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Integration of Positive Psychology and Creativity in Curriculum Actualization for School Counselors in 21st Century Learning: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
<p>This study aims to analyze the integration of Positive Psychology and creativity in the curriculum and 21st-century learning development through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. This review covers studies published between 2020 and 2025, sourced from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases, with 16 selected articles meeting the PRISMA criteria. The findings show that the application of Positive Psychology in education plays a crucial role in developing students' character strengths, psychological well-being, and holistic personal growth. These principles are applied through strength-based learning strategies, mindfulness, positive education, gratitude interventions, and strength-based counseling. Meanwhile, creativity, considered a character strength in the Positive Psychology framework, serves as a catalyst for curriculum and learning innovation in the 21st century. The integration of creativity enhances students' cognitive, affective, and social dimensions through reflective, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences. Conceptually, this study highlights the importance of synergy between Positive Psychology and creativity as a foundation for curriculum development and counseling practices oriented toward holistic human well-being and development.</p>	<p>Article History: <i>Submitted/Received 19 Nov 2025</i> <i>First Revised 21 Dec 2025</i> <i>Accepted 4 Jan 2026</i> <i>First Available online 10 Jan 2026</i> <i>Publication Date 10 Jan 2026</i></p> <hr/> <p>Keyword: <i>Positive Psychology, Creativity, 21stCentury Curriculum, Meaningful Learning, Guidance and Counseling</i></p>

1. INTRODUCTION

The complexity of 21st-century challenges requires individuals to have critical thinking, creative, and adaptive behavior skills in facing the dynamics of modern life. Hargreaves & Fullan, (2020) emphasize that schools are no longer sufficient as places for knowledge transfer but must become spaces for developing higher-order thinking skills. While 21st-century skills (21st Century Skills/CS) are highly sought after, students and the education system have yet to meet these demands (Kain et al., 2024) . The results of a study conducted by Saavedra & Opfer, (2012) also show that student success in the 21st century is highly dependent on their ability to integrate critical, collaborative, and creative thinking in the learning process. Thus, today's education must prepare students to be able to cope with rapid change.

The transformation of the modern education paradigm has shifted from academic results-oriented education to holistic human development. The new education paradigm focuses on deep learning that fosters creativity, empathy, and reflective thinking (Fullan et al., 2018) . The 21st-century curriculum demands an approach to learning based on innovation, problem solving, and meaningful experiences that encourage students to collaborate and think divergently (Mishra & Mehta, 2017) . This is in line with the view of positive psychology, which focuses on helping individuals achieve psychological well-being through the actualization of potential and meaning in life.

Creativity in positive psychology is categorized as one of the character strengths in wisdom and knowledge (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) . Over the past few decades, the discourse on educational transformation has grown stronger. When international institutions focused on economic development, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), began calling for creativity to be an important part of the curriculum, global attention to educational reform increased (Patston et al., 2021) . Various studies show that in addition to preparing basic literacy, schools must instill 21st-century skills (Trilling, 2009; Voogt & Roblin, 2012) . In line with the views of , schools are increasingly mandated to prepare students for a rapidly changing world, where creativity and innovation are key skills for survival in the 21st century.

The integration of positive psychology and creativity into the curriculum is an important step toward realizing education that is oriented toward the well-being and character development of students. Creativity in the curriculum has become a strategic focus of various education systems around the world. Countries such as Finland, through its Phenomenon-Based Learning Curriculum, and Scotland with its Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CFE), are clear examples of how creativity is placed at the core of the teaching and learning process (Isabirye et al., 2025) . This approach demonstrates that creativity is not merely the ability to think in new ways, but is also related to meaning, well-being, and self-actualization. Research results show that developing creativity can improve well-being and resilience (Liu et al., 2025; K. Smith et al., 2022) . Thus, strengthening creativity in the curriculum not only serves to improve the quality of learning but also becomes the foundation for creating education that is relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

Guidance and Counseling (BK) services in schools have strategic potential to strengthen the implementation of strength-based curricula. This approach reflects the

new direction of 21st-century education, which emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the development of potential, resilience, and self-meaning. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 111 of 2014 concerning Guidance and Counseling emphasizes that BK services are oriented towards developing the potential of students. This is in line with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System.

Although there is a lot of literature discussing the integration of creativity as a 21st-century skill in the education curriculum, there is still a lack of research that specifically explores creativity and positive psychology and their implications for curriculum development and guidance and counseling practices in schools. Therefore, the motivation for this study is specifically aimed at identifying and analyzing the latest literature that examines the application of Positive Psychology in the context of Education, and the role of creativity as a 21st-century skill, as well as exploring its implications for curriculum development and guidance and counseling practices in schools, by proposing the following two research questions:

- (i) RQ1: How is the positive psychology approach applied in the context of education to improve the holistic development (personal growth) of students?
- (ii) RQ2: How does the role of creativity in the framework of positive psychology contribute to curriculum innovation and 21st-century learning?

This study uses a *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)*. In this study, SLR is defined as an explicit and systematic method for compiling and synthesizing research findings that answer questions.

1.1 Time Frame

The publication timeframe was set to ensure that the literature represents the latest developments in positive psychology, creativity, strength-based approaches, and 21st-century curricula. Thus, the literature review was limited to the years 2020 to 2025.

1.2 Database Selection

Relevant publications were identified through the Scopus and Google Scholar databases using Publish or Perish.

1.3 Article Selection

Article selection was conducted using a combination of keywords. Keywords were selected based on their relevance to the title and research objectives. The keywords used were: ("*Positive Psychology*" OR "*Positive Education*" OR "*Well-being*" OR "*Character Strengths*") AND ("*Creativity*" OR "*Creative Thinking*") AND ("*Education*" OR "*Curriculum*" OR "*21st Century Skills*") OR "*Learning Innovation*") ("*Guidance and Counseling*" OR "*School*" OR "*Personal Growth*").

1.4 Article classification

After the literature was collected, it was imported into the Covidence website to undergo the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) process (Moher et al., 2009). This guide provides guidelines for developing search protocols, searching databases, selecting studies, analyzing characteristics,

and synthesizing results (Barrett et al., 2021) . Through the PRISMA process, researchers determine criteria for screening literature, including:

Aspect	Criteria
Publication Type	Reputable journal articles (peer-reviewed), Empirical studies
Publication Period	2020-2025
Contextual/Research Location	Primary, secondary, and higher education
Accessibility	Articles are fully accessible (full text available)

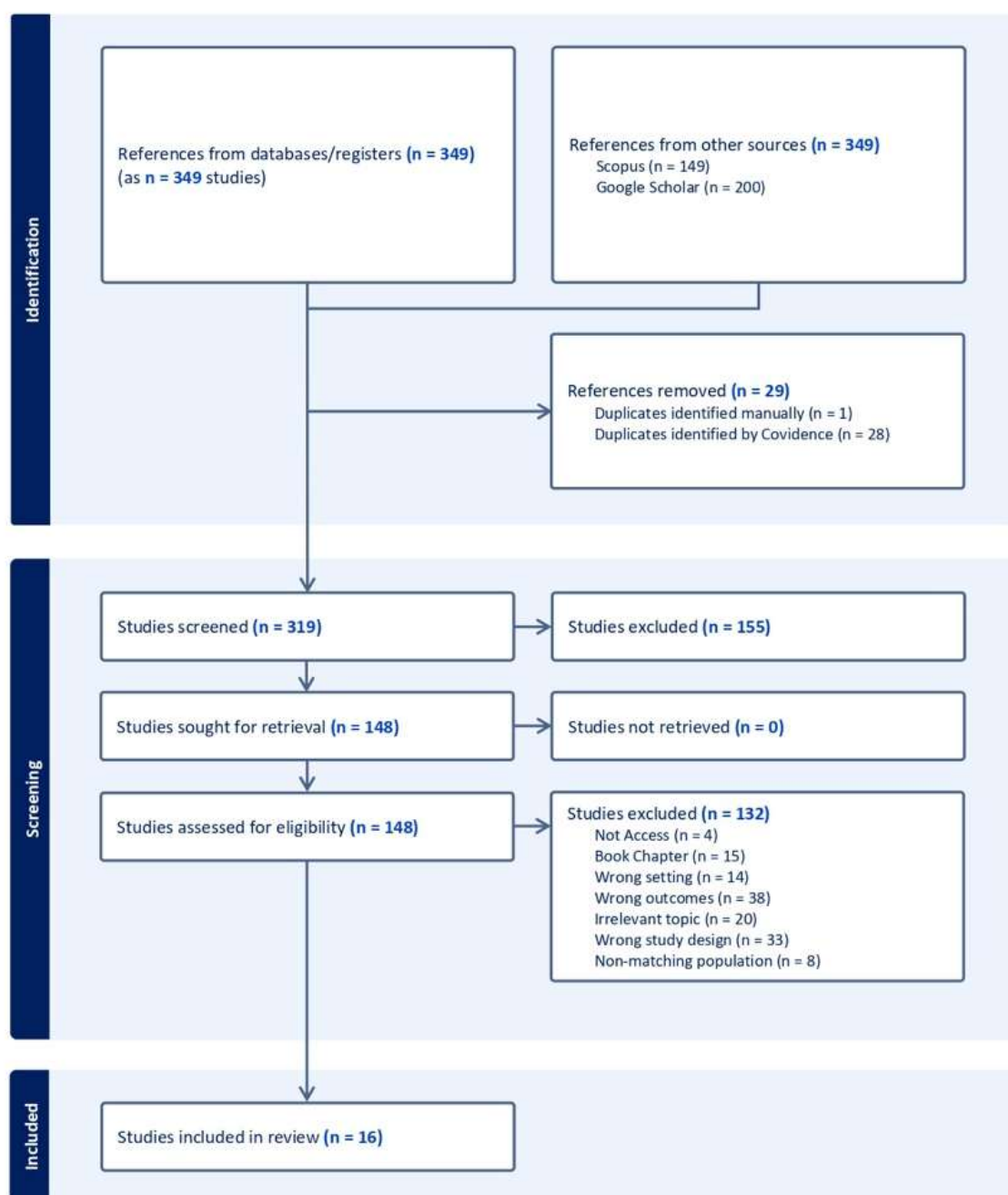


Figure1. Process of using Covidence

3. RESULTS

3.1 Article Distribution

The literature review analysis collected 16 final articles. The initial results describe the distribution of articles based on research methods, country background, and subject.

Table 1 . Distribution of Articles

	Year of Publication						Total	%
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025		
<i>Research method</i>								
Quantitative	2	1	4				7	43.8
Qualitative			2	1		1	4	25
Mixed Method	1	3					4	25
Others	1						1	6.3
Total							16	100
<i>Country</i>								
UK		1				1	2	12.5
United States	1		1				2	12.5
Australia		1					1	6.3
Canada	1						1	6.3
New Zealand	1						1	6.3
Saudi Arabia			1				1	6.3
Bahrain		1					1	6.3
Israel	1						1	6.3
India				1			1	6.3
China	1		2				3	18.8
Indonesia		1					1	6.3
Others			1				1	6.3
Total							16	100
<i>Subject</i>								
Early childhood						1	1	6.3
Junior high school								0
High school	1						1	6.3
University	2	3	4				9	56.3
Others	2	1	1	1			5	31.3
Total							16	100

Based on the research method, most articles used a quantitative approach, with seven articles (43.8%). This shows that research in this field tends to use statistical analysis to answer research questions. Meanwhile, research using qualitative and mixed methods approaches each numbered four articles (25%). Both indicate a tendency for researchers to explore phenomena more deeply through a combination

of qualitative and quantitative methods. One article (6.3%) fell into the " " category, indicating that alternative methods are still rarely used in this study.

Based on the research subject, most focused on university students, with nine articles (56.3%). This finding shows that higher education is the main focus of the studies reviewed. In addition, five articles (31.3%) fall into the "other" category, which includes teachers, educators, and students. Research focusing on early childhood and high school students each numbered one article (6.3%), while no research was found at the junior high school level. This indicates a research gap at the secondary education level.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 RQ1: *How is the positive psychology approach applied in the context of education to improve the holistic development (personal growth) of students?*

No	Author	Research Focus	Integrated Elements of Positive Psychology	Form of Curriculum Integration
1	(Määttä & Uusiautti, 2020)	Integration of strength-based teaching into education.	- Character strengths - Creativity - Optimism - Positive identity.	Strength identification activities, potential-based counseling, and character enrichment.
2	(Alam & Mohanty, 2023)	Developing a sustainability-based happiness curriculum for secondary schools	- Sustainable Happiness - Well-being, Engagement, - Positive Education, - Growth	A non-evaluative curriculum equivalent to formal subjects (6 times per week), integrating the principles of Positive Education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into a whole-school approach.
3	(Morgan & Simmons, 2021)	Promoting well-being through Positive Education	- The "PERMA" framework	Key principles of Positive Education implementation: (a) Developing character strengths, positive emotions, and positive relationships will enhance student learning and success. (b) All dimensions can be taught implicitly and explicitly.
4	(Wingert et al., 2022)	Testing the effects of Mindfulness-Based Strength Training (MBSP) on student well-, and retention.	- Mindfulness, - Character Strengths, - PERMA Model	The integration of mindfulness and the exploration of character strengths are effective in enhancing psychological well-being.

5	(Coulombe et al., 2020)	Developing a positive education approach based on <i>social ecology</i> and Personal Project Analysis (PPA) to understand the context of student well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PERMA - <i>Growth Mindset</i> - <i>Resilience</i> - <i>Self-Compassion</i> - <i>Character Strengths</i> 	Integration of <i>positive education</i> throughout the school ecosystem (teachers, students, policies), as well as a well-being-based curriculum related to the school's socio-ecological context.
6	(Bono et al., 2020)	Developing and testing the effectiveness of gratitude interventions in high schools that combine direct learning and applications to improve student well-being, character, and social-emotional skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Gratitude Intervention (GI)</i> - <i>Positive Emotions</i> - <i>Well-being</i> - <i>Engagement</i> - <i>Flow</i> - <i>Self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills (CASEL Framework)</i> 	<p>Implemented through two components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Top-down psychological education</i> through the "<i>Thanks! A Strengths-Based Curriculum for Teens</i>" curriculum 2) <i>Bottom-up social media modalities</i> <p>As well as integrating gratitude practices and SEL into daily learning.</p>
7	(Kotera et al., 2022)	The effectiveness of <i>positive psychology</i> approaches in improving students' mental well-being and reducing stigma toward psychological assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Happiness & Well-being</i> - <i>Resilience</i> - <i>Engagement</i> - <i>Self-Compassion</i> - <i>Meaning</i> - <i>Strength</i> 	Integration into campus welfare programs and academic training for students.
8	(Waters et al., 2021)	Investigating the relationship between positive education skills taught before the pandemic and positive growth (<i>stress-related growth</i>) in students after returning to school following the COVID-19 lockdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Positive education</i> - <i>Well-being</i> - <i>Strength-Based</i> - <i>Positive assessment</i> - <i>Resilience</i> - <i>Meaning</i> 	<p>A <i>positive education</i> curriculum based on SEARCH (<i>Strengths, Emotional Engagement, Attention & Awareness, Relationships, Handling, Habits & Goals</i>) for all schools.</p> <p>Teachers are trained and implement wellness skills learning in regular classroom activities.</p>

9	(Reis et al., 2021)	<i>Enrichment pedagogy</i> in gifted and strength-based education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Character strengths,</i> - <i>Engagement,</i> - <i>Flow,</i> - <i>Meaning,</i> - <i>Positive emotions,</i> - <i>Resilience</i> - <i>Growth Mindset.</i> 	Integration of <i>positive-based creativity</i> into the curriculum through <i>the Triad Enrichment Model</i> and <i>the Whole School Enrichment Model (SEM)</i> .
10	(Corbu et al., 2021)	<i>Positive Psychology Micro-Coaching Intervention: Impact on Psychological Capital and Self-Efficacy Related to Goals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Strength-Based Approach</i> - <i>Psychological Capital</i> - <i>Self-Efficacy</i> 	Micro-Coaching-Based Learning The <i>RE-GROW</i> model is used as a guide Focus on self-development through personal strengths Can be integrated into teacher training and character education curricula.
11	(Galloway et al., 2020)	<i>Strength-Based Teaching and Learning Approach for Children: Perceptions and Practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Strength-Based</i> - <i>Well-being</i> - <i>Self-Confidence</i> - <i>Engagement</i> 	<i>A strength-based</i> approach is applied in classroom activities and primary school programs in New Zealand Teachers, students, and parents are involved in identifying and developing students' strengths

Based on a review of various studies, it appears that the *positive psychology* approach in the context of education serves as a new paradigm that places emphasis on human potential as a whole. Studies confirm that education is not only aimed at transferring knowledge, but also at developing character strengths, positive emotions, self-awareness, and meaningful social relationships. This approach is rooted in the view that each student has unique potential and strengths that can be developed to achieve holistic development. Positive-oriented education encourages students to find meaning in learning, manage emotions, and contribute positively to their community as a foundation for holistic personal growth.

The integration of *positive psychology* into the education curriculum varies between explicit, implicit, and systemic approaches. The explicit approach is demonstrated through formal curricula such as *Happiness Engineering* and the *Sustainable Happiness Curriculum* (Alam & Mohanty, 2023), which emphasizes a balance between *positive education* and *education for sustainable development* (ESD). Furthermore, *Positive Psychology Micro-Coaching (PPMC)* by Corbu et al., (2021) also demonstrates effectiveness in enhancing *Psychological Capital (PsyCap)*. Meanwhile, an implicit approach is seen in strength-based teaching strategies and *mindfulness* practices (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2020; Wingert et al., 2022), where students are encouraged to recognize their potential, develop reflective awareness, and regulate their emotions through daily learning experiences. A study by Galloway et al. (2020)

confirms that a *strength-based approach* in elementary schools can increase learning engagement. Furthermore, research (Bono et al., 2020) shows that *gratitude* interventions in schools strengthen the affective and social dimensions of *positive education*. Meanwhile, the systemic approach is reflected in the *whole-school positive education* model (Waters et al., 2021) which involves the entire school ecosystem. All three show that the application of *positive psychology* in education is not just an additional activity, but is integrated into the learning structure, school culture, and daily social interactions.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, the results of this literature confirm the strategic role of counselors as facilitators of student *welfare* and self-development. Counselors can implement the principles of *positive psychology* through *strength-based counseling*, *gratitude reflection*, *resilience* training, and *mindfulness* practices. This approach encourages students to understand their potential, foster optimism, and develop a positive identity. Overall, the application of *positive psychology* in education has been shown to strengthen students' holistic *personal growth*, encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions, and is in line with the goals of developmental counseling that nurtures the whole person.

4.2 RQ1: How does creativity in Positive Psychology contribute to curriculum innovation and 21st-century learning?

Within the framework of Positive Psychology, creativity is conceptualized as one of the *character* strengths included in '*wisdom and knowledge*' (. Although research on creativity has developed long before the emergence of *Positive Psychology*, this approach views creativity not only as a cognitive ability, but also as a psychological strength that reflects an individual's capacity to generate original and meaningful ideas, solutions, and self-expression.

Furthermore, the *Positive Curriculum Framework* (Norrish et al., 2013) places curiosity, creativity, and meaning as outcomes of well-being-based learning. This shows that creativity is not only a 21st-century skill needed for innovation and adaptation, but also plays a role in supporting the psychological development and well-being of learners.

No	Author	Key Findings	Contributions to curriculum innovation and 21st-century learning
1	(Alt & Raichel, 2020)	Creativity drives learning innovation through the integration of technology and meaningful experiences.	Game-Based Learning encourages problem-based and collaborative learning that enhances creativity and digital literacy, two pillars of the 21st-century curriculum.

2	(Saputra et al., 2021)	Developing a creative cognitive behavioral counseling model (CCBCM) to enhance <i>self-regulated learning</i> .	The Creative Cognitive Behavioral Counseling Model (CCBCM) emphasizes creativity as a force that strengthens self-directed learning and well-being.
3	(Ahmed et al., 2021)	Creativity plays a role in shaping resilience, independence, and lifelong learning abilities.	Creativity drives pedagogical innovation, acting as a catalyst for the transformation from conventional learning to adaptive and reflective learning.
4	(Ahmed et al., 2022)	Creativity-based training is effective in developing innovative teachers who are ready to meet the demands of the 21st-century curriculum.	Curriculum innovation needs to integrate <i>creative teaching</i> , <i>active learning</i> , and professional reflection in teacher development.
5	(Brinsmead et al., 2025)	Exploring the use of Digital Storytelling to facilitate self-expression among children with special needs during educational transitions.	Creativity is positioned as a strength in a <i>strength-based</i> approach that enhances self-esteem, agency, and positive emotions.

The study " " (Alt & Raichel, 2020) found that the application of gamified learning not only improves digital literacy but also fosters students' *creative self-concept* and intrinsic motivation. This enjoyable and collaborative learning environment demonstrates how creativity can be integrated with Positive Psychology values, such as self-efficacy and positive emotions, to create more meaningful learning. In line with this, Saputra et al.,(2021) developed the *Creative Cognitive-Behavior Counseling (CCBCM)* model, which combines creativity with self-regulation and positive thinking, resulting in innovative guidance and counseling curricula that focus on strengthening students' self-efficacy, resilience, and self-control. Both studies indicate that creativity is not merely a cognitive skill but also a means of self-actualization and psychological well-being relevant to the principles of Positive Psychology.

Meanwhile, the role of creativity in driving 21st-century curriculum innovation is evident in the research by Ahmed et al.,(2022) , which shows that *creative pedagogy-based* training can enhance teachers' competencies in developing 21st-century skills, particularly the 4Cs (*creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration*). Similar findings were presented by Ahmed et al., (2021) , which found that creativity was a key factor in adaptive learning during the Covid-19 pandemic through *challenge-based learning* and *self-directed learning* models that fostered resilience and independence in learning. Furthermore, research by(2025) reinforces these findings through the application of *Digital Storytelling* as a means of self-expression for children with special needs, showing that creativity contributes to an inclusive and humanistic curriculum. From all of these studies, it is evident that creativity within the framework of Positive Psychology serves as a catalyst for educational

innovation that integrates cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. Creativity encourages reflective, collaborative, and well-being-oriented learning—key characteristics of 21st-century learning that emphasizes the development of human potential as a whole.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this systematic review show that the application of *positive psychology* in education is in line with the national education objectives as outlined in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, namely to develop the potential of students to become people of faith, piety, creativity, and responsibility. Philosophically, this is also in line with the thinking of Ki Hajar Dewantara, who placed education as a process of guiding children's nature towards the highest happiness and safety. In this context, *positive psychology* provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for education that humanizes students, emphasizing a balance between cognitive, affective, social, and moral aspects .

Guidance and Counseling (BK) services have a strategic position as a means of implementing *positive psychology* values in schools. Through approaches such as strength-based counseling, BK teachers can help students recognize their potential and develop their strengths to face learning and life challenges (Green et al., 2006; Smith, 2006) . This approach is in line with the function of guidance counseling, which is oriented towards the holistic development of individuals in the personal, social, learning, and career dimensions (Prayitno, 2017) .

The implication is that the integration of *positive psychology* principles into the curriculum and guidance counseling (BK) services needs to be developed systematically to foster the well-being and personal growth of students. BK teachers play an important role as facilitators in nurturing the positive potential of students through development services based on strengths, optimism, and meaning in life (Norrish et al., 2013; Seligman, 2011) . Thus, *positive psychology* is not only a conceptual foundation but also a practical framework for education that humanizes and focuses on the psychological well-being of students.

6. CONCLUSION

The results of this systematic review confirm that the integration of *positive psychology* and creativity is a strategic step in realizing an educational paradigm oriented towards well-being and the development of human potential as a whole. *Positive psychology* provides a theoretical and practical framework for strengthening the character, resilience, and meaning of life of students, while creativity is the driving force behind curriculum innovation and 21st-century learning. The collaboration between the two gives rise to a more humanistic, adaptive, and relevant educational model. In the context of guidance and counseling services, guidance counselors and school counselors play a central role as facilitators of the development of students' positive potential through a strength-based counseling

approach, self-awareness exercises, and reflective learning. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of developing a curriculum and BK services based on *positive psychology* and creativity as the foundation for an education that humanizes, innovates, and focuses on the happiness and meaningfulness of students' lives.

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