# THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

## "COUNSELING RESONANCES ON MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES AND AWARENESS"

# MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING: EXPLORING LOCAL WISDOM IN COUNSELING APPROACHES

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## ABSTRACT

*Sometimes even we often encounter differences in intercultural values, beliefs, and norms can be an obstacle in understanding and integrating local wisdom into counseling practices, especially in multicultural counseling. So this research aims to find out and understand and expand knowledge about cultural diversity and local wisdom through multicultural counseling seen from symbolic interpretation, traditional practices, community support systems, existing challenges, and the competencies that counselors must have in dealing with them. Based on the problems mentioned, this research will use the literature study method by reviewing journals that are in accordance with the objectives of this research. In this study, the results of literacy studies were obtained that support to expand the counselor's local cultural knowledge. Symbolic interpretation to understand each cultural value and symbol in the client; traditional counseling as an effort of the counselor to implement counseling by paying attention to aspects of cultural values passed down by the ancestors; social support systems provide client appreciation and comfort through social relationships formed; self-awareness and counselor reflection are also needed in multicultural counseling. There are challenges in implementing multicultural counseling, including language; values, stereotypes, social class, race or ethnicity, and gender.*

Keywords: Multicultural counseling, local wisdom, counselor competencies, challenges

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication has an important role in life. Such as social life, culture, politics, and education. Communication also plays an important role during the counseling process. Communication between the counselor and the client must go well, so that the counseling process runs successfully. Therefore, it is important to find ways on how communication can run effectively and efficiently. So that the message can be received and interpreted accordingly. One of the barriers to communication is language differences. The use of the national language will be very useful for counselors and clients who can speak Indonesian fluently. However, if there is a language difference between the counselor and the client, it can cause misinterpretation in communication.

Other differences can also increase the likelihood of misunderstandings between counselors and clients. Indonesia has a diversity of ethnicities and cultures, so clients may come from different ethnicities and cultures than the counselor. If the counselor does not have good communication skills, the counseling process may be hampered or even lead to serious misunderstandings.

Multicultural counseling plays an important role in preventing cultural misunderstandings between counselors and clients. Therefore, it is important for counselors to understand the concept of multicultural counseling, so that counselors can better understand the diversity of clients who come from various cultures. In addition, this can also increase the competence of counselors in facing challenges in multicultural counseling.

In English, "budaya" is called culture, which is rooted in the Latin word "colere", which means to cultivate or work, it can also be interpreted as managing land or farming activities, in full, it means everything that comes from and is processed by the human mind in order to manage the land or place to live in. In Indonesia itself, according to Suranto AW (2010: 23) the word culture has its roots in the Sanskrit language, namely "Buddhayah" which means all things that are interrelated with human intellect. In the KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia/Big Indonesian Dictionary) itself, it can be interpreted as thoughts, customs, everything that has developed widely, everything that has become a habit that is difficult to change. According to Michael Zwell (2000), culture is a pattern of basic assumptions learned by a group that has the same goals, beliefs and values using internal and external adaptive problem solving.

Multicultural knowledge refers to an understanding of each individual's cultural heritage, ethnic identity, awareness of injustice, racism, stereotypes, and recognition of differences in communication styles, and also characterizes traditional or conventional counseling. Will Kymlicka also elaborated, multiculturalism includes the recognition, appreciation, and fair treatment of ethnic minority groups, both in terms of universal individual rights and collective community rights, allowing them to express their cultural identity. So from the above it can be concluded that multiculturalism includes a holistic understanding of each individual's cultural heritage, including his or her ethnic identity, awareness of injustice, racism, and stereotypes, and recognition of differences in communication styles. It also includes the recognition, respect and fair treatment of ethnic minority groups, both in terms of individual rights and

the collective rights of the community, thus enabling them to express their cultural identity freely and without discrimination.

Counseling is an interactive process between a counselor and a client, which aims to help the client understand themselves and overcome their problems. This process involves the counselor's skills of listening, providing support, making suggestions, and exploring the feelings and experiences of the client.

Multicultural counseling is a relationship between a counselor and a client with the process of helping individuals who have different cultural backgrounds. Multicultural counseling has become popular in the last 20 years. Multicultural counseling has various terms, such as cross-cultural counseling, intercultural counseling, and multiculturalism counseling. Multicultural counseling is viewed as the 4th capacity after psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches (Pedersen, 1991).

Locke (Nuzliah in Muhammad Yusuf, 2016) states multicultural counseling as a field of practice in counseling that emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of individuals, as well as the norms brought by counselors and clients from different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. This results in a diversity of origin backgrounds that are reflected in the counseling context.

In its current application, multicultural counseling can be a holistic and inclusive approach to counseling. Counselors can enrich therapeutic interactions by understanding the values, norms, and traditions that make up an individual's identity. In this modern era, multicultural counseling is one of the counseling approaches that can understand and help individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the context of multicultural counseling, understanding cultural diversity is essential to provide services to clients from various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this research will summarize how counselors can explore cultural knowledge including local wisdom through multicultural counseling.

**METHOD**

This research uses a literature study research method. The literature study research method is a research approach that focuses on analyzing and synthesizing existing literature on a particular topic. The process in this method does not collect primary data through observation or experimentation, but includes searching, analyzing, and displaying information from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other related documents related to the research topic being studied.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

From the research that researchers have made, it can be obtained related results that are appropriate to support counselor competence in multicultural counseling. The data collection process begins with searching for sources of theory and literature review online and offline. The analysis of this research is carried out non-interactively and takes place periodically and continuously to search and find the results of literature review from various sources. This data analysis technique adapts to the stages or research material, so that the data is processed to analyze the findings in literature sources related to the research

material. Then the data is systematically arranged according to the type of information needed and then read and studied.

*Symbolic Interpretation*

Indonesia is a country that has several islands from Sabang to Merauke. Some of the islands are Java island, Sumatra island, Kalimantan island, Sulawesi island, and Papua island. From some of these islands, there is a group of people who have their own culture and characteristics. If you look further, Indonesia is considered a large country because each island has a variety of social, ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and other aspects. This makes Indonesia a multicultural society.

With the characteristics of some regions, this makes the Indonesian people have unique local wisdom in each region. Gobyah (2009) defines local wisdom as a fact that has become a tradition or that has been attached to the region. Meanwhile, Jim (2002) explains that local wisdom is a value that is formed, organized, and maintained by local communities and becomes a guide to life for the people in the region. From the above opinions, it can be understood that local wisdom is the values that have become a tradition for the people in the region which are related to attitudes, behavior, morals, religious values, and so on.

Gunawan & Rante (2011), state that multicultural societies are heterogeneous that it is important for each individual to tolerate each other and accept that a peaceful life requires harmonious coexistence with various different social and political entities. The characteristic of a multicultural society is that it has different cultural diversity, such as differences in race, ethnicity, culture, religion, including physical differences.

Cross-cultural counseling can be viewed in terms of communication, cultural differences, differences in habits of individuals and groups. For example in the East Java region which has 2 tribes and cultures that color the lives of its people. The tribes and cultures in question are Javanese and Madurese, and between the two tribes there are osing tribes, samin tribes, and tengger tribes. Of the two tribes and cultures there is a uniqueness that lies in the style and form of communication.

Communication is very important in our lives. Keith Davis explains "communication is the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another person". In the book Andrew E. Sikula defines communication as follows "communication is the process of transmitting information, meaning, and understanding from one person, place, or thing to another person, place, or thing".

Communication is the core in providing multicultural counseling services. If the counselor has good communication skills, it will have an effect on the counseling process. The communication plays a role in several ways:

1. Opening and starting the counseling session properly.
2. Collect, summarize, and help find solutions to the psychological problems faced by the client.
3. Demonstrate positive responses to create a sense of safety, comfort and acceptance for the client.
4. Help develop the client's quality of mental health.

5.  Support the development of more effective behaviors in interacting with the environment for the client.

6.  Builds the client's confidence to face his/her life problems independently.

7.  Communication is the main language in the world of counseling guidance, which consists of verbal and nonverbal communication.

*Traditional Practice*

The commonality of cultural diversity is one of the reasons for the multicultural counseling approach. According to Laungani (2005) Multiculturalism is seen as an umbrella term that encompasses various shades of meanings, attitudes, beliefs, norms and values, and has different interpretations and applications. Over time, counseling theories that have developed today have paid little attention to cultural aspects and other traditional values. The word tradition comes from the Latin "traditio", which is defined as a habit that has a hereditary nature or an inherited habit (Suharjanto, 2011). A literature review conducted by Chiboola (2020) found that the concept of traditional counseling is derived from traditional knowledge systems and sociocultural values, customs, and practices, and provides a collective approach as an alternative to problem identification, problem solving, and management has been proven that this approach can work or management system. Ancestors and elders usually pass on traditional knowledge (systems) that they consider important to the next generation. What is passed on does not only include policies and experiences, competencies and skills are also aspects that are also passed on by the ancestors and elders.

Traditional counseling encompasses a broad perspective that aims to achieve enhanced learning in the transformation and social integration of each individual's particular cultural values, customs, and practices. Traditional counseling is embedded in cultural nuances: it takes place in local environments, is provided by local communities, reflects the society in which counseling is provided, and is part of the human experience since antiquity. This analysis of traditional counseling also has a global interpretation and application. Most societies today practice traditional counseling, adapting to their socioculture as well as the nature of the problems they are experiencing. It is in this context of understanding that the time is right to introduce and strengthen indigenous approaches to traditional counseling that respond to social life and expectations within the local community. Traditional counseling uses various forms of traditional counseling to help people who are facing difficult situations and want to make transitional commitments, such as starting puberty, or people who feel sad because of the loss of a loved one, have physical illness, psychosomatic dysfunction. Traditional forms of counseling refer to the various methods or approaches used by traditional counselors, during the course of interaction (counseling) by the counselor in a culturally accepted environment, using appropriate interventions then designed to meet their needs, expectations and aspirations. Some common traditional counseling approaches include: marriage, pastoral, obedience, initiation, family, community, and grief counseling (Chiboola, 2020).

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*Social or Community Support System*

In multicultural counseling, knowing the local wisdom of the client's culture can also be important and useful for the counseling process. Local wisdom also includes the social support system or community support that a person has. Local wisdom refers to forms of wisdom based on good values that are accepted, applied, and maintained for generations by a group of individuals in a certain environment or region where they live. Then Sarafino (2014) explains that social support refers to feelings of comfort, attention, self-esteem, or assistance received by a person from other individuals or groups. This social support comes from a close relationship with someone family members, friends, neighbors, and local organizations that play a role in providing support and resources to someone in the community who is followed. And this explanation is also in line with the definition explained by Sarason which reveals that social support is obtained through close social relationships such as family, peers, and the community environment, or through individual experiences that make individuals feel cared for, valued, and loved by others. So from the explanation above, by understanding the support network that exists in the counselee's culture, the counselor can develop or design more effective and appropriate interventions for the client that are in accordance with the values and norms of the client's culture.

*Challenges*

Brown, Duane & Srebalus said that there are at least 6 (six) things that can be challenges in multicultural counseling.

1. Language. Differences in language are one of the challenges in the implementation of multicultural counseling. Considering that language is the most basic communication tool used, both counselors and clients. Moreover, the use of language in the country of Indonesia, Indonesia itself has many tribes and regional languages that could very well allow this challenge to be encountered. And although the Indonesian nation itself uses Indonesian, not everyone can speak or understand Indonesian well.

2. Values. Usually unaware counselors sometimes, even frequently impose their cultural values on the client.

3. Stereotypes. Stereotypes are generalizations made by one group towards another. Stereotyping is not a negative thing at first, it is an opinion that is taken for granted in society. However, stereotypes are increasingly difficult to change because the opinion is repeated. If the counselor uses stereotypes, it will not be able to freely respond to the client.

4. Social Class. Social class differences sometimes create barriers or challenges in the counseling process. If the counselor is from the middle class, then the counselor will most likely not know that delaying gratification is a dubious value for people who cannot afford it. In other words, there will be a misunderstanding or misconception in the counselor's understanding of the client.

5. Race or ethnicity. Mistakes often occur in the counseling process, sometimes clients who come from racial minorities are often ignored and even sent to hospitalization (to a mental hospital), so this sometimes makes minority clients feel less or even worthless. With this reality, many

therapeutic or counseling theories prioritize client involvement in the process.

6. Sex or gender. In Indonesia itself, which has many ethnicities, races, regional languages, gender issues also often appear to be a discussion and problem. Because of this gender issue, it is sometimes a challenge in the counseling process.

*Self-Awareness and Reflection*

In cross-cultural or multicultural counseling, self-awareness and reflection are important aspects. Self-awareness and reflection can help counselors to understand the cultural diversity of their clients. Self-awareness refers to understanding the counselor's identity, beliefs, values and prejudices. Multicultural counselors need a high level of self-awareness about their own culture and that of their clients. This is done because it is necessary to avoid ethnocentrism. Reflection is a process that involves self-introspection and critical thinking about interactions and experiences in the counseling context. Reflection can also help identify cultural barriers and develop strategies to overcome them. In cross-cultural or multicultural counseling, self-awareness and reflection go hand in hand. By strengthening self-awareness, counselors can better understand the experiences and perspectives of clients, while reflection can help counselors integrate and align their understanding of cultural diversity in counseling practice, creating an environment that is conducive, inclusive, safe, comfortable and respectful.

*Competence*

To support the implementation of cross-cultural counseling, counselors with special qualifications are required. According to Pedersen (as cited by Mcrae & Johnson), cross-cultural counselors should have proficiency in awareness, knowledge, and skills. In the aspect of awareness in cross-cultural counseling, it is important for the counselor to fully understand the fundamental differences between himself and the counselee he will be helping. The counselor should also be aware that conflicts can also arise when counseling is provided to clients with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the counselor needs to understand the cultural values, especially those of the counselee to avoid obstacles in the counseling process. Awareness of the counselor's and the client's values is an important basis for effective counseling.

On the knowledge aspect, counselors should continue to develop their understanding of culture. This can include the socio-political and cultural aspects of various ethnic groups. The broader the counselor's knowledge of various ethnic backgrounds, the more client issues can be addressed. Counselors' knowledge of cultural values is not only gained from reading books or research, but also through their own research. Thus, counselors can more easily gain insight into a particular culture.

On the skills aspect, cross-cultural counselors need to continue to develop skills in interacting with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. By practicing interacting with various communities, counselors will acquire skills that suit their needs. Counselors can also seek training experiences to enrich their understanding and increase the effectiveness of their work with culturally diverse populations.

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**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the multicultural counseling approach in Indonesia revolves around the appreciation of cultural diversity and traditional values passed down from generation to generation. While considering local cultural values, everyday practices, and societal support in helping individuals overcome challenges, counselors face obstacles such as language differences, norm-value disparities, stereotypes, social barriers, and gender issues. To address these challenges, counselors need a high level of self-awareness regarding their cultural identity, broad knowledge of cultural diversity within society, and strong interpersonal skills with various ethnic groups. Consequently, they can deliver counseling services that are more effective and relevant to the needs of Indonesia's multicultural society, while also strengthening tolerance and harmony within the community.

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