

PERFORMANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO REALIZE SUPERIOR HIGHER EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRAK

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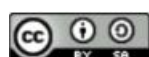
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This research aims to synthesize performance indicators of higher education institutions in order to realize superior higher education. The approach used is Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the PRISMA 2020 protocol, covering 44 scientific articles selected from leading international databases in the range of 2015–2025. The analysis was carried out thematically and narratively to identify, classify, and map performance indicators from various institutional perspectives. The results of the study revealed five main interrelated domains of performance indicators, namely: (1) academic professional identity, (2) institutional effectiveness, (3) institutional managerial structure, (4) organizational culture, and (5) behavioral ambidexterity. These five indicators form an integrative conceptual model that represents the complexity of internal relations in modern higher education. This model emphasizes that the performance of an institution cannot be judged solely from the quantity of academic output, but must consider the social, psychological, and structural dimensions of the academic actors within it. This study emphasizes the importance of a multidimensional and reflective approach in the institutional evaluation of higher education. This research also contributes to the development of a more contextual and participatory evaluation model, as well as provides a theoretical basis for more humanistic and sustainable institutional reform.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of higher education institution governance in the last two decades has been marked by a profound paradigm shift, from a system based on academic autonomy to a managerial model that prioritizes efficiency, productivity, and accountability. The shift was triggered by the pressures of globalization and the implementation of New Public Management (NPM) principles, which made universities more like bureaucratic and corporate entities than ever before (Woelert & Stensaker, 2025). In this context, higher education institutions are no longer positioned as ivory towers of science, but rather as producers of measurable outputs subject to the logic of performativity (Kallio et al., 2021). The organizational structure, leadership, evaluation system, and work orientation of lecturers and researchers have also undergone a profound reorientation that has an impact on professional identity



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and overall institutional effectiveness (Mula-Falcón et al., 2024). This creates new complexities in the effort to realize superior higher education, which is judged not only by the quantity of publications or global rankings, but also by the quality of an inclusive, reflective, and sustainable academic ecosystem (Cwik & Singh, 2022).

In this era of change, institutional policies are the main instrument in shaping the orientation and behavior of academic actors. However, a study by Wang et al., (2024) shows that an evaluation system that focuses too much on research productivity actually results in an imbalance between teaching and research missions. This structural tension can lower the intrinsic motivation of academics and create a disincentive to the quality of teaching. In line with the study of Skyhar and Farrell, (2022) when institutional policies operate as a performative control tool without considering pedagogical values, the professional identity of academics is delegitimized. It is in this context that it is important to evaluate how internal policies not only produce academic output, but also shape work culture, social relations, and the meaning of academic work (Kenny & Fluck, 2022). Therefore, the need for a synthesis and reflective performance evaluation model is becoming increasingly urgent.

In addition to policy aspects, organizational culture also plays a crucial role in mediating the impact of institutional transition on the quality of higher education institutions. Köse and Korkmaz, (2019) emphasized that the typology of institutional culture has a direct correlation with academic performance. A competitive culture has been proven to be able to encourage an increase in the quantity of publications, but on the other hand it can erode the value of collaboration and solidarity between the academic community. In contrast, the study of Al-Omoush et al., (2022) explains that collaborative culture strengthens the sustainability of social relations and collective innovation. This finding provides an important justification that institutional reform can be measured not only by quantitative indicators, but also by the extent to which organizational culture supports social cohesion and the well-being of its actors. In the Indonesian context, the issue of organizational culture is often ignored in the

evaluation of institutional performance, even though it is the foundation that determines the success of policy implementation (Suma & Siregar, 2022).

The managerial structure in the university environment has also undergone a significant evolution. The study of Deem et al., (2020) identified a shift in the role of department heads from academic leaders to administrative managers. This indicates that the university's management structure is moving towards a managerialism model, which prioritizes control and targets rather than the development of scientific substance (Poutanen et al., 2022). The consequence is the loss of deliberative and participatory space in academic decision-making. The study of Sylvester et al., (2024) further shows that decentralization and institutional autonomy that are not balanced by participatory mechanisms actually produce new forms of covert control that marginalize the voice of academics. Therefore, in assessing the performance of higher education institutions, an approach is needed that is able to assess the managerial structure not only in terms of efficiency, but also from the perspective of organizational democracy and reflective leadership (Z. Li et al., 2023).

The professional identity of academics is an important aspect that is often overlooked in the discourse of institutional performance. Hayes et al., (2021) emphasize the importance of internal media, such as institutional journals, as a tool for shaping the collective narrative and professional identity of lecturers. Through this reflective space, lecturers can build a sense of work, increase a sense of belonging to the institution, and strengthen social ties in the academic community. This is emphasized by the study of Smith I., (2021) which proposes the concept of third space, which is the space between academic and administrative professionals which is now filled by many flexible actors with a mediation function in the modern university system. In this context, strengthening professional identity is not just an individual issue, but part of an institutional strategy in creating an adaptive and inclusive academic culture (Hardie et al., 2023).

This research aims to: (1) identify and categorize university performance indicators from various theoretical perspectives and previous research contexts; (2) synthesize the relationships between these indicators in one integrative conceptual

framework; and (3) formulate practical recommendations for the development of a more equitable, participatory, and sustainability-oriented performance evaluation system for higher education institutions in Indonesia. Thus, the results of this research are expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the formulation of higher education policies that not only prioritize accountability, but also ensure the welfare, autonomy, and professional integrity of academics.

The formulation of the problem in the research is how to synthesize university performance indicators that are able to reflect institutional quality holistically, including institutional policies, organizational culture, managerial structure, and professional identity of academics, in order to realize superior higher education in Indonesia?, The question is answered through the Systematic Literature Review approach as a method to examine, critically assess, and construct performance models based on empirical evidence and theories that have developed internationally. The focus of this research lies not only on the descriptive mapping of indicators, but also on the preparation of an analytical framework that is able to bridge the gap between performative logic and substantive academic values in higher education.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This theoretical review aims to provide a strong conceptual basis related to university performance indicators in realizing superior universities. A college performance assessment must involve various aspects that include academic dimensions, organizational culture, managerial, and academic professional identity. According to Gebreiter, (2022), in the context of managerialism, universities are faced with demands to produce measurable outputs, such as scientific publications and international rankings. This requires universities to adopt a more systematic evaluation system and is based on comprehensive indicators. This evaluation includes not only quantitative aspects, but also qualitative aspects that pay attention to the social and psychological dimensions of the academic actors in it (Li et al., 2024). The concept of behavioral ambidexterity, which refers to the ability to balance exploration and exploitation in academic work, is essential for creating a productive yet sustainable work atmosphere . Performance evaluations must pay attention to the

balance between academic productivity and quality of work life (Zahro et al., 2025).

The identity of academic professionals is an important dimension that is often overlooked in college performance research. Hayes et al., (2021) suggest that this identity is formed through social experiences and an individual's reflection on his or her role in the institution. The existence of publications in internal journals managed by institutions can strengthen a sense of togetherness and pride in the academic community (Vilchis et al., 2024). Furthermore, Zou et al., (2024) explain that the development of professional identity is not only related to academic achievement, but also to the social relationships established in the work environment. Therefore, in a performance evaluation model, this aspect of identity should be seen as an indicator that describes the sustainability and quality of teaching and research in the long term. This emphasis on identity formation will help create a more inclusive and collaborative academic climate. This is in line with the view of Uwase, (2025) that an institutional culture that supports the development of academic identity will create an environment that supports sustainable innovation.

The managerial structure in higher education is no less important in influencing the performance of the institution. Poutanen et al., (2022) describe a significant change in the role of department leaders, who now function more as administrative managers than as academic leaders. These changes, while they can improve operational efficiency, often reduce academic autonomy and deliberative space in decision-making (Sylvester et al., 2024). Overly centralized and bureaucratic managerial structures can create tension between academic and administrative goals, ultimately affecting the quality of education and research. Li et al., (2024) propose the importance of more participatory and reflective governance in improving managerial dynamics in universities. The implementation of a more open and democratic leadership model will allow academics to participate more actively in the formulation of policies that affect their work. Therefore, the evaluation of university performance must consider not only structural effectiveness, but also involvement and democracy in decision-making (Rufon et al., 2025).

In the context of academic performance, behavioral ambidexterity developed by

Raiden et al., (2020) provides important insights into the dual-tasking dynamics faced by academics. This concept refers to the ability of individuals to balance exploratory activities (research and innovation) with exploitation (teaching and administrative tasks). Research shows that this ambidexterity can lead to increased productivity and efficiency if managed properly (Katou et al., 2021). However, without institutional support, ambidexterity can lead to burnout and an imbalance between personal and professional life. Therefore, it is important for universities to design policies that allow lecturers to carry out both roles in a balanced manner. This is also supported by the results of research from Mohammed, (2024) which underlines that institutional design that supports flexibility and autonomy will create a sustainable college. In this case, fair performance evaluations must take into account the psychosocial dimensions that affect academic well-being.

The development of a more comprehensive performance evaluation model is indispensable to achieve the goals of a superior college. According to Garcés-Giraldo, (2025), performance evaluations that are based solely on statistical indicators can create distortions in the understanding of institutional performance. Therefore, a more reflective and experience-based evaluation model would be more appropriate to assess the effectiveness of universities in producing quality graduates, as well as creating a healthy and inclusive academic atmosphere (Pandita & Kiran, 2023). In this case, the evaluation must pay attention to how internal policies, organizational culture, and managerial leadership affect academic and social performance in the Institution (Ludwikowska et al., 2024). It can be emphasized that it is very important for universities to design an evaluation system that takes into account all these aspects in order to create an academic environment that is conducive to the development of science and the welfare of academics.

METHODS

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize university performance indicators that contribute to the achievement of superior higher education. The design of this study refers to the PRISMA 2020 protocol which is adapted to ensure transparency and replicability of

the literature review process. The identification process began with a search of the Scopus database using structured keywords: academic organizational performance, academic institutional performance, academic institutional culture, and institutional academic development. From the results of the initial search, 115 documents were obtained, which were then selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that had been set, including: scientific papers published in the range of 2015–2025, originating from reputable journals (Tier Q1–Q3), and presenting abstracts that explicitly contain institutional performance variables.

The screening stage is carried out in two phases, namely initial screening and full-text assessment. In the first phase, a total of 52 documents were eliminated due to duplication (n=1), did not meet the publication year range (n=43), did not meet the journal quality criteria (n=5), and did not have filterable abstracts (n=3). This process left 63 articles for further selection, from which 46 reports were followed up for a full-text search. However, a total of 16 reports could not be obtained, so in the end 30 reports from the main database were analyzed in depth. In addition, 14 documents from other sources (such as citations in relevant primary articles) were also assessed for eligibility and included in the final synthesis, as seen in figure 1.

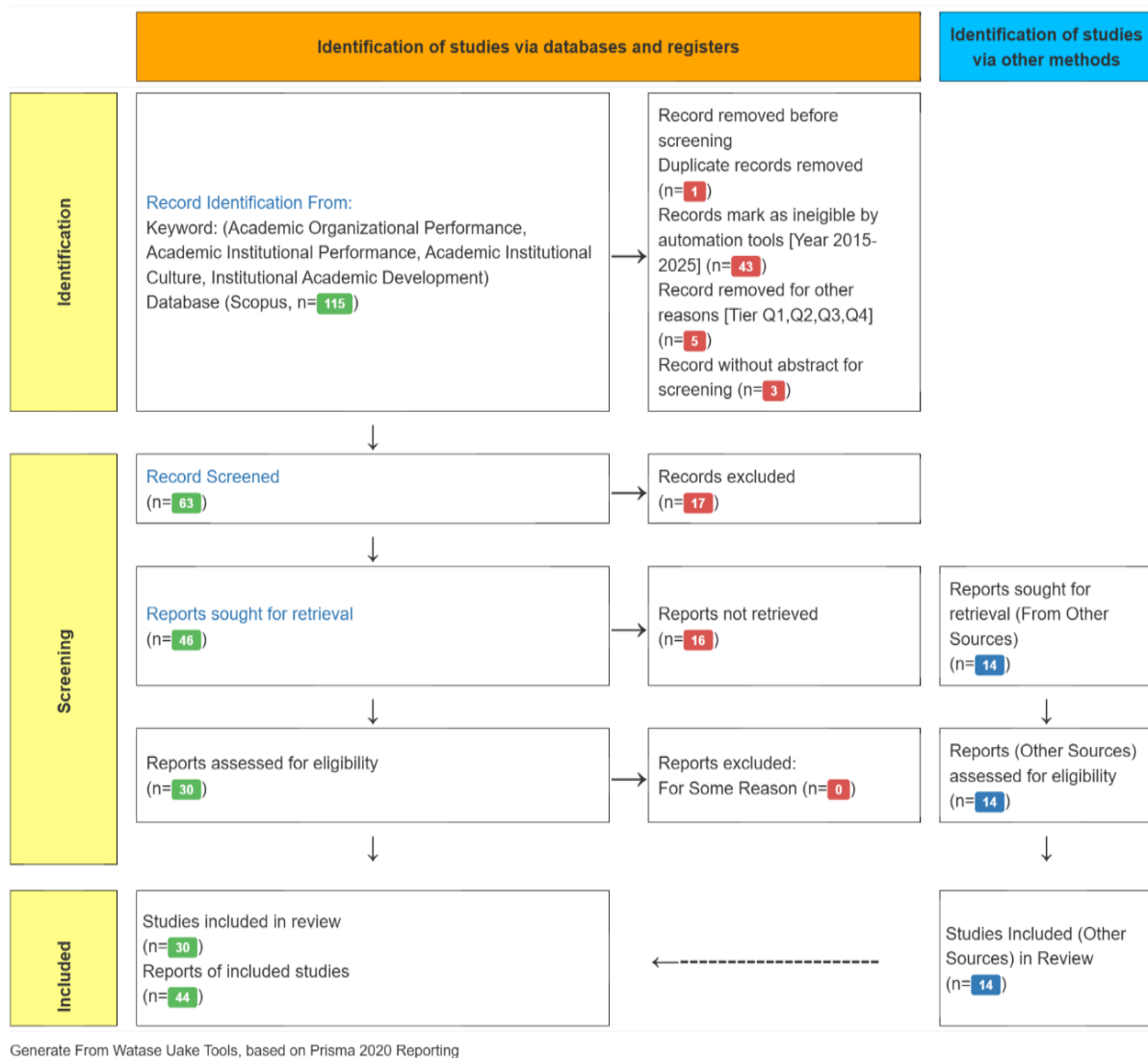


Figure 1. Flowchart PRISMA

The research instrument is in the form of a qualitative categorization protocol developed based on a theoretical framework that has been used in the previous literature, such as professional identity theory (Hayes et al., 2021; Smith I., 2021; Fitzgerald, 2020), organizational culture (Köse and Korkmaz, 2019; Wang et al., 2024; Kallio et al., 2021), institutional effectiveness (Suma & Siregar, 2022; Adipudi & Kim, 2024; Vlasov et al., 2020), and behavioral ambidexterity (Raiden et al., 2020; Kokubun et al., 2020; Lins et al., 2019). The data collection process includes systematic extraction of key information from the selected articles, namely: (1) the type of performance indicators used, (2) the conceptual approach used by the authors, and (3) the context of the higher education institution studied. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods and narrative synthesis, which allowed integration between

quantitative and qualitative findings. Each indicator is classified into clusters based on institutional domains, such as: institutional policies, organizational culture, management structure, and professional identity. This process generates a conceptual framework that describes the relationships between indicators systemically. Validation is carried out through internal triangulation between authors and cross-article consistency checks. With this systematic structure and procedure, this research can be replicated by other researchers who want to examine the performance of higher education institutions comprehensively and contextually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This study successfully identified and synthesized the main indicators of the performance of higher education institutions based on 44 articles that passed a strict selection from databases and additional sources. The identification process started from the initial 115 articles, which were then filtered into 63 articles for initial review, then narrowed down to 30 main articles and 14 additional articles. From the synthesis, it was found that the performance indicators of universities include five main domains: the professional identity of academics, institutional effectiveness, organizational culture, behavioral ambidexterity, and the managerial structure of the institution.

First, the domain of academic professional identity emerges as a crucial indicator in building institutional sustainability. A study by Hayes et al., (2021) shows that initiatives such as the development of institutional journals are able to strengthen collective narratives and increase a sense of belonging to institutions. In an interview conducted by Hayes et al., an academic said: "Having our own journal gave us a sense of pride and unity. It was more than publishing, it was about being seen and heard within our own community." These findings indicate that the indicators of professional identity are not only symbolic, but also operational in strengthening social cohesion and lecturers' work motivation.

Second, in the domain of institutional effectiveness, Smith I., (2021) identified eight main criteria that are the basis for evaluating institutional effectiveness,

including adaptive leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic communication. In an in-depth interview with faculty leaders in Germany, one respondent stated: "Effectiveness is no longer just about publication numbers; it's about how well we engage with our internal and external communities." This suggests that measures of institutional success must now consider non-material factors such as trust and participation.

Third, organizational culture is mapped as an important variable that affects collective performance. Köse and Korkmaz, (2019) found that competitive culture tends to encourage increased publication output, but collaborative culture actually strengthens innovation and long-term cooperation. In a survey of academic staff in Turkey, they noted a significant statement: "In a collaborative environment, we feel encouraged to share ideas without fear. That leads to better teaching and research integration." This means that performance evaluation must consider the cultural climate as an instrument of quality development.

Fourth, the findings on the aspect of behavioral ambidexterity show the importance of a balance between exploration (research and innovation) and exploitation (teaching and administrative tasks). In a study by Raiden et al., (2020), academics from the UK and Sweden demonstrated psychosocial dynamics when navigating the two poles of job demands. One participant stated: "I often feel torn between what I want to research and what I must teach. The institution doesn't help me reconcile those goals." This is proof that a flexible work structure and balancing policies are needed to support the productivity and welfare of lecturers.

Fifth, the dimensions of managerial structure and institutional governance are important concerns in examining the relationship between power and organizational functions. A study by Deem et al., (2020) found that department heads now function more as administrative managers than academic leaders. The results of the interview in the study describe: "I used to feel like an academic leader. Now I spend most of my time filling forms and explaining budget cuts." This suggests a shift in roles that impact reflective leadership and the loss of academic autonomy in decision-making.

As an additional visualization, the dominant theory distribution graph shows that professional identity theory and organizational theory emerge consistently as theoretical foundations, while qualitative methods (especially in-depth and narrative interviews) are the most common approaches. This indicates the tendency of higher education studies to elevate social and symbolic complexity rather than mere numerical results. The thematic table of the synthesis shows that indicators such as strengthening the academic community, balancing the role of lecturers, collaborative culture, and participatory leadership are themes that arise repeatedly from various geographical and institutional contexts. In general, this data shows the need to develop a university performance evaluation model based on indicator synthesis with a contextual, multilevel, and humanistic approach. Thus, this research forms a strong empirical basis to build an integrative conceptual framework in supporting the transformation of superior higher education.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study indicate that the evaluation of university performance cannot be simplified through a linear approach based on quantitative outputs such as publications or global rankings. Instead, meaningful and meaningful performance indicators must reflect the complexity of institutional realities, professional identities, organizational structures, and institutional culture. The synthesis of the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) study from 44 articles shows that the success of higher education institutions is determined by the interconnectedness between five main dimensions, namely: (1) academic professional identity, (2) institutional effectiveness, (3) behavioral ambidexterity, (4) organizational culture, and (5) managerial structure. These five dimensions interact dynamically and form each other, so they cannot be separated within the framework of institutional evaluation.

These findings expand on the discourse that has been built in the previous literature. For example, a study by Hayes et al., (2021) shows that institutional journals are not just a publication medium, but also a strategic tool in shaping the professional

identity of lecturers. Institutional initiatives like this are concrete examples of how institutional narratives can strengthen social cohesion and build the meaning of academic work. In the context of this research, professional identity is no longer considered as a mere personal attribute, but rather as an institutional product that can be shaped, strengthened, or even obscured by management structures and institutional policies.

The relationship between incentive policies and academic performance is also emphasized in the findings of this study, which affirms the criticism that has been raised by Kenny and Fluck, (2022) In their research in Slovenia, it shows a paradox between research productivity and teaching quality, where an evaluation system that focuses too much on quantitative output actually creates structural tensions that weaken the intrinsic motivation of lecturers. These results are particularly relevant to the synthesis of this research which underlines the importance of indicators that reflect the balance between the research mission and the teaching mission. In an interview quoted by Sacre et al., (2023), a lecturer even revealed that we are forced to publish or perish, and teaching is now seen as a burden rather than a mission. This statement emphasizes the urgency of reforming performance indicators to be more humanistic and contextual.

The dimension of behavioral ambidexterity raised by Raiden et al., (2020) makes an important contribution to the understanding of academic work dynamics. In this study, ambidexterity is interpreted as the capacity of individuals to manage the demands of exploration (research and innovation) and exploitation (teaching and administrative management). The study found that the success of an institution depends heavily on the extent to which lecturers are facilitated to carry out these two functions in a balanced manner. These findings are in line with the data in this SLR which shows that policies that facilitate the flexibility of lecturers' roles will have a positive impact on long-term job well-being and productivity. However, without adequate institutional support, ambidexterity risks leading to burnout and loss of professional orientation.

Organizational culture has also proven to be an important determinant in shaping the direction of institutional performance. Köse and Korkmaz, (2019) prove that a competitive culture, despite increasing the quantity of publications, risks sacrificing collaborative value and psychosocial balance within institutions. Conversely, a collaborative culture strengthens the sustainability of working relationships, collective innovation, and internal motivation. In this context, the findings of this study emphasize that organizational culture is not a background variable, but a structural variable that affects the direction and quality of policies, individual productivity, and institutional resilience. Therefore, performance indicators of higher education institutions must reflect the cultural dimension and not just individual indicators of academics.

The managerial structure and leadership style of universities that underwent transformation under managerial pressure were also crucial findings in this study. The study of Deem et al., (2020) noted a shift in the identity of department heads from academic leaders to bureaucratic administrators. This has a direct impact on the loss of deliberation and reflection in academic decision-making. This research supports these findings by showing that the current university management structure tends to reduce the space for academic participation and shift the institutional direction to top-down and instrumental. Performance evaluation models that only assess effectiveness based on administrative efficiency risk creating institutions that are bureaucratically strong but weak substantively and pedagogically.

The most significant contribution of this study is the effort to develop an integrative, reflective, and contextual conceptual model of higher education performance evaluation, which includes actors' (lecturer) experience-based performance indicators, managerial systems, organizational culture, and the sustainability of professional identity. Findings from Sylvester et al., (2024) reinforce this approach by showing that academics' perceptions of the work environment, clarity of roles, and institutional support are significant predictors of institutional effectiveness. Therefore, a quantitative approach alone is not enough; Institutional

evaluations must consider the affective, cognitive, and social dimensions of their internal actors.

The significance of the results of this research lies in its ability to reconstruct a perspective on the evaluation of the performance of higher education institutions, from initially technocratic to ecosystem and transdisciplinary. In the Indonesian academic environment, where evaluation practices often refer only to national standards and document-based accreditation, this synthesis model opens up new space for developing experiential, narrative, and contextual dynamics-based evaluations. Thus, the contribution of this research is not only academic, but also practical in shaping a more equitable and quality-oriented institutional evaluation policy.

In addition, theoretical contributions can also be seen from the integration of professional identity theory frameworks (Hayes et al., 2021; Smith I., 2021), organizational culture theory (Köse and Korkmaz, 2019), behavioral ambidexterity (Raiden et al., 2020), and organizational effectiveness theory (Smith I., 2021). This integration allows for a multilevel approach, namely analysis at the individual, structural, and symbolic levels that has rarely been done in higher education performance studies. This research also provides the basis for developing a performance evaluation instrument that not only assesses results, but also the processes, experiences, and meanings formed within the institution.

However, this research also has a number of limitations. First, although the data analyzed came from credible international literature, the local context of Indonesia has not been widely used as an object of primary study. Therefore, the generalization of findings requires a process of cultural and structural adaptation in accordance with the characteristics of higher education institutions in Indonesia. Second, although the SLR approach provides a broad and systematic synthesis, the study does not involve advanced quantitative analysis such as meta-analyses that can provide statistical strength to the relationships between indicators. Third, the limitations of secondary sources cause some data to be descriptive and rely on the narrative of the primary author, rather than direct empirical data. In the future, further research can be

conducted to test the validity and reliability of the indicators that have been synthesized in this conceptual model through in-depth surveys and interviews at various higher education institutions in Indonesia. In addition, exploration of innovative institutional practices that have not been widely documented can be used as an enrichment for evaluation models. Thus, the process of institutional reform in higher education can take place in a more inclusive, reflective, and evidence-based manner.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that the performance of superior universities cannot be assessed solely from quantitative indicators such as the number of publications or international rankings. Instead, it must be understood as a result of the systemic interaction between academic professional identity, institutional effectiveness, managerial structure, organizational culture, and behavioral ambidexterity. Through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to 44 selected scientific articles, this study succeeded in synthesizing the main indicators that have been scattered in the literature, and compiling them into an integrative conceptual model that reflects the complexity of the institutional reality of contemporary higher education. The main contribution of this research to the scientific field lies in its efforts to reconstruct the paradigm of university performance evaluation from a technocratic approach to an ecosystem and reflective approach. By integrating various theories such as professional identity, organizational culture, the theory of institutional effectiveness, and behavioral ambidexterity, this research enriches the discourse of higher education management, which has tended to be fragmented. This research also provides a strong conceptual basis for the development of a more contextual and humanistic institutional quality assurance and evaluation system, especially in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia.

However, the study has certain limitations. First, the selection of articles was limited to those available in English and may not fully reflect regional perspectives that could be relevant in different linguistic or cultural contexts. Second, the SLR approach, while comprehensive, does not incorporate primary data or real-world case

studies, which may result in an overemphasis on theoretical models and less focus on practical implementation challenges. For future development, this study recommends that the synthesized indicators be further tested through quantitative approaches and in-depth case studies in national higher education institutions. Follow-up research should also explore the experiences of lecturers and faculty leaders more directly through interviews and field observations, so that the affective and cognitive dimensions of performance indicators can be studied more fully. Additionally, the exploration of innovative institutional practices such as institutional internal media, teaching philosophy, and pedagogic reflection forums should be expanded as part of the strategy to build superior and sustainable higher education. Thus, higher education reform efforts will be more directed, evidence-based, and rooted in the real experiences of academic actors.

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