

EXPLORATION OF THE ONTOLOGY OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROFESSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT, ROLE AND IDENTITY OF COUNSELORS

***¹Nuraini, ²Edi Purwanta, ³Diana Septi Purnama**

***¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. Hamka, ^{2,3}Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta**

Email: *¹nuraini@uhamka.ac.id, ²edi_purwanta@uny.ac.id,

³dianaseptipurnama@uny.ac.id

Abstract

The Guidance and Counseling (BK) profession is developing in line with the complexity of the needs of students and the demands of the professionalism of counselors. This study explores the ontology of the BK profession systematically, focusing on the concept, role, and professional identity of counselors. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on PRISMA, with an analysis of 7 selected scientific articles. The results show that counselors' professional identities are a dynamic construct formed through accredited education, practical experience, regulation, collective advocacy, cultural context, spiritual values, and social orientation. The role of a counselor is multidimensional, encompassing individual practice, leadership, advocacy, and social engagement, while the concept of a counselor encompasses professional knowledge, skills, and values. The ontology of the BK profession emphasizes that the reality of counselors is progressive, subjective, and contextual. Strengthening professional identity is the foundation of competence, ethics, and sustainability of BK services.

Keywords: Guidance and Counseling, ontology, professional identity, role of counselor

Abstrak

Profesi Bimbingan dan Konseling (BK) berkembang seiring kompleksitas kebutuhan peserta didik dan tuntutan profesionalisme konselor. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi ontologi profesi BK secara sistematis, dengan fokus pada konsep, peran, dan identitas profesional konselor. Metode yang digunakan adalah Systematic Literature Review (SLR) berbasis PRISMA, dengan analisis 7 artikel ilmiah terpilih. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa identitas profesional konselor merupakan konstruksi dinamis yang terbentuk melalui pendidikan terakreditasi, pengalaman praktik, regulasi, advokasi kolektif, konteks budaya, nilai spiritual, dan orientasi sosial. Peran konselor bersifat multidimensi, meliputi praktik individual, kepemimpinan, advokasi, dan keterlibatan sosial, sementara konsep konselor mencakup pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan nilai profesional. Ontologi profesi BK menegaskan bahwa realitas konselor bersifat progresif, subjektif, dan kontekstual. Penguatan identitas profesional menjadi fondasi kompetensi, etika, dan keberlanjutan layanan BK.

Kata kunci: Bimbingan dan Konseling, ontology, identitas profesional, peran konselor

INTRODUCTION

The Guidance and Counseling (BK) profession continues to develop in line with the increasing complexity of student needs, socio-cultural changes, and the demands of counselor professionalism. These developments demand clarity about the nature of the BK profession, including the basic concept, role, and professional identity of counselors. The quality of effective counseling services depends not only on technical skills, but also on the philosophical foundations that underlie the counselor's understanding of people, the relationship of help, and the existence of the profession (Corey, 2022).

In the framework of philosophy, ontology is a branch that discusses the essence of existence and reality. In the counseling profession, ontology is concerned with how counselors understand human nature, psychological experiences, and counselor relationships (Hansen, 2004). These ontological assumptions then form the counseling paradigm, the direction of intervention, and the goal of the service. Hansen (2005) asserts that each counseling approach is built on certain ontological assumptions, for example regarding whether humans are seen as rational, emotional, free, or determined by the environment. Therefore, ontological exploration is important to strengthen the legitimacy of the profession, clarify the boundaries of practice, and affirm the identity of the counselor.

However, the literature shows that the BK profession often faces the problem of unclear professional identity. Crime & Myers (1999) states that the professional identity of counselors is still being formed and is often influenced by external demands that are not always in line with the basic values of the profession. Likewise, Gibson & Mitchell (2008) explained that counselors often experience role ambiguity due to the overlap of administrative tasks and psychological assistance tasks, especially in schools. The ambiguity of this role signifies that an ontological understanding of "who the counselor is" and "what is the essence of the role" is not yet fully established.

In addition to the aspects of identity and role, the professional ethics of counselors are also closely related to the ontological foundation of the profession. A systematic review of the literature shows that the philosophy of science, including ontology, provides the foundation for the development of professional counseling ethics. In a recent systematic analysis, it was stated that an ontological understanding as a being with existential potential and responsibility requires counselors to adhere to values such as confidentiality, client autonomy, and respect for human dignity (Fazria et al., 2024). This confirms that the essence of "being a counselor" is not just a technical job, but a commitment to values formed from a deep philosophical understanding.

At school, ASCA (American School Counselor Association, 2019)) has established a framework for the role of school counselors that emphasizes the function of counselors as facilitators of academic, career, and social-emotional development. But in practice, many studies report a mismatch between ideal roles and actual roles, so school counselors often get stuck in non-counseling work (Dekruyf et al., 2013; Scarborough, 2005). This

can be seen as an ontological problem because it concerns the existence, meaning, and limitations of the profession.

Although there is a lot of research on the philosophy of counseling, the identity of the counselor, and the role of the school counselor, studies that specifically examine the ontology of the BK profession as a single concept are still limited. In fact, the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach is needed to integrate findings spread across various fields such as counseling philosophy, professionalism, role studies, and identity theory. Through SLR, a conceptual map of the nature of the BK profession can be compiled in a more comprehensive and directed manner. Therefore, this study aims to systematically explore how the ontology of the BK profession is discussed in the literature, by highlighting the basic concepts of the profession, the role of counselors, and professional identity. This study is expected to be able to strengthen the philosophical foundation of the BK profession and clarify the existence of the role of counselors in various service contexts.

METHODS

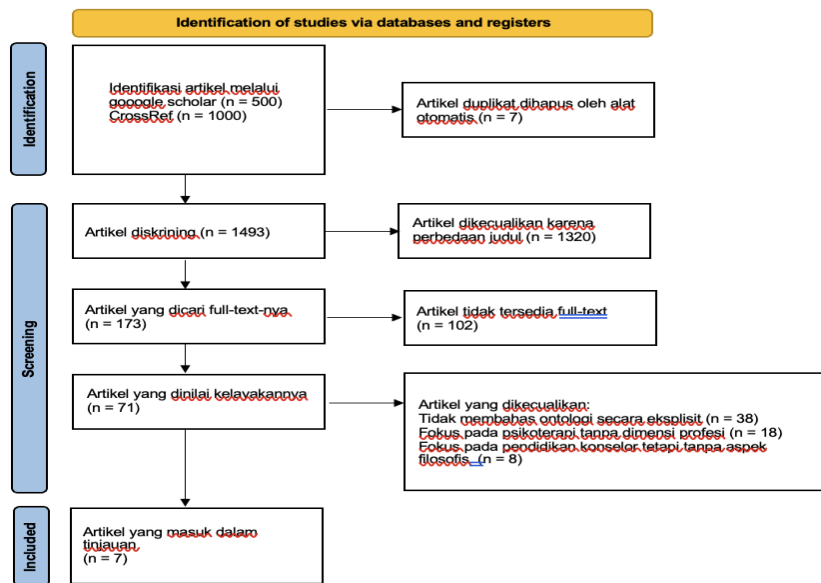
This study uses the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) with PRISMA design (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) as the main guide in the literature review process. PRISMA is a set of evidence-based standards that aim to ensure that systematic review reporting is carried out in a transparent, comprehensive, and replicable manner (January, 2024). The SLR process in this study follows systematic steps as described by Snyder (2019) It includes (1) formulating research focus and inclusion-exclusion criteria, (2) determining search sources, (3) conducting initial identification and selection, (4) assessing the feasibility of articles based on full-text, and (5) conducting thematic content analysis of selected articles. This approach ensures that the entire process of searching, filtering, and analyzing articles is done consistently and structured.

The inclusion criteria in this study were prepared to ensure compatibility with the focus of the study on the ontology of the Guidance and Counseling profession, especially those that discuss the basic concepts of the profession, the professional identity of counselors, and the role of counselors in various service contexts. The articles submitted are scientific publications in Indonesian or English and are available in *full-text form*. The publication year range 2015-2025, however, only articles relevant to the theme of ontology, the counseling profession, the philosophical basis of counseling, professional identity, and the role of counselors are maintained. The article should make these concepts the main focus or core part of the discussion. Research that is non-scientific, does not address the ontological aspects of the counseling profession, or is not available in a complete format is excluded from the analysis.

The article search was conducted through two main databases, namely Google Scholar and CrossRef, using the keywords: *ontology, counseling profession, professional identity, counselor role*, ontology, counselor, and philosophy. The initial search process yielded

500 articles from Google Scholar and 1,000 articles from CrossRef, bringing the total to 1,500 articles. The articles are then imported into Mendeley's reference management application for the initial screening process, including the removal of duplicates. After the deduplication process, the number of articles was reduced to 1,493 articles. Furthermore, a selection was made based on titles, abstracts, and inclusion-exclusion criteria, and only articles that were relevant and met the feasibility of full-text were further analyzed. In the final stage, 7 articles were obtained that were worthy of analysis, consisting of 5 articles in English and 2 articles in Indonesian, according to the PRISMA flowchart.

Gambar 1. The PRISMA Flow Diagram for Article Selection



The analysis of articles in this study was carried out through three main stages. First, the researcher read all selected articles thoroughly to understand the context, focus of the study, and how each study discusses the ontology of the Guidance and Counseling profession, including the basic concept of the profession, the identity of the counselor, and the role of the counselor. Second, important information from each article is extracted and summarized into a table containing the author's name, research title, method used, and main findings related to the ontological aspects of the counseling profession. Third, the researcher conducts an in-depth analysis to identify key themes, similarities and differences in perspectives, as well as the relationships between findings, so as to describe the ontological construction of the BK profession comprehensively and systematically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the following 7 articles, a summary of the main content and findings of each article is presented in the form of a table.

Table 1. Analysis Summary

AUTHOR	PURPOSE	ONTOLOGICAL ASPECTS STUDIED	KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO PROFESSIONAL ONTOLOGY
(WOO ET AL., 2017)	To test group differences in professional identity (Counseling Professional Identity (CPI) among counseling professionals (S2, S3, and counselor educators) using the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC).	The development of the Counseling Professional Identity (CPI) and the differences in its development at various levels of professional status.	Counselor educators rated five of the six PISC subscales significantly higher than S3 students, followed by S2 students. These results support a strong professional identity development perspective.
(PETERS & VEREEN, 2020)	To investigate the perceptions and experiences of counseling leaders who base their leadership on the identity of professional counselors.	The essence and essence of how counseling leaders base their leadership in the identity of the professional counselor.	The five main phenomenological themes that emerged are: (1) self as a person as leader, (2) culture, (3) privilege and responsibility, (4) counseling leadership, and (5) advocacy and impact.
(BETTERS-BUBON ET AL., 2021)	To understand the experiences and perceptions of school counselor educators (SCEs) regarding recent changes in the counseling profession in the United States.	SCEs' perceptions of their professional identity amid professional changes (e.g., new ACA/ASCA relationships and accreditation options). The ontological view that human perception is subjective.	One of the main themes is Inconsistent School Counselor Educator Identity. These identities are divided into subthemes: Incorporated Identity, First Educator Identity, First Counselor Identity,

			and Identity Confusion.
(PRAWITA ET AL., 2022)	To analyze the development of religious life in Guidance and Counseling (BK) ontologically	Ontology of the Development of Religious Life in BK. Ontology is defined as the study of the essence of truth and reality of all that exists.	Ontologically, religion/belief is a basic need in human life to achieve inner peace and physical health. It is necessary to have an ontological analysis of the role of counselors, because most people consider clients to be doing evil because of a lack of religious knowledge.
(UM & WOOD, 2022)	To examine the relationship between the development of counseling trainees' professional identities and their involvement in social justice.	The Relationship between Professional Identity and Social Justice Engagement. Professional identity implies support for human rights and equitable distribution of resources.	The professional identity of counseling trainees predicted their involvement in social justice. Professional orientation and values significantly predict their attitudes, perceptions, and intentions toward social justice.
(FAROZIN, 2019)	To describe the professional identity of counselor educators who teach in counselor professional education in Indonesia.	The professional identity of counselor educators is determined by their level of readiness/competence to the standards set by the government.	Counselor educators generally reported having an average level of competence (82.4%) according to the mandated standards. Cultural-specific competencies, such as cross-cultural skills and instructional technology literacy,

(EISSENSTAT & BOHECKER, 2018)	To study how the profession unrelated to counseling has navigated the developmental issues faced by the counseling profession, such as: (1) reinforcing identity, (2) presenting oneself as a profession, (3) increasing public perception and advocacy, and (4) creating licensing portability. The goal is to find solutions so that the counseling profession can move forward.	This study is based on the epistemology of social construction. Researchers hold the ontological belief that there is no one observable absolute truth about reality. Rather, reality is developed based on the social construction of the mind in which each individual develops a diverse and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences.	are considered important to add. The four building blocks of professional development include: Quality Accredited Education to equip practitioners, Professional Identity as the foundation of professionalism, Accreditation Linkage, Certification, and Licensing to ensure competence, and United Advocacy to strengthen professional positions. The four are interrelated and form a professional identity.
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An in-depth analysis of various studies confirms that the professional identity of counselors is a central construct in professional development. Woo et al. (2017) shows a significant difference in the development of professional identity between counselor educators and S2/S3 students, which confirms that professional identity is progressively formed through a combination of formal education, clinical experience, and professional recognition. These findings support the view that professional identity is not just an individual attribute, but rather the result of an interaction between academic competence, practical experience, and educational accreditation that affirms the legitimacy of the profession.

Furthermore, Peters & Vereen (2020) emphasizing that the identity of the counselor serves as the foundation of leadership. Five phenomenological themes from the self as a leader to advocacy and impact show that counselors who have a mature professional identity not only focus on individual services, but also practice ethical leadership and collective advocacy, which contributes to the strengthening of the profession in the social and organizational realms. This shows that the identity of the counselor is multidimensional, encompassing personal, professional, and social aspects, thus

supporting the theory that professional identity is a dynamic construct that constantly interacts with the social context.

Meanwhile, Betters-Bubon et al. (2021) identified identity uncertainty among school counselor educators due to policy changes and accreditation, resulting in the subthemes of incorporated identity, first counselor identity, and educator first identity. This phenomenon shows that the identity of the counselor is dynamic and contextual, shaped by the interaction between institutional demands, regulations, and the individual's perception of his or her professional role. In a broader ontological perspective, Prawita et al. (2022) emphasize that religion and spiritual values are important components in counselor development, as they play a role in client well-being and understanding of human behavior. This confirms that the role of counselors is holistic, including ethical aspects, values, and reflection on the client's existential reality.

Um & Wood (2022) broadening understanding of counselors' social orientation, where strong professional identities predict engagement in social justice advocacy. These findings suggest that professional identity is not only the cornerstone of clinical practice, but also an internal mechanism that guides counselors' attitudes, perceptions, and intentions towards social issues, including human rights and equitable distribution of resources.

In Indonesia, Farozin (2019) shows that the professional identity of counselor educators is influenced by government competency standards as well as local competencies, such as cross-cultural skills and instructional technology literacy. This emphasizes that the identity of counselors is multidimensional and contextual, requiring adaptation to the culture and needs of the community. Finally, Eissenstat & Bohecker (2018) affirm that the development of the counselor profession must be viewed systemically through the four "building blocks" of quality accredited education, professional identity, accreditation-certification-licensing linkage, and unified advocacy. This perspective emphasizes that the professional identity of counselors is a social construct formed through experience, education, regulation, and collective interaction. Its ontology shows that the reality of the profession is not singular or absolute, but rather subjective and developed based on the social construction of individual and group experiences.

Based on these findings, it can be seen that the concept of a counselor includes professional knowledge, values, and skills. The role of a counselor is multidimensional, encompassing individual practice, leadership, advocacy, and social engagement, while the professional identity of a counselor is a dynamic construct formed through education, practical experience, cultural context, regulation, and social interaction. The concept of counselor as a profession basically includes three main foundations, namely knowledge, values, and professional skills. Knowledge includes a theoretical understanding of human behavior, psychological dynamics, interpersonal relationships, as well as the ethical foundations that govern professional practice. Values concern the moral commitment of counselors to uphold human dignity, maintain confidentiality, respect diversity, and

adhere to humanitarian principles. Meanwhile, professional skills include technical abilities in assessment, counseling, intervention, and facilitation of individual development. These three aspects are interrelated and form an ontological framework that explains "what a counselor is" and "how a counselor should be present" in practice.

The role of counselors in the modern context shows an increasingly multidimensional tendency. No longer limited to the practice of individual counseling or traditional psychological services, counselors are now understood as moral leaders, agents of social change, educators, advocates, and facilitators of a healthy environment. They are involved in the process of policy formation, empowerment of individuals and groups, and encourage the creation of social justice in various educational and community settings. This complexity shows that the role of counselors is adaptive and develops according to the demands of the times. Ontologically, this expands the definition of counselor, from simply a "service provider" to a "social actor" who has a strategic influence in the development of the psychological well-being of the community.

The professional identity of a counselor, in this context, is a dynamic construction formed through various educational experiences, field practices, professional regulations, social interactions, and the cultural values that underlie it. A strong identity reflects not only technical competence, but also clarity of purpose, moral integrity, and a deep understanding of the counselor's position in the social system. A mature professional identity is the foundation for the sustainability of the Guidance and Counseling profession, because it affects the quality of service, practice ethics, courage to advocate, and adaptability to change. Thus, professional identity is not only an individual attribute, but also an ontological element that represents the existence and legitimacy of the counselor profession as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Based on a systematic review of various studies, it can be concluded that the professional identity of counselors is at the core of the development of the Guidance and Counseling profession. This identity is formed through the interaction between accredited education, practical experience, regulation, and collective advocacy, and is influenced by the cultural context, spiritual values, and social orientation of the counselor. The role of a counselor is multidimensional, encompassing individual practice, leadership, advocacy, and social engagement. The concept of a counselor encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, and professional values, which serve as the foundation for professional ethics and competence. The ontology of the BK profession shows that the reality of counselors is dynamic and constructive, where professional identities are developed progressively, subjectively, and contextually. Overall, strengthening the professional identity of counselors is a prerequisite for the competence, sustainability of the profession, and the ability of counselors to provide ethical, holistic, and socially impactful services.

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