

The Effectiveness of Community Counseling in Helping Clients

Yani Sahendra¹, Budi Astuti², Metria Dicky Putra³, Aureliana Ardhia Widya Cahyani⁴, Febi Febri⁵

^{1,2}Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³English Department, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and Cultures, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁴Education Department, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

⁵Department of Mathematics Education, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

¹yanisahendra.2023@student.uny.ac.id, ²budi_astuti@uny.ac.id, ³metriadicky.2024@student.uny.ac.id,

⁴aurelianaardhia.2023@student.uny.ac.id, ⁵febi0027fmipa.2023@student.uny.ac.id

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⁵0009-0004-1819-7937

Abstract: Community counseling is an intervention designed to help communities overcome various challenges while promoting multicultural awareness and social justice. The effectiveness of this service largely depends on counselors' competencies, including comprehensive knowledge, adequate skills, and a professional attitude in assisting clients. This study examines the effectiveness of community counseling in supporting clients through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, with data extraction based on the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison/Control, Outcome) method. A total of six journal articles that met the inclusion criteria were systematically analyzed. The findings indicate that community counseling is generally effective in assisting clients, particularly those from marginalized or disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the level of effectiveness varies depending on factors such as intervention methods, population characteristics, and contextual implementation. Some studies report significant improvements in client well-being, while others highlight the need for more structured intervention models and clearer ethical guidelines to enhance service effectiveness. This review also emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity, economic background, psychological maturity, and other socio-demographic factors in ensuring successful community counseling interventions. Despite its benefits, community counseling faces challenges, particularly in the availability of standardized guidelines and resource limitations. Further research is needed to develop more comprehensive frameworks, assess long-term impacts, and foster collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of this service. This study contributes to the academic literature by providing a synthesized perspective on the implementation of community counseling and its role in addressing client needs.

Keywords: Community Counseling, Helping Clients, Counsellor, Helping Professions, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Community Counselling

Community counselling is one of the counsellors' strategies in helping clients to overcome individual or community problems in reducing gaps between lives, generally problems occur related to multi-cultural competence and social justice in a community group (Lewis, et al., 2010). In this service, the counsellor will form a group that has similar problems with similar backgrounds or provide services to groups that have been formed but have the same characteristics of obstacles, thus requiring interventions to help the group.

Community counselling is one of the counselling services that pays great attention to individual and group situations in society. Historically, community counselling first emerged in North York in 1995. Community counselling offers a range of services to the general public in an effort to provide assistance to individuals or groups in the community who are in need. This service is sustainable, this is an effort to ensure the success of the service, so that it can provide support and change to the community (Saputra, 2016).

Community counselling can help build awareness of diversity, help overcome problems of violence in the name of religion, reconstruct views of tolerance, form accommodating and tolerant religious behaviour, and form mental readiness (Budiyo, 2022). With community counselling services, it is hoped that the community/clients will be able to overcome problems caused by misunderstanding or lack of insight into multi-cultural and social justice, the community can develop optimally and be independent in facing challenges in their lives.

1.2 Helping People/Clients

Counsellors as counselling service professionals, in providing assistance to the community/clients must prioritise sincerity to be a helper. As a helping profession, counsellors must be grounded in the role and function as someone who helps people genuinely and accepts unconditionally. A helping profession is a profession whose members receive special training or education and have a licence or certificate of recognition for the services they offer to the community (Gibson & Mitchell, 2010).

In practice, helping professions are not only counsellors, but there are doctors, teachers, psychologists, social workers, lawyers, prosecutors, and so on who offer their services. Nowadays, there is often an increasing awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health, and the need for counselling services is increasing, including in groups that are aware of problems or obstacles that require professional expertise in overcoming them.

As a counsellor, you must have competencies related to knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes, so that the implementation of services can really help people, not even add problems. This is of course inseparable from the counsellor's experience in the implementation of counselling, the more hours of flying in counselling services, the better the implementation of services. So that as a community helping profession, counsellors are indeed able to provide good, effective, and efficient help.

1.3 Implementation of Community Counselling to Help People/Clients

In the implementation of community counselling in an effort to help people/clients who have counsellor barriers, counsellors certainly follow guidelines in an effort to provide this assistance. The following are the stages in the process of providing assistance to the community/clients:

a. Building a working relationship

At this stage, the counsellor builds a therapeutic relationship with open communication, honesty, building trust, accepting unconditionally so that clients also feel comfortable and open to telling their problems.

b. Identifying the client's problem

After building a good relationship, the counsellor begins to gather information, analyse, and identify the problems that occur to the client, the counsellor also collects information on the client's abilities and the client's perspective on the problem so that the counsellor has a choice of alternative solutions to offer.

c. Setting Goals

The counsellor begins to set goals for the provision of assistance to clients, so that the client's obstacles or problems can be resolved appropriately and wisely. In determining goals, the counsellor plays a role in assisting clients in formulating the objectives of the process of providing assistance, so that those who determine the specific goals are the clients themselves, not the counsellor.

d. Encouraging Client Exploration and Taking Action

The counsellor begins to explore possible alternative solutions, identify action strategies, choose what combination of strategies best suits the client's condition and the client's goals.

e. Completion

This stage is the final stage in the process of providing assistance to clients, the counsellor assists clients in optimising the benefits of the assistance process that has been provided, and directs clients to be able to solve problems more independently so that there is no dependence in overcoming obstacles or problems (Corey & Corey, 2010).

This research is why it is important to do, because the need for counselling services is increasing, this is certainly due to the increasing awareness of the community of the importance of maintaining mental health and the increasing population. Community counselling as a form of service in clients must be optimal in providing assistance to people/clients who experience obstacles in their lives, so that they can be optimal in their development, independent in life, have knowledge and skills of Multi-cultural competence and social justice because this is closely related to human life which is a social being. will be to see the effectiveness of community counselling services in helping the community. This research wants to see how effective community counselling is in providing help to people/clients who have obstacles or problems in their lives. Especially for further development of community counselling and the counsellor profession as a community helper. The purpose of this study is to summarise the findings of previous research so as to obtain a comprehensive new perspective on the implementation of community counselling as an effort to provide help to the community/clients. In addition, this study was conducted to see how effective community counselling is in providing help to clients, what factors influence, and what are the opportunities for consideration in developing community counselling services. So that this study is able to become additional literature for science, for professional experts in the implementation of community counselling as an effort to provide help to clients in need.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol flow to collect, classify, analyse, and interpret the findings of relevant scientific studies related to the search for relevant studies in the Google Scholar database, Science Direct, and PubMed, with the keyword "The Effectiveness of Community Counselling in Helping Clients".

2.1 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria in the literature search were (1) peer reviewed studies, (2) relevant studies, (3) English language, (4) published from 2014 to 2024 (last 10 years), (5) scientific journals or articles, (6) discussing community counselling or helping clients. More specifically, the research subject does not differentiate between female or male gender, country of origin, and based on research results and professional expert experience. In addition to community counselling, helping clients, factors that influence the success of community counselling, recommendations for the development of community counselling and development in providing help to clients are retained. Research measuring pre- and post-intervention outcomes of community counselling interventions, experimental research, developmental research will also be included in the literature to be synthesised, in order to comprehensively look at the effectiveness of community counselling.

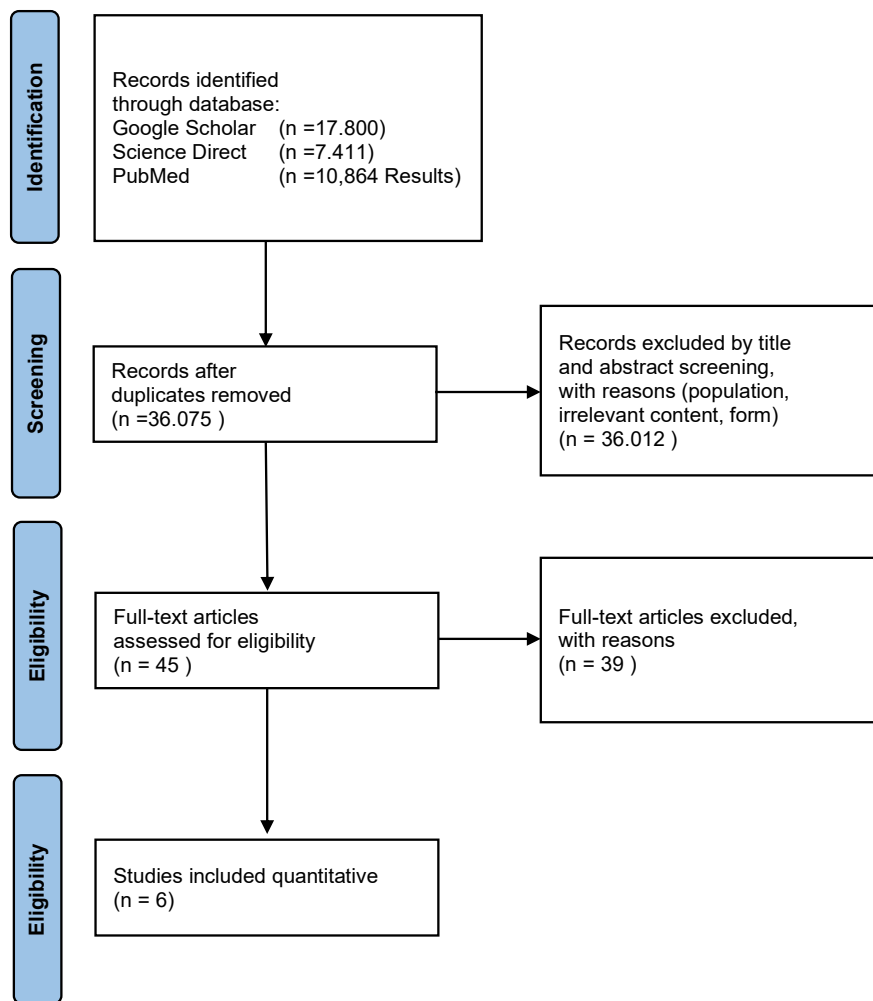
2.2 Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria for this study were (1) country specific, (2) all ages, (3) no community counsellor or helping clients, (4) no research data reported, (5) grey literature (such as unofficial blog posts or unproven assumptions). The screening process was carried out using an Excel programme, which was then adjusted to the criteria of each group of articles found. In accordance with the inclusion criteria of this study, data extraction used the PICO method (Population, Intervention, Comparison/Control, Outcome) by attaching an Excel sheet, with categories; author, year of publication, population and sample, characteristics (age), intervention, comparison (control group), and results obtained in community counselling intervention to provide help to clients.

RESULTS AND DISCUSS

3.1 Identification of Eligible Research

Based on the initial search in the data base using keywords, 36,075 articles were obtained, then 63 articles were found to be the same so that the remaining 36,012 articles, after which the researcher filtered the title and summary, only 45 articles were found that met the inclusion criteria, most of the articles were eliminated due to irrelevant variables (not specific to community counseling or helping clients) and inappropriate content and form (in the form of papers, conference results, reviews, language not published in English and Indonesian, or incorrect references). In the next stage, 45 articles were rechecked for titles, abstracts, completeness of data to be extracted, whether or not there was a full text file, and whether or not they included quantitative research methods. So that 39 articles were obtained that did not meet these criteria, the reasons were because the population characteristics were not suitable, the absence of community counseling or helping clients irrelevant studies or theories, did not have complete data, including qualitative research). After a final review of the results of the articles obtained in the search in the data base, 6 articles were obtained that met the criteria set for this study.



Picture. 1: PRISMA flow diagram

3.2 Findings of Community Counselling in Helping Clients

In presenting the findings, the PICO method was used to look at the results of each study from the interventions provided. In this section, an explanation of the study used, the population and age or population criteria in each study is written, followed by an explanation of what intervention was used, information on the existence of a control or comparison group, and the findings of the community counselling studies.

Study	Population/Sample (N; Age)	Intervention/Program	Comparison/Control	Outcomes
Copeland, et al. 2023.	n= 66, 7-18 years	Community counseling	Comparing each level after the intervention	The results indicate that there is variability in the effectiveness of school- and community-based community counselling, depending on capacity and implementation. Recommendations for future research are how to improve service implementation with consideration of service complexity.
Babughirana, et al. 2023	n=744, Rural Ugandan society	Community counseling	Comparing with the control group with no intervention	The results showed a significant contribution to improvements in the quality of maternal and household practices, as well as pregnancy and newborn outcomes in Uganda following the intervention.

Rosenberg, et al. 2024.	n=8, Pharmacist	Community counseling	Comparing with the no-intervention group	The results showed that the Community Counselling intervention can help pharmacists, so it can be useful for pharmacists.
Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat, 2014	n=102, African society	Community counseling	Without control/comparison groups	The results of the study indicate the impact of the programme implementation, the research findings suggest that the importance of working together, taking an indigenous approach, as well as a critical framework or real social action for African communities. The researcher recommends collaboration in helping the community/clients and the creation of a code of ethics guideline in the implementation of community counselling.
Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat, 2014	n=124, African society	Community counseling	Without control/comparison groups	The results suggest that there is a need for a specific framework in the implementation of community counselling in Africa. The research also sheds light on the importance of individualised assessment and intervention with a comprehensive approach in helping oppressed communities/counsellors, such as building a supportive environment, and improving the overall health of the community/counsellor.
Dike, et al, 2021.	n=108, Children	Community counseling	Comparing the intervention group with the no-intervention group	The results showed an improvement in children's eating habits after the intervention.

Table 1: Overview Community Counseling in Helping Clients

The community counselling interventions used in the 6 studies reviewed had a variety of differences ranging from materials, duration of intervention, differences in population age, intervention target, year of study, country, and environment. However, the interventions used were similar in that they were community counselling interventions, attempting to help clients. Some studies conducted comparisons on control groups, control group designs with two types, namely, by providing other interventions such as research by Copeland, et al. (2023), Babughirana (2023), Rosenberg, et al. (2024), and Dike, et al, (2021) or by not providing any intervention at all such as Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat (2014) and Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat (2014).

The duration of the intervention of each study varies, some conduct a single measurement to determine the impact of the intervention given, some also double-check the impact of the intervention by giving a certain time lag. In addition, the age of the population of each study varies, ranging from children adolescents, to adults. The year of the study differed from one another, two studies in 2014 and 2023, one study in 2021 and 2024. The research environment is different from one another, some are in developed countries and some are in developing countries, the distribution of research places varies as well, some are in urban areas and some are in remote rural areas. These different factors are also a concern in this study, whether or not they affect the impact of the intervention.

Referring to the purpose of providing community counselling in helping clients, almost all (4 studies) studies chose to use experimental research design to determine the impact of the intervention, the remaining (2 studies) did not use experimental research design but used descriptive quantitative research design. Data collection also used a variety of pretest-post test instruments, questionnaires, and even additional data from interviews and field observations.

3. 3 Factors that need to be considered by counsellors in community counselling in order to help Respectful model clients (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001).

R = Religious/Spiritual Identity

In an effort to facilitate the development of clients properly and appropriately, community counsellors need to identify the religious/spiritual beliefs of the clients. The factor of belief or religion of the client needs to be considered, because this is closely related to the concept of life of the client, his perspective on life, achievements in life, and belief in the world after death. So that in determining alternative solutions or solutions do not conflict with the spiritual concept of the client, as well as the interpretation of personal difficulties in life and strategies in dealing with stress. Community counselling counsellors also need to explore the extent of the clients understanding of the clients religious beliefs, because the level of understanding of religion affects the perspective and determines the steps in developing themselves and solving the clients problems.

Counsellors also need to provide special interventions if the client has a concept of belief/religion that is very different from the surrounding community. When the clients understanding is still immature or still erroneous about the beliefs held, then the counsellor needs to increase the clients understanding in order to have a mature and comprehensive understanding of his beliefs, which he claims as his beliefs. In an effort to provide a comprehensive understanding, the counsellor can collaborate with parties who are competent in this field, such as religious leaders. After the client has a mature and comprehensive understanding of the beliefs held, the process of providing assistance will be easier, because the clients understanding is mature and specific.

E = Economy Class Background

A person's attitudes, values, perspective on life, and behaviour will be closely related to their economic background. A counsellor who comes from a rich family will be different from a counsellor from a poor family in looking at a problem. Counsellors are also sometimes biased in providing views, because they come from an economic class background with the client. Therefore, it is very important for counsellors in the counselling process to put themselves like the client, a neutral understanding instead of putting forward understood stereotypes to reduce the level of bias in analysing the clients problems. In finding out the economic class background of the client, the counsellor must be really careful because this is very sensitive for the counsellor, when not careful it will greatly affect the level of trust of the client towards the counsellor, when the client lacks trust in the counsellor, it is difficult for the counsellor to provide effective and efficient services in the implementation of services.

After the counsellor knows the background of the clients economic class, the client is able to place himself appropriately according to the clients condition, this will be very useful in determining alternative solutions and interventions in an effort to help solve the clients problems and facilitate the clients development properly.

S = Sexual Identity

The sexual identity of the client is important for the counsellor to pay attention to in knowing the clients perspective on his gender identity, his role with that gender, and his sexual orientation. This is because there are many cases of misunderstanding of their gender, role, and sexual orientation (especially in countries that are open to sexual orientation according to eastern culture as a deviation). When there is a misunderstanding of the norms and values of the society where the client is, the counsellor needs to provide the right understanding to the client, so that helping to solve the problem is easier and more appropriate. In facilitating the development of the client well, the client must recognise his/her gender, role, and appropriate sexual orientation, if the client is female he/she must realise that his/her gender is female, how the role of a person in life, and the appropriate sexual orientation is in women.

P = Psychology Maturity

Each client certainly has a different level of maturity from one another, causative factors such as the age of the client, parenting, education level, and other factors. The counsellor needs to pay attention to the psychological maturity of the client whether it is in accordance with the age of development or not, if the client does not have psychological maturity in accordance with the age of development, the counsellor must find out what kind of service strategy will be provided to the client to mature the clients psychology. This is also closely related to how the counsellor's ability to facilitate the development of the client properly.

Information on psychological maturity will also be an important factor to see the cause of the problems that occur in the client, whether due to the level of psychological maturity or other obstacles in his life.

E = Ethnic/Racial Identity

Ethnic/racial differences will lead to different ways of interpreting life, how to respond to problems, culture and values. As a community counsellor, the counsellor must have extensive knowledge of the different perspectives of each ethnicity/race, at least knowledge of the ethnicity/race of the clients who are often given services. Competence in ethnic/racial differences will guard the counsellor against biases and stereotypes in the implementation of community counselling services, mistakes in understanding the ethnicity/race of the client in the counselling process will cause new problems to emerge and even reduce the level of trust of the client towards the counsellor in the process of implementing

counselling. A broad knowledge of ethnicity/race will greatly assist the counsellor in facilitating the development of the client appropriately.

C = Chronological/ Developmental Challenges

At each age of development, there are chronological challenges, ranging from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood. Development in each phase addresses specific changes, such as physical growth, cognitive competence, and psychological skills that occur over time. However, in every individual there are those who experience slow development, it is in conditions like this that the counsellor's role is to help the client, so that the client can be facilitated in his development, in order to achieve development as it should be. Each age of individual development has its own challenges to be assisted, counsellors are required to be sensitive to these challenges, besides that counsellors are required to be creative in helping clients who experience obstacles in their development.

T = Trauma and Other Threats to One's Well-Being

Clients who experience trauma or other forms of feeling threatened need to be given special assistance so that they feel safe and are given treatment in an effort to overcome the client's trauma. In some cases of clients who are stressed or have feelings of threat such as in cases of divorce, pregnant teenagers, HIV/AIDS sufferers, cancer patients, or victims of racism, sexism, and cultural oppression. Counsellors must be careful in seeing the side of the problem, the right intervention in an effort to overcome the trauma or threat that exists in the client. When this trauma or threat is not helped immediately, it is difficult for the counsellor to be able to facilitate the development of the client optimally, therefore it is necessary to try to overcome these problems, but must remain careful to avoid other undesirable things.

F = Family Background and History

Family background and history is one of the important factors for counsellors to pay attention to, because mistakes in understanding the background and history of the client will cause difficulties in solving the client's problems, for example in clients with single parents or even no parents, gay or lesbian parents. Of course this is a challenge for the counsellor in helping to solve the client's problem, therefore the counsellor needs to know the background and family history of the client, so that the implementation of services can be effective and efficient. When the counsellor is able to know the background and history of the client, this will greatly assist the counsellor in facilitating the optimal development of the client.

U = Unique Physical Characteristics

In some cases, the cause of the problem is dissatisfaction with the physical condition that is not in accordance with the expectations of the client, not ideal according to the client, the client who has a change in condition due to an accident incident, and the client who is physically unique / special. In dealing with a client who has characteristics like this, the counselor must try to provide understanding to the client, relating that it is actually ideal. Then in the case of a client who experiences a sudden change in physical condition after an incident, the counsellor must accompany the client until he is able to accept the condition, motivate the client, be careful in providing interventions to prevent further deterioration of the client with the changed physical condition. In a unique physical condition, the counsellor must still facilitate how the client is able to develop optimally.

L = Location of Residence and Language Differences

The factor of residence and language differences is a consideration for counsellors in helping clients, the environment is less supportive and different languages are sometimes a factor in causing problems. Counsellors in this context must have extensive knowledge of differences in residential locations and language differences, because this greatly affects the services provided, if the counsellor himself has minimal knowledge of the conditions of the location where the client lives or does not understand the language differences experienced by the client, it will cause the counsellor difficulties in helping to overcome the client's problems and difficulties in facilitating the optimal development of the client.

With this Respectful model, the counsellor will find it easier to facilitate the development of the client optimally, then be able to overcome the problems experienced by the client, so that the client is able to develop according to their developmental age, maximise their potential, and be independent in living life and facing every challenge.

3.4 Impact of Community Counselling Intervention Findings in Helping Clients

Each study had different levels of impact depending on the content, duration, age, personal condition of the individual, and the research environment. In detail, the results of each study can be seen in Table 1. However, overall, the findings of community counselling interventions are able to help clients, although the levels vary, some are significant, quite helpful, and have a positive impact on the subjects given the intervention.

Clients are able to have insight into multi-cultural and social justice so that they are able to have the ability to gradually live well, be independent, develop accordingly, and be able to face challenges wisely. The impact depends on how the counsellor's ability to implement community counselling with all considerations of the complexity of the intervention

provided. This study also found that the effectiveness of community counselling will impact the community on the importance of working together, by taking a customary approach, and using a critical framework or having a detailed plan in dealing with obstacles that exist in a community. Community counselling is also often used to help communities or groups that are oppressed or left behind, so that the community is able to rise from oppression and backwardness, in cases like this the counsellor's role is to help the community get out of the oppressed or disadvantaged condition, motivate, and improve community health.

However, the implementation of community counselling in helping clients needs further research that will create a collaborative framework and create ethical guidelines in the implementation of community counselling, so that the knowledge is more comprehensive, innovative, creative, and renewable. This note is a recommendation for future research on community counselling interventions in helping clients.

Community counselling is a service or intervention used to assist a community in overcoming obstacles or problems, so that these obstacles can be resolved properly and appropriately. As a community counsellor who works as a helper for clients, the counsellor must have competence in good and adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that the provision of assistance or intervention in a community is appropriate and avoids bias or even making mistakes in the implementation of community counselling. This is certainly a major concern in the implementation of community counselling in an effort to help clients, lest the client instead of being helped but instead adds to the complexity of the problem or even adds new problems to the client's life.

In addition, the target of the community counselling service or intervention is also considered, namely the group or community of a society. As a helper, aspects of community conditions such as family background, race/ethnicity, economic class, physical condition, and other influencing factors need to be considered. Overall, the studies conducted indicate that community counselling is effective in helping clients who have obstacles or problems in their lives.

CONCLUSION

This article brings together research over the past 10 years on the implementation of community counselling interventions in helping clients. It is one of the most recent and complementary studies on measuring the impact of community counselling implementation using a systematic literature review method. Overall, the synthesised studies show that community counselling interventions are effective in helping clients, although the level of impact varies, so community counselling is highly recommended for use in helping clients.

However, this does not mean that researchers can be complacent, there needs to be innovation in the model of providing interventions to clients so that the achievement of independence and development that should be in the community can be effectively and efficiently. Especially in oppressed or disadvantaged communities/clients, because the progress of a nation is closely related to the equitable quality of its human resources, if there is still a glaring gap, it needs improvement efforts by promoting collaboration and upholding social justice in people's lives. We are aware that research related to community counselling needs to be improved in quality and quantity, especially in oppressed or disadvantaged communities/clients, so there is still much that needs to be done in future studies that are more in-depth and comprehensive on this variable. This study has limited reference sources and specific guidelines for the implementation of community counselling, so this can be a recommendation for future research.

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