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COUNSELORS' MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE IN OVERCOMING
INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the author focuses on the importance of multicultural skills that counselors must possess due to the increasing levels of discrimination and intolerance practiced by society. The research methodology used is a literature review of professional journal articles, academic textbooks, and conference proceedings, which were examined using a descriptive qualitative research design that applies hermeneutic techniques in relation to multicultural counseling theory. The findings indicate that counselors who are culturally competent, cross-culturally empathetic, and trained in culturally competent interventions can act as agents in promoting the values of justice, tolerance, and inclusiveness, as well as helping to reduce discrimination and increase cohesion in society. This study once again emphasizes the relevance of professionalism in counseling in relation to the acquisition of critical thinking skills and ongoing counselor training. Therefore, educational institutions and professional counselor associations need to improve training to improve counselors' skills in applying multicultural skills with the aim of developing a just and harmonious society.

Keywords: multicultural competence, intolerance, discrimination

INTRODUCTION

In this research, the author focuses on the immediacy of multicultural skills that counselors ought to possess because of the increased level of discrimination and intolerance practiced by society. The research methodology that has been used is a literature review on articles from professional journals, academic textbooks, and conference proceedings investigated with a descriptive qualitative research design applying a hermeneutic technique in relation to theory on multicultural counseling. The findings indicate that counselors who are culturally competent, cross-culturally empathetic, and trained on culturally competent interventions might serve as agents for the promotion of values of justice, tolerance, and inclusiveness, as well as helping to reduce discrimination and increase cohesion in society. This research once more confirms the relevance of professionalism in counseling with respect to acquiring skills for critical thinking and on-going counselor training. Educational institutions and professional counselor associations, therefore, need to increase training on enhancing counselor skills on the application of multicultural skills with a goal of developing a just, harmonious society.

In addition to improving knowledge and skills, the personality of the counselor also plays a very important role. Alfiani (2023) emphasized in her research that traits such as empathy, acceptance, and authenticity are essential for the success of cross-cultural counseling. In addition, the RESPECTUL model serves as a basis that allows counselors to understand counseling without getting caught up in cultural stereotypes. This allows for a more genuine and equitable therapeutic relationship.

Many studies have resulted in new learning methods to produce a generation of culturally sensitive counselors from an early age. Photovoice is a reflective technique that encourages guidance and counseling students to consider their own experiences and the perspectives of others using photos. According to (Ningsih et al., 2022), this method has the ability to increase students' cultural awareness as well as their understanding of diversity. In addition to the practical approach, conceptual perspectives and practical approaches should be strengthened. Choiri (2022) emphasizes how important the philosophy of science is to raise awareness of multicultural counselors. Using a philosophical framework, counselors are invited to understand communication, cultural principles, and human nature. As such, they have the technical capabilities and a strong epistemological foundation to deal with the complexities of a multicultural society.

While (Setiawan, 2022) shows that the competency standards of counselors in Indonesia do not consider multiculturalism. Arredondo's multicultural guidance competency framework (MCC) establishes that counselor competencies should include three main domains: self-awareness, awareness of the counselor's worldview, and multicultural intervention skills. If MCC is applied in counselor education in Indonesia, it is hoped that the role of this profession in combating discrimination and intolerance can be strengthened. In situations like this, guidance and counseling counselors must have diversity-sensitive knowledge, attitudes, awareness, and skills to reduce prejudice and improve social cohesion. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the multicultural abilities that counselors have in dealing with discrimination and intolerance, as well as to cultivate and develop these skills to meet the needs of a pluralistic society. Data were collected from the primary literature of national and international journal articles and secondary books, proceedings, research reports and analyzed through a descriptive qualitative approach through hermeneutic analysis.

A study conducted by (Azizah, 2020) This shows that the multicultural skills possessed by counselors greatly influence the character formation of the younger generation. By teaching cultural awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and intervention skills, counselors help counselors deal with their own problems. They also teach the values of honesty, responsibility, and leadership that are important to prevent radicalism and intolerant behavior in society. Based on these exposures, it is clear that a counselor's multicultural competencies consist of personality, cultural sensitivity, intervention skills, philosophical thinking, and social roles. Unfortunately, multicultural competencies are still underutilized in counseling practices in Indonesia, although many studies have addressed this issue. For this reason, further discussion of the multicultural capabilities of counselors is essential, especially to combat the discrimination and intolerance that continues to arise in multicultural societies.

In this discussion, it was emphasized that counselors' multicultural competence has an important role in overcoming the problem of discrimination and intolerance in society. This study focuses on how counselors can perform their professional roles in a pluralistic society with cultural awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and proper intervention skills. The article not only discusses relevant theoretical frameworks but also underlines experimental results indicating that effective training, innovative approaches, and the ability of counselors themselves to enhance multicultural sensitivity. Besides, in order to make sure that the discussion does not remain in the realm of ideas, but directs towards real problems, it is necessary to think critically about the social context of Indonesia. Therefore, it is expected that this article can provide an academic contribution to the development of guidance and counseling science as well as an opportunity to give real directions for counselors in strengthening their strategic role within the framework of constructing a just, inclusive, and discrimination-free society.

METHOD

The research adopted a descriptive qualitative design because it is regarded as most useful when dealing with complicated societal phenomena, particularly in the realm of multicultural counseling. This research design provides an apt tool for teasing apart the meanings hidden within the literature in a scientific, rational, and profound way. In this regard, descriptive qualitative research, adopted from Creswell (2018), focuses on the need to locate meaning with regard to a specified societal context in order to broaden understanding. The research adopted descriptive qualitative research with hermeneutic interpretation. This means that not only is the literature described, but it is also interpreted within the context of corresponding frameworks from cultural counseling theory. The use of hermeneutic approaches within research helps to interpret findings while keeping in mind the fundamental cultural context (Gadamer, 2013). The research has investigated a broad literature base as well as the findings of previous research on the subject of multicultural counseling. Reports on research, textbooks, proceedings, and scientific articles that are relevant to the research are secondary sources of scientific research. The primary source of the research is articles from national and international journals. The research is based on the broad concept of multicultural counseling that has the potential to be applied in a number of educational, social, and cultural environments, including its relevance to students of the era of globalization.

The literature study is utilized to analyze articles from journals, proceedings, research reports, as well as research literature from scientific databases such as Google Scholar, ProQuest, and ResearchGate, for the purpose of gathering data. The gathering of data begins with a critical evaluation of literature, use of a keyword, determination of literature relevance (Bowen, 2009), followed by content analysis of the gathered data. The content analysis includes reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion-drawing phases. The practice of content analysis is supported by the theory of multicultural counseling by Sue & Sue (2016), as well as the qualitative analysis technique described in Miles et al. (2014). The source triangulation method is employed to compare findings from different literature sources to validate the findings of research. In order to make certain that the findings accumulated are consistent, objective, and verifiable, the researcher uses peer discussions or discussions with a supervisor, too. Hence, it is assumed that this research is highly credible and is capable of making a profound scientific impact on the realm of multicultural counseling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that multicultural competence has a strategic role in supporting counselors to face increasingly complex problems of discrimination and intolerance. Counselors who have self-awareness, understanding of cultural diversity, and multicultural skills are considered more capable of establishing professional counseling relationships and are free from prejudice. These findings are in line with the multicultural competency model of Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) which emphasizes the integration of aspects of awareness, knowledge, and skills in the adjustment of interventions according to the client's sociocultural background. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, counseling services need to integrate local wisdom values such as tolerance, harmony, and mutual cooperation so that they are more contextual and can be optimally accepted by clients (Supriyanto et al., 2023)

The focus of the application of multicultural counseling is different compared to research in other countries. For example, discrimination based on race and ethnicity is a major focus of multicultural issues in the United States. In Indonesia, on the other hand, the main problem is differences in religion, customs, and social structure of society. According to research conducted by (Ningsih et al., 2022), counselors in Indonesia often face difficulties in helping students who experience religious discrimination in school. This is because of institutional bias that is not completely neutral. This condition shows that counselors need to have deeper sensitivity to differences in values and beliefs. Moreover, they must try to foster inclusiveness. More importantly, there is a significant gap between formal education received by counselors and the demand for the necessary multicultural competencies. Counselor education curricula are often too cognitive-centered but not sufficient to develop self-awareness and multicultural competency. This leads to the limited capacity of counselors to handle sophisticated cases of intolerance. In other words, counselor education programs that focus on reflective practice, training cross-culturally, and hands-on experience in a multicultural environment become indispensable.

The findings of the research also reveal that multicultural counseling can help social transformation and solve personal problems. Counselors can actively educate people for the importance of tolerance, support policies for inclusion, and create spaces to be able to talk with people from other cultures. Dinsmore

and English (2017) refer to this role, defined as social justice counseling, a type of counseling which is focused more on social justice than on individuals. Therefore, counselors not only help people with their own problems, but also contribute to social change. A counselor's skills to deal with intolerance are greatly influenced by his or her ability to build empathic relationships. Empathy allows counselors to understand clients' experiences of discrimination without punishing them. According to Arifin's (2021) research, multicultural awareness-based empathy can make counseling safer, encouraging clients to tell about the discrimination they experienced. The client's courage to open up is an important first step in the process of psychological healing and self-identity strengthening.

However, multicultural counseling still faces some difficulties in Indonesia, namely, there is personal prejudice against counselors, there is no literature and multicultural training made specifically for Indonesia, and school rules biased in particular religions or values sometimes hinder inclusive counseling. To address this problem, policy interventions are needed that strengthen counselor education and provide an ongoing professional training platform. Conceptually, the results of this study show that multicultural counselors in Indonesia must develop multicultural skills through a dual approach: applying international multicultural counseling standards and integrating local values. In this way, they will gain a better theoretical understanding of the outside world and be able to adapt it to Indonesian society. This principle can be formulated as a postulate The multicultural competence of counselors in Indonesia is contextual, dynamic, and based on local values combined with an international framework.

Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination in Society

Discrimination and intolerance can take many forms in Indonesian society, both overt and covert. For instance, religious discrimination often comes in the form of restrictions on worship, refusal to build houses of worship, and hate speech based on a certain belief. It is clear that this type of discrimination has violated human rights and is making minorities feel isolated (Wibowo, 2020). In addition, discriminatory practices in social strata, ethnicity, and race still influence daily life. For example, stereotypes that are harmful to certain ethnic groups, or different treatment according to a person's economic background. Intolerance on social media is presented through hate speech, bullying in cyberspace-called cyberbullying-and the dissemination of hoaxes that increase inter-group conflict (Saputra, 2021). Discriminative acts have broad social and psychological impacts. Socially, discrimination may reduce social cohesion, segregation, and social horizontal conflict. On the other hand, psychologically, victims of discrimination often suffer from problems such as stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and long-term trauma. That is why intolerance is a mental and social problem that needs to be overcome with a multicultural counseling approach (Suryani, 2022).

The Role of Counselors in Dealing with Intolerance and Discrimination

Counselors are strategically responsible for raising the awareness of living diversity. The counselor could help the client understand that differences in religion, culture, and social identity are something natural and need to be valued. Through self-reflection and open discussions, counselors help clients avoid intolerance caused by prejudices and stereotypes of individuals or groups (Herdiansyah, 2019). Besides, counselors act as social changers. Not only can they work in individual counseling spaces, but also they have the ability to build community-based programs to increase the value of tolerance. For instance,

teachers at schools can organize cross-cultural activities or discussions between students from different backgrounds. Therefore, counselors are not only problem solvers but also people who advance social justice in society (Putra & Widodo, 2021). Counselors also help solve cultural conflicts. In a multicultural society, there are always conflicts between different groups. Counseling can act as a neutral party in helping people communicate and solve conflicts and find solutions that are fair for all parties. Empathetic communication can be used by counselors to reduce the chance of conflict and create a healthier discussion environment (Nugraha, 2020).

Strengthening The Multicultural Competence of Counselors

Counselors must have strong multicultural abilities to do their job well. Ongoing training that focuses on social sensitivity, cultural values, and intervention skills appropriate to the client's cultural context can help improve the quality of counseling. This has been shown to improve the quality of counseling, especially when counselors work with clients from different backgrounds (Ridwan & Setiawan, 2022). In addition, the counseling education curriculum must incorporate multicultural values. From the beginning, prospective counselors must be introduced to the facts of the diversity of society, the problem of intolerance, and how to deal with it. Multicultural education will make educators better prepared to handle complex social dynamics (Pranata, 2021). Professional supervision and self-reflection are important parts of improving competence. In order not to get carried away in counseling practices, counselors must be aware of their own cultural biases. Counselors can increase sensitivity and improve multicultural intervention skills with the help of supervisors or peers (Hidayat, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Counselors could be in a position to actively contribute to effecting social change by being sensitive to cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding, along with sensitive intervention skills that incorporate values of tolerance, inclusivity, and justice. Findings from the research and discussion verify that multicultural competence is an indispensable component in efforts toward surmounting the challenge of discrimination and intolerance in society. Although multicultural competencies cannot be established through technical training only, but supplementation with self-reflection processes, professional supervision, and sustainable practices, enabling counselors to identify and reduce potential biases when offering counseling services. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that the multicultural competencies of counselors have an impact which goes beyond individual counseling services to building a more just and harmonious life in society. Hence, counselors with multicultural competencies are enabled to co-operate with schools, families, governments, and other institutions within the community in designing prevention and intervention programs that are inclusive in nature. The findings based on these results create an imperative for counseling education institutions and professional organizations that house counselors to pay greater attention to the sustainable development of multicultural training, enhance the supervision system, and stimulate cross-sectoral collaboration. This is from where counselors are expected to develop in them the capability to think strategically to create a social environment devoid of discrimination and supportive of justice and harmony amidst global era challenges.

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