## SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

# Self-care among the Helping Professionals: A Systematic Literature Review

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Self-care is important in all aspect of our life. Generally, the concept of self-care is not a new term that attracted scholars to conduct relevant studies. Despite the number of self-care research on specific group or issues on the self-care practices, the comprehensive of self-care from the aspect of types, relation and factors of self-care has been relatively limited. Hence, this review synthesizes the available research exploring self-care issues among the helping professionals. **Methods:** A systematic review was conducted for papers published from year 2017-2021 included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods articles. Meanwhile, a Reporting Standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) was adopted for current study. Two main journal databases, Scopus, Web of Science and additionally Google Scholar and PsycArticles were utilised. **Results:** The search yield 26 articles that can be analysed systematically. Outcome included identify types of self-care emphasized by helping professionals, relation, and factors influence self-care. **Conclusion:** Finding synthesizes the latest research on self-care, and highlights the benefits of self-care for the helping professionals. Finally, a number of recommendations were discussed at the end of the research.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The self-care concept emerged from nursing theorists, and refers to the behaviour necessary to promote and preserve individual's health, and manage health problems. Self-care is a term that is commonly found in our daily lives but lacks systematic explanation in the literature across disciplines. Majority of self-care literature appears to come from the biomedical field and focuses on the treatment of health issues (1). Self-care is an ethical requirement and it should start from initial training through working as a professional so as to provide significant personal and professional benefits (2, 3, 42, 47, 48, 49). Although self-care is a crucial component of helping professionals' well-being, it is insufficient to protect them from occupational risks. However, lack of self-care has been linked to unsatisfactory service quality which can be detrimental to both our clients and ourselves (4, 5, 43, 44, 46). Helping professionals tend to prioritize their clients' emotional support over their own, neglecting self-care activities that would lead to burnout (45) and consequentially the quality of service provided. It is crucial for these professionals to understand that their ability to give is not infinite and they need to practice self-care to ensure their profession's sustainability.

Helping professionals are defined as "occupations that provide health and education services to individuals and groups, including occupations in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, counselling, medicine, nursing, social work, physical and occupational therapy, teaching, and education" (6). It is important that we develop a culture of self-care among the helping professionals. Systematic literature reviews (SLR) on self-care practices which focus on helping professionals are few. Lack of focus in this area will prohibit us from performing our tasks to the best of our abilities, which could be harmful to us and to our clients (7, 4). The focus should shift from "doing" self-care to "being" self-care (8). In this paper, a systematic literature review on selfcare practices among helping professionals is carried out to give a comprehensive viewpoint. The objective is to identify the types of self-care related with helping professionals, the related terms linked to self-care, and factors that influence self-care practices.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

## **Review protocol—ROSES**

A SLR paper is guided by standard reporting format or a review protocol thus reducing biasness. The protocols of systematic review include a detailed methodology section which usually alter with justification of the changes (9).

This study was guided by the Reporting Standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) review protocol and process begin with the Population, Intervention, Control, and Outcomes (PICO) model which has four main parts (10, 50); which are applied to formulate the research questions. PICO in this paper is refers to:

- 'P' for Problem or Population (Helping professionals)
- 'I' for Intervention or Interest (Self-care)
- 'C' for Context (Types of self-care, terms linked to self-care)
- 'O' for Outcome (Factors affected self-care)

## **Research questions**

Two main sources were utilized to formulating the research questions. First, ideas from previous studies related to self-care and helping professionals. Second, the traditional mnemonic of PICO approach was used to the main guide as helping professionals (Population), self-care (interest), types of self-care, term linked to self-care (context) and factors affected self-care (Outcome). Based on these concepts, the authors develop the research questions:

- (i) What types of self-care are related with helping professionals?
- (ii) What are the related terms linked to self-care?
- (iii) What factors influence the self-care of helping professionals?

#### **Systematic searching strategies**

The systematic searching strategy included three subprocesses; identification, screening, and eligibility.

## Identification

The searching process was carried out on two selected databases; Scopus and Web of Science. Additionally, manual searching was also carried out using Google Scholar and PsycArticles database. The manual searching techniques were referred to handpicking, backward tracking, forward tracking, citation, and reference tacking (9).

Keywords related to each concept were combined and searched using OR. The search results of the two individual concepts were combined with AND. The result list was screened to match the criteria set; only English and empirical articles (systematic review, literature review, review, meta-analysis excluded), last 5 years of publication from 2017-2021 and in English language. The empirical articles included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods articles. In the process,

26 articles were retained for quality assessment.

## Appropriate key words to search

From the online thesaurus, the related words to the keywords included synonyms, and related terms were identified during the process of identification. Researchers were careful in selecting the suggested synonyms. The keywords used by previous studies were also taken into consideration. Eventually, the appropriate keywords were decided through the discussion of the first and second author.

Relevant keywords identified as related to self-care were: self-care; self-care practice; self-compassion; wellbeing; wellness; and burnout; and psychological well-being. For helping professionals, the keywords identified were: counsellor/s; and helping professional/s.

## **Screening and eligibility**

From the total 324 articles retrieved from Web of Science and Scopus with duplicates removed, the authors manually screened the articles through title, abstract and contents. There are 33 articles were removed from Web of Science and 269 from Scopus due to the irrelevancy of the articles. With the balance 22 articles, the authors felt the need to search Google Scholar where two articles were hand-picked and two more articles from PsycArticles database. The total studies included in the qualitative synthesis for this paper was 26 articles (Figure 1).

#### **RESULTS**

## The developed themes

The result from the data was extract from the 26 articles. Thematic analysis was performed with the guiding of the research questions in mind (Table I). Where suitable,

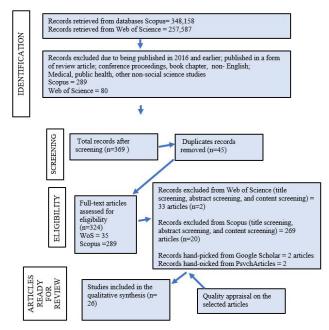


Figure 1: Flow diagram of the searching process

Table I: Findings

Authors/Theme Sub-themes	Types of SC				Relation of SC					Factors affected SC						
	PS	PF	PSY	WN	AW	RS	СО	MF	PA	PR	FN	GD	TN	FM	SV	BD
Keesler & Troxel (2020) (16)				√	<b>V</b>	$\sqrt{}$	√		√							
Butler et al. (2019) (21)						$\sqrt{}$			$\checkmark$				$\sqrt{}$			$\sqrt{}$
King et al. (2018) (36)															$\sqrt{}$	
Lichner et al. (2018) (17)				$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$								$\sqrt{}$			
Miller et al. (2021) (11)	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$								$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$					
Hricová et al. (2020) (12)		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$										$\sqrt{}$			
Masson (2019) (19)					$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$			$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$	
Turnbull & Rhodes (2021) (18)					$\sqrt{}$								$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$	
Acker (2018) (32)												$\checkmark$				$\sqrt{}$
Khanjani et al. (2021) (23)							$\sqrt{}$									
Andrews et al. (2020) (24)							$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$							
Viskovich & De George-Walker (2019) (25)								$\sqrt{}$					$\sqrt{}$			
Lianekhammy et al. (2018) (14)	$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$				$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$			
Miller et al. (2018) (29)	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$								$\checkmark$			$\sqrt{}$			
Meany-Walen et al. (2018) (13)		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$				$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$				$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$
Beauchemin et al. (2021) (35)													$\sqrt{}$			
Beckerman & Wozniak (2018) (27)								$\sqrt{}$						$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$
Chan et al. (2021) (26)								$\sqrt{}$								
Martin-Cuellar et al. (2021) (15)				$\checkmark$				$\sqrt{}$								
Cinar (2020) (20)						$\sqrt{}$								$\checkmark$		
Raczova (2019) (33)	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$									$\sqrt{}$				
Ayala et al. (2017) (34)												$\checkmark$				
Warlick et al. (2021) (28)										$\checkmark$						
Caleshu et al. (2021) (37)		$\checkmark$										$\sqrt{}$			$\sqrt{}$	
Miller et al. (2019) (30)	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$								$\checkmark$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$	
Miller et al. (2020) (31)	$\sqrt{}$	$\checkmark$								$\checkmark$						

SC= Self-care PS = Personal Self-care

PF = Professional Self-care PSY = Psychology Self-care

WN=Wellness

AW= Awareness

RS= Resilience

CO= Compassion MF= Mindfulness

PA =Proactive PR=Professionalism

EN= Financial status

GD= Gender

TN= Training FM=Family and culture

SV= Supervisor BD= Boundaries

the authors list down the themes extracted from the articles and synthesis it. Based on the process, authors discussed on the common selected themes, and remove the uncommon themes.

The developed themes were as follows:

- 1. Types of self-care related with helping professionals: Personal self-care; Professional self-care; Psychological self-care.
- 2. Related terms linked to self-care: Wellness; Awareness; Resilience; Compassion; Mindfulness.
- 3. Factors influencing self-care of helping professionals: Proactive; Professionalism; Financial status; Gender; Training; Family; Supervisor; and Boundaries

## Types of self-care related with helping professionals

Three major types of self-care were identified in the literature; personal self-care, professional self-care and psychological self-care. Personal self-care means an individual apply strategies to cope with stress in life, or take necessary actions to get better when feeling unwell (11). Personal self-care involves participating in physical activities, adequate sleep, finding humour in daily life, avoid situations with risk of disease, and wellness activities that enhance individual overall well-being (11,14, 29, 30, 31, 33). Professional selfcare includes improving individual abilities in job performance such as self-education, self-development courses, or other educational events (12). Professional self-care also involves professional growth and development, cognitive awareness of the burnout risk, use professional education to cope with workload, make good relationship with colleagues and gain professional support (11,12,14, 29, 30,31, 33,37). It includes taking short breaks within a workday, interact with co-workers, engage in supervision, manage work time and personal time, and being part of professional groups (11, 13). Psychological self-care is improved emotional control, maintaining a positive work environment to minimise emotional tiredness and depersonalization and elevating personal achievement (12, 14). Psychological self-care also includes effort taken to prevent emotional exhaustion, maintain positive thinking, treat one's own limitation with kindness and keep good interpersonal relationship (12, 33).

#### Related terms linked to self-care

There are five most common terms linked to self-care: wellness, awareness, resilience, compassion; and mindfulness.

#### Wellness

Wellness and wellbeing enable individuals to see the positive side of difficult circumstances and reduce the effects of secondary traumatic stress and burnout (15, 16). Some researchers found that self-care has significant positive relation with professional wellbeing and job satisfaction. Studies on self-care have reiterated that a high level of self-care may help in preventing undesirable phenomena brought on at the workplace. Self-care can prevent burnout syndrome and have a good impact on wellbeing (17). Generally, there are six types of wellness; Physical, Spiritual, Emotional, Cognitive, Interpersonal Relationships, and Professional. Physical wellness includes biological aspects such as sleep, diet, exercise, medical health and secure positive energy. The importance of maintaining good health, getting enough sleep and rest, having healthy diet, and engaging in physical activity are among the matters surrounding physical wellness. The level of energy is used as one of the measures of physical wellness too. On the other hand, spiritual wellness encompasses various practices such as faith-based activities, meditation, or feeling connected with the universe; whereby emotional wellness refers to the presence of desired feelings such as calm, happiness, and overall emotional stability. It is also refer to contented feeling and able to manage daily life, accordingly. Cognitive wellness is interpreted as "optimistic", "positive frame of mind" and "thinking positively", have flexible, innovative, and imaginative thinking. Interpersonal connections take place when people who make meaningful connections with other people who are outside of their professional environments. It also refers to the feeling of connectedness with the loved ones, friends, pets and significant others. Professional wellness involves setting boundaries at work, performing tasks well, interacting with colleagues, and participating in supervision. Maintain appropriate boundaries, maintain work-life balance, and have a positive attitude in professional setting are attribution of wellness. (13). From the total of 26 papers reviewed, four papers encompassed the wellness aspect.

## Awareness

Awareness of self-care for own therapy can be helpful to deal with stress and could improve their practice (18, 19). Self-awareness has been linked to efficiency, job

satisfaction and the pursuit of a work-life balance (16). Certain activities which can be considered as forms of self-care are based on one's self-awareness of ideas, needs and constraints (17). To regularly strengthen the awareness of professional helpers' wellbeing, they need to continuously improve their resilience. Professional helpers need to be familiar with the theoretical underpinnings of resilience and view it as a self-care strategy for their clients as well as for their own awareness and development. They may experience secondary traumatization due to high workload and exposure to traumatic cases. Hence, they need to be aware of themselves to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It can also effectively help their clients and regulate negative effects of vicarious trauma. Continual development of self-awareness and resilience can assist in reducing the negative effects of secondary traumatization and increasing job satisfaction (19). From the total of 26 papers reviewed, four papers elaborated on the awareness term.

#### Resilience

Resilience is viewed as a process to preserve harmony despite the challenges faced by an individual. It is the ability of an individual to successfully overcome challenging conditions and self-adjust to the new environment (20, 21). Resilience also refers to the ability to adapt and recover from stressful situations. For helping professionals, resilience is especially important as they are often exposed to challenging and traumatic experiences in their job. According to Masson (19), vicarious traumatizing experiences lead the helping professionals to develop personal and professional resilience strategies. To reduce the impact of vicarious trauma, it is essential for helping professionals to receive training not only on vicarious trauma but also on resilience. Additionally, helping professionals should proactively prioritize self-care practices and strategies to reorganize and develop themselves to reduce the effects of vicarious trauma effectively. Resilience is a protective quality that professional helpers can use to manage stress, avoid burnout, and enhance the wellbeing and guarantee job satisfaction. The assumptions of goodness, fortuitousness, self-worth, justice, and selforientation demonstrated a favourable relationship to psychological resilience (20, 16). Personal resilience can be developed by promoting professional empowerment, organisational knowledge and setting professional boundaries (19). Resilience seems to increase with age and life experiences (19) and to develop conducive environment, the experienced professional can guide the younger ones or share their experiences. From the total of 26 papers reviewed, four papers describe resilience and self-care.

## Compassion

Compassion is defined as "a strong feeling of sympathy with another person's feelings of sorrow or distress, usually involving a desire to help or comfort that person"

in the American Psychological Association's dictionary (22). Self-compassion refers to individuals who spend time on themselves, do what they like and emphasize on balance in life and this may be an important tool for helping practitioners deliver high-quality care services (14, 16). Meanwhile, compassion for others can be viewed as a protective element in reducing helping professionals' burnout (23). To find the balance of self-compassion and compassion to others was due to the individuals' awareness and emotions management. On addition, individuals must feel comfortable and secure in both their personal lives and professional environments to practise self-care and self-compassion (24). Out of the 26 papers reviewed, four papers were on compassion and self-care terms.

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness means being alert, focused, and in the moment (13). Studies have shown strong, positive connections between mindfulness, self-compassion and integrated self-knowledge (25). It has been suggested that psychological distress reduction, self-compassion, and empathy can be enhanced through mindfulness training (26). Helping professionals experience vitality through mindfulness which could deepen the understanding of the connection of mindfulness (15). The significance of helping professionals practising mindfulness would be beneficial if it is routinely communicated as an institution expectation (27). Out of the 26 papers reviewed, five papers discussed thoroughly mindfulness and self-care.

## **Factors influencing self-care**

## Proactive

More proactive training practises would lead to increased focus and maintenance of fitness after students graduate and so educators and supervisors should decide potential issues to address and how to promote self-care. Masson (19) stressed that helping professionals must make sure they have proactive self-care measures and techniques in place in order to rejuvenate, reorganise, and develop themselves to effectively lessen the consequences of vicarious trauma. Other researchers claimed that there is a lack of internal and/or external permission to be proactive although the helping professional is unwell and needed to actively address the issue (24). Generally, research results showed that participants' capacity for self-care and self-compassion would enhance their welfare, prevent them from providing "thinner" care, and enable them to provide the kind of compassionate care they desired. In essence, self-care is to take proactive measures to increase resiliency and general wellbeing (21). Self-care has both preventive and restorative benefits (14, 16). Researchers developed the theme of intentionality where planning, prioritising, scheduling, and choosing were used as adjectives to describe the conscious and intentional choice to take care of oneself (13).

#### Professionalism

There is a strong relation between age and years of practice with self-care. Older professionals who have been doing social work longer engage less frequently in self-care (11). However, studies have shown the contrary where self-compassion of senior practitioners appears to be higher (14). It was observed that there were substantial disparities between academic levels, where practitioners with graduate degrees practise more self-care than those with a lower academic qualification (11) while some studies report the contrary (28). Those who had a professional licence participated more in activities associated with self-care and they were strongly encouraged to upgrade their knowledge and skills continuously and professionals should embark on continual professional development. Organisations should look for ways to motivate their co-workers to do the same (29-31).

#### Financial status

It was reported that self-care routines depend on one's financial status. Financial resources were associated with self-compassion and self-kindness, while lesser financial resources were associated with isolation (11, 14, 30). Financial stability revealed significant differences, where individuals with more stable finances practising greater self-care. It is also possible that people who are more stable financially have more time to participate in self-care.

## Gender

Gender disparities in resilience have been discovered in a study (19). This review supported the concept that women experience greater difficulties than males in finding a work-life balance, raising children, managing multiple obligations, and multitasking in a way that leaves them with less time to advance their careers (32). It is evident from the other forms of self-care that women engage more frequently in both health self-care and workplace well-being (33). Other studies reported that women had significantly higher stress levels and lower levels of self-care and overall quality of life and are more likely than men to experience burnout. (34, 37).

## **Training**

There is an increased demand for multifaceted wellness professional educational programmes to include self-care in professional curricula which can help students develop the necessary skills and help them understand the value of self-care. It helps students become more compassionate toward themselves through development on mindfulness, self-reflection, and integrated self-knowledge; which could lead to positive impact on their self-care (14, 21,25,29,30,35). Other researchers (13) revealed two themes in the training on self-care; preparation for academic program, and post program. It is reported that students felt their academic training did not prepare them well for wellness activities

and training should be expanded to supervisory and activities in socio-psychology (17). Some participants believed that their training had instilled on them the "culture of psychology" which had caused their stress-related outbursts and that the training did not help them develop their "authentic self" (18). The fact that only a professional with a high degree of self-care is well equipped to work for the clients is a condition for the spread of these activities (17). Helping professionals should be offered different educational opportunities and benefits for their own growth rather than having these things forced upon them because doing so could make burnout worse in situations when stress levels are already high (12).

## **Family**

The beliefs and expectations one has of oneself and the outside world are moulded by the culture in which one lives (18, 20). Family plays an important role on the individual perception of society and the basic human perception of the society and their presumptions were influenced by the immediate social context (13,20). Family, culture, community, and religion might all serve as stressors as well as sources of support (19, 27). Better self-care practices were observed in married professionals (30).

## Supervisor

There is a stigma that the helping professional can handle things on your own (18). Researchers (27, 36) suggested group supervision for helping professionals to exchange coping mechanisms with one another and to be aware of the symptoms like depression, anxiety, or past negative experiences which can lessen stress level. Good supervision is viewed as essential, including reflective and process-oriented supervision (18). Promoting work cohesion, establishing proper managerial oversight, and providing possibilities for creativity should be emphasized in addition to allowing them autonomy, sufficient administrative assistance, and building a culture where they feel valued (19, 30, 37). Overworked culture in organisations are unable to protect their employees and opt for a high employee turnover rate (27).

#### **Boundaries**

Helping professionals need to be clear to identify someone else's experience and not accept it as one's own especially violence cases. This is necessary to combat feelings of helplessness and victimisation where they need to let go of responsibilities for clients' safety and well-being outside of the therapy room (13, 18, 27). Some researchers interest in self-care was sparked by the desire to balance the demands of personal and professional lives (21). This differentiation is important to maintain harmony in the several facets of life, such as the physical, spiritual, emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, and professional spheres (13). It is important to identify professional helpers who are at risk of burnout and

implement self-care approach to "rebalance" and return them to the state they were in before burnout (18, 32).

#### **DISCUSSION**

Self-care practices increase job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. (12, 32). Data from studies revealed that helping professionals do only a moderate amount of self-care. Studies have indicated that they only engage in self-care occasionally, and the overall mean score was in the moderate range (11, 14, 30, 31). Selfcare practices engagement should be improved. Every individual has different ways in practicing self-care (18, 38) to recover from burnout. Personally, self-care involved examining, "what support you?" (18). Self-care is needed to be prioritized for oneself. It can help to be effective with profession and prevent burnout. Self-care should be a regular habit and weaved it into daily life by taking the time to practise it at the start of training (13). Self-care could be useful to encourage quick, small, doable behaviour changes. A commitment to bettering one's health, and a solution-focused mentality in which minor changes result in larger changes (35).

Out of the total of 26 papers selected in this SLR, 10 papers discussed about the importance of including training for helping professionals or curricula program for trainees to ensure they have adequate of knowledge and practice of self-care. This is supported by other researchers (39) who asserted that self-compassionate individuals are generally better psychologically and physically indicating self-compassion as a self-care method with various benefits. It is believed that one of the best ways to improve the practise of self-care in graduate school and beyond is to teach helping professionals self-compassion while they are trainees. The practise of self-compassion has been linked in research to many positive results. Faculty members are supposed to function as role models for helping professional graduate students. If faculty do not promote, practise, or teach self-care, students are unlikely to practice selfcare. Stress management classes may be available as options in helping professional education programmes. If self-care is not compulsory in the curriculum, students may lose the chance of acquiring important and critical skills. The ability to develop and consistently incorporate important self-care components into curricula and clinical training is influenced by faculty in helping professional education programmes (39). The helping professionals' program should take training seriously in making self-care course compulsory to focus more on producing professionals who not only can take care of their clients but themselves too.

There are four sub-themes with six papers each, discussing about factors on the influence of self-care which are proactive, professionalism, family and supervisor. Proactive self-care is taking care of yourself now. Strengthening self-care practice as a preventive

strategy for burn-out is vital. It is undeniable that with intentional self-care, helping professionals can regularly schedule times to take care of themselves instead of only when stressed-out symptoms appeared. In this review, professionalism of the helping professionals with licence, higher academic qualification and more experiences helpers practice more self-care (11, 30). In order to improve professionalism in helping professionals, they were encouraged to improve their skills and maintain their professional licence. Self-care is strongly affected by family and culture. Sustainable behaviours, such as self-care, caring for others, and caring for the community, have an impact on and the wellbeing and a positive family environment (40). This review also indicated that majority helping professionals hope to get supervision and maintain good interpersonal support when they are stuck in their profession. Supervision is a supportive activity that enables helping professionals to express their uncertainties, frustrations and concerns, and receive support for the challenges they face when providing their services. Some measures, like promoting self-care and educating people about compassion fatigue, can be started immediately. It is best to improve peer support in the workplace, strike a balance between work and life, and encourage helping professionals to look for emotional support (38). Helping professionals are human too, they might face difficulties in their personal and professional life and need to seek psychological assistance when necessary.

The role of culture in self-care is significant, as an individual's beliefs and expectations of themselves and the world are shaped by the culture in which they live. Investigating attitudes and self-orientation linked to cultural resilience can be beneficial. Culture allows individuals to develop structure and skills as they acquire an identity and socialization, which are passed down from one generation to the next (20). According to Lau et al (41), self-care in Chinese culture emphasizes internal peacefulness and balance instead of external activities. The idea of balance in yin-yang and the importance of being in harmony with nature are crucial for achieving self-care. A lack of support for overcoming obstacles, high expectations, insufficient focus on the helping professionals as an individual are some characteristic of Australia's psychology culture as reported by Turnbull and Rhodes (18) in their study. Although the culture is important in self-care but from the 26 selected SLR for this paper, there are only two articles emphasize on this area, so it was not included as one of the themes in this SLR. Future research is recommended to explore further into this area.

Typically, majority of the helping professionals are female. From the 26 articles which selected for this SLR, the average respondents from the various helping profession consist of 83.27% of female which excluded the paper with the women in the articles' title. Hence, based on statistic, the authors infer that majority of the

helping professionals are female. Additionally, there are five out of 26 papers indicated that female participants in helping professions are more prone to burn-out, difficult to have work-life balance due to their societal role. It is normal for people to show sympathy and generosity to others while simultaneously berating themselves with criticism. Women, specifically are more prone to such self-critical manner (39). Women's self-care is an area that is worth exploring further especially on the female helping professionals' self-care as this profession is dominated by female.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper gives an overview of the previous studies on self-care and identified types and factors influencing helping professionals' self-care. Based on the present study, the authors have systematically reviewed previous papers obtained from the four major databases (Scopus, Web of Science, PsycArticles and Google Scholar) using ROSES approach. Articles were selected from year 2017-2021. A thematic analysis was conducted on the 26 chosen articles. Three main themes emerged: (I) types of self-care; (II) relation of self-care; (III) factors which affected self-care. The three themes were categorized into 16 sub-themes. Out of the 16 sub-themes, the most occurrence sub-theme was training. The following most occurrence sub-themes were proactive, professionalism, family and supervision. The result recommended that self-care training should be included in the curricula for trainees and helping professionals should be providing continuously training on self-care. The reviews emphasized that helping professionals should have proactive self-care practice to ensure their general wellbeing. On the other hand, those have higher education levels and belong to a professional membership reported more self-care practice. Family and culture are important factor in self-care practice. Proper supervision is vital to support helping professionals to avoid negative consequences. These findings might assist stakeholders to improve the helping professionals' self-care to have a more effective and productive work-force. It is not only improving the mental health of the helping professionals but providing a better quality of service for their clients too.

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