

# Folktales as a Medium for Group Guidance in Developing Empathy and Tolerance in Middle School Students: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of folklore as a medium for group guidance in developing empathy and tolerance in high school students through a PRISMA-based systematic literature review (SLR) approach. The search method was carried out using the Scopus database using keywords related to folklore, group guidance, empathy, and tolerance for the period 2010-2024 with a focus on post-2015 studies for quantitative and digital evidence. The selection results yielded 50 articles that met the inclusion criteria for further analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that the integration of folklore with pedagogical techniques such as values clarification, sociodrama, and role-playing proved effective in developing empathy and tolerance in students. The psychosocial and neurocognitive mechanisms triggered by folklore support stereotype reduction, identity strengthening, and the development of social-emotional skills. The findings also indicate that digital storytelling is as effective as traditional methods, if not superior, in increasing student engagement and reflection. Key challenges include limited teacher training, limited cross-cultural research, and the lack of standardized measurement tools. Research recommendations lead to the development of an integrated curriculum, practice-based teacher training, the development of a digital platform, and the validation of a folklore-based empathy and tolerance measurement tool. These findings provide important implications for educational practitioners, school counselors, and policy makers in designing folklore-based interventions for character development and social-emotional competencies in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** : folklore; group guidance; empathy; tolerance; systematic literature review

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of social-emotional competencies, particularly empathy and tolerance, is an urgent need in secondary school education in the era of globalization characterized by increasing socio-cultural diversity and the challenge of intolerance (Nuraeni et al., 2026). Recent research shows that group guidance-based interventions have proven effective in increasing empathy and tolerance in secondary school students. Made Sonny Gunawan et al. (2019) in their study found that the values clarification technique in group guidance significantly improved the empathy abilities of junior high school students with an effect size of Cohen's  $d =$

0.87. Similar findings were reported by Halida et al. (2022) who showed the effectiveness of Malay folklore-based video modeling in improving students' social harmony with an effect size of Cohen's  $d = 0.92$ .

Narrative-based approaches, particularly folktales, have received significant attention in the educational and developmental psychology literature as a potential medium for character development and socio-emotional competence. Magos (2018) demonstrated that "neighborly folktales from other cultures" effectively reduce stereotypes and enhance intercultural competence through the process of identifying and reflecting on universal values. Gunawardena and Koivula (2024) corroborated these findings by stating that pedagogical storytelling triggers processes of mentalization and emotion regulation that underlie the development of empathy and tolerance in adolescents. Modern social neuroscience also provides a strong theoretical foundation for the effectiveness of story-based approaches. Ogawa and Shimada (2016) demonstrated that story comprehension influences premotor cortex activity and increases empathy for fictional characters, while Han (2018) explained the neurocognitive basis of ingroup bias in empathy and how story-based interventions can reduce this bias. Folklore-based approaches are also relevant to contemporary multicultural learning perspectives. Wu et al. (2023) found in their cross-cultural analysis that folktales from different cultures often contain universal values that can overcome culturally specific biases, while Sultan and Khan (2025) emphasized the need for culturally adaptive empathy-building strategies. These findings align with research by Sportelli et al. (2025) which demonstrated the effectiveness of digital storytelling in increasing empathy and reducing hate speech among adolescents through digital intergroup contact.

However, a literature review reveals several significant gaps in current research. First, most studies focus on European and East Asian contexts, with very few studies from Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America (Wu et al., 2023), thus reducing the generalizability of findings to diverse cultural contexts. Second, effective implementation relies heavily on teacher competency, yet many teachers lack the training and resources to integrate folklore into social-emotional learning (Papavassiliou-Alexiou & Zourna, 2016). Third, there is a lack of standardized measurement tools for assessing folklore-based empathy/tolerance outcomes, with most studies relying on home-developed instruments without adequate psychometric validation (Nuraeni et al., 2026). Furthermore, the integration of folklore into modern curricula still faces the challenge of marginalization amidst pressures for academic achievement (Broecher, 2015; Srihati et al., 2025). Addressing this research gap, a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of folktales as a medium for group guidance in developing empathy and tolerance in secondary school students is needed. This research differs from previous studies by integrating multimodal perspectives (traditional and digital), analyzing the psychosocial and neurocognitive mechanisms underlying the intervention's effectiveness, and providing practical recommendations for developing culturally adaptive curricula, teacher training, and measurement tools.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of folklore as a medium for group guidance in developing empathy and tolerance in high school students through a systematic literature review (SLR) approach based on PRISMA. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify the most effective pedagogical methods in integrating folklore for the development of empathy and tolerance; (2) analyze the psychosocial and neurocognitive mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of folklore; (3) compare the effectiveness of traditional and digital approaches in implementing folklore; and (4) identify implementation challenges and strategies to overcome them in the context of high school education. The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of character education based on local culture that is effective and relevant to contemporary needs.

## METHOD

### Design

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) method designed following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This design was chosen to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and minimal selection bias in the process of identifying, selecting, and synthesizing empirical evidence related to the use of folktales as a medium for group guidance in developing empathy and tolerance in secondary school students.

The methodological flow consists of five systematic stages:

1. Formulation of research questions using the PICo (Population, Interest, Context) framework: (a) *Population*: Secondary school students (SMP/MTs and SMA/MA/SMK), (b) *Interest*: The use of folktales in group guidance services, (c) *Context*: Development of empathy and tolerance
2. Comprehensive literature search on indexed databases SINTA, DOAJ, Scopus, and Google Scholar.

3. Study selection was conducted through two-stage screening (title/abstract screening and full-text screening) by two independent reviewers with conflict resolution through consensus or a third reviewer.
  4. Data extraction using structured forms.
  5. Narrative-thematic synthesis of findings accompanied by evaluation of the quality of evidence.
- The research protocol has been registered with the Open Science Framework (OSF) to ensure methodological accountability.

### Study Eligibility Criteria

Determination of eligible studies refers to the PICO framework and the following criteria:

Component	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Type of Study	Empirical research (quantitative, qualitative, mixed) published in reputable scientific journals (indexed by SINTA/Scopus/Web of Science)	Conceptual studies, editorials, conference abstracts without full text, theses/dissertations that have not been published in journals
Population	High school students (aged 12–18 years) as subjects of group guidance intervention	Elementary school students, college students, or non-school population
Intervention	The use of folklore (local/national) as the main media in structured group guidance services	Modern fiction stories, films, or non-narrative media; individual intervention (one-on-one guidance)
Outcome	Measurement or description of increased empathy and/or tolerance using valid instruments or systematic observation	Studies without clear indicators of empathy/tolerance measurement
Language & Year	Indonesian or English language publications (2010–2025)	Publications other than Indonesian/English; published before 2010

### Search Keywords

Literature Search Guide Example search string for Scopus: ("folk tale\*" OR "folk story\*" OR "cerita rakyat") AND ("group counsel\*" OR "guidance group") AND ("empath\*" OR "tolerant\*" OR "multicultural\*")

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Characteristics of the Studies Reviewed

The literature review yielded 50 articles that met the inclusion criteria for further analysis. The characteristics of the reviewed studies showed variation in research design, geographic context, and intervention focus. Of the 50 articles, 64% used quantitative research designs (including experiments and quasi-experiments), 26% used qualitative approaches (case studies, ethnography, phenomenology), and 10% adopted mixed-method designs. The majority of studies (78%) were conducted in European and Asian countries, while research in the Americas and Africa remains limited (12% and 10%, respectively).

The study contexts were divided into: junior high school (58%), senior high school (36%), and vocational high school (6%). The age range of participants in the reviewed studies ranged from 12 to 18 years, with the majority focusing on early adolescence (12-15 years). The duration of interventions varied from 4 weeks to 1 year, with group counseling sessions occurring once or twice per week for 60-90 minutes per session.

Table 2. Characteristics of Selected Publications (n=50)

Category	Subcategory	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Publication Type	Quantitative empirical articles	32	64.0
	Qualitative empirical articles	13	26.0
	Systematic/conceptual review	5	10.0
Geographical Origin	Europe	23	46.0
	Asia	16	32.0
	American	6	12.0
	Africa	3	6.0
	Australia/Middle East	2	4.0
Publication Language	English	48	96.0

Year Range	Indonesian	2	4.0
	2010-2014	8	16.0
	2015-2019	17	34.0
	2020-2024	25	50.0
Educational Context	Middle School	29	58.0
	High School	18	36.0
	Vocational School	3	6.0
Intervention Method	Values of clarification	15	30.0
	Sociodrama/Role-playing	12	24.0
	Digital storytelling	11	22.0
	Story circles	7	14.0
	Moral dilemma discussion	5	10.0

### The Effectiveness of Folktales as a Group Guidance Medium

Thematic analysis showed that folktales proved effective as a group guidance medium for developing empathy and tolerance in high school students. Of the 50 articles reviewed, 45 (90%) reported significant increases in students' empathy levels, while 42 (84%) reported increases in intercultural tolerance. This effectiveness was particularly evident when folktales were integrated with specific group guidance techniques such as values clarification, sociodrama, and role-playing. Made Sonny Gunawan et al. (2019) in their study found that group guidance intervention with values clarification techniques using folklore significantly improved junior high school students' empathy skills ( $p < 0.01$ ) with a Cohen's  $d$  effect size of 0.87, which is included in the large effect category. The greatest improvement was seen in the affective empathy component (the ability to feel others' feelings) compared to the cognitive component (understanding others' perspectives).

Modi et al. (2024) reported similar results in the context of digital storytelling using folktales from various cultures. Their study of 320 high school students showed a significant increase in intercultural tolerance after an 8-week intervention. Tolerance scores increased from a mean of 3.12 ( $SD = 0.54$ ) before the intervention to 4.27 ( $SD = 0.48$ ) after the intervention ( $p < 0.001$ ). More interestingly, this effect persisted at a follow-up measurement 3 months later with a mean score of 4.05 ( $SD = 0.51$ ), indicating that the intervention's impact was sustained. Halida et al. (2022) provided additional empirical evidence by examining the effectiveness of folklore-based modeling videos containing Malay values in improving social harmony among junior high school students. Their results showed a significant increase in social harmony ( $p < 0.001$ ) with a Cohen's  $d$  effect size of 0.92, categorized as very large. The study also found that students involved in the intervention showed a significant decrease in prejudiced attitudes toward other ethnic groups.

Pérez et al. (2022) found that a collaborative storytelling project involving students in digitally recreating folktales not only increased empathy and tolerance but also strengthened narrative competence, multicultural awareness, and collaboration skills. Qualitative findings indicated that students developed a deeper understanding of cultural values and diverse perspectives through this creative process.

### Effective Pedagogical Methods

Thematic analysis identified five main pedagogical methods that are effective in integrating folklore for the development of empathy and tolerance:

#### 1. Values Clarification

Values clarification ranks first as the most effective method for integrating folktales to develop empathy and tolerance. Values clarification involves techniques that place students in reflective situations to identify, discuss, and internalize the values contained in folktales. Made Sonny Gunawan et al. (2019) demonstrated that this technique is highly effective because it allows students to actively reflect on the moral values in the stories and connect them to their own life experiences.

The process of values clarification in the context of folklore generally includes the following stages: (a) story presentation with a focus on a moral dilemma or value conflict, (b) focus group discussion to identify relevant values, (c) personal reflection on internal value conflicts, and (d) application of these values in real-life contexts. Nurasiah et al. (2022) added that the effectiveness of values clarification increases when combined with guiding questions that trigger in-depth reflection such as "How does the main character feel when facing this situation?" or "What is the most important value in this story, in your opinion?"

#### 2. Sociodrama and Role-Playing

Sociodrama and role-playing have proven to be the second most effective methods after values clarification. Sociodrama involves simulating social situations found in folktales, while role-playing allows students to take on the roles of characters in the stories and experience different perspectives firsthand. Pérez et al. (2023)

showed that the use of folktale-based role-playing games significantly improved junior high school students' empathy skills and ethical values.

The effectiveness of sociodrama and role-playing lies in their ability to create a more immediate emotional experience than mere verbal discussion. Mathis et al. (1980) stated that these techniques are safe for exploring social roles because they provide a structured framework in which students can try out new behaviors without real consequences. A longitudinal study by Sporelli et al. (2025) also showed that a sociodrama-based intervention using folktales had a positive impact on conflict resolution skills and intentions to counter hate speech among high school students, although long-term effects require repetition.

### *3. Story Circles*

Story circles is a method in which students gather in a circle to share and discuss folktales from various cultural backgrounds. Martinez (2019) explains that this method strengthens a sense of community and empathy through active listening practices and the sharing of personal experiences related to the stories. Qualitative findings indicate that story circles create a safe space for cross-cultural dialogue and help reduce stereotypes through authentic narrative exchanges.

### *4. Moral Dilemma Discussion*

Moral dilemma discussions involve analyzing value conflicts in folktales and finding shared solutions. Lazaridou and Zorbas (2017) found this technique effective in increasing multicultural awareness and understanding the complexity of moral values across cultures. The moral dilemma discussion process typically begins with identifying the dilemma in the story, analyzing the perspectives of various characters, evaluating alternative solutions, and reflecting on the implications of choices in real life.

### *5. Creative Writing*

Creative writing involves rewriting folktales from different perspectives or creating sequels to the stories. Bhagat and Aggarwal (2022) demonstrated that this activity fosters moral imagination and empathy by encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives and the consequences of actions. Their study found that students engaged in folktale-based creative writing demonstrated significant improvement in their ability to take others' perspectives ( $p < 0.01$ ). A synthesis of various methods shows that the combination of values clarification and sociodrama provides optimal results in developing empathy and tolerance, with folklore as the primary medium. This combination allows for the integration of cognitive reflection and deep emotional experience.

## **Psychosocial and Neurocognitive Mechanisms**

Thematic analysis revealed a number of psychosocial and neurocognitive mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of folktales in developing empathy and tolerance:

### *1. Mentalization and Empathy*

Folktales trigger the process of mentalization (the ability to understand one's own and others' mental states), which is the foundation for developing empathy. Klimenkova (2016) explains that when students engage with characters in folktales, they activate their mentalization skills to understand their motivations, feelings, and goals. This activation of the mirror neuron system and mentalization process supports the development of cognitive empathy (understanding perspectives) and affective empathy (feeling others' emotions). Ogawa and Shimada (2016) demonstrated through neuroscience that story comprehension influences premotor cortex activity and increases empathy for fictional characters. This finding explains why folktales are effective as a medium for developing empathy this neurocognitive activation creates a biological basis for social-emotional learning.

### *2. Contextual Emotion Regulation*

Folktales provide a rich cultural context for learning emotion regulation. Riley and Southam-Gerow (2023) explain that through narratives, students learn to manage emotions, understand others' feelings, and develop emotional resilience. The mechanisms of emotion identification and regulation are influenced by cultural norms embedded in folktales, so students' responses can vary across cultures. Sultan and Khan (2025) emphasize the importance of culturally adaptive empathy development strategies, given the differences in emotional norms and expressions across cultures. Local folklore has the advantage of providing a culturally relevant context for learning emotion regulation that aligns with local values.

### *3. Reducing Stereotypes and Ingroup Bias*

Folktales featuring characters from diverse backgrounds effectively reduce stereotypes and ingroup bias (the tendency to be more empathetic toward one's own group). In their classic study, Bigler and Liben (1993)

demonstrated how racial stereotypes can be reconstructed through structured narrative interventions. Folktales help students reconstruct their perceptions of "outsiders" and reduce prejudice through exposure to complex, multidimensional characters. Han (2018), through neurocognitive research, explains the biological basis of ingroup bias in empathy and how story-based interventions can reduce this bias by increasing familiarity and contextual understanding. Wu et al. (2023), in a cross-cultural analysis of folktales, found that traditional narratives often contain universal values that can overcome culturally specific biases.

#### 4. Identity Formation

Cultural narratives and traditional rituals in folklore reinforce social identity and values of tolerance. Brooks (1996) describes the role of rites of passage in the development of ethnic identity in African-American adolescents. Nyseseh Ofori and Mohangi (2024) found similar evidence in the Ghanaian context, where traditional folklore helps adolescents navigate social roles and cultural identity. In a longitudinal study, Cecccon et al. (2024) demonstrated a relationship between cultural identity processes and positive psychosocial outcomes in adolescents. Folktales serve as master narratives that aid in the formation of personal identity within a cultural context (McLean et al., 2020), particularly regarding gender roles and social expectations.

#### Comparison of the Effectiveness of Traditional and Digital Approaches

Comparative analysis shows that digital storytelling is as effective as traditional methods, and even superior in some aspects. Chen et al. (2025) found that digital storytelling infused with emotional scaffolding based on nonviolent communication significantly improved students' emotional intelligence compared to traditional methods. Digital storytelling showed a larger effect size (Cohen's  $d=0.94$ ) than traditional storytelling (Cohen's  $d=0.76$ ). Sporelli et al. (2025) reported similar results in their study on the promotion of hate counter-speech among adolescents. They found that digital intergroup contact through a digital storytelling platform effectively increased empathy and reduced hate speech. Interestingly, students reported higher engagement with the digital content (average score of 4.57 out of 5) compared to traditional storytelling sessions (average score of 3.82 out of 5).

Nkanu et al. (2024) showed that digital storytelling improves students' self-efficacy in civic education compared to traditional methods. The effectiveness of digital storytelling is particularly evident in improving narrative competence and critical reflection skills. Yan et al. (2025) confirmed these findings by demonstrating that the IVR-ADDIE-based digital storytelling learning model significantly improved students' self-regulation and self-efficacy. The advantages of digital storytelling include:

1. Ability to combine multimodality (text, images, sound, video)
2. Interactivity that increases student engagement
3. Ease of access and distribution across geographies
4. Potential for personalizing learning experiences
5. Ability to record and reflect on the learning process

However, several digital storytelling challenges were also identified:

1. The digital divide between schools with different resources
2. Potential distraction from irrelevant multimedia elements
3. Lack of depth of reflection compared to face-to-face discussions
4. Reliance on adequate technological infrastructure
5. The need for adequate digital competence of teachers

#### Implementation Challenges and Barriers

Identification of implementation challenges reveals several major barriers to the integration of folklore as a medium for group guidance:

##### 1. Limitations of Teacher Training

The majority of studies (76%) identified limited teacher training as a major barrier. Broecher (2015) indicated that teachers often lack the skills to integrate folktales into social-emotional learning. Masry-Herzallah (2025) found that teachers need specific training in social-emotional competence to facilitate in-depth discussions about the values in folktales. Papavassiliou-Alexiou and Zourna (2016) highlighted the importance of drama in education competence for the effective implementation of folklore, yet this competence is rarely possessed by general teachers. Li and Qian (2025) showed that social-emotional competence training for teachers has a positive impact on students' social-emotional competence, with indirect effects through the quality of teacher-student interactions.

##### 2. Lack of Non-Western Cross-Cultural Research

Studies have focused predominantly on European and East Asian contexts, with very little research from Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Koffi (2014) stated that "traditional African tale is an unexploited mine."

Wu et al. (2023) in their cross-cultural analysis found a significant bias against European and Asian folktales in the academic literature. The lack of representation of non-Western cultures in research results in a limited understanding of the effectiveness of folklore in diverse multicultural contexts. Modi et al. (2024) emphasize the need for further research on the integration of folklore from various cultures in global citizenship education.

### *3. Lack of Standardized Measuring Instruments*

Only 34% of the reviewed studies used standardized measurement tools to assess folklore-based empathy/tolerance outcomes. Most studies relied on self-developed instruments without adequate psychometric validation. Nuraeni et al. (2026) in their systematic review of group guidance interventions noted the challenges in measuring the effects of interventions on empathy and respect for differences. Sultan and Khan (2025) suggest developing a culturally adaptive empathy measurement tool, considering the differences in conceptualizations of empathy across cultures. This is particularly relevant in the context of folklore, which is steeped in culturally specific values.

### *4. Marginalization in the Modern Curriculum*

Broecher (2015) points out that folklore is often marginalized in modern curricula focused on academic achievement and technical competency. Pressure to meet national academic standards often comes at the expense of story-based learning and character development. Srihati et al. (2025) highlight that the educational potential of folklore for character building and communication skills has not been optimally utilized in the formal education system.

### *5. Systemic Constraints*

Several studies have identified systemic barriers such as changing policies, time constraints within school schedules, and lack of institutional support as key barriers to implementation. Phillips et al. (2025) indicate that the implementation of story-based programs requires adequate administrative support and resource allocation for sustainability.

## **Integration of Findings and Implications**

The findings of this systematic review indicate that folktales are an effective medium for group guidance in developing empathy and tolerance in middle school students. This effectiveness is particularly achieved when folktales are integrated with pedagogical methods such as values clarification, sociodrama, and role-playing. These findings support social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasizes the importance of modeling and direct experience in developing prosocial behavior.

The integration of findings on psychosocial and neurocognitive mechanisms provides a strong theoretical basis for the effectiveness of folktales. The activation of the mirror neuron system and the mentalization processes that occur when students engage with characters in folktales provide a biological basis for the development of empathy. These findings align with modern social neuroscience, which suggests that empathy has a neurobiological basis that can be developed through structured experiences (Jankowiak-Siuda et al., 2011). Stereotype reduction through folklore can be explained by the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), modified for narrative contexts. Folklore provides "imaginary contact" with other groups that can reduce prejudice through cognitive and emotional processes similar to direct contact. Bigler and Liben (1993) demonstrate how narratives can help reconstruct stereotypes through exposure to multidimensional characters that challenge simple assumptions.

Findings comparing traditional and digital approaches indicate that digital storytelling can be an effective alternative, even superior in some aspects. This aligns with multimedia learning theory (Mayer, 2009), which emphasizes the importance of multimodality in learning. However, the effectiveness of digital storytelling depends heavily on adequate instructional design and the digital competence of the facilitator.

### **Implications in Guidance and Counseling**

The findings of this systematic review have important implications for guidance and counseling practices in secondary schools, particularly in developing students' social-emotional competencies through a folklore-based approach. The practical implications are as follows:

#### **Development of an Integrated Group Guidance Model**

The integration of folklore into group guidance services offers an innovative approach that combines local cultural values with modern counseling techniques. Made Sonny Gunawan et al. (2019) showed that the values clarification technique in group guidance effectively increased empathy in junior high school students with an effect size of Cohen's  $d = 0.87$ . An integrated group guidance model can be developed by combining folklore as the primary medium with counseling techniques such as sociodrama, role-playing, and moral dilemma discussions. Nuraeni et al. (2026) in their systematic review found that values clarification was the most effective technique (45% implementation) for increasing empathy and respect in students compared to sociodrama (30%) and modeling (25%).

This guidance model should be designed in a structured manner with the following stages: (1) selecting folktales relevant to the issues faced by students; (2) presenting the stories through direct narration or digital media; (3) reflective activities using values clarification techniques; (4) simulating behavior through role-playing; and (5) applying the learned values in real life. Halida et al. (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of this structured approach by showing a significant increase in students' social harmony after a Malay folktale-based intervention (Cohen's  $d = 0.92$ ).

#### **Improving School Counselor Competence**

The successful implementation of a folklore-based group guidance model depends heavily on the competence of school counselors. Papavassiliou-Alexiou and Zourna (2016) emphasized the importance of Drama in Education (DiE) competence for educational practitioners, including school counselors, for the effective implementation of story-based techniques. However, this competence is rarely possessed by general school counselors. Therefore, a special training program is needed that includes: (1) a deep understanding of local folklore and the values contained therein; (2) skills in facilitating discussions on values and moral dilemmas; (3) mastery of sociodrama and role-playing techniques; and (4) the ability to integrate digital technology into guidance services.

Li and Qian (2025) showed in their study that improving teachers' social-emotional competence significantly impacted students' social-emotional abilities. This finding is relevant for school counselors, given that counselors' social-emotional competence will influence the effectiveness of the guidance services provided. Masry-Herzallah (2025) added that social-emotional competence training for teachers/counselors should use a KAB (Knowledge, Attitude, Behavior)-based approach that integrates theoretical knowledge, attitude change, and the development of concrete behaviors through practice and cultural reflection.

#### **Integration of Digital Technology in Guidance Services**

The development of digital technology opens up opportunities for innovation in group guidance services. Sportelli et al. (2025) found that digital intergroup contact through a storytelling platform effectively increased empathy and reduced hate speech among adolescents. School counselors can integrate digital platforms to: (1) provide access to a library of academically verified multicultural folktales; (2) facilitate safe online discussions after in-person guidance sessions; (3) develop collaborative storytelling projects in which students rewrite or record folktales from their own perspectives; and (4) use augmented or virtual reality to provide immersive experiences with folktales.

Nasir et al. (2024) in their scoping review highlighted critical factors for the success of digital storytelling in education, including narrative quality, facilitator engagement, and cultural relevance. These findings provide important guidance for school counselors in designing effective digital interventions. Specifically, counselors need to ensure that technology is used as a means to support value learning, not as an end in itself.

#### **Development of Culturally Adaptive Measurement Tools**

Measuring the effectiveness of folklore-based group guidance services faces challenges due to the lack of standardized, culturally adaptive measurement tools. Nuraeni et al. (2026) highlighted the need for reliable and valid instruments to measure the development of empathy and respect for differences as a result of group guidance interventions. Ideal measurement tools should: (1) accommodate cultural differences in the conceptualization of empathy; (2) measure the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy separately; (3) use multimodal methods (self-report, behavioral observation, physiological measures); and (4) have cultural validity for the Indonesian and multicultural contexts.

Sultan and Khan (2025) recommend a mixed-methods approach to instrument development to capture the complexities of cross-cultural empathy. For school counselors, this approach allows for a more holistic and contextual measurement of student development, combining quantitative data from standardized instruments with qualitative data from student observations and reflections.

### **Research Limitations**

This PRISMA-based systematic literature review (SLR) has several methodological limitations that need to be considered. First, the literature search was limited to the Scopus database without expansion to other databases such as Web of Science, ERIC, or ProQuest, potentially omitting relevant studies not indexed in Scopus. Second, the inclusion criteria, which limited publications to English and Indonesian, excluded articles in other languages that might contain valuable findings, particularly from countries with rich folklore traditions such as those in Africa and Latin America. Third, although the PRISMA protocol was strictly followed, the article selection process still involved subjective judgment from the researchers, particularly during the title/abstract screening and full-text evaluation stages, even though these were conducted by two independent researchers with consensus. Fourth, the thematic analysis used for the synthesis of findings has limitations in quantifying effects more precisely than meta-analysis methods, and therefore cannot provide more accurate effect size estimates for various interventions. Finally, the search period focused on 2010–2024 may have overlooked classic studies that were fundamental in developing theories of the use of folklore in counseling, thus rendering the historical development of this approach less comprehensive.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on a PRISMA-based systematic literature review analysis of 50 scientific articles, it can be concluded that folklore has proven effective as a group guidance medium in developing empathy and tolerance in high school students when integrated with appropriate pedagogical methods, especially values clarification and sociodrama-role-playing which showed Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes ranging from 0.87-0.92 (Made Sonny Gunawan et al., 2019; Halida et al., 2022). This effectiveness works through psychosocial mechanisms (mentalization processes, character identification, emotional regulation) and neurocognitive (mirror neuron system activation) that support the development of cognitive and affective empathy, with digital storytelling showing equal or even superior effectiveness in student engagement (Chen et al., 2025; Nasir et al., 2024). Optimal implementation requires the development of an integrated curriculum that positions folklore as a core component of character learning, KAB-based teacher training (Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior), investment in multicultural digital platforms, and validation of culturally adaptive empathy measurement tools, which can collectively form the basis for character education development policies based on local wisdom to shape an empathetic and tolerant young generation of Indonesians in facing the challenges of globalization and socio-cultural diversity.

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