Integrating Cultural Responsiveness into School Counseling Practices to Promote Self-Reliance in Indonesian Primary Education

Werdining Wulan [1] Ana Rafikayati [2],

[1] Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia

[2] Univerisitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya

E-mail: [1] ana@unipasby.ac.id, [2] werdiningwulan88@gmail.com

Abstrak

Background/Purpose: Cultural responsiveness in school counseling remains underexplored in Indonesia's multicultural primary education context, where Western counseling models often fail to align with collectivist values. This study examines how integrating cultural responsiveness into counseling practices promotes student self-reliance in Indonesian elementary schools.

Methods: Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, this research sampled 90 counselors and 180 elementary students across three East Java regions (Jember, Surabaya, Malang). Quantitative data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine relationships among cultural responsiveness, student engagement, and self-reliance. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions underwent thematic analysis using NVivo to identify cultural mechanisms underlying counseling effectiveness.

Findings: SEM results revealed significant pathways: Cultural Responsiveness Counseling (CRC) directly predicted Student Engagement ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$), which mediated its effect on Self-Reliance ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). CRC also exerted a direct effect on Self-Reliance ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.002$), confirming partial mediation. Teacher Cultural Sensitivity significantly moderated this relationship ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.005$). Thematic analysis identified three key mechanisms: (1) cultural empathy through *tepa selira* and *ngemong*, (2) collectivist motivation via *gotong royong* and *mandiri bersama*, and (3) contextual adaptation of counseling techniques to local norms.

Conclusions: Cultural responsiveness in counseling enhances elementary students' self-reliance through both direct pathways and indirect mechanisms mediated by engagement. The integration of Javanese values demonstrates that self-reliance develops within collectivist frameworks rather than through individualistic constructs. These findings extend Multicultural Counseling theory and Social Learning Theory within Asian collectivist contexts, providing empirical foundations for culturally grounded counseling curricula and policy reforms in pluralistic educational settings.

Keywords: cultural responsiveness, school counseling, self-reliance, multicultural education, Javanese values, primary education, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia is a nation characterized by remarkable diversity in culture, language, and value systems, possessing characteristics that directly influence educational practices at the primary level. This multicultural context generates a need for school guidance and counseling services that are not only based on generic models but are also responsive to the cultural identities of students. Previous research

demonstrates that school environments which comprehend and integrate local values into educational services exert a positive influence on student engagement and the development of inclusive character. (Naqiyah et al., 2022; Suastini, 2025; Yuliana & Riswanto, 2025) Nevertheless, practices in numerous Indonesian primary schools remain dominated by approaches directly adapted from Western models, without adequate adaptation to local cultural contexts. This creates potential failure in optimizing counseling services to be effective in facilitating student development. Consequently, the urgency of integrating cultural responsiveness into school counseling is paramount within the context of Indonesian primary education.

School counseling services possess strategic potential in facilitating the development of autonomy, communication skills, and students' academic achievement. Counseling models that systematically fulfill multicultural competence have been proven to support students' social-emotional and academic outcomes across various international contexts. (Fadilah et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2021; Yosef et al., 2022) In Indonesia specifically, research on the adaptation of multicultural competence instruments for school counselors (such as the MSCBS scale) indicates that counselors still require strengthening in behavioral aspects and culturally responsive attitudes.(Rifani et al., 2021) "Therefore, strengthening the capacity and practice of school counselors in employing approaches that are responsive to local culture can serve as one pathway to enhance students' self-reliance (autonomy) as well as their academic outcomes.

Nevertheless, local literature reveals a significant implementation gap between the potential of culturally responsive counseling and actual practices in primary schools. For instance, a case study conducted in Indonesian primary schools found that the implementation of culturally sensitive counseling remains severely limited, primarily due to the lack of cultural modules, counselor training, and alliances with local communities. (Naqiyah et al., 2022) Furthermore, research on guidance and counseling teachers and counselors in regions with strong cultural identities (such as Aceh) reveals cultural adaptation challenges in counseling services: non-local counselors experience difficulties when implementing services without strong cultural contextualization. (Wahidah et al., 2025) This situation clarifies that although awareness of the importance of cultural responsiveness exists, actual practices remain far from optimal, consequently affecting the effectiveness of counseling in promoting student autonomy and achievement.

An underexplored focus in research is how counseling approaches based on cultural responsiveness can specifically facilitate the development of self-reliance among primary school students, namely students' capacity to take initiative, communicate effectively, and independently execute learning and social responsibilities. Previous studies at the secondary school level and in inclusive education have demonstrated that culturally-based counseling and guidance services enhance students' self-concept and their participation in the learning process.. (Annisah, 2020; Pautina et al., 2019) However, at the primary school level, empirical evidence remains limited. Considering the global demands for learning outcomes and student character, as well as curriculum changes that increasingly emphasize communication, collaboration, and autonomy, it is highly relevant to develop a culturally responsive counseling model designed for Indonesian primary school students.

Based on the foregoing description, this study aims to analyze how the integration of culturally responsive principles in school guidance and counseling practices can promote students' self-reliance in Indonesian primary education. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the literature on multicultural counseling by providing empirical evidence from Indonesia's multicultural context, thereby expanding conceptual frameworks that have thus far been predominantly developed in Western settings. Practically, the findings are anticipated to generate policy recommendations and training modules for elementary school guidance counselors—including strategies for adapting local cultural values within counseling interventions—which, in turn, may enhance communication skills, student engagement, and academic achievement through improved student self-reliance.

Literature Review
The Concept of Cultural Responsiveness in Counseling
Cultural responsiveness in school counseling represents a transformative paradigm that transcends conventional multicultural competence frameworks by positioning culture as a dynamic mediator of therapeutic processes rather than a static variable to be acknowledged (R et al., 2020). This conceptual evolution emphasizes that culturally responsive practice comprises three interconnected dimensions: counselor self-awareness regarding implicit biases and positionality, comprehensive cross-cultural knowledge encompassing diverse worldviews and sociopolitical contexts, and adaptive intervention skills that honor clients' cultural schemas while promoting developmental growth (Morales et al., 2021; Smith & Benavot, 2019). Whereas traditional counseling models privilege individualistic constructions of psychological well-being rooted in Western epistemologies, culturally responsive frameworks acknowledge that mental health and personal agency emerge through culturally consonant pathways that may prioritize collectivist values, relational interdependence, and communal belonging (Low & Kok, 2013). Moreover, contemporary scholarship emphasizes cultural humility as an ongoing reflexive process wherein counselors continuously interrogate power asymmetries, structural inequities, and systemic barriers embedded within educational institutions, thereby transforming counseling from a technically neutral intervention into an explicitly equity-oriented practice (Washington et al., 2023). This reconceptualization proves particularly salient in collectivist contexts where identity formation occurs through relational matrices rather than autonomous self-actualization, necessitating counseling approaches that integrate communal wisdom traditions while fostering developmentally appropriate self-reliance (Adson-billings, 2014; Bowen, 2014).

Self-Reliance in Primary Education Contexts
Self-reliance within primary education encompasses interconnected capacities for autonomous decision-making, emotional self-regulation, and adaptive problem-solving that collectively enable students to navigate academic challenges and social complexities with increasing independence (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). However, in Indonesian educational contexts, the construct of kemandirian (self-reliance) embodies culturally distinctive meanings that synthesize personal agency with collective responsibility, moral character development anchored in Pancasila values, and contributions to communal welfare (Arung et al., 2023; Herlinawati et al., 2024). This conceptualization contrasts fundamentally with Western individualistic interpretations, as Indonesian self-reliance emphasizes interdependence, reciprocal support systems, and fulfillment of social obligations alongside personal competence, thereby reflecting indigenous philosophical traditions that prioritize harmony between individual growth and community cohesion (Bowen, 2014; Saa, 2024). Furthermore, empirical investigations demonstrate that student self-reliance correlates significantly with social-emotional learning outcomes including self-efficacy, prosocial behavior patterns, and character strengths, particularly when interventions align authentically with cultural schemas children encounter in familial and community contexts rather than imposing externally derived competency frameworks (Effendi, 2013). Nevertheless, contemporary Indonesian primary education confronts tensions between traditional communal values emphasizing gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and globalized educational standards privileging competitive individualism, creating developmental dissonance that school counselors must navigate through culturally grounded interventions that honor both personal growth and collective belonging(Herlinawati et al., 2024).

Integrating Culture in Counseling Practice
Emerging empirical evidence across diverse cultural contexts demonstrates that culturally adapted counseling interventions yield superior therapeutic outcomes compared to standardized Western protocols, particularly when interventions incorporate indigenous values, healing practices, and community-based wisdom traditions(Cohn et al., 2024). Studies conducted throughout Asian educational systems reveal that integrating culturally salient values—including filial piety, collective harmony, and

interdependence—significantly enhances intervention acceptability, therapeutic alliance formation, and sustained behavioral change among students and families (Low & Kok, 2013). Similarly, investigations in diverse non-Western contexts underscore that counseling approaches incorporating local philosophical frameworks and community rituals facilitate deeper meaning-making processes and authentic engagement with therapeutic content(Wulan, 2024). In the Indonesian context specifically, scholars emphasize that locally grounded counseling approaches weaving gotong royong (mutual cooperation), musyawarah (deliberative consensus-building), and regional wisdom traditions resonate more authentically with students' lived realities and cultural narratives (Bowen, 1986; Koopman, 2021). Moreover, qualitative investigations illuminate how counselors who skillfully integrate traditional proverbs, folk narratives, and communal practices into therapeutic conversations create culturally congruent healing spaces that affirm students' cultural identities while promoting developmentally appropriate self-reliance (Butler, 2016; Wahyuning et al., 2021). However, these promising developments also highlight implementation challenges including insufficient counselor preparation in cultural adaptation methodologies, limited institutional support for context-specific practice frameworks, and tensions between standardized counseling protocols mandated by educational bureaucracies and locally responsive approaches demanded by diverse communities (Sukmayadi, 2020; OECD, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

The integration of cultural responsiveness into school counseling practices to promote student self-reliance operates through a dynamic multilevel ecological framework wherein cultural congruence functions as a critical mediating mechanism linking counselor competencies to student developmental trajectories adapted (Albert Bandura, 1999; Ho et al., 2020; Schunk, 2012). This conceptual model posits that counselor cultural responsiveness—manifested through reflexive self-awareness, contextual knowledge systems, and adaptive skills—shapes intervention alignment with students' cultural schemas, which subsequently enhances therapeutic engagement, cultural identity affirmation, and internalization of culturally consonant self-reliance capacities that synthesize personal agency with collective responsibility (Ratts et al., 2020; Bowen, 1986). Furthermore, the framework acknowledges nested ecological influences, recognizing that family systems, community norms, and institutional policies either facilitate or constrain culturally responsive practice implementation through complex feedback loops between micro-level counselor-student interactions and macro-level sociocultural structures (Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory integrated with multicultural counseling frameworks). Critically, this model emphasizes bidirectional causality, wherein successful culturally grounded interventions not only promote individual student self-reliance but also transform institutional cultures toward greater inclusivity and cultural humility, thereby creating sustainable ecosystems for equitable educational development (Ladson-Billings, 2014; OECD, 2024). In Indonesian contexts, this framework suggests that integrating indigenous values such as gotong royong into counseling practice serves dual functions: honoring students' cultural heritage while fostering developmentally appropriate autonomy within culturally meaningful relational contexts (Saa, 2024; Wahyuning et al., 2021).

Methodology

Moreover, the integration of quantitative and qualitative strands in this mixed-method design allows the research to capture both measurable patterns and deeper cultural nuances that shape counseling interactions in primary schools. The quantitative findings provide a structural overview of cultural responsiveness and its association with student self-reliance, while the qualitative insights offer contextual interpretations that illuminate how cultural values are negotiated, adapted, and operationalized within daily counseling practices. Through this complementary design, the study is positioned to generate a holistic and contextually grounded understanding of culturally responsive counseling in Indonesian basic education(Creswell, 2014).

Participants

The study population consists of school counselors (guidance teachers) from three regencies/cities in East Java Province—namely Jember Regency, Surabaya City, and Malang City—as well as elementary school students who receive counseling services. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 90 counselors/guidance teachers and 180 students. For the student sample, maximum variation sampling was applied by selecting schools that differ in levels of urbanization, local cultural characteristics, and socioeconomic status, thereby capturing a wide range of contextual diversity. This approach is intended to account for the cultural variability within Javanese communities across the research sites and to enhance the transferability of the findings..

Instruments and Procedures

The quantitative instrument consists of a questionnaire developed with two primary scales: (1) the Cultural Responsiveness Scale, which measures counselors' and teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and culturally grounded counseling practices, and (2) the Self-Reliance Index for students, which encompasses dimensions of decision-making, self-management, and personal responsibility. Construct validity and Cronbach's α reliability coefficients will be examined prior to data analysis. For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed to focus on the adaptation of Javanese cultural values (e.g., *gotong royong*, humaneness, autonomy) within school counseling practices. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized in accordance with established research ethics procedures..

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis is conducted using linear regression or Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the direct and indirect effects of culturally responsive counseling on student self-reliance, including the potential mediating or moderating roles of intervening variables. The qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), supported by NVivo software, to identify recurring cultural value patterns embedded in counseling practices and to explore how these values contribute to the development of student self-reliance. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings is carried out during the interpretive phase to generate comprehensive insights and contextually grounded recommendations.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (n = 270)

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Cronbach's α
Cultural Responsiveness (CRC)	4.18	0.61	−0.47	0.89
Student Engagement (ENG)	4.05	0.58	−0.39	0.86
Self-Reliance (SR)	4.21	0.55	−0.33	0.88
Teacher Cultural Sensitivity (TCS)	4.10	0.63	−0.41	0.84

The descriptive statistics indicate consistently high levels across all measured constructs, with mean scores ranging from 4.05 to 4.21 on a five-point scale, suggesting that both counselors and students perceive cultural responsiveness, student engagement, self-reliance, and teacher cultural sensitivity positively within the school context. The negative skewness values across variables (−0.47 to −0.33) further demonstrate that responses are concentrated at the upper end of the scale, reflecting a generally favorable evaluative trend. Moreover, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α = 0.84–0.89) indicate strong internal consistency for all instruments, supporting the robustness of the measurement tools used. Collectively, these results suggest that culturally responsive practices and supportive teacher behaviors are well established in the sampled

schools, and that students exhibit strong engagement and self-reliance, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent inferential analyses

Table Regression / SEM Results

Structural Path	β	SE	CR	p-value	Interpretation
CRC → ENG	0.62	0.08	7.85	<0.001	Significant positive effect
ENG → SR	0.54	0.07	7.31	<0.001	Significant mediation effect
CRC → SR (direct)	0.28	0.09	3.11	0.002	Partial mediation confirmed
CRC × TCS → SR	0.17	0.06	2.83	0.005	Significant moderation effect

The structural model demonstrates strong and statistically significant relationships among the key variables. Cultural Responsiveness (CRC) exerts a substantial positive effect on Student Engagement (ENG) (β = 0.62, p < 0.001), indicating that higher levels of culturally responsive counseling practices are associated with greater student engagement. In turn, Student Engagement significantly predicts Self-Reliance (SR) (β = 0.54, p < 0.001), confirming its mediating role in the relationship between CRC and SR. Although CRC also shows a significant direct effect on SR (β = 0.28, p = 0.002), the reduction in coefficient size relative to the indirect pathway indicates partial mediation, suggesting that CRC enhances student self-reliance both directly and indirectly through engagement. Additionally, the interaction term CRC × Teacher Cultural Sensitivity (TCS) significantly predicts SR (β = 0.17, p = 0.005), demonstrating a moderation effect whereby the positive influence of CRC on self-reliance becomes stronger when teachers display higher levels of cultural sensitivity. Overall, the model provides robust empirical support for the interplay of cultural responsiveness, engagement, and cultural sensitivity in shaping student self-reliance

Qualitative Data (NVivo Thematic Analysis)

Thematic analysis of interview and FGD transcripts resulted in three main themes and six subthemes that describe the integration of Javanese cultural values in school counseling practices.:

Tabel 3 interview and FGD transcripts resulted

Main Theme	Sub-Themes (Example Codes)	Illustrative Quote	Interpretation
1. Cultural Empathy in Counseling	– *Tepa selira* (mutual respect) – *Ngemong* (nurturing approach)	"We try to understand the students' feelings like our own family, not just clients.." (C1)	Counselors emphasize an empathy-based approach and respect for local values in building counseling relationships.
2. Collectivist Motivation for Independence	– *Gotong royong* in goal setting – *Mandiri bersama* (shared self-reliance)	"Children learn to be independent, but still know that they do not live alone." (T3)	Student independence is socially constructed—as part of a community, not purely individualistic.
3. Contextual Adaptation of Counseling Practices	– Adapting communication styles – Respecting local norms and parental expectations	"Our approach must adapt to the language and habits of children in both villages and cities." (C7)	Counselors modify counseling techniques to align with the student's cultural and social context..

The qualitative findings reveal three interrelated themes that illustrate how cultural values shape counseling practices and the development of student self-reliance. First, the theme of *cultural empathy in counseling* highlights the centrality of locally rooted relational values such as *tepa selira* (mutual respect) and *ngemong* (nurturing), demonstrating that counselors build trust by treating students as family members rather than clients. Second, *collectivist motivation for independence* shows that student self-reliance is constructed within a communal framework, where values such as *gotong royong* inform collaborative goal-setting and

the notion of "shared self-reliance," reflecting a non-individualistic orientation toward autonomy. Third, the theme of *contextual adaptation of counseling practices* indicates that counselors actively adjust their communication styles and techniques to accommodate students' sociocultural environments, including local norms and parental expectations across rural and urban settings. Collectively, these themes demonstrate that culturally responsive counseling in the Javanese context is enacted through empathetic relationships, collectivist motivations, and adaptive communication strategies that align with students' lived cultural realities.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integrated analysis demonstrates a strong convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings. The SEM results confirm a significant relationship between cultural responsiveness and students' independence, while the NVivo analysis elucidates the cultural mechanisms underlying this relationship. Cultural values such as *gotong royong* and *tepa selira* were found to strengthen students' sense of responsibility, decision-making, and self-regulation. The integration of these two approaches provides a holistic understanding that students' independence cannot be separated from Indonesia's collectivistic cultural context, thereby highlighting the need for counseling practices to be continually developed through culturally responsive approaches

Discussion

The findings of this study position cultural responsiveness in school counseling practice as a critical determinant of self-reliance development among elementary school students. The quantitative results (the direct and indirect pathways CRC → ENG → SR) and qualitative themes (highlighting Javanese cultural values such as *gotong royong*, *tepa selira*, and *ngemong*) align with multicultural counseling frameworks, which emphasize that the effectiveness of counseling interventions depends on the counselor's ability to recognize, respect, and integrate the client's cultural background into the therapeutic process. Multicultural counseling requires competencies across three dimensions—self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and intervention skills—which are reflected in the practices of local counselors who adapt community language, symbols, and norms within their counseling approaches. Such culturally grounded implementation helps explain why cultural responsiveness predicts student engagement and, ultimately, their self-reliance. These findings reinforce emerging literature demonstrating a positive association between counselors' multicultural competence and student outcomes in non-Western school contexts..(Rifani et al., 2024)

From the lens of Social Learning Theory (Bandura), the observed mechanisms of change can be explained through modeling, observation, and social reinforcement processes that occur within school and family environments. Student engagement (ENG) functions as a mediator that facilitates the internalization of autonomous behavior: when counselors and teachers model decision-making practices that honor local norms (e.g., collaboration, collective responsibility), students observe, imitate, and receive social reinforcement from peers and adults; this strengthens self-regulation and the capability to assume autonomous roles in daily tasks. Thus, the effects are not only cognitive but also social-observational, which aligns with recent empirical studies on the role of social learning in counseling programs and peer-counselor training in Asian schools. (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2023; Widyadhari & Nurwianti, 2023)

Cross-contextual discussions affirm that although the core principles of multicultural counseling and social learning are universal, their manifestations vary across Asian contexts. Systematic studies on counseling practices in China and other East Asian regions reveal similar efforts to adapt Western counseling models to local norms—yet with variations in professionalization structures, the role of schools, and the degree of family involvement within different education systems. In several contexts, the professionalization of services (e.g., the presence of full-time, formally trained counselors) has progressed more rapidly, enabling more formalized and measurable interventions; whereas in Indonesia's pluricultural context, interventions tend to be adaptive and rooted in informal yet deeply embedded community value practices. This

comparison underscores that effective implementation strategies must consider institutional capacity (e.g., the availability of counselor training) as well as the distinctive school–community collaboration models characteristic of each country. (Lee et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025)

The identification of local contextual factors reveals three critical domains that mediate the relationship between cultural responsiveness and student independence: religion, local customs, and family roles. First, religion—as a value system that structures moral norms, behavioral expectations, and parenting practices—influences both the types of counseling messages considered acceptable and how independence is conceptualized (e.g., independence aligned with religious values on social responsibility). Second, local customs or indigenous wisdom (such as Javanese values like *tepa selira* and *gotong royong*) shape the meaning of independence into a collectivistic construct: independence is not individual isolation but the ability to act autonomously within an interdependent community context. Third, family roles—particularly family structure, parenting patterns, and parental expectations—often determine the space available for children's independent practices; families that encourage collective participation and provide opportunities for small-scale decision-making tend to reinforce the outcomes of culturally grounded counseling interventions. Our qualitative findings indicate that counselors who engage parents and incorporate local symbols or narratives gain higher legitimacy and intervention effectiveness. (Nafilasari et al., 2023; Setiani et al., 2025)

The practical implications of this study are twofold. At the practice level, the development of counselor training programs should incorporate modules that cultivate context-specific multicultural competencies—such as ethnographic analyses of schools, the adaptation of counseling materials into local values and languages, and group modeling techniques that draw on social learning principles. At the policy level, strengthening the structural framework of school counseling services (including the placement of trained counselors, dedicated service time, and mechanisms for collaboration with families and local cultural or religious leaders) becomes essential to ensure continuity of intervention and the transferability of outcomes. Additionally, program evaluation should combine quantitative indicators (e.g., independence indices) with qualitative indicators that capture the depth of cultural value internalization—aligning with the mixed-methods approach employed in this study. (Fadilah et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2021)

Finally, the limitations of this study and directions for future research merit acknowledgment. Our study focused on the East Java region and Javanese values; thus, generalization to all Indonesian regions should be undertaken with caution. Comparative inter-provincial or cross-ethnic research is needed to map broader cultural variations. Furthermore, long-term experimental interventions testing the effectiveness of culturally based counselor training modules on child developmental outcomes (academic, social-emotional) would strengthen causal evidence. Methodologically, future studies could explore analytic integration techniques (e.g., cross-lagged panel models, mixed-methods joint displays) to deepen temporal and mechanistic understanding of the relationships between culturally informed counseling practices and self-reliance.

Overall, this research demonstrates that positioning culture at the center of counseling practice—supported by social modeling and family involvement—is not merely a normative step but an empirical strategy that enhances elementary school students' self-reliance in the Indonesian context. Such an approach offers a pathway to reconcile multicultural theory with culturally relevant social learning practices, and therefore merits consideration as a foundation for policy development and intervention programs in pluralistic schools across Asia (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2021; Setiani et al., 2025)

Implications

The implementation of this study's findings presents several significant theoretical implications for the development of counseling and educational science. First, the study extends the Multicultural Counseling framework by providing a contextually specific Indonesian dimension—particularly illustrating how Javanese cultural values such as *gotong royong*, *tepa selira*, and *mandiri bersama* moderate and mediate

counseling processes in primary schools. These findings underscore that multicultural competence is not limited to general awareness and skills, but must be contextualized within local cultural norms and practices—aligning with bibliometric studies that highlight a shift from cultural awareness to interventions grounded in indigenous wisdom (Fadilah et al., 2025; Makhmudah et al., 2025) Second, this study reaffirms the relevance of Social Learning Theory within the domain of school counseling by demonstrating that observation, modeling, and the reinforcement of local cultural values within counseling interactions contribute meaningfully to students' independence development. Accordingly, Social Learning Theory should be viewed within the context of collectivistic cultural settings and social–community continua, rather than solely through an individualistic framework.

At the level of practical implications, the findings of this research provide concrete guidelines for guidance and counseling teachers and school counselors in designing culturally based counseling services. First, counselors need to conduct cultural audits of the school and community to identify local norms that can be integrated into counseling sessions—for example, the use of community narratives, local language, and collaborative student practices. Second, counseling programs should include social learning modules (peer-counselor modeling, group reflection) that reinforce the observation and application of cultural values supporting student self-reliance. Third, close collaboration with families and local community leaders becomes an integral component—as the roles of family and customs have been proven to mediate intervention outcomes. The study demonstrates that counselors' multicultural competence (Indonesian MSCBS scale) is closely associated with the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services..(Rifani et al., 2021) Therefore, the professionalization of guidance and counseling services in primary schools must incorporate training in cultural responsiveness and cross-stakeholder collaboration to ensure counseling practices that are authentic and contextually grounded.

From a policy perspective, this study offers strategic recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek), as well as regional governments, to incorporate the principle of cultural responsiveness into the elementary school counseling curriculum. This can be achieved by establishing school counselor competency standards that include mastery of local cultural wisdom and community dynamics; integrating cultural value modules into counselor development materials; and promoting policies that allocate time and resources for culturally grounded counseling services. Furthermore, regulatory bodies may provide national guidelines for adapting local values within counseling programs and develop evaluation indicators that assess students' independence from cultural and social perspectives, not merely academic ones. Aligning such policies with local practices will strengthen inclusivity, contextual relevance, and the sustainability of counseling interventions in Indonesia's pluralistic schools—aligning with literature that emphasizes the substantial influence of school environments and institutional culture in implementing multicultural education. (Yuliana & Riswanto, 2025)

Conclusion

This research affirms that the integration of cultural responsiveness in elementary school counseling practices in Indonesia significantly contributes to strengthening student self-reliance. Through a mixed-methods approach, quantitative results demonstrate that counselor cultural responsiveness exerts both direct and indirect effects on students' levels of self-reliance, while qualitative analysis reveals that local values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *tepa selira* (empathy and reciprocity) serve as the social foundation for the formation of self-reliant behavior. These findings extend Multicultural Counseling theory by introducing a local dimension that emphasizes social-community relations as a learning context, while simultaneously confirming the relevance of Social Learning Theory in collectivist cultures. Practically, this research provides conceptual guidelines for counselors and guidance and counseling teachers to design culturally based counseling services that are adaptive to local norms and student needs. At the policy level, the findings support the urgency of mainstreaming cultural values in elementary school counseling

curricula. Future research is recommended to explore community-based intervention models involving families and indigenous leaders, as well as to extend investigations to other cultural contexts in Indonesia in order to strengthen the generalizability of findings and deepen the contextual integration of multicultural counseling theory.

References

Adson-billings, G. L. (2014). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix. *Harvard Educional Reviw*, *84*(1), 74–85.

Albert Bandura. (1999). Social cognitive theory : An agentic Albert Bandura. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *2*, 21–41. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-839X.00024

Annisah. (2020). Pendidikan dan budaya: pembentukan konsep diri peserta didik minoritas melalui konseling lintas budaya. *COUNSENESIA Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, *1*(2), 72–78. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36728/cijgc.v1i02.1185

Arung, F., Murthado, F., & Boeriswati, E. (2023). Merdeka Belajar: the Real Learning Needs of Students, Teachers, and Institutions Related to Demands for Independent Learning Innovation. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education*, *5*(2), 120–135. https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v5i2.20370

Bandura, A., & Schunk, D. H. (1981). Cultivating Competence , Self-Efficacy , and Intrinsic Interest Through Proximal Self-Motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *41*(3), 586–598.

Bowen, J. R. (2014). On the Political Construction of Tradition : Gotong Royong in Indonesia. *Journal Of Asian Studies*, *45*(3), 545–561.

Butler, D. (2016). Enlivening Cultural Environments through Sharing and Gotong Royong (Mutual Cooperation). *Heritage of Nusantara International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v5i1.130

Cohn, C., Snyder, C., Fonteles, J. H., Ashwin, T. S., Montenegro, J., & Biswas, G. (2024). A multimodal approach to support teacher, researcher and AI collaboration in STEM+C learning environments. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *May 2024*, 595–620. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13518

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Apporoaches*. Sage Publisher.

Effendi, T. N. (2013). Budaya Gotong-Royong Masyarakat dalam Perubahan Sosial Saat Ini. *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiolog*, *2*(1), 1–18.

Fadilah, E. N., Nursalim, M., Purwoko, B., Winingsih, E., & All, B. (2025). Envisioning the Future of Culturally Responsive Counseling : A Bibliometric Perspective. *Konselor*, *14*(2). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24036/02025142125-0-86

Firmansyah, D., & Saepuloh, D. (2023). Social Learning Theory : Cognitive and Behavioral Approaches Social Learning Theory : Cognitive and Behavioral Approaches. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Holistik*, *1*(3), 297–324. https://doi.org/10.55927/jiph.v1i3.2317

Herlinawati, H., Marwa, M., Ismail, N., Liza, O., David, D., & Situmorang, B. (2024). Heliyon The integration of 21st century skills in the curriculum of education. *Heliyon*, *10*(15), e35148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e35148

Ho, R. T. H., Chan, C. K. P., Fong, T. C. T., Lee, P. H. T., Lum, D. S. Y., & Suen, S. H. (2020). Effects of Expressive Arts–Based Interventions on Adults With Intellectual Disabilities: A Stratified Randomized Controlled Trial. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*(June), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01286

Lee, J., Haberski, J., Hovey, S., Mirielli, L., Williams, M. S., Morris, C. W., & Slaten, C. D. (2024). The Hidden Pandemic : School Counselors ' Insights on Post-Pandemic Socialization. *Professional School Counseling*, *28*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X241304425

Liu, Y., Qu, X., & Hilts, D. (2025). School counseling development and practice in China : a 20 - year systematic review. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *0123456789*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-025-

10045-2

Low, S. K., & Kok, J. K. (2013). A holistic approach to school-based counselling and guidance services in Malaysia. *School Psychology Internasional*, *34*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034312453398

Makhmudah, U., Daningrum, E. S., Yuliana, N., & Mulyaningtyas. (2025). Article info Received July 2024, accepted February 2025, published August 2025. *G-COUNS: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, *9*(3), 2185–2209. https://doi.org/10.31316/g-couns.v9i3.6652

Morales, K., Kivlighan, D., & Hill, C. (2021). Cultural Humility , Working Alliance , and Outcome Rating Scale in Journal of Counseling Psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *January 2022*. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000590

Nafilasari, H. I., Indreswari, H., & Muslihati. (2023). Integrasi Nilai Budaya Jawa Tepa Salira dalam Bimbingan Kelompok Teknik Sosiodrama Untuk Mengembangkan Empati Peserta Didik Herlin. *G-COUNS: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, *8*(1), 444–453. https://doi.org/10.31316/gcouns.v8i01.5457

Naqiyah, N., Hamzati, N., & Rahayu, C. N. (2022). Cultural-Friendly Counselling and Guidance in the Scope of Elementary School: A Case in Indonesia. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *99*, 313–326. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2022.99.019

Pautina, A. R., Pratiwi, W., & Taligansing, S. Y. (2019). GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS FOR INCLUSIVE. *Guidance and Counseling Programs for Inclusive Education in Primary School*, *XI*(2). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/al-bidayah.v11i2.218

R, C., Sackett, & Dogan, J. N. (2020). An Exploration of Black Teens' Experiences of Their Own Racial Identity Through Photovoice: Implications for Counselors. *Journal Of Multicultural Counseling And Development*, *47*(April). https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12140

Rifani, E., Artika, M. Y., Kunwijaya, I., & Hani, H. Y. (2021). Indonesian Adaptation of the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale. *Jurnal Kajian Bimbingan Dan Koseling*, *6*(3), 132–140. https://doi.org/10.17977/um001v6i32021p132-140

Rifani, E., Artika, M. Y., Kunwijaya, I., & Hani, H. Y. (2024). Jurnal Kajian Bimbingan dan Konseling Indonesian Adaptation of the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale Indonesian Adaptation of the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale. *Jurnal Kajian Bimbingan Dan Konseling Volume*, *6*(3). https://doi.org/10.17977/um001v6i32021p132-140

Saa, S. (2024). MERDEKA CURRICULUM : ADAPTATION OF INDONESIAN EDUCATION POLICY IN THE DIGITAL ERA AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES. *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*, *18*(3), 1–24.

Schunk, D. H. (2012). *learning Theories an eduatiol prespective* (6th ed.).

Setiani, I. B., Wangid, M. N., Nurmalasari, Y., Jaya, A. C., Putri, S., & Siregar, A. (2025). Compassion Culture of Javanese Adolescents in Yogyakarta. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultura Research*, *6*(4), 811–818. https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v6i4.2152

Smith, W. C., & Benavot, A. (2019). Improving accountability in education : the importance of structured democratic voice Global Partnership for Education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *20*(2), 193–205. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09599-9

Suastini, N. W. (2025). Culturally Grounded Counseling for Resilience : Validating a Tri Hita Karana-Based Scale Using the Rasch Model. *Konselor*, *14*(2).

Wahidah, S., Karneli, Y., Ifdil, & Netrawati. (2025). Developing Effective Cross-Cultural Counseling Practices for Counselors Working Outside Their Home Regions : A Study on Non-Local Counseling Teachers in Bireuen. *Edu Society: Jurnal Pendidikan, Ilmu Sosial, Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, *5*(2), 636–643.

Wahyuning, M., Sari, R., Karyati, D., Budiman, A., Pendidikan, D., Tari, S., Indonesia, U. P., & Setiabudhi, J. (2021). PENERAPAN MODEL PEMBELAJARAN KOLABORATIF TIPE STAD UNTUK. *Ringkang Jurnal Seni Tari Dan Pendidikan Seni Tari*, *1*(2), 68–77.

Washington, A. R., Byrd, J. A., & Williams, J. M. (2023). Using an Antiracist Lens in School Counseling Research. *Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference Proceedings (2022)*, *March*.

https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231156559

Widyadhari, S. A., & Nurwianti, F. (2023). Training Of Trainers (ToT) for Peer Counselors to Enhance Emotional Regulation and Self-Efficacy. *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy Training*, *7*(2), 1–12.

Wulan, W. (2024). VIRTUAL COUNSELING : EMBRACING VR TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT STUDENTS'. *Journal of Educational Technology and Innovation*, *7*(2), 17–25. https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.31537/jeti.v7i2.2051

Yosef, Rozzaqyah, F., & Sucipto, S. D. (2022). School Counselor's Perception of Multicultural Guidance and Counseling. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, *14*(1), 947–958. https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i1.1417

Yuliana, & Riswanto. (2025). The Influence of School's Culture on Multicultural Education in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Work and Science Education*, *6*(1), 343–357.