victims—indicating that gender bias may emerge during counselor education and training itself, with potential downstream effects

on future practice. This pattern is further supported by DeVona and Weiner (2024), who document the experience of double bind among women in leadership roles within nonformal educational settings, whereby assertive leadership behaviours in women were evaluated more negatively than identical behaviours in men. Collectively, these studies suggest that promoting gender equality through counseling services requires not only student-facing interventions but critical reflection on gender biases embedded within counselor education, professional training, and the organizational structures of the counseling profession itself.

A notable pattern across the studies grounding this second theme concerns the specific point within the counseling career pipeline at which gender bias becomes observable: Emelianchik-Key et al. (2023) document bias at the pre-service training stage, before counselors even enter independent practice, while Holland Iantosca and Lemke (2022) and DeVona and Weiner (2024) document bias manifesting later, at the level of career advancement and leadership evaluation within already-practising professionals. This pipeline-spanning pattern suggests that gender bias within the counseling profession is not confined to a single, correctable intervention point but instead accumulates across multiple career stages, implying that effective remediation likely requires coordinated attention across counselor education curricula, early-career mentoring, and organizational leadership-evaluation criteria simultaneously, rather than a single-point intervention at any one stage of the counselor career pipeline.

### ***Theme 3: Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Class in Educational Equity\****

The third theme highlights that gender equality in education cannot be understood independently of other social identities, particularly race and socioeconomic status. Foxx et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of culturally responsive counseling practices enabling counselors to address multiple forms of inequality simultaneously, arguing—within a social justice framework—that gender-related

challenges are frequently intertwined with structural factors shaping students' educational access, participation, and achievement.

A similar perspective emerges in Holland Iantosca and Lemke's (2022) finding that postsecondary planning for Black female students frequently overlooks the complex intersection of race, gender, and social class in shaping educational opportunities, advocating instead for counseling practices grounded in care, cultural relevance, and individualized support. Brown et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that advising and coaching interventions for first-generation Black male college students become more effective when they explicitly acknowledge the influence of racial and gender-based discrimination on students' educational experiences. At a broader level, Carnevale et al. (2022) show that educational and career inequalities emerge from the interaction of multiple social factors, finding that women consistently face lower probabilities of securing quality employment than men from the same racial groups, with limited access to comprehensive counseling and career guidance identified as a contributing factor. Collectively, these studies indicate that promoting gender equality through counseling services requires an intersectional approach recognizing the interconnected influences of gender, race, and social class in shaping educational outcomes and opportunities.

It is worth noting that the studies grounding this third theme predominantly examine the intersection of gender with race specifically, within the particular racial dynamics of the United States educational and labour-market context—a pattern reflecting the geographic concentration of the broader evidence base discussed in this chapter's research context and limitations. While the underlying theoretical principle of intersectionality is not inherently limited to race-based intersections, and could equally encompass intersections between gender and other social categories such as religion, disability, rural–urban residence, or socioeconomic status more directly relevant to the Indonesian context this chapter's introduction highlights, the specific empirical findings synthesized under this theme should be un-

derstood as documenting one particular, racially inflected instantiation of a more general intersectional principle, rather than as a comprehensive account of all forms of intersectional disadvantage counseling services might need to address across different national and cultural contexts.

## **Discussion**

Read through the lens of social learning theory, these findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of counselors' role in shaping gender norms, positioning counselors as role models who contribute to students' social learning processes (Khowatim, 2020; Nurmansyah et al., 2025). Yet Holland Iantosca and Lemke's (2022) findings indicate that this modeling process does not always yield positive outcomes: when male and female counselors exhibit differing leadership aspirations shaped by gender constructions, students may internalize similar patterns through daily observation and interaction. This finding indicates that the counselor's role as an agent of change cannot be separated from the profession's own internal conditions, suggesting that strengthening gender competencies must be pursued through counselor education, professional training, and the development of more equitable career systems within educational institutions themselves.

The theme of intersectionality emerges as a particularly significant finding within this synthesis. Guthridge et al. (2022) previously noted that education-based gender-equality interventions often yield limited impact; this synthesis suggests that one contributing factor is the tendency to treat gender as a standalone category without considering its interconnections with other social identities. Findings by Foxx et al. (2020), Holland Iantosca and Lemke (2022), and Brown et al. (2023) consistently show that counseling services' effectiveness is optimized when designed with the intersectionality of multiple identities—gender, race, and social class—in mind, a pattern reinforced by Carnevale et al.'s (2022) data showing that failure to accommodate

identity complexity in educational services can reinforce structural inequalities affecting career opportunities and labour-market outcomes. This finding aligns with prior feminist-counseling research indicating that such approaches can enhance the self-esteem of bullying victims, while noting that external factors such as the broader social environment may nonetheless constrain improvement (Saputri, 2017).

Theoretically, this synthesis reinforces feminist counseling theory by emphasizing the importance of an intersectional perspective within counseling practice, while expanding social learning theory by demonstrating that the modeling process is reciprocal: counselors serve as role models for students, while educational institutions and social systems simultaneously shape the values, beliefs, and practices counselors themselves uphold. This reciprocal framing carries several practical implications, discussed below, while also underscoring an important limitation: most reviewed studies originate in the United States, meaning that the applicability of these findings to other educational contexts, including Indonesia, should be approached with appropriate caution. Differences in research design across the reviewed studies further limit direct comparison of findings; nonetheless, this diversity of perspectives and methodologies contributes to a more comprehensive picture of counseling services' role in promoting gender equality, with the narrative synthesis employed here indicating that such efforts constitute a complex, multidimensional process shaped by both individual and structural factors.

Read through the organizational gatekeeping framework introduced in this chapter's theoretical foundations, several of the findings discussed above take on additional explanatory clarity. The gendered gatekeeping identified by Bellas et al. (2024) in school support systems for early menarche, and the differential responses to gendered dating-violence vignettes documented by Emelianchik-Key et al. (2023), both exemplify how counseling practice can produce unequal outcomes through routine, moment-to-moment professional judgment rather than through any single, deliberately discriminatory

policy or decision. This gatekeeping lens carries an important implication distinct from, though complementary to, the more structural forms of inequality captured by intersectionality theory: whereas intersectionality theory highlights how overlapping identity categories shape students' experiences of educational institutions, gatekeeping theory highlights the specific behavioural and decisional mechanisms through which counselors, often unintentionally, translate broader social gender norms into differential treatment of individual students. Addressing gatekeeping-related inequality, this theoretical distinction suggests, may require interventions targeted specifically at counselors' moment-to-moment professional judgment and decision-making processes, distinct from broader structural or curricular reforms targeting intersectionality awareness alone.

The "glass escalator" phenomenon documented by Holland Iantosca and Lemke (2022) offers a further illustrative case of organizational gatekeeping operating in an unexpected direction—advantaging, rather than disadvantaging, a numerical minority group (male counselors) within a female-dominated profession. This finding is theoretically significant because it demonstrates that gatekeeping dynamics and gender-based advantage do not operate uniformly in the direction conventional assumptions about gender and professional advantage might predict; within school counseling specifically, the mechanisms of gatekeeping advantage appear to interact with the profession's own demographic composition in ways that produce counterintuitive patterns of gendered opportunity, reinforcing this chapter's broader argument that gender-related inequality in counseling contexts requires close, context-specific empirical examination rather than reliance on generalized assumptions about which gender group is advantaged in any given institutional setting.

Read as a whole, the synthesis suggests that the relationship between counseling and gender equality is characterized by a recurring paradox: the very services intended to advance gender-equitable outcomes are delivered by a profession that is itself not free of gender

bias, embedded within institutions that themselves reproduce gendered patterns of opportunity and constraint. This paradox is visible across all three themes, in the gap between the promise of gender-responsive practice and the competency and institutional limits that constrain it, in the documented biases within counselor education and career advancement, and in the way intersecting identities complicate any straightforward account of who counseling serves well. Recognizing this paradox is not grounds for pessimism about counseling's gender-equality potential but a precondition for realizing it, since services designed without awareness of the profession's own susceptibility to bias risk scaling up that bias rather than correcting it.

The synthesis also clarifies why gender-focused educational interventions have so often yielded the mixed and disappointing results documented in prior reviews such as Guthridge et al. (2022) and Stewart et al. (2021). If, as the intersectionality theme suggests, gender operates always in interaction with race, class, and other social identities, then interventions that isolate gender as a standalone target are likely to miss much of what actually shapes students' experiences, addressing one thread of a woven pattern while leaving the others untouched. This reframing suggests that the comparatively modest effects of many gender interventions reflect not the futility of intervention as such but the limits of a single-axis approach, and that more intersectionally sophisticated designs might reasonably be expected to perform better, a proposition that itself warrants direct empirical testing.

## **Practical Implications**

For counselor education and training, the findings indicate a need to comprehensively integrate gender and intersectionality perspectives as part of the foundational framework for professional competency development, consistent with Simons et al.'s (2022) recommendations regarding the Counselor Competence Gender Identity Scale.

For institutional policy, educational institutions need to evaluate career systems and leadership opportunities for counselors themselves, to prevent the reproduction of gender-based inequalities identified in the "glass escalator" and "double bind" findings discussed above. Given this chapter's engagement with organizational gatekeeping theory, institutions might further consider implementing structured, criteria-based protocols for common counseling decisions—such as career-pathway recommendations or response prioritization for student concerns—that reduce reliance on ad hoc professional judgment in precisely the domains where this chapter's findings suggest gendered gatekeeping is most likely to occur unintentionally.

For service design, academic and career counseling services should be designed with explicit attention to the interplay among gender, race, and social class as part of students' interconnected life experiences, rather than treating gender as an isolated intervention target.

For policymakers, particularly within the Indonesian context highlighted in this chapter's introduction, the scarcity of gender-sensitive counseling services documented by Irawan et al. (2024) suggests a need for targeted investment in gender-responsive counselor training as part of broader higher-education policy. Given the contextual differences between the predominantly American evidence base and the Indonesian counseling profession's distinct institutional arrangements discussed in this chapter's research context, Indonesian policymakers should treat the specific interventions identified in this review as a starting framework requiring local adaptation and empirical validation, rather than assuming direct, unmodified transferability of American gender-responsive counseling models into the Indonesian educational and cultural context.

Underlying these specific recommendations is a broader principle that distinguishes a genuinely gender-responsive counseling system from one that merely adds gender awareness as an afterthought. The synthesis suggests that gender-responsiveness cannot be bolted onto an otherwise unchanged system through a single training module or

policy statement; it must instead be built into the design of counselor education curricula, the criteria governing professional advancement, the protocols structuring routine counseling decisions, and the frameworks used to evaluate service quality. Gender-responsiveness, on this reading, is a systemic property rather than an individual attribute, and interventions that target only individual counselors' awareness, without addressing the institutional structures within which those counselors work, are unlikely to produce durable change.

For the Indonesian context specifically, this systemic understanding carries a cautionary implication regarding the transfer of models developed elsewhere. Because the reviewed evidence base is concentrated within the American school counseling system, with its distinctive training pathways, caseload structures, and professional autonomy, the specific interventions it validates cannot be assumed to transfer unmodified to the Indonesian *bimbingan dan konseling* context, where counselors typically carry broader responsibilities and larger caseloads within different institutional hierarchies. Indonesian policymakers and practitioners are accordingly best served by treating this review's findings as a theoretically grounded starting framework requiring local adaptation and empirical validation, rather than as a ready-made blueprint for direct implementation.

## **Future Research**

Future research should prioritize empirical studies conducted outside the United States, including within Indonesia, to test the applicability of the themes identified in this review across different cultural, institutional, and policy contexts.

Comparative research directly measuring the effectiveness of gender-responsive counseling models—rather than relying primarily on qualitative and conceptual studies, as the majority of the reviewed literature does—would strengthen the evidence base regarding programme effectiveness. Further research is also needed on how counselor education programmes might most effectively operationalize intersectionality training, building on the Counselor Competence

Gender Identity Scale referenced in this chapter, and on how institutional career systems for counselors themselves might be restructured to prevent the reproduction of gender-based inequality identified in the "glass escalator" phenomenon.

Building on the organizational gatekeeping framework developed in this chapter's discussion, future research would benefit from direct observational or vignette-based studies capturing counselors' moment-to-moment decision-making processes across a broader range of gendered scenarios than the teen dating-violence vignettes examined by Emelianchik-Key et al. (2023), in order to map more comprehensively where and how gatekeeping-related gender bias enters routine counseling practice. Such research could usefully extend beyond the United States-dominated evidence base synthesized in this chapter to examine whether gatekeeping dynamics manifest similarly, or differently, within Indonesian and other non-Western counseling contexts, given the cultural specificity of gender norms and counselor-student relational dynamics that likely shape how gatekeeping processes unfold across different national and cultural settings.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic literature review has shown that counseling services play a crucial role in promoting gender equality in educational settings by reducing gender stereotypes, strengthening students' identities, and broadening their academic and career aspirations. The effectiveness of these services is shaped by counselors' competencies, institutional support, and the extent to which gender-responsive approaches are genuinely implemented rather than merely espoused. The findings further indicate that an intersectional perspective must be integral to counseling practice, given that students' experiences are shaped by the interplay of multiple social identities rather than by gender in isolation. Across the ten studies synthesized in this review, spanning primary schooling through higher education and nonformal educational settings, a consistent pattern emerges: gender equality outcomes in counseling depend less on the mere presence of counseling services

than on the specific, deliberate design choices—training content, institutional support structures, and attentiveness to intersecting identities—that determine whether those services function as genuine engines of gender-equitable opportunity or, absent such deliberate design, risk reproducing the very inequalities they are nominally intended to address.

Theoretically, this chapter reinforces feminist counseling theory and social learning theory in explaining counselors' roles as agents of social change within educational settings, while its engagement with organizational gatekeeping theory offers a complementary explanatory mechanism clarifying how gender-related inequality can emerge through routine professional judgment rather than deliberate discrimination alone. In practice, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening gender competencies within counselor education and training, alongside the development of counseling services that are more inclusive and responsive to student diversity.

Future research should test the effectiveness of gender-responsive counseling models across varied educational contexts, particularly within Indonesia, where the evidence base remains comparatively limited. As school counseling provision continues to expand across many national education systems, ensuring that this expansion is guided by an explicitly gender-responsive, intersectionally informed, and gatekeeping-aware theoretical framework—of the kind synthesized within this chapter—will be essential to ensuring that growing institutional investment in counseling genuinely advances, rather than inadvertently constrains, gender equality within educational settings worldwide.

As school counseling provision continues to expand across many national education systems, ensuring that this expansion is guided by an explicitly gender-responsive, intersectionally informed, and gatekeeping-aware theoretical framework—of the kind synthesized within this chapter—will be essential to ensuring that growing institutional investment in counseling genuinely advances, rather than inadvertently constrains, gender equality within educational settings

worldwide. The three theoretical frameworks integrated within this chapter—feminist counseling theory, social learning theory, and organizational gatekeeping theory—together offer a more complete analytical toolkit than any single framework alone: feminist counseling theory clarifies counseling's structural, rather than purely individual, function; social learning theory clarifies counselors' role as reciprocal models within the broader educational community; and organizational gatekeeping theory clarifies the specific behavioural mechanisms through which gender-related inequality can emerge even absent deliberate discriminatory intent. Future scholarship and practice engaging with the role of counseling services in promoting gender equality would benefit from drawing on this integrated theoretical toolkit, rather than relying on any single theoretical lens in isolation.

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