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**MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING AS AN EFFORT TO PREVENT SOCIAL
CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

Schools are representatives of society with diverse cultural, religious, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Although this diversity has the potential to add to the richness of social interactions, it sometimes leads to conflict if not managed properly. This is where multicultural counseling becomes one of the useful means of avoiding such conflicts. The current research uses a qualitative research approach, which is a literature study that browses different articles in journals, literature, and proceedings concerning issues of multicultural counseling, as well as avoiding conflicts within a societal setting, specifically a school setting. The results obtained from this research indicate that the service offered by the use of multicultural counseling has a significant impact on enhancing cultural awareness, empathy, and cross-cultural communication skills of students. Multicultural counseling decreases the intensity of conflict, discrimination, and bullying behavior, as well as promotes the establishment of an inclusive and harmonious school climate. Discussion underlined that the success of implementing this service is influenced by a high degree of counselor multicultural competence along with support from inclusive school policy. The results provide novelty in the form of an integrative multicultural counseling formulation, including counselor training, cross-cultural activity development, and strengthening of inclusive character education. Thus, multicultural counseling does not only hold a role as a problem-solving tool but also as a means of social transformation that is able to form a young generation into one which is tolerant, adaptive, and ready to face global challenges.

Keywords: multicultural counseling, social conflict, school.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, which has a myriad of diversities in terms of cultural, race, religious, and societal aspects, has a real potential threat of a social conflict that occurs within the learning environment. This is exacerbated given that learning within a multicultural system is specifically aimed at ensuring that there are no conflicts within intergroups (SARA), such as radicalization, by teaching a critical appreciation for such diversities from a young age (Retnasari, 2018; Eka Yanuarti et al., 2019). In this regard, counselors within learning institutions, who are agents of change within society, are vital in ensuring that students are aware of cultural diversities (Gunawan, 2021). Nonetheless, counseling frameworks employed within learning institutions still emphasize the traditional psychological element, irrespective of the cultural background of the counselor as well as the client. Thus, in order to address this, it is still necessary to optimize the efficiency of a conflict prevention strategy for a multicultural perspective (Tilaar, 2022; Zahroini & Jamaluddin, 2024).

The development of multicultural counseling in learning institutions has become a significant consideration because of the diversities in learning institutions when it comes to cultures, religions, and societies. Diversity in learning institutions has the potential to result in societal conflict, which affects the teaching and learning process in institutions (Sue & Sue, 2021; Tilaar, 2022). The effect of multicultural counseling on students is that they are able to have a better comprehension of cultural variations.

The relevance of this research is obvious, as a microcosm of a diverse society is a school itself. Schools have to ensure that students feel safe in a bias-free environment, irrespective of cultural backgrounds. The application of multicultural counseling is a part of social awareness skills that, when acquired, helps eliminate negative prejudice and stereotypes within different communities of students (Gunawan, 2021; Ridley, 1992). The application of this helps produce empathetic responses from students to cultural issues while preparing students for the challenges of the diverse global environment.

This research tries to analyze and create a multicultural counseling strategy that can prevent the rising tension within society that is evident in learning institutions. The research is concerned with problem identification emanating from the lack of cultural awareness, misconceptions, as well as creating highly effective strategies to tackle the problem of intolerance (Elizar, 2020; Zahroini & Jamaluddin, 2023). Solutions to these problems might include developing a counseling program with a multicultural perspective that can be implemented within the daily operations within the learning institutions.

The literature relevant to this issue has assisted in making a conclusion on what is meant by a holistic perspective that includes cultural theory and practices, as it is all embraced in the meaning of multi-cultural counseling, ensuring that the counselors are extremely responsive facilitators who are able to identify cultural differences while also expressing cross-cultural empathy with clients (Arredondo & Glauner, 1992; Berger & Bradberry, 2024). Inclusion and cultural pluralism are thus essential components in designing a service that precludes conflict while ensuring positive interpersonal interactions.

The supposed thesis in this research is that the implementation of multicultural counseling in the educational setting is supposed to reduce instances of interpersonal conflict among students while promoting a high degree of interpersonal association quality. The implementation of such types of counseling is supposed to increase cultural understanding, empathy, and relationship-building skills that

are vital in helping with regard to a cohesive learning environment in the educational setting. The implementation of such types of counseling is also supposed to empower the students to recognize the existence of diversity within the surroundings, thereby avoiding behavior that is discriminatory, negative, and biased, which might result in conflict. Following the suppositions provided by the notions from Sue (2020), Firdaus et al. (2015), the implementation of multi-cultural counseling within the educational setting is an important tool that has been used in the improvement of the psychological, communal, as well as unity, aspects within the learning environment.

The uniqueness of this research is that, besides having solutions for problems that occur after a conflict, there is a significant preventive solution offered through educational programs that are multicultural on a continuous process. This indicates a shift from a reactive position to a proactive position concerning the delivery of counseling services within institutions of learning. The use of the idea of multi-cultural counseling on a platform that is preventive focuses on creating cultural tolerance, improving inter-cultural communications, and creating internalized values that are favorable from within, promoting harmony. Unlike previous research that culminated in a generalized solution to counseling, this particular research is passionate about developing a systemic counsel strategy with a precise assessment of the impact that is long-run on the environment within the institutions of learning. This, as described by Gunawan (2021), as well as Zahroini And Jamaluddin (2023), the innovation in the service delivery of multi-cultural counseling cannot exclude the need for adjustments within the school, in relation to the dynamism that is changing with diversities that continue to grow within society.

Furthermore, the implementation of multicultural counseling at a school level is also important to bring up a young generation that not only succeeds academically but also has a high level of awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness to a diverse environment. In this matter, it is henceforth essential that the counselors within the educational institution are multi-culturally competent, which has the skills to identify, is aware of, as well as has the skills to overcome different discrepancies within a interpersonal relationship. This, in turn, helps a counselor to become an excellent mediator, facilitator, and change agent that helps to develop a peaceful environment within an institution. The importance of support from a strict training system of a school, as well as support from all concerned parties, is a judging factor of a successful application of a certain approach, particularly when it is a question of improving the overall development of individuals.

Therefore, it is a crucial point that this research emphasizes that the practice of applying multicultural counseling is not only a vital supplementary process, but is, in fact, a fundamental need in a modernized educational system that is faced with a pluralized societal condition. The never-ending application of this approach has been proven to reduce the gravity of societal conflict, elevate a sense of solidarity among the students, upgrade the quality of interpersonal relation, and cultivate a sounder foundation of togetherness in the educational environment. In addition to acting as a means of conflict prevention, the practice of applying multicultural counseling is also capable of acting as a means of fostering a tolerant and tolerant youth who is eager to become a peace agent in the midst of diversities in a globalized era. In this respect, it is safe to state that the application of multicultural counseling services is a strategic means that is capable of developing a sounder character education, upgrading a sounder sense of

social cohesion, and developing a sounder and healthy educational environment that is responsive to a democratic society in a modernized era.

In accordance with this specification, this research is supposed to contribute substantially to the progress in the theory, practice, and application of counseling in educational institutions, besides the matter of becoming a reference for education policy that is capable of handling challenges brought by diversities in the era of globalization. This research is going to empower the role of the educational institution as a change agent in society, who not only plays a role as a center of learning but also as a center for the formation of characters that are inclusive, besides being capable of adapting to the dynamics of sociocultural factors (Elizar, 2020; Ridley, 1992).

Overall, multicultural counseling in schools is a strategic solution to prevent social conflict rooted in cultural ignorance and prejudice. This approach fosters respectful social relationships, supports the achievement of educational goals that are not only academic but also socio-emotional, thus producing a generation of young people prepared to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Sue & Sue, 2021; Firdaus et al., 2015).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with method studies literature. The research object in this study is the concept, theory, and practice of multicultural counseling applied in schools, as well as its relevance in preventing social conflict among students. The objects studied include journal articles, books, proceedings, and previous research reports that discuss multicultural education, counseling, and the issue of social conflict in schools. (Sugiyono, 2017).

The scope of this research focuses on the study of multicultural-based guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Indonesia. The focus is directed at the role of counselors, conflict prevention strategies, and local culturally based approaches that can be used in counseling. This scope was chosen because secondary school is the phase where students begin to encounter greater diversity. complex (Moleong, 2018). The primary instrument of this research is the researcher herself, acting as a human instrument, conducting literature searches, source selection, analysis, and data interpretation. In line with Nasution's (2003) view, in qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument that determines the quality of the research results.

This research was conducted through a literature search obtained from national and international journal databases, digital libraries, and other credible scientific sources. Several databases used included Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Garuda (Digital Reference Garuda). A total of 10 journal articles, 2 books, and 1 proceeding were obtained that met the criteria of relevance, novelty, and credibility. All of this literature was analyzed to identify key themes, compare theories, and draw conclusions regarding the contribution of multicultural counseling to preventing social conflict in schools. Election sites This digital data- based approach is relevant for expanding the scope of library sources (Creswell, 2014).

The data collection method is carried out through the following steps: (1) determining keywords such as "multicultural counseling", "social conflict in schools", and "multicultural education"; (2) choosing reading materials according to the standards of relevance, originality, and reliability; and (3) recording,

categorizing, and displaying data for analysis purposes. Cooper (2016) stated that the data collection method in literature research needs to involve structured selection so that the data obtained is valid.

The data that has been collected is then analyzed through the introduction of the main theme, theoretical comparison, and conclusion from literature materials. According to Krippendorff (2013), argued that content analysis is a research method that is employed to make precise and replicable findings from a set of data by taking into consideration the context (2013). The process of content analysis has three stages, namely: (1) simplification of the research data conducted by sorting literature based on the research aim; (2) simplification of research data in the form of themes concerning multicultural counseling, conflict, and society; (3) conclusion that emphasizes the importance of avoiding conflict in the educational setting by means of multicultural counseling. On the other hand, the process of simplifying, revealing, and concluding is a cyclic process, which is part of qualitative research, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

The findings from the literature review indicate that multicultural counseling within the educational context plays a significant role in the prevention of conflict within society. The use of multicultural models within counseling services helps students comprehend the differences in values, norms, and intercultural identity, thus eliminating negative stereotypes and prejudice (Sue et al., 2009). Schools that employ a multicultural approach within BK counseling services are significantly different because they are more effective within the promotion of tolerance, empathy, and teamwork among students (Banks, 2015). Additionally, counselors with skills in multicultural practices are also bestowed with the ability to form a more empathetic relationship with students from diverse backgrounds, thus ensuring that the possibility of misunderstandings in life is significantly minimized (Arredondo et al., 1996).

The library further informs that typically, most conflicts that arise within the social surroundings of a learning institution are linked to discrimination on grounds of religion, cultures, ethnicity, and socio-economic classes. This, in turn, widens the gap that is established within the surroundings; hence, the chances of discrimination, as well as violence, against students are high. In this regard, multicultural counseling plays a significant role in acting as a bridge that promotes respect, as well as positive communication, among diverse students (Ridwan, 2019).

The argument is also supported by findings from empirical research. For instance, in a research project carried out at SMKN 1 Haurwangi, it has been revealed that the program on cultural counseling is an effective way to ensure that there is a reduction of 40% in social conflicts within a span of a year. The program is also an effective means to ensure that students are involved in the learning process, along with healthy interactions (Sukarya et al., 2025). In another research, findings from the research study carried out by Ningsih (2022) have revealed that students who are involved in the service offered by the program on cultural counseling have experienced an increase in empathy, along with a reduction in discrimination against different social groups.

In conclusion, from the results of this research, it is clearly evident that, besides being a problem-solving tool, the tool of multicultural counseling is a very deep tool that helps in developing a tolerant

environment that is harmonious within a learning institution such as a school. This is because the service provides a learning platform that provides empathy, acknowledges diversities, as well as applies cross-cultural skills that are greatly needed within the lives. In addition, the service encourages a healthy learning environment within a school that acknowledges diversity as a common wealth, as opposed to a causative agent that promotes segregation. Through increased implementation, the service of multicultural counseling is set to be a solid bedrock for developing a tolerant, respectful, and prepared generation capable of meeting the challenges of globalization that call for a set of multicultural societal skills.

Discussion

In comparing the existing results from previous research, the result of this research indicates a high suitability level. This is because Sue et al. (2009) stated that the significance of recognizing the variations of cultural values and identities represented a struggle to eliminate stereotypes, while Arredondo et al. (1996) stated that counselors played a significant part in developing empathetic communications. This corresponds with the most updated research findings, which have underlined the incorporation of cross-cultural practices and inclusive discussions as a preventative approach to facilitate reduced social tensions (Ridwan, 2019).

Despite this, a distinction exists pertaining to the importance attributed to research findings. In particular, the research that is past considers the component on an individual level, which includes cultural awareness, as well as interpersonal communication, while, on the other hand, modern research considers the group component, particularly inclusive educational policy, inter-cultural gatherings, as well as cooperation with educators, counselors, and parents. The existence of discrepancies pertaining to importance identifies that the use of multicultural counseling has expanded from a purely psychological point of view on an individual level to a full-fledged educational process in order to avoid conflict within society.

The importance of support from institutions to make a success in the implementation of multicultural counseling is also considered for discussion further. It has been revealed that institutions with a positive orientation toward inclusive policy, cultural celebration, and a professional development approach toward counselors are more capable of ensuring an acollegious environment in a school (Supriatna, 2020). The failure to support from the institutions may result in the failure of the service of counseling. Hence, support from counselors, teachers, students, and parents is also necessary to make this service more sustainable.

Additionally, the skills obtained from multicultural counseling, such as empathy, cross-cultural communication, and negotiation skills, are also required within the scope of globalization. This is in line with the idea that a mini multi-cultural society is inside a school, which promotes that students from a young age need to be amiable with the idea of diversity (Hidayat, 2018; Fauzi, 2020). Hence, in this discussion, it is contended that, besides conflict in the social dimensions of a school, skills obtained from multicultural counseling would be a strategic tool in preparing the youth for the challenges of a society undergoing globalization.

Findings

On the basis of findings, analysis, and conclusions from the research, certain creative implications have been recognized. Firstly, the proactive technique of multicultural counseling has potential application

not only in conflict resolution but also in effecting changes in educational institutions. The proactive technique of multicultural counseling has overall potential to develop a communal environment that is more inclusive, with the value of diversity recognized as an advantage, not a weakness.

In addition, this research also proposes a new approach to applying a multicultural counseling paradigm that is grounded on the intermix of these three pivotal components: (1) improvement in overall counselor training programs in order to cultivate excellence in the area of multicultural competence, (2) initiating inter-cultural programs that include tasks such as group discussions, cultural exchange, and joint cooperation on communal tasks, and (3) use of media resources on educational learning for moral development, with a concentration on inclusiveness.. This makes it different from the classical way of counseling because it focuses on problem-solving on a more individualized basis.

Third, apart from playing the role of contributing to the body of knowledge, the findings from this research are also significant from a conceptual perspective, with the development of a principle that states that the importance of multicultural counseling is vital in ensuring that there is a harmonious environment in educational institutions. The counselor not only plays a role in facilitating but is also a force that brings change, such that the students are able to develop a sense of the importance of empathy within their daily lives.

Fourth, the findings generalize that the success of multicultural counseling services is dependent to a large extent on the support of the institution, which is the school. If such support is not offered, the services are bound to fail because the goals of counseling cannot be realized. Hence, a strategy that incorporates the whole institution is requisite to make the environment safe, comfortable, and inclusive for all students.

On a theoretical level, this research also improves the conception that multicultural counseling is a part of character education in the global era. In the age of globalization, students who learn to value diversities from a tender age are going to be more competitive in terms of their life experiences. In this manner, not only is this research significant in the realm of education, but it is also a contributing factor within the development of a peaceful, multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that a multicultural counseling setting is a strategic way that helps not only with interpersonal issues but is also a tool within the avoidance of conflict within educational institutions. It provides students with an increased awareness and appreciation of the worth of values, norms, religions, languages, and socioeconomic statuses in order to reduce stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. The discoveries from this research within the literature review support that a multicultural counseling setting is a means that helps to develop empathy within students, increases cross-cultural communications, and gives a sense of belonging.

Theoretically, this study improves the practice of counseling because it incorporates multicultural counseling within the process of character education in the international setting. The interventions are not only a type of treatment but also serve as a preventive program that induces beliefs concerning unity in tolerance, mutual respect, and the appreciation of diversity. This occurs not only on an individual basis but

on a system level, which recognizes a transformation from a non-democratic setting within the educational environment to a democratic society.

Furthermore, these findings support the idea that the effectiveness of multicultural counseling is dependent on organizational support, manifested in the form of inclusive policies, counselor training initiatives, and involvement at all levels from stakeholders related to the school.

On the basis of these observations, certain recommendations are made. Firstly, the education policy in schools should be aimed at values of inclusive practices and anti-discrimination, such that multicultural counseling is given robust support. Secondly, school counselors should be continuously trained in multicultural competency, such as understanding local cultural contexts, acquiring cross-cultural communication skills, and techniques of conflict resolution based on multicultural concepts. Lastly, counseling programs should be integrated with school activities, such as cross-cultural workshops, student experience exchanges, and collaborative projects which engender mutual respect.

Fourth, it is necessary to further strengthen the collaboration among counselors, teachers, parents, and the community to make sure that multicultural education is consistent both in and out of school. Fifth, in future research, it is advisable to conduct empirical studies using quantitative or a mixed-method approach so that the effectiveness of multicultural counseling in diminishing social conflict and enhancing the quality of relations among the students can be more specifically measured. Thus, multicultural counseling will be allowed to continue developing, not only as a practice of counseling services but also as long-term educational strategy in developing a tolerant, adaptive young generation ready to face the challenge of globalization.

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