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சங்க அக இலக்கியங்களில் பூர்வீக ஆலோசனை மற்றும்
மனநலக் கருத்துக்கள்: சங்கப் பூர்வீக ஆலோசனை மாதிரி
(SICM) உருவாக்கம்

Indigenous Counselling and Mental Health Concepts in Sangam Akam Literature: Development of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)

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Abstract: The increasing prevalence of adolescent mental health challenges underscores the need for culturally responsive counselling approaches informed by indigenous knowledge systems. While contemporary counselling psychology has largely evolved within Western theoretical traditions, Sangam Akam literature preserves culturally grounded perspectives on emotional regulation, resilience, interpersonal relationships, and social support that remain relevant to contemporary practice. This integrative review examines indigenous counselling and mental health concepts across the five major Sangam Akam anthologies—Kurunthogai, Natrinai, Akananuru, Ainkurunuru, and Kalithogai. Guided by Indigenous Psychology and contemporary counselling theories, thematic synthesis identified six interrelated psychological constructs: emotion regulation, grief and loss, hope, resilience, identity development, and social connectedness. The review further revealed indigenous helping processes embodied by the Thozhi, Annai, Sevili, Vayil, family, and community, which collectively promote emotional adaptation and psychosocial well-being. These findings informed the development of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM), a culturally grounded conceptual framework that integrates indigenous Tamil counselling wisdom with contemporary counselling psychology. Rather than replacing established counselling theories, the SICM complements them by offering a culturally responsive perspective for adolescent counselling and provides a foundation for future empirical research in indigenous psychology..

Keywords: Sangam Akam Literature; Indigenous Counselling; Indigenous Psychology; Adolescent Mental Health; Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM).



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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterised by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes that shape psychological well-being. During this stage, young people negotiate identity, interpersonal relationships, and emotional challenges while adapting to family, peer, and societal expectations (Erikson, 1968; Steinberg, 2020). These developmental transitions highlight the importance of counselling approaches that are not only evidence-based but also culturally responsive to adolescents' lived experiences.

Although contemporary counselling psychology has made substantial advances in understanding adolescent mental health, its dominant theoretical foundations have largely evolved within Western sociocultural contexts. Increasing attention has therefore been directed towards Indigenous Psychology, which recognises that psychological knowledge is embedded within local cultures, languages, philosophies, and social practices. Instead of viewing indigenous and contemporary perspectives as competing paradigms, Indigenous Psychology encourages their integration to achieve culturally meaningful understandings of human behaviour. Recent scholarship has further strengthened this movement by emphasising the integration of indigenous epistemologies into contemporary psychological science and counselling practice. Such work highlights the importance of developing culturally responsive theories that acknowledge local knowledge systems, traditional helping practices, and indigenous worldviews alongside established psychological frameworks (Patil, 2025; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Among the world's classical literary traditions, Sangam *Akam* literature offers a distinctive account of emotions, interpersonal relationships, and psychosocial development. The five major *Akam* anthologies: *Kurunthogai*, *Natrinalai*, *Akananuru*, *Ainkurunuru*, and *Kalithogai* portray experiences such as love, separation, grief, hope, resilience, and reconciliation through culturally embedded relationships involving the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community. These figures function as trusted sources of emotional guidance, mediation, and social support, reflecting helping processes that closely parallel many principles recognised in contemporary counselling psychology (Rogers, 1957; Bowlby, 1988; Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Despite extensive literary scholarship on Sangam literature, comparatively little attention has been given to its relevance for counselling psychology or its potential contribution to Indigenous Psychology. In particular, no integrative conceptual framework has systematically synthesised the indigenous counselling processes and mental health concepts represented in Sangam *Akam* literature into a culturally grounded model for adolescent counselling. Addressing this gap is important because culturally embedded helping traditions may enrich existing counselling perspectives and provide contextually relevant approaches to adolescent mental health.

Accordingly, this integrative review aims to identify the mental health concepts and indigenous counselling processes represented in Sangam *Akam* literature, interpret these findings through the perspectives of Indigenous Psychology and contemporary counselling psychology, and propose the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM) as a culturally grounded conceptual framework for adolescent counselling. In doing so, the review contributes to the growing field of Indigenous Psychology by demonstrating the relevance of classical Tamil literary traditions to culturally responsive counselling research, practice, and future empirical investigation.

2. Methodology

This study employed an **integrative literature review** guided by the **PRISMA 2020** framework (Page et al., 2021) to identify, organise, and synthesise mental health concepts and indigenous counselling processes represented in Sangam *Akam* literature. PRISMA was adopted to enhance the transparency and methodological rigour of the review rather than to conduct a conventional systematic review.

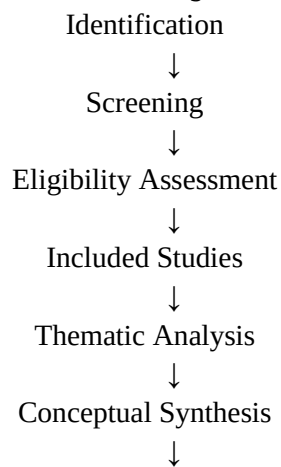
The review focused on the five major Sangam *Akam* anthologies - *Kurunthogai*, *Natrinalai*, *Akananuru*, *Ainkurunuru*, and *Kalithogai* which collectively represent the principal corpus of classical Tamil *Akam* literature and have been widely recognised for their literary and historical significance (Nagalakshmi, 2020).

Studies addressing Sangam *Akam* literature, Indigenous Psychology, counselling psychology, adolescent mental health, and related psychosocial theories were included. Publications limited to linguistic analysis, conference abstracts, duplicate records, opinion articles, and other non-academic sources were excluded.

The selected literature was organised using a review matrix and analysed through the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Themes were interpreted through selected perspectives from contemporary counselling psychology, including Person-Centred Theory, Attachment Theory, Emotion Regulation Theory, Resilience Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Social Support Theory, and Positive Youth Development. This analytical process enabled the identification of recurring psychological constructs and indigenous helping relationships across the Sangam texts.

The thematic synthesis informed the development of the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)** by integrating the identified psychological constructs with indigenous counselling processes represented through the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community. The resulting model is proposed as a culturally grounded conceptual framework to guide future research and culturally responsive counselling practice.

Figure 1. PRISMA-Guided Integrative Review Process



Conceptual Development of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)

3. Indigenous Psychological Perspectives on Sangam *Akam* Literature

Indigenous Psychology emerged from the recognition that psychological theories developed predominantly within Western sociocultural contexts may not fully explain human behaviour across diverse cultural settings. Instead of replacing established psychological theories, Indigenous Psychology emphasises that culturally embedded knowledge systems including language, literature, philosophy, traditions, and social practices provide valuable insights into human cognition, emotion, and behaviour (Kim et al., 2006; Berry et al., 2011). Within the Indian context, Sinha (1997) and Misra and Mohanty (2002) similarly argued that indigenous philosophical and cultural traditions offer important perspectives for understanding psychological processes within their sociocultural milieu. More recent scholarship has further reinforced the importance of integrating indigenous epistemologies into contemporary psychological research, highlighting their relevance for culturally responsive theory development and practice. This perspective provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for interpreting Sangam *Akam* literature as a source of indigenous counselling knowledge.

Classical Tamil literature, particularly the Sangam *Akam* corpus, represents one of the earliest literary traditions documenting the emotional, social, and cultural life of ancient Tamil society (Nagalakshmi, 2020). It also preserves a rich repository of indigenous knowledge concerning emotions, interpersonal relationships, morality, and collective well-being. Unlike many contemporary psychological perspectives that primarily emphasise individual functioning, Sangam *Akam* literature depicts emotional experiences within the interconnected contexts of family, community, culture, and the natural environment (Hart, 1975; Ramanujan, 1994). Experiences such as love, separation, grief, hope, reconciliation, and emotional resilience are presented as natural developmental transitions supported through empathy, guidance, and social connectedness. Contemporary scholarship has increasingly interpreted Sangam *Akam* literature as an important source of

indigenous psychological knowledge, demonstrating its relevance for understanding emotional processes, interpersonal relationships, and culturally grounded perspectives on human development (Mohanambihai Arasu, 2021; Gomathi, 2026). These culturally embedded perspectives closely correspond to contemporary concepts of emotional regulation (Gross, 2015), resilience (Masten, 2014), adaptive coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), and psychosocial well-being (Ryff, 1989).

A defining characteristic of Sangam *Akam* literature is its portrayal of indigenous helping relationships through figures such as the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community. These individuals provide emotional guidance, mediation, reassurance, and social support during periods of psychological distress, reflecting culturally embedded helping practices rather than formal therapeutic intervention. Their roles resonate with several principles recognised in contemporary counselling psychology, including empathic understanding (Rogers, 1957), secure attachment (Bowlby, 1988), emotional regulation (Gross, 2015), resilience (Masten, 2014), and perceived social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Recent scholarship has similarly interpreted Sangam texts as repositories of indigenous psychological principles that offer culturally grounded perspectives on emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and human development (Gomathi, 2026). Viewed through the lens of Indigenous Psychology, these relational processes provide the conceptual foundation for examining the mental health concepts and indigenous counselling practices presented in the following sections and for developing the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)**.

4. Theoretical Framework: Integrating Sangam Akam Literature with Contemporary Counselling Psychology

4.1 Conceptual Foundation

The psychological concepts represented in Sangam *Akam* literature are interpreted through selected perspectives from contemporary counselling and developmental psychology. These theories are employed as interpretive frameworks rather than explanatory models imposed upon the literary texts. Together, they facilitate an understanding of how indigenous helping relationships portrayed in Sangam *Akam* literature correspond with contemporary concepts of emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, resilience, and psychosocial development. Their integration provides the theoretical basis for the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)**, which synthesises indigenous Tamil counselling wisdom with contemporary psychological knowledge.

4.2 Person-Centred Theory

Person-Centred Theory emphasises empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard as essential conditions for psychological growth (Rogers, 1951, 1957). These principles are reflected in the role of the *Thozhi*, whose empathic listening, emotional reassurance, and respectful guidance support the heroine during periods of emotional conflict. Rather than directing decisions, the *Thozhi* facilitates emotional clarity while preserving personal autonomy, illustrating an indigenous expression of person-centred helping relationships.

4.3 Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory proposes that emotionally secure relationships foster psychological adjustment and resilience across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). In Sangam *Akam* literature, emotional security is sustained through the supportive relationships of the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, family, and community. These interconnected relationships function as culturally embedded attachment networks that promote trust, emotional stability, and adaptive coping during periods of uncertainty and separation.

4.4 Emotion Regulation Theory

Emotion Regulation Theory explains how individuals recognise, express, and regulate emotions to maintain psychological well-being (Gross, 1998, 2015). Sangam *Akam* literature consistently conveys emotional regulation through open emotional expression, reflective dialogue, and supportive interpersonal interactions rather than emotional suppression. Such culturally embedded strategies parallel contemporary understandings of adaptive emotion regulation and emotional resilience.

4.5 Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory describes positive adaptation to adversity through protective relationships, coping resources, and personal strengths (Masten, 2014). In Sangam *Akam* literature, resilience is reflected in the capacity to endure separation, sustain hope, and overcome emotional adversity through encouragement from trusted relationships. These protective processes illustrate culturally grounded pathways to resilience within everyday social life.

4.6 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasises that human development is shaped through continuous interaction between individuals and their surrounding social and environmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Likewise, the symbolic *thinai* landscapes of Sangam *Akam* literature integrate emotional experiences with ecological settings, cultural values, and social relationships. This ecological perspective highlights that psychological well-being is inseparable from the broader cultural environment in which individuals live.

4.7 Social Support Theory and Positive Youth Development

Social Support Theory identifies supportive interpersonal relationships as important protective factors for psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985), while Positive Youth Development emphasises the cultivation of developmental strengths and competencies (Lerner et al., 2005). Sangam *Akam* literature reflects these perspectives through the collective roles of the *Thozhi*, family, and community, who foster emotional support, resilience, social competence, and positive development through culturally embedded relationships.

4.8 Integrated Theoretical Framework

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide complementary lenses for interpreting the indigenous counselling knowledge preserved in Sangam *Akam* literature. Person-Centred Theory explains empathic guidance, Attachment Theory highlights emotionally secure relationships, Emotion Regulation Theory interprets adaptive emotional processes, Resilience Theory explains positive adaptation to adversity, Ecological Systems Theory situates psychological experiences within their cultural and environmental contexts, while Social Support Theory and Positive Youth Development emphasise the protective influence of supportive relationships and developmental strengths. Collectively, these perspectives provide the theoretical foundation for the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM), which conceptualises adolescent mental health as a culturally embedded and relational process supported through indigenous helping systems (Rogers, 1957; Bowlby, 1988; Gross, 2015; Masten, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Lerner et al., 2005).

5. Mental Health Concepts in Sangam *Akam* Literature

5.1 Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to recognise, express, and manage emotions in ways that promote psychological well-being and adaptive functioning (Gross, 2015). During adolescence, this capacity develops not only through individual coping skills but also through supportive interpersonal relationships that encourage emotional awareness and adaptive responses. Sangam *Akam* literature embodies this relational understanding of emotional regulation by portraying emotional expression as a natural and socially supported process rather than an experience to be concealed.

“தாமே செல்ப ஆயின், கானத்துப்
புலந்தேர் யானைக் கோட்டிடை ஒழிந்த
சிறுவீ முல்லைக் கொம்பிற் தாய்அம்,
இதழ் அழிந்து ஊறும் கண்பனி மதர்எழில்
பூண்டுக வனமுலை நனைத்தலும்
காணார் கொல்லோ? மாணிழை நமரே.”
- Allur Nanmullaiyar (Kurunthogai 202)

In this poem, the heroine openly expresses the anguish of separation while continuing to hope for reunion. Instead of suppressing her emotions, she shares her distress with the *Thozhi*, whose presence offers reassurance, understanding, and emotional perspective. The poem highlights that emotional recovery begins when distress is acknowledged within a trusting relationship, allowing painful experiences to be expressed, validated, and gradually integrated.

This portrayal resonates with contemporary perspectives on emotion regulation, which recognise that adaptive emotional functioning is shaped by both individual processes and supportive social environments (Gross, 2015). However, Sangam *Akam* literature extends this understanding by locating emotional regulation within culturally recognised helping relationships. The *Thozhi* does not attempt to eliminate the heroine's distress; instead, she creates a safe relational space where emotions can be expressed without judgement and managed through empathy, reflection, and companionship.

This indigenous perspective remains highly relevant to current adolescent counselling practice. Emotional validation, empathic listening, and supportive peer relationships continue to be recognised as essential protective factors that strengthen emotional resilience and psychological well-being. By presenting emotional regulation as a shared relational process rather than an individual responsibility, Sangam *Akam* literature offers a culturally grounded perspective that complements contemporary counselling approaches.

5.2 Grief and Loss

Grief and loss are inevitable aspects of human experience, particularly during adolescence, when emotional attachments and interpersonal relationships play a central role in psychological development. Contemporary counselling psychology recognises grief as a dynamic process through which individuals gradually adapt to separation and emotional change with the support of meaningful relationships (Worden, 2018). Sangam *Akam* literature presents a similar understanding by portraying grief not as emotional weakness but as a shared experience that becomes more bearable through empathy, companionship, and relational support.

“அறன் இலாள் தோழி! என்றும்,
பிறன் இலாள் தோழி! என்றும்,
நம் உணர்ந்து ஆறிய கொள்கை,
அன்னை முன் நாம் என்னிதற் படலே?”
- [Mamulanar](#) (Akananuru 251)

The poem presents the heroine's emotional suffering following separation from her beloved. Her grief is expressed through longing, uncertainty, and inner conflict, yet these emotions are neither concealed nor dismissed. Instead, she turns to the *Thozhi*, whose compassionate presence provides understanding, reassurance, and emotional stability. The poem suggests that healing begins when emotional pain is acknowledged within a trusted relationship, allowing grief to be shared rather than endured in isolation.

Throughout Sangam *Akam* literature, grief is consistently presented as a relational experience. Figures such as the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, and *Sevili* create emotionally safe spaces where sorrow can be expressed without judgement and gradually transformed through empathy, guidance, and companionship. Their role is not to remove suffering but to help individuals navigate it with dignity, patience, and hope. This culturally embedded understanding closely mirrors contemporary grief counselling, which views supportive relationships as essential to healthy adaptation following loss (Worden, 2018).

Collectively, these findings suggest that grief is most effectively understood and addressed within supportive interpersonal relationships. By portraying emotional healing as a shared relational process rooted in empathy, trust, and companionship, Sangam *Akam* literature offers a culturally grounded perspective that complements contemporary approaches to bereavement, separation, and emotional recovery.

5.3 Hope

Hope is a fundamental psychological resource that enables individuals to persevere through uncertainty while maintaining confidence in the future. During adolescence, hope promotes emotional stability, strengthens motivation, and encourages adaptive coping in the face of personal and interpersonal challenges (Snyder, 2002). Sangam *Akam* literature conveys hope as an enduring emotional strength sustained through meaningful relationships, where reassurance and shared understanding help individuals remain resilient despite present adversity.

“சாதல் அஞ்சேன்; அஞ்சுவல் சாவின்

பிறப்புப் பிறிது ஆகுவது ஆயின்,

மறக்குவென் கொல் என் காதலன்?”

- *Ilanthiraiyanar (Natrinal 99)*

In this poem, the heroine expresses profound emotional anguish, fearing not death itself but the possibility of forgetting her beloved. Although separation causes deep distress, the poem does not descend into hopelessness. Instead, it reproduces an enduring belief that love, memory, and reunion transcend present suffering. Hope therefore emerges as an inner source of emotional strength that enables the heroine to endure uncertainty without surrendering to despair.

The portrayal of hope in Sangam *Akam* literature has important implications for adolescent counselling. Young people frequently encounter academic pressures, relationship difficulties, and uncertainty about the future, making hope an essential protective resource for psychological health. The Thozhi nurtures hope by offering reassurance, encouraging patience, and helping the heroine reinterpret emotionally difficult situations with confidence rather than despair. These culturally embedded helping relationships demonstrate how hope can be strengthened through empathic support, trusted companionship, and shared emotional understanding.

This relational understanding complements Snyder's (2002) Hope Theory, which emphasises hopeful thinking as a pathway towards adaptive coping and goal-directed behaviour. Sangam *Akam* literature extends this perspective by demonstrating that hope is not sustained solely through individual cognition but is also cultivated through culturally embedded interpersonal relationships.

5.4 Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience represents the capacity to adapt positively to adversity while maintaining emotional balance and hope. Resilience is understood not as an inherent personality trait but as a capacity that develops through supportive relationships, meaningful life experiences, and opportunities to overcome challenges (Masten, 2014). Sangam *Akam* literature presents resilience as a dynamic process in which emotional endurance is strengthened by encouragement, trust, and the confidence that difficult circumstances will eventually change.

“பெரிய இலையினையும் பருத்த அடியினையும் உடைய நெல்லி மரத்தின்

அழகிய புளிப்பினையுடைய திரண்ட காய்களை உண்ணும்...

சிறிய மரைமானின் மிக்க கூட்டம் தின்னும் காட்டினைக் கடந்துச் சென்ற

நம் தலைவன் விரைவில் திரும்பி வருவார்.”

- *Kazhaarkkeeran Eyitriyaar (Akananuru 163)*

The poem conveys the heroine during a period of prolonged separation as her beloved travels through the harsh *Palai* landscape. Although uncertainty and anxiety are evident, she does not succumb to despair. Instead, her confidence in reunion enables her to endure emotional hardship with patience and determination. The poem captures that resilience does not arise from denying suffering but from preserving hope and emotional stability despite adversity.

Across Sangam *Akam* literature, resilience is consistently nurtured through interpersonal relationships. The *Thozhi*, together with family and the wider community, offers reassurance, emotional encouragement, and practical support that help individuals navigate periods of uncertainty. These relationships foster patience, strengthen confidence, and reinforce the belief that emotional hardship can be overcome. Resilience therefore emerges as a shared relational process rather than an individual accomplishment, reflecting the collective values that characterise indigenous Tamil society.

These findings reinforce the importance of supportive relationships in strengthening resilience during adolescence. Masten's (2014) description of resilience as an adaptive developmental process provides a useful theoretical lens for interpreting these literary representations, while Sangam *Akam* literature further suggests how resilience is cultivated through culturally embedded helping relationships characterised by empathy, encouragement, and collective responsibility.

5.5 Identity Formation and Role Transition

Adolescence is a period of identity formation during which individuals negotiate personal aspirations, social expectations, and emerging adult roles. Contemporary developmental psychology recognises identity as a dynamic process shaped through self-reflection as well as interactions with significant others (Erikson, 1968; Steinberg, 2020). Sangam *Akam* literature presents a similar perspective by portraying identity as a relational process in which emotional maturity develops through guidance, responsibility, and culturally valued relationships.

“வேர் அலர் பலவின் கோள் அருந் தீம் கனி,
குலைத் தலை வாங்கக் காம்பு அறிந்து அன்ன
நிலைமை என் உயிர்க்கு ஆகலின்...”
- *Kapilar (Kurunthogai 18)*

The poem presents the heroine as she embodies on the consequences of her relationship and the responsibilities associated with her choices. Rather than responding impulsively to emotional conflict, she indicates self-awareness, emotional restraint, and concern for the well-being of others. Her reflections reveal an evolving sense of identity shaped by both personal emotions and the cultural expectations that guide responsible behaviour.

Sangam *Akam* literature consistently depicts identity development as a relational journey rather than an isolated process of self-discovery. The *Thozhi*, *Annai*, and other trusted figures provide emotional guidance, practical wisdom, and moral support that help the heroine negotiate uncertainty and adapt to changing social roles. Identity is therefore constructed through continuous interaction with supportive relationships that encourage reflection, responsible decision-making, and emotional growth.

This interpretation complements Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory by recognising that identity develops through resolving developmental challenges. Sangam *Akam* literature extends this understanding by illustrating how cultural values and indigenous helping relationships actively shape identity formation. These insights remain highly relevant to contemporary adolescent counselling, where supportive relationships, family involvement, and positive peer interactions continue to play a central role in fostering self-understanding, confidence, and healthy psychosocial development.

5.6 Social Connectedness

Social connectedness reinforces the sense of belonging that develops through meaningful relationships with family, peers, and the wider community. It is widely recognised as a protective factor that enhances psychological well-being, strengthens resilience, and reduces the adverse effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Sangam *Akam* literature similarly presents emotional well-being as fundamentally relational, where individuals are sustained through networks of care, mutual responsibility, and social support rather than through individual effort alone.

“ஆற்றுதல் என்பது ஒன்று அலந்தவர்க்கு உதவுதல்;

போற்றுதல் என்பது புணர்ந்தாரைப் பிரியாமை;

பண்பு எனப்படுவது பாடு அறிந்து ஒழுக்குதல்;

அன்பு எனப்படுவது தன் கிளை செறாஅமை.”

- *Nallanthuvanar (Kalithogai 133)*

This poem presents compassion, loyalty, and mutual care as enduring social values that sustain both individuals and communities. Emotional well-being is portrayed not as a private experience but as something nurtured through reciprocal relationships. Helping those in distress, remaining committed to loved ones, and acting with empathy are described as shared responsibilities that preserve both personal and collective harmony.

Throughout Sangam *Akam* literature, emotional challenges are rarely faced in isolation. The *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family members, and the wider community form an interconnected network that offers reassurance, guidance, mediation, and emotional support during periods of uncertainty. These relationships foster a strong sense of belonging, enabling individuals to navigate emotional difficulties while maintaining hope, resilience, and psychological balance. Social connectedness therefore serves as the foundation through which other psychological strengths are developed and sustained.

Collectively, these literary representations demonstrate that social connectedness is sustained through culturally embedded networks of care, mutual responsibility, and community participation. This understanding complements Social Support Theory while reinforcing the continuing importance of family relationships, peer support, and community engagement in promoting positive mental health and healthy psychosocial development.

5.7 Integrative Synthesis of Mental Health Constructs in Sangam Akam Literature

The thematic analysis of Sangam *Akam* literature suggests that emotional regulation, grief and loss, hope, psychological resilience, identity formation, and social connectedness are not isolated psychological experiences. Rather, they form an interconnected framework through which emotional well-being is understood, sustained, and restored. Collectively, these constructs portray mental health as a relational and culturally embedded process in which individual well-being is inseparable from supportive interpersonal relationships and shared social responsibilities.

A recurring pattern across the poems is the central role of indigenous helping relationships in promoting psychological adjustment. The *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family members, and the wider community consistently provide emotional reassurance, practical guidance, conflict mediation, and moral support during periods of uncertainty and emotional distress. Their contribution extends beyond companionship; they represent a culturally recognised support system through which individuals learn to regulate emotions, cope with separation, sustain hope, adapt to adversity, negotiate changing social roles, and maintain a sense of belonging. Emotional well-being is therefore presented as a shared relational process rather than an individual achievement.

Although the psychological processes identified in this review parallel contemporary concepts of emotion regulation, attachment, resilience, and social support (Gross, 2015; Bowlby, 1988; Masten, 2014; Cohen & Wills, 1985), the poems locate these processes within everyday relationships instead of formal therapeutic settings. This culturally grounded perspective broadens contemporary understandings of counselling by demonstrating that emotional healing can emerge naturally through trusted interpersonal relationships embedded within family and community life.

The synthesis of these six psychological constructs provides the conceptual foundation for the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)** developed in the following chapter. Rather than presenting indigenous and contemporary perspectives as competing approaches, the proposed model integrates them to illustrate how culturally embedded helping relationships can complement contemporary counselling practice and contribute to culturally responsive approaches to adolescent mental health.

Figure 5. Integrated Mental Health Framework in Sangam Akam Literature

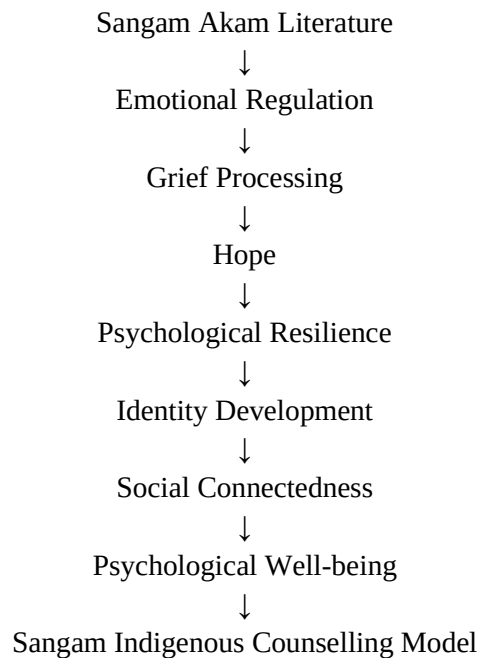


Table 5. Mapping Mental Health Constructs in Sangam Akam Literature to Contemporary Counselling Psychology

Mental Health Construct	Representative Poem	Indigenous Process	Contemporary Theory	Counselling Application
Emotional Regulation	Kurunthogai 202	Emotional validation	Gross	Emotion regulation
Grief & Loss	Akananuru 251	Emotional support	Bowlby	Grief counselling
Hope	Natrinal 99	Reassurance	Snyder	Hope-based counselling
Psychological Resilience	Akananuru 163	Encouragement	Masten	Resilience training
Identity Development	Kurunthogai 18	Developmental guidance	Erikson	Identity counselling
Social Connectedness	Kalithogai 133	Community support	Cohen & Wills	Social support interventions

6. Indigenous Counselling Concepts in Sangam Akam Literature

Counselling is commonly understood as a collaborative helping process that promotes emotional well-being, adaptive coping, and personal growth through empathic communication, guidance, and supportive relationships (Corey, 2021). While contemporary counselling is practised within professional settings, cultures have long developed their own indigenous systems of emotional care that reflect local values, social structures, and shared understandings of psychological health. Indigenous psychology recognises these culturally embedded helping traditions as important sources of knowledge because they reveal how communities have historically responded to emotional distress and interpersonal challenges.

Sangam Akam literature offers one of the earliest literary representations of such an indigenous helping system within the Tamil cultural tradition. Counselling is presented not as a formal therapeutic intervention but as an integral part of everyday social life. The poems portray emotional support through trusted interpersonal relationships embedded within the cultural fabric of Sangam society. Individuals experiencing emotional

conflict receive guidance through trusted relationships involving the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family members, and the wider community, each contributing distinct forms of emotional support, mediation, mentoring, and conflict resolution.

These helping relationships should not be viewed as direct equivalents of contemporary counselling roles. Instead, they represent culturally grounded interpersonal processes that perform many of the psychological functions associated with modern counselling, including empathic listening, emotional validation, guidance, mediation, and the strengthening of supportive relationships. Examining these indigenous helping figures provides the conceptual basis for understanding how emotional care was organised within Sangam society and establishes the foundation for the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)** developed in this review.

Table 6 - Indigenous Counselling Agents and Their Contemporary Relevance

Indigenous Counselling Agent	Primary Counselling Function	Contemporary Equivalent
Thozhi	Emotional support, mediation, cognitive reframing	Peer counsellor / Person-centred counsellor
Annai	Emotional security and guidance	Parent / Family counsellor
Sevili	Mentoring and psychosocial support	Mentor / School counsellor
Vayil	Communication and conflict mediation	Mediation counsellor
Family	Emotional security and resilience	Family systems counselling
Community	Collective care and social support	Community counselling

6.1 The *Thozhi*: An Indigenous Counselling Relationship

Among the helping figures portrayed in Sangam *Akam* literature, the *Thozhi* occupies the most influential counselling role. As the heroine's trusted companion, she provides emotional reassurance, facilitates communication, and offers guidance during periods of uncertainty. Their relationship is characterised by trust, empathy, and confidentiality, creating a safe space in which the heroine can openly express her thoughts and emotions. Instead of directing or judging, the *Thozhi* helps the heroine understand her situation and navigate emotional challenges within the cultural expectations of Sangam society.

"வேர் அலர் பலவின் கோள் அருந் தீம் கனி,
குலைத் தலை வாங்கக் காம்பு அறிந்து அன்ன
நிலைமை என் உயிர்க்கு ஆகலின்..."
- *Kapilar (Kurunthogai 18)*

In this poem, the heroine's emotional vulnerability is likened to a ripe jackfruit suspended from a fragile branch, symbolising the delicate balance between love, uncertainty, and social responsibility. Recognising the heroine's distress, the *Thozhi* approaches the hero with sensitivity rather than blame, encouraging a thoughtful resolution that safeguards both the heroine's emotional well-being and her social dignity. The poem exemplifies that emotional support is achieved through understanding, careful communication, and respectful mediation rather than confrontation.

The *Thozhi* consistently performs functions that parallel core helping processes recognised in counselling practice. She listens with empathy, validates emotional experiences, encourages reflection, and promotes constructive decision-making while respecting the heroine's autonomy. These qualities closely resemble the principles of person-centred counselling (Rogers, 1957), although the *Thozhi* fulfils this role through friendship and shared cultural responsibility rather than professional training. Sangam *Akam* literature therefore presents the *Thozhi* as an indigenous helping figure whose effectiveness lies not in specialised expertise but in the strength of a trusting relationship. Collectively, these findings suggest that emotional support in Sangam society was sustained through trusting interpersonal relationships rather than specialised therapeutic roles.

6.2 The *Annai*: An Indigenous Family Counselling Relationship

The family constitutes the earliest context in which emotional security and interpersonal trust are established, and Sangam *Akam* literature conveys the *Annai* (mother) as a central figure in this process. More than a parental authority, she is presented as an emotionally perceptive caregiver who recognises subtle changes in her daughter's behaviour and responds with empathy, guidance, and concern. Her role represents an indigenous understanding of family counselling in which emotional well-being is nurtured through attentive relationships and compassionate communication rather than control or punishment.

“ஓங்கு மலை நாட! ஒழிக நின் வாய்மை!

...

‘பண்டும் இனையையோ?’ என வினவினள் யாயே.”

- *Peruvazhuthi (Natrinal 55)*

In this poem, the mother notices subtle emotional and behavioural changes in her daughter and gently enquires about their cause. Instead of responding with suspicion or condemnation, she approaches her daughter with patience and genuine concern, seeking to understand the emotions underlying her behaviour. The poem reveals maternal care as an active process of listening, observation, and emotional responsiveness, demonstrating that supportive enquiry can strengthen trust while preserving the daughter's dignity.

The *Annai*'s role closely resonates with established perspectives on attachment and family counselling, which emphasise that emotionally responsive caregiving promotes secure relationships, emotional regulation, and healthy psychosocial development (Bowlby, 1988). Sangam *Akam* literature enriches this perspective by illustrating that parental guidance is most effective when it combines empathy with cultural wisdom and respect for the individual's emotional experience. Rather than imposing solutions, the *Annai* creates a supportive environment in which emotional concerns can be recognised and addressed within the family. Collectively, these observations emphasise that emotionally responsive parenting provides a secure relational foundation for psychological development, emotional regulation, and healthy family relationships.

6.3 The *Sevili*: An Indigenous Mentoring Relationship

Beyond the guidance provided by the *Annai* and the companionship of the *Thozhi*, Sangam *Akam* literature assigns a distinctive helping role to the *Sevili* (foster mother). As an experienced caregiver, the *Sevili* offers emotional support shaped by maturity, practical wisdom, and close familiarity with the heroine's circumstances. Her relationship replicates an indigenous mentoring process in which emotional care is expressed through reassurance, guidance, and compassionate understanding rather than formal authority.

“கேளாய்; வாழியோ! மகளை! நின் தோழி,

திருநகர் வரைப்பகம் புலம்ப, அவனொடு

பெருமலை இறந்தது நோவேன்; நோவல்...

மடமயில் அன்ன என் நடைமெலி பேதை

தோள் துணையாகத் துயிற்றத் துஞ்சாள்.”

- *Karuvur Kannam Pullanar (Akananuru 63)*

In this poem, the *Sevili* recognises the heroine's silent suffering as prolonged separation leaves her unable to sleep or find emotional comfort. Rather than dismissing her distress, she responds with empathy and quiet concern, acknowledging the depth of the heroine's emotional experience while offering reassurance. The poem illustrates that effective support sometimes begins not with advice but with sensitive recognition of another person's suffering.

Unlike the *Thozhi*, whose support is grounded in friendship, the *Sevili* draws upon experience and practical judgement to help the heroine cope with emotional uncertainty. Her guidance resembles contemporary mentoring relationships in which trusted adults encourage reflection, resilience, and adaptive coping without

assuming the role of a therapist (**Masten, 2014**). Sangam *Akam* literature therefore presents the *Sevili* as an indigenous mentor whose emotional insight and compassionate presence strengthen psychological well-being through trusted interpersonal relationships. Such literary representations emphasise that experience, compassion, and trusted guidance are enduring resources for promoting resilience during periods of emotional uncertainty.

6.4 The *Vayil*: An Indigenous Communication and Mediation Relationship

Emotional healing often depends on restoring communication after misunderstanding, conflict, or prolonged separation. Sangam *Akam* literature recognises this need through the *Vayil*, an intermediary who facilitates dialogue between the lovers with discretion, sensitivity, and respect. Rather than merely conveying messages, the *Vayil* helps rebuild trust and mutual understanding, reflecting an indigenous approach to conflict resolution grounded in communication and reconciliation.

“வேரல் வேலி வேர்க்கோட் பலவின்
சாரல் நாட! செவ்வியை ஆகுமதி;
சிறுகோட்டுப் பெரும்பழம் தூங்கியாங்கு,
இவள் உயிர் தவச் சிறிது; காமமோ பெரிதே.”
- Koodaloor Palkannanaar (*Natrinal* 200)

The poem compares the heroine's emotional condition to a large jackfruit hanging from a slender stalk, symbolising the fragile balance between emotional vulnerability and enduring love. Recognising the seriousness of her distress, the speaker communicates her condition to the hero with care and restraint, encouraging him to respond responsibly before emotional suffering deepens. The poem indicates that timely, empathic communication can prevent misunderstanding and preserve important relationships.

Sangam *Akam* literature thus presents communication not simply as the exchange of information but as a relational process that promotes emotional healing and social harmony, closely reflecting person-centred principles of empathic communication and relationship building (**Rogers, 1957**). By presenting communication as a means of restoring understanding rather than assigning blame, the poem foregrounds dialogue as a vital process in emotional healing.

6.5 Family as an Indigenous Counselling System

While individual helping figures provide emotional guidance in specific situations, Sangam *Akam* literature reveals the family as the enduring context in which emotional security, moral responsibility, and interpersonal care are sustained. The poems depict the family as a collective system in which parents, relatives, and caregivers share responsibility for emotional support rather than assigning that responsibility to a single individual. This relational perspective depicts a culturally grounded framework of emotional care in which emotional growth is nurtured through everyday family interactions.

“பலவுறு நறுஞ்சாந்தம் படுப்பவற் கல்லதை
மலையுளே பிறப்பினும் மலைக்கதுதான் என்செய்யும்?
நினைக்குங்கால் நும்மகள் நுமக்கும்ஆங் கனையளே!

...

சீர்கெழு வெண்முத்தம் அணிபவற் கல்லதை
நீருளே பிறப்பினும் நீர்க்குஅதுதான் என்செய்யும்?
தேருங்காற் நும்மகள் நுமக்கும்ஆங் கனையளே!”
- Cheraman Perunkadunko (*Kalithogai* 9)

Through the metaphors of sandalwood and pearls, the poem reminds parents that a child's life ultimately extends beyond the place of origin. Rather than encouraging possessiveness or control, it invites families to

recognise emotional maturity, respect personal choices, and respond with understanding. The imagery suggests that genuine parental care involves preparing individuals to navigate life with confidence while remaining connected to their family and cultural values.

This portrayal is consistent with contemporary family systems perspectives, which view emotional well-being as emerging from patterns of interaction rather than from isolated individuals (Goldenberg et al., 2017). Sangam Akam literature similarly presents the family as a network of mutual care where empathy, communication, and shared responsibility foster resilience and healthy development. Rather than locating emotional care within a single individual, the poem presents the family as a relational environment in which shared responsibility nurtures emotional resilience across generations.

6.6 Community as an Indigenous Counselling System

Emotional well-being is sustained not only through close interpersonal relationships but also through the collective wisdom and support of the wider community. Sangam Akam literature conveys the community as an active participant in resolving emotional distress, where respected elders and socially trusted individuals guide relationships, mediate conflicts, and restore harmony. Rather than viewing emotional problems as purely private experiences, the poems illustrate that communities share responsibility for protecting psychological well-being and maintaining healthy social relationships. This reinforces a community-based helping tradition in which emotional care is embedded within collective social life rather than confined to professional practice.

"நெறி அறி செறி குறி புரி திரிபு அறியா அறிவனை முந்துறீஇத்,

தகை மிகு தொகை வகை அறியும் சான்றவர் இனம் ஆக,

வேய் புரை மென் தோள் பசலையும், அம்பலும், மாய புணர்ச்சியும்,

எல்லாம் உடன் நீங்கச், சேய் உயர் வெற்பனும் வந்தனன்."

- Kapilar (Kalithogai 49)

This poem describes how wise and discerning members of the community, who understand social customs and human relationships, intervene with sound judgement to resolve emotional difficulties. Their guidance removes the heroine's distress, uncertainty, and emotional suffering while facilitating the reunion of the lovers. Rather than relying on authority or coercion, these respected individuals restore harmony through wisdom, cultural understanding, and appropriate social mediation. The poem therefore highlights that emotional healing is achieved through collective guidance rooted in shared cultural values and trusted social relationships.

This portrayal corresponds to community and ecological perspectives in counselling psychology, which recognise that psychological well-being is influenced by supportive social networks and culturally meaningful relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Sangam Akam literature similarly presents emotional care as a shared community responsibility in which experienced and respected individuals contribute to conflict resolution, emotional reassurance, and social cohesion. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that emotional well-being in Sangam society was understood as a shared social responsibility sustained through collective wisdom, mutual trust, and active community participation.

6.7 Synthesis of Indigenous Counselling Concepts

The foregoing analysis underscores that Sangam Akam literature presents counselling not as an isolated activity performed by a single individual but as a culturally embedded network of interconnected helping relationships. Emotional support is distributed across multiple levels of social life, with each relationship contributing distinct psychological functions that collectively promote healthy psychological development, resilience, and relational harmony. Rather than relying on formal therapeutic practices, the poems portray counselling as an integral component of everyday life, grounded in empathy, trust, communication, and shared cultural values. The *Thozhi* embodies the role of an empathic companion who provides emotional validation, reassurance, and confidential support during periods of psychological distress. The *Annai* offers parental care that nurtures emotional security and moral development, while the *Sevili* contributes the wisdom of experience through

guidance, mentoring, and life-oriented counsel. The *Vayil* facilitates communication and reconciliation by restoring dialogue between individuals experiencing relational conflict. Beyond these individual helping relationships, the family functions as a stable environment that nurtures emotional development through shared responsibility, and the wider community reinforces psychological well-being by offering collective guidance, social acceptance, and culturally grounded conflict resolution.

Taken together, these interconnected relationships suggest that Sangam Akam literature conceptualises counselling as a multi-layered relational ecology in which emotional support is distributed across peers, caregivers, mentors, mediators, families, and the wider community. This understanding closely aligns with contemporary perspectives on person-centred counselling, attachment, resilience, ecological systems, and social support (Rogers, 1957; Bowlby, 1988; Masten, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cohen & Wills, 1985). No single figure performs the entire counselling function; rather, psychological well-being emerges through the coordinated contributions of these complementary relationships operating within a shared cultural framework. This understanding extends beyond individual acts of support to reveal an integrated network of emotional care in which each relationship performs a distinct yet interconnected role. Such a perspective closely resonates with ecological and systemic approaches to counselling while retaining a uniquely indigenous foundation rooted in Tamil social and literary traditions.

The preceding literary analysis therefore provides both the empirical evidence and the conceptual foundation for proposing the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM). Building upon this foundation, the model organises these indigenous helping relationships into an integrated framework for culturally responsive counselling. It conceptualises counselling as a dynamic process operating across multiple relational levels, beginning with empathic peer support, extending through family and mentoring relationships, and culminating in community participation and collective responsibility for emotional well-being. By synthesising these literary representations with contemporary counselling psychology, the SICM provides a culturally grounded framework that informs counselling theory, guides practice with adolescents and families, and offers a foundation for future empirical research within Indigenous Psychology.

The following chapter builds upon these findings by translating the identified indigenous helping relationships into an integrated conceptual framework for culturally responsive counselling grounded in Sangam Akam literature.

7. A Conceptual Framework for Indigenous Counselling: The Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)

The thematic synthesis presented in the preceding sections shows that Sangam Akam literature contains a coherent framework of psychological understanding and culturally embedded helping practices that are highly relevant to adolescent development. The poems present emotional experiences as normative developmental transitions rather than signs of dysfunction, illustrating how supportive interpersonal relationships facilitate healthy psychological adaptation. These observations provide the foundation for proposing the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)**, a culturally grounded conceptual framework that integrates indigenous Tamil perspectives on emotional support with counselling psychology.

The SICM conceptualises counselling as a relational and ecological process embedded within everyday social life. Emotional support is not confined to professionally trained counsellors but emerges through the complementary roles of the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family members, and the wider community. These culturally recognised helpers facilitate emotional expression, provide guidance during developmental challenges, encourage constructive decision-making, and promote adaptive adjustment through trusted relationships. The model therefore extends contemporary counselling perspectives by recognising indigenous helping systems as psychologically meaningful and developmentally significant.

Conceptually, the SICM consists of five interconnected components: (1) developmental challenges, (2) emotional experiences, (3) indigenous counselling processes, (4) psychological mechanisms, and (5) positive developmental outcomes (Figure 7). Rather than representing a linear sequence, these components interact

dynamically, illustrating how culturally embedded counselling relationships transform developmental challenges into opportunities for emotional growth, resilience, and psychosocial adjustment. Consequently, the SICM complements existing counselling theories by offering a culturally responsive framework rooted in indigenous Tamil knowledge while remaining compatible with contemporary psychological science.

Figure 7. Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)



7.1 Conceptual Components of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model

The SICM is organised around five interrelated conceptual components that collectively explain how indigenous counselling relationships promote adolescent psychosocial development. Rather than functioning as independent stages, these components operate as an integrated system in which developmental experiences evoke emotional responses, interpersonal relationships provide culturally grounded support, psychological resources are strengthened, and positive developmental outcomes emerge. Together, they illustrate the dynamic interaction between individual experiences and the social environments that characterise indigenous Tamil approaches to counselling.

Developmental Challenges

Developmental challenges constitute the starting point of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model. Sangam *Akam* literature presents experiences such as love, separation, interpersonal conflict, uncertainty, and identity exploration as natural transitions within adolescence rather than signs of psychological disturbance. These experiences create emotional demands that require understanding, guidance, and relational support. By presenting developmental struggles as normative life events, the poems emphasise adaptation through meaningful social relationships instead of individual pathology. Within the SICM, these challenges provide the context in which indigenous counselling relationships become relevant, initiating the processes that foster emotional growth, psychosocial adjustment, and healthy development.

Emotional Experiences

Developmental transitions are accompanied by diverse emotional experiences, including longing, anxiety, grief, hope, fear, and anticipation. Sangam *Akam* poetry presents these emotions as authentic expressions of

human experience that deserve acknowledgement rather than suppression. Emotional experiences are communicated openly through interpersonal relationships, allowing trusted individuals to recognise distress and respond with empathy and guidance. Within the SICM, emotional awareness serves as the bridge between developmental challenges and indigenous counselling processes, enabling culturally meaningful responses that support emotional adaptation and strengthen psychological functioning.

Indigenous Counselling Processes

The defining feature of the SICM is its conceptualisation of counselling as a culturally embedded relational process. Emotional support is provided through the complementary roles of the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family members, and the wider community, each contributing distinct forms of guidance appropriate to the individual's circumstances. These relationships facilitate empathic listening, emotional validation, conflict mediation, moral reflection, and context-sensitive decision-making. Instead of relying on formal therapeutic intervention, the model underscores how everyday social relationships function as indigenous helping systems that promote emotional stability and adaptive responses to developmental challenges.

Psychological Mechanisms

The indigenous counselling processes described in the SICM activate several protective psychological mechanisms that facilitate healthy adolescent development. Through supportive relationships, individuals develop greater emotional regulation, adaptive coping, resilience, secure interpersonal bonds, and a stronger sense of identity and belonging. These mechanisms explain how culturally grounded counselling relationships translate emotional support into positive psychological functioning. Instead of viewing resilience and adaptation as individual attributes alone, the SICM conceptualises them as outcomes that emerge through sustained interpersonal interaction and collective social support.

Positive Developmental Outcomes

The interaction between developmental experiences, emotional processes, indigenous counselling relationships, and protective psychological mechanisms culminates in positive developmental outcomes. Adolescents are better equipped to manage emotional challenges, establish healthy relationships, strengthen emotional competence, and develop a coherent sense of identity. These outcomes extend beyond the resolution of immediate distress, contributing to long-term psychological well-being and social adjustment. Within the SICM, positive development reflects the cumulative influence of culturally embedded helping relationships, demonstrating the enduring relevance of indigenous Tamil knowledge for promoting adolescent mental health.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications of the Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model

The Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM) is the principal conceptual contribution of this review, demonstrating that Sangam *Akam* literature embodies a culturally grounded framework for understanding adolescent emotional development and counselling. By interpreting classical Tamil literature as a source of indigenous psychological knowledge, the model extends counselling psychology beyond conventional Western perspectives and highlights the relevance of culturally embedded helping traditions.

Unlike contemporary counselling models that primarily emphasise professional therapeutic relationships (Corey, 2021), the SICM conceptualises emotional support as a relational process sustained through the complementary roles of the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community. These relationships promote emotional understanding, guidance, conflict resolution, and social connectedness, illustrating how indigenous helping systems contribute to healthy psychological development.

The SICM also provides a culturally responsive framework for counselling practice with adolescents, particularly in educational and community settings. It may inform culturally sensitive counselling, psychoeducation, counsellor training, and preventive mental health initiatives by integrating indigenous values with contemporary psychological practice.

As a conceptual model, the SICM provides a foundation for future empirical research. Further studies are needed to validate its components across diverse populations and examine its applicability within educational, clinical, and community contexts. Such research will strengthen the evidence base for culturally grounded counselling while advancing indigenous psychology and adolescent mental health research.

8. Discussion

8.1 Interpretation and Theoretical Contribution

The present review shows that Sangam *Akam* literature offers more than a literary representation of human emotions; it preserves a culturally grounded understanding of adolescent psychological development and indigenous helping practices. Interpreted through counselling psychology, the poems reveal a relational approach in which emotional challenges are understood and addressed through trusted interpersonal relationships rather than individual coping alone. The recurring roles of the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community illustrate a culturally embedded support system that promotes emotional understanding, guidance, conflict resolution, and social connectedness.

The thematic synthesis identified six interrelated psychological constructs emotion regulation, grief, hope, resilience, identity development, and social connectedness which collectively informed the development of the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)**. Rather than replacing contemporary counselling theories, the SICM complements them by demonstrating that culturally embedded helping relationships can facilitate positive adolescent development through empathy, shared responsibility, and supportive social networks, consistent with contemporary perspectives on resilience and social support (Masten, 2014; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Collectively, these findings position classical Tamil literature as an important source of indigenous psychological knowledge and establish the SICM as a culturally responsive conceptual framework that advances counselling research, theory, and practice.

8.2 Practical Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

The findings have important implications for culturally responsive counselling with adolescents, particularly in educational and community settings where family and social relationships continue to influence psychological development. The relational principles reflected in Sangam *Akam* literature support counselling approaches that recognise the contributions of peers, caregivers, families, and communities in promoting adaptive psychological functioning. Accordingly, the SICM may inform culturally sensitive counselling, psychoeducation, counsellor education, and school-based mental health initiatives by integrating indigenous values with contemporary psychological practice.

A major strength of this review is its interdisciplinary synthesis of Tamil literary studies, indigenous psychology, and counselling psychology, culminating in the development of the SICM. Nevertheless, the proposed model remains conceptual and has not yet been empirically validated. Furthermore, interpretations of classical literary texts may differ across scholars and historical traditions. Future research should therefore examine the empirical validity of the SICM, explore its applicability across diverse adolescent populations, and evaluate its usefulness within educational, clinical, and community counselling contexts. Such investigations will strengthen the evidence base for culturally grounded counselling and advance the integration of indigenous psychological knowledge into contemporary mental health research.

9. Practical Implications

The findings of this review have important implications for culturally responsive adolescent counselling, particularly within educational and community settings. The Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM) highlights the value of integrating culturally meaningful helping relationships into contemporary counselling practice by recognising the complementary roles of peers, families, and communities in promoting psychological well-being. These indigenous principles may inform school and college counselling, peer-support programmes, family-centred interventions, psychoeducation, and preventive mental health initiatives, especially in collectivist cultural contexts.

Beyond counselling practice, the SICM provides a culturally grounded framework for counsellor education and life skills programmes. Incorporating indigenous psychological concepts derived from Sangam *Akam* literature into counsellor training and mental health education may strengthen multicultural competence and encourage culturally sensitive approaches to adolescent care. The model also offers a conceptual basis for developing policies that acknowledge indigenous knowledge alongside evidence-based psychological practice.

10. Future Research Directions

As a conceptual framework, the SICM requires systematic empirical validation. Future studies should examine the relationships among its proposed components across diverse adolescent populations using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research designs. Longitudinal and intervention studies would further clarify the model's applicability within educational, clinical, and community counselling settings.

Future research may also focus on developing culturally grounded assessment instruments and intervention programmes based on the SICM. Comparative studies across indigenous cultures could enhance understanding of shared and culture-specific helping practices, while digital adaptations may extend the model's application to contemporary mental health services. Such research will strengthen the evidence base for culturally responsive counselling and advance the integration of indigenous psychology into adolescent mental health research.

11. Conclusion

This review suggests that Sangam *Akam* literature preserves a rich tradition of indigenous psychological knowledge that extends beyond its literary significance. Through a thematic synthesis of *Kurunthogai*, *Nattrinai*, *Akananuru*, *Ainkurunuru*, and *Kalithogai*, the review identified six interrelated psychological constructs—emotion regulation, grief, hope, resilience, identity development, and social connectedness—and showed how these are fostered through culturally embedded helping relationships involving the *Thozhi*, *Annai*, *Sevili*, *Vayil*, family, and community. These findings informed the development of the **Sangam Indigenous Counselling Model (SICM)**, a culturally grounded framework that integrates indigenous Tamil perspectives with counselling psychology.

The SICM contributes to the growing field of indigenous psychology by demonstrating that classical Tamil literature offers valuable insights into adolescent emotional development and culturally responsive counselling. Rather than replacing established counselling theories, the model complements them by highlighting the enduring importance of relational, family, and community-based support systems. Although the framework requires empirical validation, it provides a foundation for future research, culturally responsive counselling practice, and the continued integration of indigenous knowledge into contemporary mental health discourse.

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