Multicultural Counseling in the 21st Century: Redefining Professional Services in the Era of Globalization

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Multicultural Counseling in the 21st Century: Redefining Professional Services in the Era of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

Background: Multicultural understanding in counseling services is essential to ensure that counselors respect and assess the cultural background of counselees without bias or discrimination, making it necessary to integrate multicultural values into every counseling interaction. **Objective:** This study aims to explore the urgency of multicultural counseling as a new paradigm in 21st-century counseling practices. **Method:** Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, this study systematically examines relevant national and international literature to analyze the theoretical foundations, dimensions, and practical implications of multicultural counseling. **Result:** The findings highlight seven key thematic areas: culture in the context of counseling, multicultural counseling paradigms, cultural dimensions in counseling interactions, multicultural counseling competencies, multicultural counseling approaches, counseling models, and emerging perspectives of multicultural counseling in the 21st century. The discussion emphasizes that multicultural counseling enhances counselor effectiveness by fostering cultural sensitivity, ethical awareness, and adaptive intervention strategies in diverse cultural settings. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that multicultural counseling is an essential component in developing inclusive guidance and counseling services. **Contribution:** This study contributes to the strengthening of the theoretical development in multicultural counseling and provides practical implications for enhancing counselor competence in diverse educational and social environments.

KEYWORDS

1. INTRODUCTION

A multicultural society refers to a community in which individuals coexist while maintaining their distinctive cultural identities and characteristics, which differentiate them from other social groups (Byram & Golubeva, 2020). This concept contributes to the emergence of multiculturalism, defined as an attitude that emphasizes understanding, valuing, and critically evaluating one's own cultural background while also showing respect and openness toward the cultures of other ethnic groups (Lee, 2013). Multiculturalism promotes acceptance and appreciation of both one's own cultural heritage and that of others (Blair, 2015), thereby encouraging mutual respect among members of a diverse society.

Education is one of the key domains through which multicultural values are applied. Counselors and guidance teachers must acknowledge that counselees come from varied cultural backgrounds and possess differing personalities, belief systems, morals, and cultural traditions (Lue &

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Riyanto, 2020). Consequently, counselors and educators are required to appreciate and evaluate the cultural background of each counselee without demeaning or dismisssing it. Professionals in guidance and counseling are expected to integrate multicultural values and uphold respect for diversity throughout the counseling process (Clark et al., 2017). Counselors must also be aware of differences in characteristics such as personal values, morals, and cultural norms between themselves and their counselees. They must honor these differences as part of each individual's uniqueness. These distinctions may influence the counseling relationship, making it essential for multicultural counseling to bridge cultural gaps between counselors and counselees (Demos, 2016). Through this approach, the potential risk of counselor encapsulation, in which counselors impose their own cultural perspectives during counseling, can be reduced.

From a cultural perspective, multicultural counseling involves an interactional process shaped by the distinct cultural contexts of both the counselor and the counselee (Brigman et al., 2021). Variations in cultural backgrounds often lead to differences in interpretation, worldview, and communication patterns, all of which may affect the effectiveness of counseling services. Therefore, counselors and guidance teachers must develop cultural sensitivity and competence to understand and support their counselees within their respective cultural contexts. Cultural values significantly influence the counseling process as they form part of the identity of both the counselor and the client, impacting the dynamics of communication during counseling sessions. Professional counselors are those who can recognize these cultural dimensions and integrate them into their practice.

In the 21st century, the counseling profession has undergone substantial development that has influenced both social life and educational practices, particularly through the advancement of multicultural counseling (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Social changes in the late 20th century led to a growing awareness of the importance of acknowledging cultural diversity within counseling practices. This recognition of cultural pluralism must be incorporated into counseling theories and methodologies to address complex realities in a globalized society (Gilbert, 2019). Multicultural counseling is regarded as a progressive paradigm for the 21st century as it emphasizes the role of cultural factors in counseling services (Gorski & Goodman, 2015). Unlike traditional counseling, which tends to focus solely on clients' personal problems without considering their cultural identities, multicultural counseling takes into account multiple dimensions of the individual, including personality, ethnicity, race, religion, cultural values, gender, socioeconomic background, and community environment (Flurentin & Santoso, 2017). Thus, this counseling approach is essential for individuals seeking personal growth and support in overcoming life's challenges.

Previous research on multicultural counseling has highlighted the importance of incorporating cultural values into counseling practice to enhance the effectiveness of services for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Turhan, 2020; Verdon et al., 2015; Sanchez et al., 2022; Reiz et al., 2022). Studies, including those conducted by several researchers, emphasize the importance of counselors being competent in understanding cultural diversity to prevent bias and discrimination in counseling interactions. Furthermore, various counseling models based on a multicultural approach have been developed, such as the integrative model, which combines Western psychological theories with local cultural perspectives (Wang & Ko, 2025). Other research also highlights the importance of developing practical skills in multicultural counseling, including cross-cultural communication and the application of culturally sensitive interventions (Sit et al., 2017). These studies underscore the importance of understanding and implementing multicultural counseling in response to the increasingly complex social dynamics.

Despite the growing body of literature on multicultural counseling, a significant gap remains in understanding how counselors can effectively integrate multicultural competencies into their everyday practices, particularly in the context of globalization. While many studies have focused on theoretical frameworks and the development of multicultural counseling models, there is a limited body of research exploring the practical application of these models in diverse counseling settings, such as schools, community centers, and mental health services. Additionally, few studies address the challenges counselors face in adapting their approach to clients from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly in countries experiencing rapid demographic shifts. This gap underscores the need for further empirical research on the practical application of multicultural counseling practices and the development of effective strategies to overcome cultural barriers in counseling interactions.

This study highlights the relevance of multicultural counseling as a contemporary paradigm in the field of counseling services. The importance of multicultural-based approaches forms a theoretical and practical foundation in guidance and counseling, which must be understood and applied by counselors and educators. Multicultural counseling serves as a practical framework for addressing the diverse cultural needs of students in educational settings.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, a structured and comprehensive method used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research relevant to a specific topic. As stated by Xiao & Watson

(2019), SLR systematically involves searching, critically assessing, and interpreting all available studies related to predetermined research questions. Through this process, SLR compiles and synthesizes empirical evidence to address specific research questions. The primary purpose of employing an SLR is to provide researchers with an in-depth understanding of the existing body of knowledge on a given topic. This method allows researchers to recognize the context of previous studies, identify theoretical foundations, and explore research gaps that can be developed in future inquiries (Okoli, 2015). In this study, SLR is utilized to explore strategies for addressing challenges related to multicultural counseling and to examine the competencies required by school counselors in multicultural settings.

2.2 Research Object

The data reviewed in this SLR consist of journal articles retrieved from Google Scholar. The selection of articles was based on predefined criteria, followed by screening and analysis procedures. The data used in this study are secondary, meaning they are obtained not from direct field research but from previously published scholarly works. These secondary sources include articles from credible national and international journals that discuss the predetermined research topic. Only literature closely related to the topic of multicultural counseling was included in the review. The data collection process involved identifying relevant journal articles, accessing them through Google Scholar, and reviewing their content. The articles selected for analysis were published between 2013 and 2022. The keywords used in the search process were multicultural counseling, multicultural counselor, and multicultural counseling theory.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria outline the characteristics required of the research sources selected for review. The general inclusion criteria are as follows: (1) Original research journal articles; (2) Articles discussing multicultural counselling, published between 2013 and 2025. More specific inclusion criteria include: (1) Published in English; (2) Published within the last 10 years (2013–2022); (3) Includes research components such as research problem, objectives, and findings; (4) Classified as journal articles; (5) Full-text accessible; (6) Employs analytical or experimental research design; (7) Focuses on multicultural counseling.

The Exclusion criteria refer to characteristics that disqualify sources from being included in the study. Any article that meets one or more exclusion criteria is omitted from the review. The exclusion criteria are: (1) Review articles rather than original research; (2) Articles not related to multicultural counselling; (3) Articles published before 2013

2.4 Data Extraction

Data extraction was carried out by organizing relevant findings from the selected studies into structured tables. Articles with similar themes were grouped to facilitate synthesis in line with the research objectives. Each study was systematically documented in a data extraction table that included bibliographic details, title, research methodology (design, sample, variables, instruments, data analysis), results, and journal quality. A content analysis technique was used to examine the collected articles. Coding was conducted based on the identified themes, and similarities and differences across studies were analyzed. The extracted findings were interpreted and synthesized to conclude relevant to the research questions.

2.5 SLR Procedure

The SLR process in this study consists of five stages: (1) Formulating the Research Problem: The research problem is clearly defined according to the topic under investigation; (2) Literature Identification: Relevant articles are located through systematic searching based on the research theme; (3) Filtering and Feasibility Screening: Articles are selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, taking into account population, intervention, comparison, outcomes, and study design; (4) Data Analysis: Selected articles are analyzed, categorized, and grouped according to their methodological quality and relevance; (5) Conclusion Drawing: A conclusion is formulated based on the analysis, directly addressing the research questions and aligned with the study objectives.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The selection of relevant journal articles related to the topics and issues under discussion yielded several pertinent articles. These articles were then organized and presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Results of the Literature Review Selection

Authors	Title of Article	Journal	Years	Conclusion
Barden, S.M., & Greene, J.H	An investigation of multicultural counseling competence and multicultural counseling	International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 37	2015	Student gender and ethnicity did not affect MCSE or MCC. Students who had been in graduate education longer had

Authors	Title of Article	Journal	Years	Conclusion
	self-efficacy for counselors-in-training			higher self-reported MCC and higher levels of multicultural knowledge.
Ridley et al. (2021)	The process model of multicultural counseling competence	The Counseling Psychologist, 49(4)	2021	The model consists of three distinct phases: preparation, intake and in-sessions, and termination.
Yoon et al. (2014)	Critical issues in teaching a multicultural counseling course	International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 36	2014	The process of teaching a MCC is as important as, or even more important than, the content.
Ivers et al. (2016)	The relationship between mindfulness and multicultural counseling competence	Journal of Counseling & Development, 94(1)	2016	After race/ethnicity, multicultural course completion, and empathy were controlled, components of mindfulness were correlated with multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge.
Ridley et al (2021)	Multicultural counseling competence: A construct in search of operationalization	The Counseling Psychologist, 49(4)	2021	The three major models of the construct—skills-based, adaptation, and process-oriented—share six limitations.
Dillon et al. (2016)	A dyadic study of multicultural counseling competence	Journal of counseling psychology, 63(1)	2016	Both client and counselor perspectives suggested that some counselors possessed generally higher MCC than others.
Tomlinson-Clarke (2013)	Multicultural counseling competencies: Extending multicultural training paradigms toward globalization	Ideas and research you can use, 60	2013	Multicultural training must extend counselors' competencies beyond pre-requisite levels for meeting client concerns in a culturally diverse world.
Mollen & Ridley, (2021)	Rethinking multicultural counseling competence: An introduction to the major contribution	The Counseling Psychologist, 49(4)	2021	Laying the groundwork for impasse analysis, proposals for alternative models of the construct, and conceptualization of cases that demonstrate the use of the model.
Collins et al (2015)	Student perspectives: Graduate education facilitation of multicultural counseling and social justice competency	Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 9(2)	2015	Participants' education primarily resulted from a single course design and an emphasis on awareness and knowledge of culture; however, attainment of multicultural counseling skills and attention to social justice tenets and advocacy were reported as lacking or absent from their education.
Jones et al (2016)	Multicultural counseling competence training: Adding value with multicultural consultation	Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 26(3)	2016	An intentional effort is required for integrating cultural factors into treatment-one cannot rely solely on the client to acknowledge cultural factors in therapy.
Greene et al (2014)	The influence of film and experiential pedagogy on multicultural counseling self-efficacy and multicultural counseling competence	Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	2014	Influence of experiential pedagogical strategies with an emphasis on film on multicultural counseling competence (MCC) and multicultural counseling self-efficacy (MCSE) increased as a result of one semester in a multicultural counseling class.
Quinn (2013)	A person-centered approach to multicultural counseling competence	Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 53(2)	2013	This culturally adapted person-centered approach is suggested to provide a competent and effective

Authors	Title of Article	Journal	Years	Conclusion
				treatment system for racial/ethnic minority clients and families.
Matthews et al (2018)	Examining the relationships between multicultural counseling competence, multicultural self-efficacy, and ethnic identity development of practicing counselors	Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 40(2)	2018	Ethnic identity and multicultural self-efficacy accounted for 42.4% of the variance in multicultural counseling competence after controlling for social desirability, F(3, 159) = 38.99, p < .001.
Clark et al (2017)	The relationship between counselors' multicultural counseling competence and poverty beliefs	Counselor Education and Supervision, 56(4)	2017	Multicultural counseling competence (MCC) is predictive of counselor individualistic and structural poverty beliefs.
Fietzer et al (2018)	Multicultural personality and multicultural counseling competency in counselor trainees	Counselor Education and Supervision, 57(2)	2018	Multicultural personality predicted multicultural counseling competency, but ethnic identity did not.
Berger et al (2014)	Therapist ethnicity and treatment orientation differences in multicultural counseling competencies	Asian American Journal of Psychology, 5(1)	2014	If therapists become more personally involved with diverse populations, they will feel more culturally aware and feel like they have a better relationship with ethnic minority clients.
Ratts et al (2016)	Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Guidelines for the counseling profession	Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44(1)	2016	Framework of the MSJCC visually depicts the relationships among the competencies' key constructs: multicultural and social justice praxis, quadrants, domains, and competencies.

The journal articles that met the selection criteria were then subjected to further analysis by the researchers. This study employed a meta-synthesis approach as the data analysis technique within the SLR framework. Meta-synthesis is a qualitative method used to generate new insights or a more comprehensive understanding by systematically integrating findings from previous studies. Through this method, large amounts of research data can be synthesized to produce a coherent and in-depth interpretation. The findings from the analysis are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Multicultural Competency Standards

No	Competency standards	Aspect	Application
1.	Counselor Awareness of Cultural Values	Attitudes and beliefs	Cultural self-awareness and sensitivity to one's cultural heritage are very important
			Their cultural backgrounds and experiences have influenced attitudes, values, and biases about psychological processes.
			Be able to recognize the limits of their multicultural competence and expertise
			Recognize the source of their discomfort with the differences that exist between them and clients in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture
		Knowledge	have special knowledge about their race and culture and how it is personally and professional influences the counselor's understanding of the counseling process
			have knowledge and understanding of how bullying, racism, discrimination, and stereotypes affect each counselee and affect the counseling process
			Knowing its social impact on others.

No	Competency standards	Aspect	Application
		.Skills	Be able to recognize abilities and seek educational, consulting, and training experiences to increase their understanding and effectiveness in working with culturally different populations.
			seek to understand themselves as racial and cultural beings and actively seek a non-racist identity
2.	Counselor Awareness from a Client's Perspective	Attitudes and beliefs	Be aware of their positive and negative emotional reactions to other racial and ethnic groups that may prove detrimental to the counseling relationship
			Be aware of the stereotypes and preconceived notions they hold of other racial and ethnic minority groups
		Knowledge	Have special knowledge and information about the particular group they deal with. They are aware of the lived experiences, cultural heritage, and historical backgrounds of their culturally diverse clients.
			Understand how race, culture, ethnicity, and so on can influence personality formation, vocational choices, manifestations of psychological disorders, help-seeking behavior, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of counseling approaches.
			Understand and know socio-political influences that affect the lives of racial and ethnic minorities.
		Skills	Familiarize yourself with relevant research and the latest findings regarding mental disorders and mental health that affect different ethnic and racial groups.
			Take an active role in minority activities outside of counseling activities.
3.	Appropriate Cultural Intervention Strategies	Attitudes and Beliefs	Respect the client's religious or spiritual beliefs and values, including attributions, as they influence worldviews, psychosocial functioning, and expression of stress.
			Respect cultural practices and help indigenous peoples and respect between different communities.
			Value bilingualism and not view other languages as a barrier to counseling.
		Knowledge	Have clear and explicit knowledge and understanding of the general characteristics of counseling and therapy and understand how they may clash with the cultural values of various cultural groups.
			Be aware of the institutional barriers that prevent minorities from using counseling services.
			Know about potential bias in assessment instruments and use procedures and interpret findings keeping in mind the client's cultural and linguistic characteristics.
			Knowing culture with regards to family structure, hierarchies, values, and beliefs from multiple cultural perspectives.
			Be aware of relevant discriminatory practices at the social and community level that may affect the psychological well-being of the population served.
		Skills	Engage in a variety of verbal and nonverbal assistance responses.
			Can perform institutional intervention skills on behalf of their clients.
			Do not mind consulting traditional healers or traditional leaders and religious practitioners in dealing with culturally different clients if necessary.
			Able to interact in the language requested by the client and, if unable, can make appropriate referrals.
			Have training and expertise in the use of traditional assessment and testing instruments
			present and work to eliminate bias, prejudice, and discriminatory contexts in conducting evaluations and providing interventions, and must develop sensitivity to issues of oppression, sexism, heterosexism, elitism, and racism

No	Competency standards	Aspect	Application
			Responsible for educating their clients on psychological intervention processes, such as goals, expectations, legal rights, and counselor orientation.

The findings presented in the previous table show that counselors are required to meet three fundamental standards of multicultural competence: awareness of cultural values, understanding the client's cultural perspective, and the ability to implement culturally relevant intervention strategies. These three components are essential and serve as the core foundation of counselor competence in multicultural counseling.

3.2. Discussion

Initial interpretations of multiculturalism primarily emphasized dimensions such as race and ethnicity. Over time, contemporary scholars have refined the concept by focusing on specific cross-cultural variables. In the late 20th Century, multicultural counseling competence emerged as an important focus within the helping professions and has since been recognized as the fourth force in counseling and psychology alongside psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches (Dilon et al., 2016). Multicultural counseling refers to a therapeutic relationship in which the counselor and the counselee originate from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural counseling similarly involves interaction between counselor and client, but the primary distinction lies in the significant cultural differences that influence the counseling dynamics (Darmawani et al., 2020). Multicultural counseling intentionally incorporates aspects such as race, ethnicity, cultural traditions, and gender into the counseling process. It represents a structured approach aimed at addressing cultural diversity, and an understanding of multiculturalism is essential to enhance the effectiveness of counseling practices (Summers et al., 2020). Considering these cultural variations, counselors must develop cultural awareness and sensitivity, ensuring that the counseling process not only focuses on problem-solving but also fosters an effective relationship between the counselor and the client. Ethical guidelines must also be upheld in the implementation of multicultural counseling.

a) The Meaning of Culture in the Context of Multicultural Counseling

Counselors must strive to understand the problems experienced by their counselees objectively, avoiding personal bias and adopting a holistic perspective. Awareness of cultural diversity within society significantly contributes to the effectiveness of counseling. One of the most unethical practices in cross-cultural counseling is when a counselor imposes personal cultural beliefs or values on the client. In essence, multicultural counseling occurs when the counselor and counselee come from different cultural backgrounds, which may stem from differences in socialization, life experiences, or ethnicity. Intercultural interaction often presents complex challenges for individuals (Collier, 2015). As a theoretical approach, multicultural counseling provides a comprehensive framework that highlights key principles relevant to both theory and practice. Quinn (2013) asserts that multicultural counseling competencies are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of culturally adapted counseling interventions.

To enhance multicultural competence, various professional development programs have been introduced. One of these initiatives is offered by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), which provides training to equip counselors with the competencies needed to work effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly those outside the European context. AMCD also established standards for multicultural counseling competencies. Cultural variables significantly impact counseling services, making it essential for counselors to understand the cultural influences in their professional practice. The counseling relationship is complex and shaped by the unique cultural identity of each client, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding in multicultural counseling. Fundamentally, multicultural counseling reflects a commitment to diversity and promotes cultural values that support harmonious coexistence within a pluralistic society (Stepney, 2022)

Culture functions both as an individual and social construct, forming a system of shared values that shapes attitudes and behaviors. Within a counseling context, culture influences individual perspectives and actions. Culture has three main characteristics. First, culture is an abstract concept; what can be observed are its manifestations through human behavior, such as thoughts, traditions, rituals, and artifacts. Second, culture exists as a conceptual group that emerges through interactions where individuals develop shared beliefs and adaptive behavioral patterns. Third, culture is internalized by group members, forming a collective identity that differentiates one cultural group from another. In the context of multicultural counseling, culture encompasses traditions, values, beliefs, norms, language, and customs that are passed down across generations and form the basis of a group's identity. Culture shapes how individuals think, evaluate, and act collectively within a community.

b) Multicultural Counseling: Paradigm

Multicultural counseling, also known as cross-cultural counseling, is a counseling process in which the counselor and the counselee come from different cultural backgrounds. This type of counseling involves intercultural interaction, where both parties bring their respective cultural perspectives into the counseling relationship. According to Von-Tress, multicultural counseling occurs when the counselor or guidance teacher and the counselee differ culturally due to variations in the acquisition of culture, subculture, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. John Locke's view of multiculturalism emphasizes the uniqueness and distinction among groups, drawing attention to individual differences rooted in cultural diversity.

The term "multicultural" is associated with the broader concept of culture, which consists of three fundamental variables. The first is ethnographic variables, which include ethnicity, nationality, religion, and language. The second is demographic variables, such as age, gender, and geographic residence. The third is status variables, which encompass educational background, economic conditions, and social class. These cultural variables influence the behavior, values, beliefs, perceptions, goals, moral principles, and cognitive processes of each counselee (Shiraev & Levy, 2020). The multicultural paradigm encourages individuals to adopt a pluralistic mindset, which involves an attitude of openness, acceptance, and active engagement with cultural diversity as a natural part of social life.

Pedersen explains that the foundation of multicultural theory rests on the recognition that both counselors and counselees are influenced by cultural dimensions, including gender, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background (Casas et al., 2016). Thus, multicultural counseling integrates these cultural influences within the therapeutic process, creating an environment where the counselor and counselee interact with mutual respect for cultural differences. This approach values the uniqueness of each counselee and acknowledges that both counselors and clients bring culturally shaped beliefs and attitudes into the counseling process. Therefore, for counseling to be effective, a counselor must be able to understand and incorporate the cultural perspectives of their counselee into the counseling process (Hawranek et al., 2024).

c) Cultural Dimensions in the Multicultural Counseling Process

The multicultural counseling paradigm expands the understanding of cultural diversity beyond race and ethnicity by also addressing diversity related to social class, disability, sexual orientation, and other sociocultural factors. This broad perspective enables counselors to recognize that cultural diversity encompasses multiple dimensions of human experience.

In practice, multicultural counseling requires an understanding of several key cultural dimensions. First, culture provides philosophical guidance and direction for counseling, influencing its core principles, goals, and ethical foundations. Second, culture affects the characteristics and needs of the counselee, shaping their worldview and personal development. Third, culture determines how counselors understand individuals and apply relevant counseling approaches. Fourth, culture serves as a basis for designing counseling service programs. Fifth, culture influences the management and implementation of counseling services. Sixth, culture affects the availability of facilities, service infrastructure, and financial considerations in counseling. Seventh, culture has a significant influence on the dynamics of the counseling process, including communication patterns and the nature of counselor–client relationships. Ultimately, culture has a significant influence on the counseling environment, encompassing the social and institutional contexts within which counseling takes place (Efremov, 2025).

According to Wong & Wong (2020), counselors and guidance teachers must possess awareness, knowledge, and skills related to cultural diversity to work effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds. Culturally competent counselors not only address issues related to race and ethnicity but are also able to manage broader cultural differences that may arise during counseling. Corey (2016) emphasizes that cross-cultural interventions should be grounded in the cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors of the counselee, rather than being based solely on universal counseling theories that may not apply to all cultural contexts. In an increasingly globalized world, interactions across cultures are inevitable, making multicultural counseling an essential paradigm. Whether conducted individually or in groups, counseling must be culturally responsive in order to be meaningful and effective.

d) Competence of Counselors/Guidance Teachers in Multicultural Counseling

The competence of counselors and guidance teachers in carrying out multicultural counseling is based on three fundamental standards of multicultural competency: awareness of cultural values, understanding the client's cultural perspective, and the ability to apply culturally appropriate intervention strategies. These three elements become the core competencies that determine the effectiveness of multicultural counseling services. The Professional Standards Committee of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) affirms that counselors are required to demonstrate three primary competencies: attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills. This means that multicultural counseling competence encompasses not only technical counseling capabilities but also cultural understanding and sensitivity (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2015).

According to Fisher-Borne et al. (2015), multicultural counseling competence refers to the counselor's overall ability to work effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds. Similar to other cross-cultural professional practices, counselors must possess several fundamental professional characteristics, including: being aware of personal values and assumptions about human behavior, being able to reflect on and manage personal values, demonstrating openness and willingness to learn from clients with different values, understanding the general principles of counseling, recognizing the influence of ethnicity and environmental background, being responsive to cultural differences that may create barriers during counseling, refraining from imposing personal cultural values on clients, and acknowledging the importance of cultural competence in the counseling relationship (Park & Ramirez 2021).

As outlined by the AMCD, multicultural competence requires the development of appropriate attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Cultural understanding is also closely tied to counseling ethics, especially within multicultural settings. Counselors must begin by developing self-awareness, as it is difficult for them to form meaningful relationships with others without understanding themselves. For example, when a counselor is unable to listen effectively due to unresolved personal issues, the counseling process will not be optimal. Therefore, self-understanding forms the basis of effective counseling practice. After developing self-awareness, counselors must deepen their understanding of cultural frameworks and models (Wambu & Fisher, 2015), as cultural literacy is essential before engaging directly with counselees. Culture plays a central role in shaping human behavior and counseling interactions. Since culture develops through environmental experiences, individuals from different regions will possess varying cultural backgrounds (Milfont & Schultz, 2016).

Effective multicultural counseling requires mutual cultural understanding between the counselor and the counselee. This understanding helps prevent miscommunication and ensures that therapy respects cultural influences on thoughts, emotions, behavior, and spirituality. Counselors must also demonstrate sensitivity and critical judgment when making decisions during sessions. For instance, if a counselee from a specific cultural background is uncomfortable with direct verbal responses, the counselor should adapt by providing culturally appropriate non-verbal support (Mirza et al., 2017).

Ultimately, competency in multicultural counseling reflects the counselor's ability to create a therapeutic environment that respects cultural diversity. Counselors and guidance teachers must continually reflect on their practice and align it with professional ethics. Awareness of issues such as discrimination and the tendency to impose cultural bias is essential to maintain integrity and effectiveness in multicultural counseling.

e) Approaches to Multicultural Counseling

The urgency of multicultural counseling lies in its emphasis on honoring the counselee's cultural worldview and psychological well-being. Research indicates that clients' perceptions of counselors' multicultural competence are positively linked to their emotional adjustment and well-being (Storlie et al., 2019). Therefore, counselors must be able to understand the cultural frame of reference of the counselee in order to support their personal growth and help them function effectively in their social environment.

There are three main approaches in multicultural or cross-cultural counseling. The first is the universal or ethical approach, which emphasizes the everyday human experiences shared by all cultural groups. This perspective focuses on shared human values and promotes mutual understanding between the counselor and the counselee by highlighting similarities rather than differences. The second is the emic or culturally specific approach, which focuses on the uniqueness of each culture. This approach values cultural distinctiveness and recognizes that counseling methods should be tailored to the client's cultural context to ensure relevance and effectiveness. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the client's cultural background to prevent misinterpretation of their behavior or problems. The third approach is the inclusive or transcultural approach, which views counseling as a reciprocal process that requires active collaboration between the counselor and the counselee (Gaden et al., 2022). This approach emphasizes cultural awareness, open communication, and adapting counseling strategies to the cultural needs of the counselee. Key components include sensitivity to cultural biases, understanding the client's cultural history, choosing culturally appropriate interventions, and the ability to address cross-cultural challenges in counseling (Soto et al., 2018).

Multicultural counseling has been described as the fourth force in counseling theory, following psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches. Its emergence represents a movement that highlights the importance of cultural understanding as a core element of counseling. Previous counseling approaches were heavily influenced by Western or Eurocentric perspectives, which often marginalized minority cultural perspectives. In contrast, multicultural counseling promotes cultural inclusivity and responsiveness. Multicultural counseling helps clients from diverse backgrounds address personal and sociocultural challenges, while also fostering adaptation in pluralistic societies (Yıldız & Uslu, 2024).

f) Multicultural Counseling Model

The multicultural counseling model is widely recognized as the fourth significant movement in counseling theory, following the psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches. Within this model, multicultural

counseling competence and social justice are viewed as fundamental aspects of a professional counselor's identity (O'Hara et al., 2016; Ratts et al., 2016; Storlie et al., 2018). The model emphasizes that cultural understanding is inseparable from effective counseling practice, as it profoundly shapes one's interpretation of human behavior and psychological processes. Scholars in this field frequently concentrate on issues affecting minority populations, shifting away from a historically Eurocentric foundation that has dominated many counseling frameworks.

This model is based on the premise that cultural variables, including age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status, influence both counselors and counselees. Among the key models outlined in multicultural counseling are the following:

The culture-centered model emphasizes recognizing and appreciating the cultural values that underpin beliefs and behavioral patterns. This model emphasizes the importance of understanding one's own cultural background and that of others to foster mutual respect and self-awareness. Challenges in counseling often arise when differences in cultural assumptions exist between the counselor and the client or when there is a lack of openness in cultural communication (Mirza et al., 2017).

The integrative model highlights the importance of incorporating traditional cultural values within the counseling process. It considers various factors affecting clients, including pressures resulting from interactions with dominant cultural groups, adherence to traditional cultural norms, and the impact of individual and family experiences on psychological development (Engin et al., 2018).

The ethno-medical model provides a culturally grounded therapeutic framework aimed at enhancing cross-cultural sensitivity and communication. It places the client within a broader cultural context. It encompasses nine conceptual elements, including cultural definitions of illness, cultural beliefs about healing, criteria for well-being, cultural views of bodily function, and culturally based health practices (Marques et al., 2021). This model emphasizes aligning therapeutic strategies with clients' beliefs and values to enhance the effectiveness of counseling.

The multicultural counseling model is rooted in promoting unity and harmony amid diversity. Its ultimate goal is to integrate cultural values into counseling practice, creating a supportive and inclusive therapeutic environment. Counselors must consider clients' cultural backgrounds to avoid misinterpretation and bias while also preventing culturally insensitive interventions (Nafari & Ruebottom, 2025). In today's diverse and globalized world, developing multicultural competence is essential for counselors to navigate complex cultural interactions and provide adequate support.

g) Multicultural Counseling: New Hopes and Paradigms for the 21st Century

Multicultural counseling has gained increasing significance as a professional practice in the 21st Century. The rising cultural diversity within societies has heightened the demand for culturally responsive counseling services, reinforcing the need for counselors to enhance their professional capabilities (Amoah & Emmanuel, 2020). Counselors play a vital role as facilitators of change. They must develop a strong understanding of cultural diversity to build empathy, cultural awareness, and appropriate intervention strategies that align with clients' cultural realities.

The multicultural paradigm encourages counselors to adopt a pluralistic mindset that recognizes diversity as a natural part of human existence. This paradigm promotes tolerance, intercultural respect, and the acceptance of different worldviews (Mosanya & Kwiatkowska, 2023). Siscoe (2024) emphasizes that pluralism requires active engagement and positive attitudes toward cultural differences. At its core, multicultural competence is positionned as a central objective in professional counseling.

Three essential paradigm shifts in multicultural counseling reflect emerging expectations and new directions in the field of multicultural counseling. The first paradigm is the enrichment of multicultural counseling, which expands the theoretical foundation of counseling by incorporating diverse perspectives on psychological development and mental health. Contributions from professionals across cultures have strengthened the theoretical basis of multicultural counseling, emphasizing that cultural differences must be recognized and accommodated within counseling practice.

The second paradigm highlights social responsibility and professional transformation. Multicultural counseling acknowledges the ethical obligation of counselors to address the diverse needs of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Counselors are expected to function as advocates and agents of change, especially within marginalized communities (Chen et al., 2024). This paradigm underlines that failing to account for cultural diversity may lead counselors to become part of the problem rather than the solution.

The third paradigm emphasizes the development of culturally competent counselors. This paradigm requires counselors to demonstrate awareness, cultural knowledge, and practical skills in working with diverse clients. Counselors must balance respect for individual uniqueness with recognition of shared cultural experiences and challenges influenced by social systems. Lee (2013) notes that multicultural counseling presents both challenges and opportunities due to differences in cultural backgrounds between counselors and clients.

Culturally responsive counseling cannot be achieved without mutual cultural awareness and understanding.

This awareness must exist in both the counselor and the client so that cultural perspectives can be integrated productively within counseling sessions. Counselors must continuously cultivate cultural sensitivity through exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and ongoing reflection. Cultural literacy is therefore essential because it shapes attitudes, values, and counseling practices in multicultural settings.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

Based on the findings of this systematic literature review, the integration of multicultural competence into counseling practice is no longer optional but essential, particularly in culturally diverse educational settings. Counselors are encouraged to develop cultural awareness, sensitivity, and culturally responsive intervention strategies to enhance the effectiveness of counseling services. The findings further imply the need for continuous professional training programs that systematically develop multicultural competencies to ensure equitable and inclusive counseling practices.

4.1 Research Contributions

This study contributes theoretically by synthesizing key components of multicultural counseling competence into a coherent framework relevant to educational contexts. Practically, it offers guidance for counselors and educational institutions in implementing culturally responsive counseling practices. By highlighting the role of ongoing professional development, this study extends existing literature and provides a foundation for future research and policy development in multicultural counseling.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that emerged during the implementation of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). One constraint is that the SLR process requires a considerable amount of time to meet the criteria of the research questions, particularly in locating and comprehensively analyzing relevant studies. Despite efforts to conduct an extensive literature search, there remains the possibility that certain significant studies were not included, which may influence the conclusions. Additionally, although the SLR method emphasizes systematic data collection from available literature, data analysis is constrained by the type of study design. Only research presenting statistical data could be synthesized, which means that qualitative studies were not incorporated into the analysis and therefore were not reflected in the findings of this study.

5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future studies are encouraged to examine the application of multicultural counseling competencies within more specific contexts, particularly in educational institutions characterized by high cultural diversity or among marginalized populations, such as students from minority groups or those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Subsequent research could focus on designing and testing intervention models based on multicultural competencies and examining their impact on students' psychological well-being, academic engagement, and social development. Furthermore, future studies should explore strategies to strengthen counselor education and professional training programs, ensuring that future counselors are adequately prepared to address the complex cultural dynamics encountered in multicultural counseling settings.

6. CONCLUSION

Multicultural counseling has become a vital component of professional counseling in the 21st century due to the growing need for cultural competence in addressing the increasingly diverse populations served by counselors. Globalization has amplified cultural interaction, making it essential for counselors and guidance teachers to develop the skills necessary to respond effectively to cultural differences. Multicultural counseling is now recognized as the fourth force in counseling, complementing psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches. This development reflects a shift toward a broader understanding of human behavior, one that acknowledges and respects cultural diversity.

The central concept of multicultural counseling is the counselor's ability to manage cultural differences in a sensitive and professional manner. This competence is built upon three core standards: awareness of cultural values, understanding the client's cultural worldview, and the ability to implement culturally relevant intervention strategies. These standards prevent counselors from imposing their own cultural values on clients and instead promote culturally responsive counseling practices. A counselor's cultural awareness and ability to assess cultural influences are crucial in fostering an effective therapeutic relationship that encourages growth, trust, and psychological well-being.

Findings from this systematic literature review (SLR) demonstrate that multicultural competencies are essential for effective school counseling. Counselors who show sensitivity to cultural values and understand the client's cultural perspective are better equipped to build strong therapeutic alliances and address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds. The application of appropriate cultural intervention strategies is also vital in facilitating students' emotional, academic, and social development. This study contributes to the broader field of mul-

ticultural counseling by emphasizing its relevance in contemporary guidance and counseling practice. It provides a foundation for future studies aimed at developing inclusive counseling frameworks that serve all individuals regardless of their cultural background.

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All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Eric Komba Foyoh Mani: Conceptualization; Methodology; Validation; Formal analysis; Investigation, Writing - Original Draft. Martha Fanta Mansaray: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing

Declaration of GenAI Usage in Scientific Writing

The author declares that generative AI was used solely for conducting literature review searches in the manuscript titled Multicultural Counseling in the 21st Century: Redefining Professional Services in the Era of Globalization. AI tools assisted in identifying and retrieving relevant academic sources and articles to inform the research. All other aspects of the study, including data analysis, interpretation, and manuscript writing, were conducted independently by the author. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the IJCP GenAI Tool Usage Policy, with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to declare. All co-authors have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report.

Informed Consent Statement

The author declares that this study is a literature review and does not involve human participants, personal data, or any other subjects. Therefore, written and verbal informed consent is not required. The entire research process was conducted in accordance with academic ethical standards, upholding scientific honesty, integrity, and the ethical use of legitimate sources.

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