



Overview of Self-Care for Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the physical, social, and psychological challenges faced by Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers in the Daerah Aliran Sungai region of Katingan Regency, which may impact their emotional well-being. The primary focus of this research is to depict the self-care levels of BK teachers and identify the factors influencing them. A descriptive, quantitative approach was used, with a survey administered to 11 BK teachers using the Self-Care questionnaire. The results showed that 63.6% of the teachers had low self-care levels, while 36.4% had moderate levels. The most prominent aspect was the tendency to neglect personal needs, while the lowest aspect was their involvement in positive activities. The study concludes that although BK teachers are highly dedicated, they are susceptible to emotional exhaustion. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of developing contextual self-care training programs and institutional support tailored to remote areas as preventive measures to improve the psychological well-being and sustainability of BK teachers' performance in the Daerah Aliran Sungai region.

KATA KUNCI

Self care;
Guru bimbingan dan
konseling;
Kesejahteraan guru;
kesehatan mental

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tantangan fisik, sosial, dan psikologis yang dihadapi oleh guru Bimbingan dan Konseling di wilayah Daerah Aliran Sungai Kabupaten Katingan, yang berpotensi memengaruhi kesejahteraan emosional mereka. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menggambarkan tingkat self-care guru BK serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif dengan survei terhadap 11 guru BK menggunakan instrumen angket Self-Care. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 63,6% guru BK memiliki tingkat self-care rendah, sementara 36,4% berada pada kategori sedang. Aspek yang paling menonjol adalah kecenderungan mengabaikan kebutuhan pribadi, sedangkan aspek yang paling rendah terkait dengan keterlibatan dalam aktivitas positif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun guru BK memiliki dedikasi yang tinggi, mereka rentan terhadap kelelahan emosional. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya pengembangan program pelatihan self-care yang kontekstual serta dukungan institusional yang berbasis pada wilayah terpencil sebagai langkah preventif untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis dan keberlanjutan kinerja guru BK di daerah aliran sungai.

1. INTRODUCTION

Guidance and Counseling teachers are an integral part of the education system, playing a vital role in helping students achieve optimal development, both academically, socially, emotionally, and in their careers. In carrying out their duties, Guidance and Counseling teachers are expected not only to possess professional counseling skills but also to demonstrate emotional stability, mental health, and psychological well-being. As Corey & Corey (2021) stated, a practical helper is an individual who can maintain a balance between personal needs and professional

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responsibilities (Zulhakim et al., 2025). Without this ability, guidance and counseling teachers are at risk of emotional exhaustion and reduced service effectiveness.

Guidance and Counseling teachers in the Katingan River Basin face more complex challenges than those in urban areas. These challenges not only stem from professional demands but also from extreme geographical conditions, limited transportation access, minimal educational facilities, and limited professional and social support. Geographically, most schools in the Katingan area can only be reached via river routes, with long travel times and unpredictable weather, which pose an obstacle to guidance and counseling teachers consistently providing professional supervision and peer support. This situation can increase physical and psychological pressure, leading teachers to focus more on meeting the demands of their duties and students' needs. In contrast, their personal needs and emotional well-being are often neglected (Yusof, 2025). This aligns with several studies that highlight limited access to communication and inadequate educational facilities (Wahyuni & Prasetyo, 2022; Smith & Lazarus, 2020). Such conditions may significantly increase physical and psychological pressure compared to teachers in urban areas. Research by Hartini Widodo & Widodo (2022) shows that teachers in the Central Kalimantan water region face higher work stress due to geographical isolation, administrative burdens, and lack of professional supervision.

These conditions make self-care a critical aspect influencing the psychological well-being of guidance and counseling teachers. Self-care is understood as a series of efforts to maintain physical, emotional, cognitive, and social health through both planned and spontaneous strategies (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Previous research has shown that self-care plays a protective role against work stress, emotional exhaustion (burnout), and decreased empathy (Alvi & Gill, 2020; Simşir Gokalp, 2022; Sveen et al., 2016; Babicka et al., 2021; Hähner et al., 2023). For guidance and counseling teachers in K, self-care is even more crucial, as they frequently deal with students facing personal, social, family, and psychological issues (Perry & Singh, 2019; Boamah & Laschinger, 2018).

This condition requires special attention; however, the focus on self-care for guidance and counseling teachers in remote areas remains very limited. Most research on teacher well-being focuses on stress, burnout, emotion regulation, and general psychological well-being (Cumming, 2017; Stevenson & Harper, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2021). Specific studies on self-care for guidance and counseling teachers have primarily been conducted in urban areas with access to training, psychological services, and professional communities (Ahmad et al., 2021; Fitriana & Arifin, 2020; Lestari & Yusuf, 2021; Putri & Rahmawati, 2023). This creates a knowledge gap because extreme geographic conditions, such as those in the Katingan River Basin, present very different challenges (Yuliana & Ramadhan, 2023; Nurhayati, 2019).

Based on the author's analysis, several research gaps remain underexplored. First, self-care for guidance and counseling teachers in river basin areas has not been a primary focus due to the dominance of professional demands and limitations in the work environment. Second, geographic limitations and social isolation lead to a different self-care pattern than guidance and counseling teachers in urban areas. However, these differences have not been widely empirically demonstrated. Third, the self-care practices of guidance and counseling teachers in remote areas have not been integrated with the social, cultural, and environmental contexts of rural areas, necessitating a study tailored to local conditions.

According to ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), an individual's well-being is influenced by the interaction between personal factors and the physical and social environment. In the context of guidance and counseling teachers in river regions, external factors such as transportation access, geographic isolation, limited social support, and heavy workloads have the potential to significantly affect self-care practices. Recent research shows that teachers in rural areas have distinct self-care needs, particularly regarding self-compassion, community support, and psychological resilience (Mindell & Naff, 2023a; Nirmala & Putra, 2021; Prasetyo & Wahyuni, 2020).

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on self-care for guidance and counseling teachers in river basin areas, a geographic context that is rarely the focus of research, despite the significant environmental and psychosocial challenges it presents. Additionally, this study uses the Self-Care Scale (Gonzalez et al., 2017), which has been internationally validated, thereby strengthening measurement quality and the relevance of the research findings.

This study aims to: 1) describe the level of self-care among guidance and counseling teachers in the Katingan River Basin region; 2) identify the most vulnerable aspects of self-care; and 3) provide empirical data as a basis for the formulation of policies and mentoring programs for guidance and counseling teachers in remote areas.

The contribution of this study includes two aspects. Theoretically, this research expands understanding of the relationship between self-care, geographic context, and teacher well-being from a developmental ecology perspective. Practically, the findings can be used by local governments, schools, professional organizations, and the

Education Quality Assurance Institution to develop training programs, mentoring, and context-based policies that support the well-being of guidance and counseling teachers in remote areas..

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive approach using a survey to provide an objective depiction of self-care levels among guidance and counseling teachers. Descriptive research was chosen because it allows for the factual portrayal of phenomena without manipulating variables (Rahmawati & Yusuf, 2021). The survey method is commonly employed in research related to teacher well-being and psychological behavior (Babicka et al., 2021; Babicka et al., 2021).

2.2 Research Subject.

The research was conducted in the Katingan River Basin region, located in Central Kalimantan. This area is characterized by geographic features that promote isolation and limited access. Data collection took place between August and October 2025 through a combination of direct visits and online questionnaires. The location was selected due to the high level of school isolation (Nurhayati, 2019; Hadi & Prasetyo, 2019).

The population of this study comprises all guidance and counseling teachers in Katingan Regency, totaling 11 individuals. Given the small population size, total sampling was used (Supriyanto & Arifin, 2021). The respondents included both male and female teachers, each with 3–20 years of service, and working at secondary schools in the river region (Mulyani & Sudrajat, 2020).

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection instrument used is the Self-Care Questionnaire (Gonzalez et al., 2017), which measures six aspects of self-care: 1) Self-destructive behaviors; 2) Difficulty accepting/asking for help; 3) Frustration when not receiving a response; 4) Lack of positive activities; 5) Neglecting personal needs; 6) Lack of tolerance for positive influences.

The questionnaire uses a 1–7 Likert scale. Content validity was ensured through consultation with counseling experts, and the instrument's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87 (Simşir Gokalp, 2022). Data were collected through both offline and online methods, following practices similar to those used in rural areas (Mindell & Naff, 2023b; Smith & Lazarus, 2020).

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using statistical methods appropriate for descriptive quantitative research. The collected data were analyzed to determine the frequency and percentage distributions of self-care levels and the average scores for each self-care aspect. The analysis aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the self-care practices of guidance and counseling teachers in the region.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

a) Overall Self-Care Level

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	7	63.6%
Moderate	4	36.4%
High	0	0%
Total	11	100%

Most guidance and counseling teachers (63.6%) fall into the low self-care category, while the rest fall into the moderate category (36.4%). No teacher reached the high category (0%). The overall average score is 91.7, indicating that self-care abilities are not yet optimal.

b) Average Score for Each Self-Care Aspect

Self-Care Aspect	Average Score	Category
Self-destructive behavior	14.73	Moderate
Difficulty accepting/asking for help	11.73	Low
Frustration from not receiving a response	13.09	Very Low
Absence of positive activities	11.09	Low
Not considering personal needs	19.64	Moderate
Lack of tolerance for positive influences	17.82	Moderate

Interviews with some teachers revealed that they rarely engage in activities they find enjoyable due to limited access and challenging conditions in the Katingan river basin. Teachers also mentioned difficulties in seeking professional support due to the schools' remote locations. Some respondents showed high spiritual awareness as a form of self-care, but this has not been consistent.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the self-care levels of guidance and counseling teachers in the Katingan River Basin are low to moderate. This finding contrasts with prior studies conducted in urban settings, where self-care levels were notably higher. The discrepancy between these findings suggests that environmental factors, such as geography and access to resources, along with limited support systems, play a significant role in shaping self-care behaviors among teachers. Teachers in remote areas, like those in Katingan, are likely to face unique challenges that contribute to lower levels of self-care. The lack of infrastructure, along with physical and social isolation, restricts their ability to engage in effective self-care practices.

Compared with urban areas, where guidance and counseling teachers often benefit from better infrastructure and support networks, this study found that teachers in the Katingan River Basin faced additional barriers to self-care (Syah et al., 2024). Previous research by Eka Wahyuni & Desinta (2022) and Putri & Rahmawati (2023) reported higher self-care scores in urban settings, suggesting that proximity to professional resources, regular communication with colleagues, and access to mental health services can significantly enhance self-care levels. Geographical isolation, long distances between schools, and the lack of professional supervision are critical factors contributing to the lower self-care levels observed in this study.

One of the lowest scores in this study was observed in the aspect of "difficulty accepting or asking for help." This finding resonates with the work of Perry & Singh (2019), who identified that counselors in areas with limited professional support systems often struggle to seek emotional assistance. In the Katingan Regency, the difficulty of maintaining regular communication with fellow guidance and counseling teachers further exacerbates these challenges, leaving teachers without crucial emotional and professional support. This isolation can leave teachers feeling overwhelmed, with limited opportunities for collaboration or for seeking help from others in similar roles.

Additionally, the findings of this study align with those of Mindell & Naff (2023b), who noted that teachers in rural areas often experience self-neglect, stemming from high social demands and limited access to mental health services. The lower levels of positive activity in this study further corroborate the research by Babicka et al. (2021), who found that teachers working in areas with extreme working conditions seldom engage in self-care practices, leading to emotional burnout and diminished work motivation. This pattern is concerning as it underscores the need for interventions that address the systemic barriers to self-care in remote teaching environments.

The findings of this study also support Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which holds that both physical and social environments profoundly influence behavior and well-being. Guidance and counseling teachers in the Katingan River Basin are immersed in a restricted environment (the microsystem and mesosystem), where interactions with colleagues and the workplace fail to provide the psychological well-being support they need (Danguilan et al., 2025). This lack of a supportive network may hinder the development of self-care behaviors and increase the risk of emotional strain over time.

Furthermore, the results align with Stevenson & Harper (2022a), who emphasized that the absence of organizational support places teachers in challenging environments at greater risk for burnout. The emotional exhaustion demonstrated in the study, particularly as reflected in the low tolerance for positive influences, is a sign of potential burnout. This is consistent with findings from Boamah & Laschinger (2018) and O'Connor & Hamilton (2021), who highlighted the importance of a supportive work environment in mitigating emotional exhaustion and burnout among educators.

One limitation of this study is the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not fully explore demographic factors or the influence of local cultural aspects on self-care practices. Future research should employ a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of guidance and counseling teachers in greater depth, as this would provide richer insights into the contextual challenges and coping strategies teachers face (Cumming, 2017; Kim & Kim, 2020).

Despite these limitations, the study's strength lies in its focus on the unique geographical context of the Katingan River Basin, characterized by remoteness, social isolation, and limited access to professional services. This research highlights that the low levels of self-care among guidance and counseling teachers are not merely a result of individual factors, but also reflect broader systemic challenges within the work environment. The use of the internationally validated Self-Care Scale further strengthens the reliability and credibility of the findings, ensuring that the study contributes valuable insights into self-care among teachers in remote areas.

4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

In sum, the results of this study have significant implications for theoretical, practical, managerial, and methodological aspects. Theoretically, the findings of this study strengthen Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which posits that geographic and social environmental conditions directly affect self-care. This finding also emphasizes that self-compassion is the foundation of self-care (Mindell & Naff, 2023; Simşir Gokalp, 2022). This suggests that the interaction between personal factors and the environment influences an individual's well-being. The finding of low self-care levels among guidance and counseling teachers in the river basin area indicates that physical and social environmental limitations directly shape self-care behaviors.

The isolated geographic conditions, lack of professional support, and limited access to well-being resources demonstrate that self-care cannot be understood solely as an individual responsibility, but as a result of systemic interaction between the individual and their environment. Additionally, this study underscores that self-compassion is an essential foundation in the development of self-care, especially for helping professions working in environments characterized by pressure and limitations.

Research on the general workforce has shown that self-care activities, such as mindfulness and exercise, are positively correlated with improvements in psychological well-being through the use of personal and work resources (self-care activities), which in turn supports an individual's ability to cope with high work demands and reduce work-related stress (Self-care at Work Matters, indicating a positive relationship between self-care and work well-being through the utilization of work and personal resources) (Gómez & Borges, 2022).

Furthermore, empirical studies on nurses have shown that self-compassion plays a significant role in increasing compassion satisfaction while simultaneously reducing burnout and secondary traumatic stress, which are key indicators of professional quality of life (The Role of Self-Compassion in Professional Quality of Life), strengthening the notion that self-compassion is a protective variable in the context of helping professions facing intense emotional pressures (Kesumaputri et al., 2021). In line with these findings, recent qualitative studies have also emphasized that mindfulness practices in the context of self-care help healthcare professionals with emotional regulation and reduce vulnerability to work pressure, which impacts psychological resilience and service quality (Mindfulness and Self-Care in Healthcare Professionals) (Ortiz & Moreno, 2025). These findings are consistent with recent research on the role of work environments in professional well-being (Dollard et al., 2022). Additionally, this study reaffirms that self-compassion is an essential psychological foundation for the development of self-care, especially for helping professions, as compassionate self-attitudes have been shown to act as a protective factor against burnout and emotional exhaustion (Neff & Germer, 2023).

From a practical and managerial perspective, this study indicates the need for more systematic support from schools and policymakers to create a work environment that supports the well-being of guidance and counseling teachers. Schools in river basin areas should facilitate self-care development by providing stress management training, strengthening self-care awareness, creating reflection spaces, and enhancing peer support. Organizational and community-based interventions have proven effective in improving educators' psychological well-being in high-pressure work environments (OECD, 2023). At the policy level, support in the form of regional incentives, transportation and communication facilities, as well as access to mental health services, are strategic steps that not only function as a form of recognition but also as preventive measures to maintain the quality of guidance and counseling services in remote areas, as recommended in global studies on mental health at the workplace.

Methodologically, this study shows that a quantitative descriptive approach is practical for mapping the initial conditions of self-care among guidance and counseling teachers in remote areas. However, it has not fully captured

the subjective experiences and emotional dynamics accompanying self-care practices in such complex environments. Therefore, further research is advised to use qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore the personal meanings, coping strategies, and emotional experiences of guidance and counseling teachers more deeply, as recommended in contemporary methodological studies that emphasize the importance of integrating both quantitative and qualitative data in professional well-being research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The level of self-care among guidance and counseling teachers in the Katingan River Basin area is categorized as low to moderate. Factors such as isolated geographic conditions, social isolation, and a very high workload lead guidance and counseling teachers to focus more on their professional duties than on their personal needs. This creates a gap in fulfilling their emotional and physical needs. Although guidance and counseling teachers are highly dedicated to their work, they are at a high risk of emotional exhaustion if self-care practices are not given attention and developed. The lack of attention to self-care can affect the quality of services provided to students and the mental health of teachers.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of continuous institutional support and the development of self-care training programs based on local contexts, especially in 3T areas (Lagging, Leading, Outermost). Support from educational institutions and local governments is essential so that these teachers can not only perform their professional duties well but also maintain their personal well-being. Furthermore, this study extends the application of self-compassion and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in the context of education in remote areas by demonstrating how external factors, such as the environment and social support, can influence a teacher's personal and professional well-being.

Future research is expected to develop more integrated community-based self-care training interventions that involve teachers, school principals, and local education offices. With this approach, it is hoped that the well-being of guidance and counseling teachers will be sustainably maintained, enabling them to be more effective in their roles, support student development, and improve the quality of education in remote areas.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors of this study were actively involved and carried out their respective roles with great responsibility. NF was responsible for the design of the research and writing of the introduction. FSS contributed to the development of the instrument, content validity testing, and data collection coordination. R was involved in processing initial data and verifying the completeness of responses. N assisted in distributing the questionnaire to guidance and counseling teachers in the River Basin area and in field documentation. RHB contributed to data analysis, result interpretation, and the discussion section. ZZ supported the literature review and integration of theory into the research framework. Z checked the data consistency and assisted in preparing the research result tables. SA contributed to the methodology section and ensured traceability of the research procedures. MZP contributed to refining the language and the manuscript format in accordance with the journal's requirements. HAT assisted in critically reviewing the research results and formulating theoretical and practical implications. DRR was responsible for writing the conclusion, aligning the final manuscript, and verifying research ethics.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this study.

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