

The Professional Counselors Competence in Mastering Multicultural Counseling Through Universal Expertise: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Multicultural competence is a crucial element in professional counseling practice, especially in the era of globalization which is characterized by increasingly diverse client cultural backgrounds. These competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable counselors to work effectively with different cultural groups. The purpose of this study is to explore the definition, implementation, and challenges of multicultural competencies of professional counselors based on the existing literature. This study uses a literature study method or literature review, by reviewing various articles, journals, and books that are relevant to the topic of multicultural competence in counseling. Multicultural competence is defined as the ability to understand and apply knowledge about different cultures in counseling practice. Key skills that counselors must possess include intercultural communication, managing power dynamics and privileges, and a deep understanding of the client's cultural context. The main challenges in implementing these competencies are overcoming personal biases, lack of indepth knowledge of a particular culture, effective communication, and limited resources and support. Counselor education and training, through a comprehensive curriculum and ongoing training, plays a crucial role in developing multicultural competencies. Multicultural competence is an essential component in professional counseling that allows counselors to work effectively with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Continuous education, training, and self-reflection are essential in supporting the development of these competencies. By confronting and addressing existing challenges, counselors can provide more inclusive, empathetic, and effective services, meeting the needs of clients in the most meaningful and relevant way.

Keywords: Multicultural Competence, Professional Counseling, Intercultural Communication

Abstrak: Kompetensi multikultural merupakan elemen krusial dalam praktik konseling profesional, terutama di era globalisasi yang ditandai dengan semakin beragamnya latar belakang budaya klien. Kompetensi ini mencakup pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan sikap yang memungkinkan konselor bekerja secara efektif dengan kelompok budaya yang berbeda. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi definisi, implementasi, dan tantangan kompetensi multikultural konselor profesional berdasarkan literatur yang ada. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi literatur atau tinjauan pustaka, dengan cara mengkaji berbagai artikel, jurnal, dan buku yang relevan dengan topik kompetensi multikultural dalam konseling. Kompetensi multikultural diartikan sebagai kemampuan memahami dan menerapkan pengetahuan tentang budaya yang berbeda dalam praktik konseling. Keterampilan utama yang harus dimiliki konselor mencakup komunikasi antar budaya, mengelola dinamika kekuasaan dan hak istimewa, dan pemahaman mendalam tentang konteks budaya klien. Tantangan utama dalam penerapan kompetensi ini adalah mengatasi bias pribadi, kurangnya pengetahuan mendalam tentang budaya tertentu, komunikasi yang efektif, serta terbatasnya sumber daya dan dukungan.

Pendidikan dan pelatihan konselor, melalui kurikulum yang komprehensif dan pelatihan berkelanjutan, memainkan peran penting dalam mengembangkan kompetensi multikultural. Kompetensi multikultural merupakan komponen penting dalam konseling profesional yang memungkinkan konselor bekerja secara efektif dengan klien dari berbagai latar belakang budaya. Pendidikan, pelatihan, dan refleksi diri yang berkelanjutan sangat penting dalam mendukung pengembangan kompetensi tersebut. Dengan menghadapi dan mengatasi tantangan yang ada, konselor dapat memberikan layanan yang lebih inklusif, empati, dan efektif, memenuhi kebutuhan klien dengan cara yang paling bermakna dan relevan.

Kata kunci: Kompetensi Multikultural, Konseling Profesional, Komunikasi Antarbudaya

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly global and diverse world, multicultural competence is becoming increasingly important in various aspects of life, including in the field of counseling. Rapid demographic changes and increased human mobility are causing more and more individuals from different cultural backgrounds to meet and interact with each other. This requires counselors to have a deep understanding of different cultures and the ability to work effectively with clients from different cultural backgrounds.

Multicultural counseling is a counseling approach that takes into account the client's cultural background as an integral part of the counseling process. Because culture itself is something that can be used as a reference to know where the individual comes from (Sulistyarini & Jauhar, 2014). The multicultural competence of a counselor includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to work effectively in diverse cultural contexts. Counselors must be able to identify and understand cultural factors that can influence the client's perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors. Because in the counseling process, the counselor provides learning situations to the client, so that the client can understand himself at this time and maybe in the future (Tursina, et.al. 2024). They must also have the ability to develop counseling strategies that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the client's needs.

Previous studies have shown that counselors who have good multicultural competence can provide more effective and meaningful services to clients from various cultural backgrounds (Marjo, 2022; Gani, 2019). Counselors must have competence as service agents at the level of primary and secondary education as well as early childhood education which includes pedagogic, personality, professional and social competencies (Yusri, F., 2013). These competencies are not only important in the context of individuals but also in the context of groups and communities. Gani (2019) pointed out the importance of multicultural counseling in handling student conflicts, while Harahap & Maryolo (2018) discussed how multicultural counseling can be used to prevent bullying of lesbians in society and schools.

Counselors in the Society 5.0 era are faced with new challenges in providing effective counseling services, such as the rapid adoption of technology, changes in the way humans communicate and interact, and increasing levels of stress and emotional imbalance due to increasing demands in life (Yandri, et.al, 2023). Counselor education and training are also an important focus in improving multicultural competence. Zulvi (2021) emphasized the importance of 21st century counselor education who must be able to prepare counselors with adequate multicultural competencies to face the challenges of globalization. This will increase the professionalism of a counselor. Professionalism is an understanding that teaches that every work must be done by a professional person (Rakhmawati, 2013).

As a professional, you must have a strong desire to help others and have a positive nature in looking at counseling that has a lot of diversity (Prakoso, 2008). Nurrahmi also highlighted the importance of competency-based training to improve the professional competence of guidance and counseling teachers, which showed that the development of multicultural competencies should be an integral part of the education and training curriculum of counselors.

In daily practice, counselors often face challenges in understanding and appreciating the cultural differences of their clients. Yaniasti (2020) showed that the implementation of culture in effective counseling communication can improve counseling relationships and help clients feel more understood and supported. In addition, innovative approaches such as KIPAS (Intensive,

Progressive, Adaptive, Structured Counseling) discussed by Gudnanto (2020) provide insight into how the counselor's experience can be applied in practice to improve the effectiveness of multicultural counseling.

Based on this background, this literature review aims to identify and analyze the competence of professional counselors in mastering multicultural counseling with universal expertise because multicultural counseling is very important for reviewing culturally sensitive counseling sessions. Counselors need to understand and respect the traditional values of certain ethnic groups (Schoen, 2005). Through a deeper understanding of this topic, it is hoped that it can make a significant contribution to the development of more inclusive and effective counseling practices in diverse cultural contexts.

METHOD

This study uses the method of literature study or literature review, which is a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and interpret scientific works that are relevant to the topic of competence of professional counselors in mastering multicultural counseling with universal expertise.

The global criteria used in this study are: 1) Articles have been published in national and international journals and proceedings; 2) Articles in English and Indonesian; 3) Articles are qualitative and quantitative research in the form of original research; 4) Articles in the form of reviews, comments, opinions, and editorials.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Multicultural Competencies of Professional Counselors are Defined and Implemented in Counseling Practice

The multicultural competence of a professional counselor is defined as an ability that includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable counselors to work effectively with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This definition includes an in-depth understanding of the cultural factors that influence the client's perceptions, behaviors, and life experiences. This competency also involves the counselor's ability to adapt their counseling approach to suit the client's specific cultural needs (Haolah, 2018). The multicultural competence of counselors includes an understanding of different cultural values, norms, and beliefs, as well as the ability to apply this knowledge in counseling interactions (Marjo, 2022).

In counseling practice, multicultural competence is implemented through several concrete steps. First, counselors must make proactive efforts to understand the cultural background of their clients because in counseling practice, it cannot be separated from the culture of each individual (Suwarni, S, 2016). This can involve researching a particular culture, as well as developing sensitivity to issues that may be relevant to clients from that culture. Gani (2019) showed that counselors who are competent in multicultural aspects are able to recognize and respond to power dynamics and privileges that may affect counseling interactions.

Counselors must develop culturally sensitive communication skills. This includes the ability to listen with empathy, use inclusive language, and avoid assumptions or stereotypes that could damage the counseling relationship. Yaniasti (2020) emphasized the importance of implementing culture in counseling communication to increase the effectiveness of counseling relationships and help clients feel understood and supported.

Counselors must have an open and receptive attitude towards cultural differences. Because cultural understanding has a great influence on the way of looking at life in understanding the meaning of being human (Nuzliah, 2016). This attitude includes a commitment to continuously learning and developing an understanding of different cultures, as well as a willingness to acknowledge and overcome any personal biases or prejudices that may be present. Zulvi (2021) emphasized the importance of counselor education and training that includes multicultural aspects, so that counselors can be better prepared to face the challenges of globalization and cultural diversity.

In daily practice, counselors can use a variety of techniques and strategies that are tailored to the client's cultural context. Gudnanto (2020) proposes a counseling approach that focuses on the reflective experience of counselors in higher education institutions as an example of the practical application of multicultural competencies. This approach shows how counselors can adapt their counseling techniques to be more effective in multicultural contexts.

As a consequence, the multicultural competence of professional counselors is defined and implemented through a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that together enable counselors to work effectively and empathetically with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Through a deep understanding and thoughtful application of these competencies, counselors can provide more inclusive and meaningful services to their clients.

Counselors Skills and Attitudes Have To Be Competent In Multicultural Counseling

In order to be competent in multicultural counseling, counselors must develop a set of skills and attitudes that allow them to work effectively with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Key skills that counselors must possess include intercultural communication skills, the ability to manage power dynamics and privileges, and the ability to assess and understand the client's cultural context in depth. Intercultural communication skills include the ability to listen empathetically, use inclusive language, and avoid using assumptions or stereotypes that can damage counseling relationships (Yaniasti, 2020). Counselors need to develop sensitivity to nonverbal ways of communication that may differ across different cultures, as well as the ability to tailor their communication styles to suit the needs of the client.

Skills in managing power dynamics and privileges are essential in multicultural counseling. Counselors must be able to recognize how factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social status can affect their interactions with clients. Gani (2019) showed that counselors who are competent in this aspect are able to identify and address possible power imbalances, as well as work to empower clients in the counseling process. This includes the ability to create a safe and inclusive environment where clients feel valued and heard.

A deep understanding of the client's cultural context is also an important skill that counselors must have. Counselors need to be knowledgeable about different cultural values, norms, and beliefs, as well as how these factors can affect the client's perception and life experience. Zulvi (2021) emphasizes the importance of education and training that includes multicultural aspects to help counselors develop this understanding. With a deep knowledge of the client's culture, counselors can develop strategies and interventions that are more effective and tailored to the client's cultural needs.

In addition to skills, a positive and receptive attitude towards cultural differences is also very important. Counselors must have an attitude of openness and a willingness to continue learning about different cultures. Marjo (2022) emphasizes that this attitude includes a willingness to acknowledge and overcome any personal biases or prejudices that may be had, as well as a commitment to participate in training and continuing education to improve multicultural competence. Empathy, humility, and appreciation for cultural diversity are also essential in building strong and effective counseling relationships.

Gudnanto (2020) in his research on the KIPAS counseling approach shows that the self-reflection and personal experience of counselors in working with clients from various cultural backgrounds can help in developing the necessary multicultural skills and attitudes. Through continuous reflection and learning, counselors can increase their self-awareness of cultural biases and strengthen their ability to work with clients more effectively.

The comprehensive, to be competent in multicultural counseling, counselors must develop intercultural communication skills, the ability to manage power dynamics and privileges, and a deep understanding of the client's cultural context. An attitude of openness, a willingness to continue learning, empathy, and an appreciation for cultural diversity are also key components that a professional counselor must have. Through the development of these skills and attitudes, counselors can provide more inclusive, effective, and meaningful services for clients from various cultural backgrounds (Widada, 2019).

Counselor Education and Training Supports Multicultural Competency Development

Counsellor education and training currently plays an important role in supporting the development of multicultural competencies. One of the main ways to achieve this is through a curriculum that covers various aspects of multicultural counseling, including key theories, the latest research, and best practices in the field. Zulvi (2021) emphasizes the importance of 21st century counselor education which explicitly includes multicultural topics in its training programs. This includes courses that focus on understanding cultural diversity, power dynamics, as well as strategies for working effectively with clients from different cultural backgrounds.

Practical training is also a critical component in the development of counselors' multicultural competencies. A good training program usually involves simulation, role-playing, and hands-on experience with diverse populations (Clarke, 2013). This allows counselors to develop and hone intercultural communication skills and obtain constructive feedback from instructors and peers. Nurrahmi in her research highlights the importance of competency-based training designed to improve the practical skills of counselors in dealing with multicultural issues. This approach ensures that counselors not only understand theoretical concepts but are also able to apply them in real-life situations.

Advanced training and continuing education are essential in supporting the development of multicultural competencies. Counselors should participate in workshops, seminars, and conferences that focus on multicultural issues to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in the field. Marjo (2022) showed that counselors who are committed to continuing education are more likely to develop receptive and adaptive attitudes to changes in the cultural context they encounter in their practice. Continuing education also helps counselors to identify and address personal biases that may affect their interactions with clients (Gladding, 2009).

In addition to the formal aspects of education and training, self-reflection and supervision are also important elements in the development of multicultural competencies. Gudnanto (2020) proposes a counseling approach, which involves reflecting on the counselor's personal experience in working with clients from various cultural backgrounds. Through this reflection process, counselors can identify areas that need improvement and develop strategies to improve their multicultural competence. Supervision that focuses on multicultural issues also provides additional support and new perspectives that benefit counsellors.

In consequence, counselor education and training currently supports the development of multicultural competencies through a comprehensive curriculum, practical training, continuing education, self-reflection, and supervision. With this holistic approach, counselors can develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to work effectively in diverse cultural contexts. This not only improves the quality of the services they provide but also ensures that they can meet the needs of their clients in a more inclusive and empathetic manner.

Challenges for Counselors in Applying Multicultural Competencies in Daily Practice

Counselors face a variety of major challenges in applying multicultural competencies in daily practice. One of the phenomena that occurred was that there were guidance and counseling students from abroad who were faced with cultural differences, a new environment that was very different from the environment and culture. This can be seen from daily interactions, gathering more with friends from one region, being more open to chatting with friends from other regions compared to friends from other regions, and choosing to sit close to friends from one region (Rahmi, et.al, 2024). Facing this phenomenon, of course, as a counselor, you should be able to apply your multicultural competencies in counseling practice.

There are also other biggest challenges such as overcoming personal biases and stereotypes that may affect their perception and interaction with clients and there are also deep differences in understanding based on perspectives between counselors and counselors. There can be mistakes in interpreting for counselors or mistakes in conveying problems for counselors. In order to avoid such problems, a counselor is recommended to have sensitivity to the culture owned by the counselor, by neutralizing the cultural perspective owned by the counselor (Yusman, et.al, 2021). Marjo (2022) points out that while counselors may have theoretical knowledge about cultural diversity, the implicit biases embedded in them can be a barrier to delivering truly inclusive and equitable services. These biases can manifest in many forms, such as improper assumptions about the client's cultural background or unfair judgments of the client's behavior based on personal prejudices.

The lack of in-depth knowledge of a particular culture is also a significant challenge. Counselors may feel that they do not adequately understand the different values, norms, and beliefs of their clients, which can hinder their ability to provide appropriate and effective interventions. Gani (2019) emphasizes the importance of counselors to continue to develop their understanding of different cultures and how those cultural factors affect client experiences and behaviors. This lack of knowledge can make counselors feel less confident and even lead to errors in handling cases.

Effective communication is also a major challenge in multicultural counseling. Yaniasti (2020) highlights that differences in communication styles, emotional expressions, and non-verbal meanings can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings between counselors and clients. Counselors need to have the skills to tailor their communication style to fit the client's cultural preferences, which often requires extensive practice and experience. Miscommunication can damage the counseling relationship and reduce the effectiveness of the intervention carried out.

An alternative challenge is managing the power dynamics and privileges that exist in the counseling relationship. Counselors should be aware of how factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social status can affect their interactions with clients. Harahap and Maryolo (2018) highlight that this power imbalance can create obstacles in building trusting and supportive relationships. Counselors need to work to empower clients and create a safe and inclusive environment where clients feel valued and heard.

Limited resources and support are also often an obstacle to the implementation of multicultural competencies. Many counselors may not have adequate access to advanced training, supportive supervision, or other resources necessary to develop and maintain their multicultural competencies (Friday, 2002). Nurrahmi highlighted the importance of continuous competency-based training to overcome this challenge. Without adequate support, counselors may struggle to integrate multicultural knowledge and skills into their daily practice.

In consequence, the main challenges faced by counselors in applying multicultural competencies in daily practice include overcoming personal biases and stereotypes, lack of indepth knowledge of a particular culture, effective communication, managing power dynamics and privileges, and limited resources and support. As a result, counselors need to understand the culture-specific aspects of the counseling process and the particular counseling style they use, so that they can handle those cultural variables more skillfully (Jumarin, 2002).

Cultural Implementation in Counseling Communication Increases the Effectiveness of Counseling Relationships

The implementation of culture in counseling communication can increase the effectiveness of counseling relationships in various in-depth and comprehensive ways. First of all, understanding and appreciating the client's culture allows the counselor to build a more empathetic and trusting relationship. Yaniasti (2020) emphasizes that when counselors show respect for the values, norms, and cultural traditions of clients, clients tend to feel more respected and listened to. The high and low professional quality of a counselor will have a direct impact on the high and low recognition of the wider community and the rewards he will receive (Putri, 2016).

By integrating cultural knowledge into counseling communication, counselors can avoid miscommunication and misunderstandings that often arise from cultural differences. Non-verbal communication, emotional expression, and interaction styles can vary greatly between cultures. Counselors who are competent in multicultural aspects understand and are able to adapt their communication style to better suit the client's cultural preferences. For example, in some cultures, direct eye contact is considered disrespectful or threatening, while in others, it can be a sign of trust and openness. Awareness and adjustment to these nuances help counselors to communicate more effectively and strengthen therapeutic relationships.

The implementation of culture also allows counselors to be more precise in interpreting and responding to client needs. Gani (2019) emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the client's cultural context in understanding the problems they are facing and developing relevant interventions. For example, an effective counseling approach in one culture may be irrelevant or even counterproductive in another. By taking into account the client's cultural background, counselors can design more effective and appropriate intervention strategies, increasing the likelihood of therapy success.

The application of a multicultural approach in counseling communication helps to address the power dynamics and privileges that may exist in counseling relationships. Harahap & Maryolo (2018) show that by recognizing and managing power imbalances, counselors can empower clients and create more equal relationships. This is important because feelings of repressed or imbalanced can hinder the client in the counseling process. By empowering clients, counselors help them to feel more engaged and empowered in the therapeutic process, which ultimately increases the effectiveness of the intervention.

An approach that includes self-reflection and the counselor's hands-on experience with different cultures also contributes to the increased effectiveness of counseling relationships. Gudnanto (2020) through a counseling approach, shows how the reflective experience of counselors in working with clients from various cultural backgrounds can enrich their skills and understanding. This process of reflection allows counselors to continually learn and tailor their approach according to the specific needs of the client, which has a positive impact on the relationship and counseling outcomes.

The implementation of culture in counseling communication increases the effectiveness of counseling relationships by creating a more empathetic and respectful environment (Diswantika, 2022). In addition, it can also avoid miscommunication, tailor interventions to the client's cultural needs, address power dynamics, and facilitate continuous learning and adjustment from counselors. All of this contributes to the creation of a strong, trusting, and effective therapeutic relationship in helping clients achieve their goals.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From all the discussions above, it can be concluded that multicultural competence is a crucial element in professional counseling practice. These competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable counselors to work effectively with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Counsellor education and training currently plays an important role in supporting the development of multicultural competencies through a comprehensive curriculum, practical training, and continuing education. However, counselors face a variety of challenges in applying these competencies, including overcoming personal biases, lack of in-depth knowledge of specific cultures, effective communication, and managing power dynamics and privileges. The implementation of culture in counseling communication can increase the effectiveness of counseling relationships by creating an empathetic and respectful environment, avoiding miscommunication, tailoring interventions to the client's cultural needs, and empowering clients. Through an approach that values cultural diversity and continuous self-reflection, counselors can provide more inclusive, effective, and meaningful services to their clients. Overall, the development and application of strong multicultural competencies not only improves the quality of counseling services but also ensures that the needs of clients from different cultural backgrounds are met in the most empathetic and effective way possible.

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