

The Absence of Psychosocial Services in Indonesian Primary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. Psychosocial services in primary schools are vital for a more inclusive and equitable education but still remain largely absent within Indonesia, for they cause an important gap when they do not quite meet children's emotional and behavioral needs. This study aims to examine the urgency and relevance of psychosocial support in Indonesian primary education. Using a systematic literature review of national and international journals published between 2020 and 2025, the study synthesizes empirical findings on children's psychosocial development, the roles and limitations of primary school teachers, and effective school-based mental health interventions globally. Results reveal that the lack of structured psychosocial services affects children's emotional well-being negatively. Addressing these issues also places an unsustainable burden upon untrained teachers. A comparative analysis of countries such as Finland, South Korea, and South Africa highlights some successful models that integrate mental health support within the school systems. Indonesia risks obstructing holistic young learner development without urgent policy changes, teacher capacity building, and strong school-community collaboration, the study concludes. Key recommendations include teachers implementing basic psychosocial training, school communities establishing collaborative networks, and integrating mental health policies within national education frameworks to promote sustainable and inclusive primary education.

Keywords: psychosocial support; primary education; mental health in schools; teacher challenges; Indonesia education policy

INTRODUCTION

Primary education plays an important role in shaping children's cognitive, social and emotional foundations (Sholeh et al., 2024). At this level, students experience an early learning process that lays the foundation for long-term academic and character development. Therefore, the quality of basic education is a measure of the success of the education system as a whole in realising a resilient, inclusive and competitive generation (Wardhani et al., 2024).

However, education does not only focus on academic achievement. In practice, children's psychosocial development is an important element that influences learning processes and outcomes (Nehru, 2020). The term psychosocial means the relationship between psychology and social. Psychological factors include emotions and cognitive development, while social factors are related to forming relationships with others that are in accordance with social norms. (Fajriyah & Ha'yati, 2023). At the primary school level, children often face pressure from family, social environment, and classroom dynamics. If not handled appropriately, disturbed psychosocial conditions can have a negative impact on children's motivation to learn, social relationships, and mental development (Kleinkorres et al., 2023).

Various studies have shown that psychosocial disruptions in early childhood have the potential to reduce learning achievement or long-term behaviour (Gautam & Arya, 2023). In this context, psychosocial support services are an urgent need in the primary education system. In countries such as Finland, South Korea and South Africa, psychosocial interventions have been integrated into schools through the provision of professionals, teacher training and cross-sector collaboration to support students' overall mental health.

Unfortunately, in Indonesia, this kind of service has not received serious attention, especially at the primary school level. Teachers are often at the forefront of dealing with students' emotional and behavioural problems without adequate capacity and system support. This suggests a gap between the needs on the ground and the policies and support available. There are limited academic studies that address psychosocial services at the primary education level in Indonesia, especially those that highlight the role and burden of teachers in this context. This represents a significant research gap.

In response to these issues, this study aims to assess the urgency and relevance of psychosocial services in basic education in Indonesia through a systematic literature review approach. The study will compile and analyse current findings from

national and international journals for the period 2020-2025 related to children's psychosocial development, the role of teachers and good practices from other countries.

This research is important to provide a conceptual basis and policy recommendations that can encourage the formulation of a more holistic basic education strategy. The results of the study are expected to serve as a reference for policy makers, education practitioners and the wider community in strengthening psychosocial support systems in primary schools, in order to create a healthy, safe learning environment that supports optimal growth for all children.

METHODS

This research was conducted using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach by following the three-stage framework developed by (Xiao & Watson, 2019) to gain an in-depth understanding of the importance of psychosocial services in basic education in Indonesia. The research procedure was carried out through several stages arranged systematically as Figure 1.

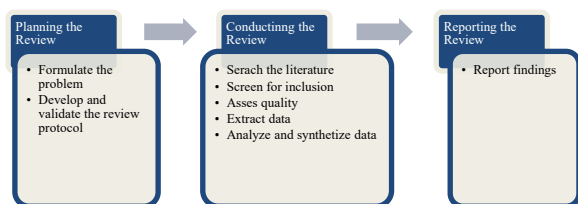


Figure 1. Process Literature Review (Xiao & Watson, 2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of conducting the review of journal articles taken from 2020 related to '(1) psychosocial challenges in primary school students, (2) teacher burdens and limitations, and (3) good practices of psychosocial services in Indonesia' that have been carried out by the author. The author found a total of five articles analyzed according to the research topic. The results of the article review can be seen in Table 1.

Based on the analysis of the five studies reviewed, it can be concluded that primary school students in Indonesia face significant psychosocial challenges, which are influenced by various internal and external factors. (Agung Pradnya Savitri & Gustiawan, 2022) showed that there is a high prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems among primary school students, such as

conduct disorder (38.5%), problems with peers (34.2%), and emotional symptoms (25%), many of which correlate with inconsistent, authoritarian or permissive parenting. In addition, children with special needs such as slow learners also face difficulties in academic and social adaptation. (Paresti et al., 2024) highlighted the importance of psychosocial support from teachers and the school environment in improving the self-confidence and social functioning of such students. Strategies such as the use of peer tutors and conducive learning environments have been shown to be effective as inclusive approaches.

However, the effectiveness of psychosocial services is strongly influenced by the condition of the teachers themselves. (Rahmi, 2024) revealed that teachers' poor mental health due to work pressure and lack of training is a major obstacle in providing optimal psychosocial support to students. In this context, (Widiyastuti & Nurmahmudah, 2023) emphasized the importance of mental health literacy for teachers so that they can play an active role in detecting and dealing with students' psychosocial problems, including conducting initial assessments and building cooperation with parents and professionals such as psychologists or psychiatrists.

In addition, the role of schools in protecting children's rights is also highlighted. (Alfian et al., 2025) highlighted that there are still violations of children's rights such as physical violence, discrimination and bullying that cause psychosocial disorders in students. School environments that are not fully inclusive of children with special needs or from low economic backgrounds also exacerbate this condition.

Thus, all studies emphasise the importance of synergy between appropriate parenting, teacher competence in mental health literacy, and safe and inclusive school environments to create an effective psychosocial support system for primary school students in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Psychosocial challenges in primary school students in Indonesia reflect complex and interrelated issues between individual, family, school and social environment factors. Children face issues such as behavioural disorders, social adaptation difficulties and emotional distress that can impact on their learning. This condition is further exacerbated by inappropriate parenting, limited teacher understanding and skills in dealing with psychosocial problems, and a school

Table 1. Analysis of Study Results

| No | Author, Year | Title | Theme | Major Findings |
|----|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | (Agung Pradnya Savitri & Gustiawan, 2022) | Jakarta Utara Association Between Parenting With Behavioral and Emotional Problems Among Primary School Students in Penjaringan, North Jakarta | Psychosocial Challenges in Primary School Students, | Primary school students in Indonesia face various psychosocial challenges, which commonly include behavioural and emotional problems such as conduct disorder (38.5%), problems with peers (34.2%), and emotional symptoms (25%) such as anxiety or mild depression. A study in North Jakarta showed that authoritarian, permissive or inconsistent parenting was correlated with high rates of behavioural and emotional problems in primary school students. |
| 2 | (Paresti et al., 2024) | Overcoming Slow Learners' Challenges: The Importance Of Psychosocial Support In The Educational Environment | Psychosocial Challenges in Primary School Students, Teacher Burdens and Limitations, Good Practices of Psychosocial services in Indonesia | Students with special needs, such as slow learners, also experience challenges in academic and social adaptation. They tend to have high dependency on teachers and peers, and limited focus. Emotional, instructional and social support has proven to be very helpful in improving their confidence and social adaptation. Another challenge is limited resources and training, where teachers lack specialized training in addressing needs, especially in patient and structured approaches. The use of peer tutors has proven effective in helping slow learners in academic and social adaptation. A conducive and enjoyable learning environment is also an important protective factor for slow learners. |
| 3 | (Rahmi, 2024) | Teachers' mental health and well-being in education: What can be improved for the education system in Indonesia? | Teacher Burdens and Limitations, | Teachers' own mental wellbeing is also an important issue. Job pressures, lack of mental health training, and lack of support from the work environment can reduce teachers' mental health, which in turn impacts their ability to provide good psychosocial services to students. When teachers experience poor mental health, this can have a negative impact on students' mental health, resulting in adverse effects on the teaching and learning process. |
| 4 | (Widiyastuti & Nurmahmudah, 2023) | Peran Guru dalam Mendeteksi dan Membantu Penanganan Gangguan Psikososial Peserta Didik di Usia Sekolah Dasar | Teacher Burdens and Limitations, Psychosocial Challenges in Primary School Students, Good Practices of Psychosocial services in Indonesia | It is very important for teachers to have mental health literacy for teachers so that they are able to recognise and deal with students' psychosocial problems, and the importance of good cooperation between schools and parents will make it easier to help deal with students' psychosocial disorders by directing treatment to the authorities, namely psychologists/psychiatrists through health centres, hospitals and disability service units. Teachers play an important role while students are undergoing the treatment process by creating a conducive and enjoyable learning environment. Teachers provide initial support through observing behavioural changes, listening to students' complaints, and conducting simple assessments before referring to more competent parties. |
| 5 | (Alfian et al., 2025) | Analisis Peran Sekolah dalam Perlindungan Hak Anak di Sekolah Dasar | Psychosocial Challenges in Primary School Students, | There are still violations of children's rights in the primary school environment, such as physical violence by unscrupulous educators, discrimination, and lack of effective handling mechanisms. This has a negative impact on children's psychosocial health. Bullying and peer violence remain issues that threaten students' emotional security at school, which can lead to learning disabilities and deviant behaviour; school environments that are not yet fully inclusive and friendly to children with special needs or low socioeconomic backgrounds exacerbate students' psychosocial conditions. |

environment that is not yet fully safe, inclusive and supportive. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts involving the active role of teachers, parents, professionals and schools as protective institutions. Improving mental health literacy, specialised training for teachers, and creating a positive and child-friendly learning environment are key to building an effective and sustainable psychosocial support system in primary education.

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