

Strengths-Based Multicultural Counseling (SBMC) Model: An Approach for Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the 21st Century

Novi Rosita Rahmawati¹, Prio Utomo^{2*}

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kediri, Kediri, Indonesia

Jl. Sunan Ampel No.7, Ngronggo, Kec. Kota, Kota Kediri, Jawa Timur 64127, Indonesia

²Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (IKIP) Siliwangi, Indonesia

Jl. Terusan Jend. Sudirman No.3, Baros, Kec. Cimahi Tengah, Kota Cimahi, Jawa Barat 40521, Indonesia

Abstract: The diversity among students serves as a valuable potential for fostering dynamic interactions and personal growth. To harness this potential, every student must cultivate multicultural awareness, which does not develop automatically but requires intentional efforts from an early stage. This article highlights the critical importance of strengths-based multicultural counseling and its relevance in the 21st century. The study utilizes a literature review as a methodological approach to emphasize the significance of strengths-based multicultural counseling, focusing on the opportunities and challenges faced by counselors and guidance teachers in contemporary contexts. Findings from the study reveal that strengths-based multicultural counseling is recognized as a "fourth force" or dimension within the counseling field, positioned alongside humanism, behaviorism, and psychodynamics. This approach emphasizes the need for cultural competence in counselors, encompassing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for professional practice in strengths-based multicultural counseling. Counselors are encouraged to view this method as a long-term relational process rather than a temporary intervention, given its implications for problem-solving and fostering understanding of diverse values among students. The counseling process thus becomes a vital responsibility in navigating and interpreting the differences and values that shape students' lives.

Keywords: Strengths-based multicultural counseling (SBMC) model, Counselors; Guidance and Counseling Teachers, Students, 21st century

INTRODUCTION

Each student is unique, a notion echoed by Fouad et al. (2009), who emphasize that cross-cultural and multicultural perspectives reveal that all individuals embody multicultural identities. In counseling, multiculturalism has become a topic of significant discussion. Broad interpretations of multiculturalism encompass aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, and other marginalized identities or sources of diversity (Cokley et al., 2008). Cultural competence starts with an understanding of one's own culture, extending beyond basic facts like ancestral origins to include values, assumptions, and biases shaped by cultural influences (Nelson et al., 2008). Achieving cultural self-awareness involves recognizing that every perspective, including one's own, is distinctive and valuable, which represents a critical milestone for Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers (Owen et al., 2011). This self-awareness is vital regardless of the counselor's cultural background.

Student diversity represents a dynamic potential for their personal development. It is essential for every student to cultivate multicultural awareness early in life, as this awareness does not emerge naturally but requires intentional development. In counseling, both students and guidance Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must possess multicultural awareness, with the latter also needing multicultural competence (Warnick, 2008). To address cultural differences between Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers and counselees, Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must understand the cultural contexts of their

* **Corresponding Author:** Prio Utomo, ✉ prio.utomo@ikipsiliwangi.ac.id

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, IKIP Siliwangi, Indonesia

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clients. Consequently, effective counseling demands knowledge not only of psychological principles and techniques but also of diverse cultural dimensions (Gainau, 2012). Multiculturalism underscores the value of cultural pluralism, which should be cherished as a rich reservoir of human cultural heritage. This recognition fosters coexistence, harmony, and tolerance among cultures. Even when a dominant or mainstream culture exists within a society, multiculturalism safeguards the rights, acknowledgment, and peaceful coexistence of all cultures, aiming for harmony rather than conflict (Cartwright et al., 2008).

Culturally competent schools integrate the value of diversity into both the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and learning, fostering an inclusive school climate (Klotz, 2006). Similarly, school Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers and effective multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers maintain attitudes and beliefs that reflect an awareness of their cultural backgrounds while actively working to identify and challenge their own biases, stereotypes, and values. Even when their belief systems differ from those of their students, these Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers respect and accept diverse worldviews (Neukrug, 2012). The cultural and ethnic diversity students bring to schools contributes to the development of multicultural systems, creating a reciprocal influence between schools and cultures. This dynamic has significantly shaped counseling approaches, with both positive and negative effects (Gibson & Mitchell, 2010).

As human civilization advances into the 21st century, the counseling profession must address the interplay of human behavior and environmental factors with cultural awareness, sensitivity, and mutual respect. This approach should align with the ethics of care, compassion, and responsibility. Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers rely on effective cultural strategies to navigate these complexities and meet contemporary challenges (Gerstein et al., 2012). Strengths-based multicultural counseling is essential for professional Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers, as it emphasizes understanding how cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors shape the experiences of counselees from diverse backgrounds. This fosters strong relationships and mutual understanding (Gibson & Mitchell, 2010).

Effective multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers prioritize learning about the cultural backgrounds of their students without making assumptions about their affiliations. They demonstrate a commitment to understanding various cultural groups and are acutely aware of the negative impacts of sociopolitical issues like racism, sexism, and heterosexism on students (Vasquez, 2010). Additionally, these Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers recognize that certain counseling theories may impose values that conflict with the needs of some students within the counseling relationship (Rodolfa et al., 2005).

This discussion highlights the importance of strengths-based multicultural counseling and its relevance in the 21st century. Initially introduced in the United States during the 20th century, this counseling approach was supported by the establishment of the American Counseling Association (ACA) in 1955, under the guidance of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA). During its early development, Copeland emphasized the importance of strengths-based multicultural counseling in addressing the needs of minority communities in North America. For over fifty years, these communities have faced the challenge of navigating traditions rooted in North American culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pedersen characterizes multicultural counseling as the "fourth force" in the field, positioning it alongside humanism, behaviorism, and psychodynamics as a pivotal framework for addressing cultural and social diversity (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). This approach serves as a tool to navigate cultural challenges and societal differences. Multicultural counseling and therapy have advanced significantly in recent years, driven by global changes and the increasing frequency of multicultural interactions facilitated by modern transportation and communication technologies.

Multicultural counseling requires Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to possess cultural competence, which includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for professional practice in diverse contexts (Kaslow et al., 2007). The psychological aspects of multicultural counseling emphasize five components: psychological science and education, integrative pedagogy, core curriculum, core professional competencies, practical elements, social responsibility, diversity, and gender awareness. Key competencies for multicultural leaders and Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers include (a) flexibility in strategy and tactics, (b) cultural sensitivity, (c) the ability to manage complexity, (d) resilience and resourcefulness, (e) honesty and integrity, (f) personal stability, and (g) strong technical skills (Connerley & Pedersen, 2006).

Strengths-based multicultural counseling competence involves Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers acquiring awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively build pluralistic, democratic relationships. This includes the ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and advocate on behalf of students from various backgrounds. On a broader scale, this competence enables Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to influence organizational practices, policies, and theories to become more inclusive and responsive to diverse populations (Sue & Torino, 2005).

Constantine et al. (2007) define multicultural competence as the active engagement of Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers in self-awareness, acquiring knowledge, and applying skills when working with diverse individuals. Pieters et al. (2009) suggest that the domains of this competency model can be understood as overarching goals or dynamic processes. The Strength-Based Multicultural Counseling Model focuses on leveraging clients' potential, values, and strengths rooted in their diverse cultural backgrounds as a foundation for fostering positive change. By incorporating cultural identity, social context, and personal strengths into the counseling process, this approach empowers clients to overcome challenges and reach their full potential.

This discussion highlights the vital importance of strengths-based multicultural counseling in the 21st century. It emphasizes the value of focusing on clients' inherent strengths, cultural values, and backgrounds as a foundation for fostering positive change and personal development. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, this approach enables Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to provide more effective and inclusive services by recognizing the unique cultural identities of each client. Strengths-based multicultural counseling views cultural diversity as a resource rather than a hindrance and encourages Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to cultivate ongoing self-awareness and cultural competence. By understanding and respecting the diverse cultural experiences of clients, Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers can build stronger therapeutic relationships and facilitate meaningful transformation. The model emphasizes that Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must not only recognize their own cultural biases but also be sensitive to the varying needs of clients to prevent misunderstandings or harm. In today's globalized society, multicultural counseling is more essential than ever, given the rising significance of addressing identity, race, ethnicity, and cultural complexities in counseling practices. This model provides an opportunity to enhance counseling effectiveness by promoting inclusivity, empathy, and cultural responsiveness, ultimately contributing to clients' well-being and success in an ever-changing world.

This model blends multicultural principles with a strengths-oriented perspective, helping individuals from varied backgrounds to identify and utilize the inherent potential shaped by their cultural values. The core principles of Strengths-Based Multicultural Counseling (Wiley et al., 2021) include:

- 1) Respect for the Client's Cultural Uniqueness: Emphasizes the importance of understanding and appreciating the client's cultural identity as well as recognizing the values that the client brings from their cultural background.
- 2) Focus on Strengths and Potential: Prioritizes the abilities and strengths that clients have, and how those strengths can be used to overcome challenges and achieve positive change in their lives.
- 3) Self-Awareness and Cultural Competence: Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should have an awareness of their own cultural biases and strive to continuously improve their knowledge and skills in dealing with cultural diversity.
- 4) Collaborative Approach: Building a mutually supportive relationship between counselor and client, making the client an active partner in the change process.
- 5) Acceptance of Diversity: Recognizing that each individual has unique life experiences influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, and valuing this diversity as a source of strength.
- 6) Empathy and Sensitivity to Client Background: Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers need to demonstrate genuine empathy towards clients and adapt to their needs and cultural perspectives.
- 7) Application of Culturally Responsive Practices: Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should use approaches and techniques that are appropriate to clients' values and life experiences, to ensure that interventions are relevant and effective in their cultural context.
- 8) Using Diversity as a Source of Strength: This model sees cultural diversity as an asset that can enrich the counseling process, rather than an obstacle.

These principles aim to create a counseling approach that is inclusive and sensitive to cultural diversity, with a focus on developing clients' strengths and potential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Strengths-based Multicultural Counseling Competence

Multicultural competence begins with self-awareness, requiring individuals to explore not only basic aspects of their cultural heritage, such as their parents' origins and background, but also the values, assumptions, and biases shaped by their cultural experiences. Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must view strengths-based multicultural counseling as a relationship with long-term implications, as it impacts problem-solving and helps clients navigate differences in how values are interpreted in their lives (Vera & Speight, 2003). This perspective implies that Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must first understand their own cultural biases. Self-awareness is the foundation for effectively understanding and assisting clients, enabling Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to recognize and appreciate the unique characteristics and differences of each student (Wibowo, 2015).

Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should cultivate five essential qualities: (1) respect, (2) genuineness, (3) empathic understanding, (4) the ability to convey empathy, respect, and genuineness to clients, and (5) structuring the counseling process effectively (Carter, 2004). Sue and Sue (2008) emphasize strengths-based multicultural counseling competence as a key recommendation for developing the traits of effective multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers, detailed in the following framework.

Table 1. Multicultural Counseling Competence

Dimensions	Counselor Awareness against self-assumptions and biased values	Understanding Views A world of difference student culture	Develop Strategy Interventions and Techniques which is appropriate
Attitudes and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have awareness and sensitivity to assess cultural heritage and respect differences. • Be aware of how their own cultural background affects psychological processes. • Able to recognize their limits. • Feel uncomfortable with the difference between themselves and the client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of their emotional reactions to other races and ethnic groups • Recognizing Stereotypes and preconceived notions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect spiritual beliefs and student values • Respect for custom will mpractice help • Appreciate the value of bilingualism
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have knowledge of their race/cultural heritage and how it affects the definition of normality and the counseling process • Have knowledge and understanding of ways of oppression/racism/discrimination (referring to the white identity development model) • Have knowledge of their social impact on others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have specific knowledge and information about the particular group they work with (referring to the development of the minority identity model) • Understand how race/culture/ethnicity can affect personality formation/ Elections • Skills/Psychological Disorders/Help seeking behavior • Understand and have knowledge of social and political influence that violates racial/ethnic minorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clear knowledge of the limits of counseling and how it can clash with minority values. • Be aware of institutional barriers in preventing minority access to mental health services • Understand the limits of the assessment procedure • Have knowledge about minority family structure and hierarchical society
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek consultative education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should familiarize themselves with relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a variety of styles of providing assistance.

Dimensions	Counselor Awareness against self-assumptions and biased values	Understanding Views A world of difference student culture	Develop Strategy Interventions and Techniques which is appropriate
	<p>experiences to enrich their understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continually seek to understand themselves as a racial/cultural being and actively seek a non-racist identity 	<p>research on various groups and seek educational opportunities that enrich their understanding knowledge and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with minority individuals in settings outside of counseling so that their informed perspective is broad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to train intervention skills. Willing to consult with various other parties who help. Responsible for attention in the language required by the student

The description above highlights that strengths-based multicultural counseling is grounded in the recognition of cultural pluralism, its characteristics, and dynamics, which influence how Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers interpret culture. These interpretations can either facilitate or hinder the counseling process. Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers working across cultural boundaries must be mindful of the implications of cultural diversity on counseling, carefully considering the complexities and dynamics within and between diverse cultural groups. Effective counseling practice demands that Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers deeply understand the intricate relationship between culture and group identity as experienced by their clients. Discomfort with any level of identity is not an option for competent Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers (Vera & Speight, 2003).

Community Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers who study multiculturalism go beyond mere understanding to take action (Baluch et al., 2004). Strengths-based multicultural counseling requires practitioners to master a comprehensive set of multicultural competencies, attitudes, and values, along with certain internalized personality traits. These elements must be consistently reflected in their thought processes and actions, serving as tools for fostering client development and behavior change. Multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers' approaches to thinking and acting are embedded within a systemic framework to enhance the cultural effectiveness and efficiency of professional counseling services.

The strengths-based multicultural counseling movement represents a revolutionary force in the counseling profession, driving a paradigm shift. This shift expands the understanding of fundamental concepts like mental health, psychological maturity, human development, psychological disorders, and intervention strategies to incorporate a more culturally respectful and responsive perspective (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008). Furthermore, Erford (2015) argues that all counseling is inherently strengths-based and multicultural because each client enters a counseling session with a unique worldview shaped by diverse cultural experiences. These experiences—encompassing race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and spirituality—shape how clients perceive and respond to theoretical approaches and intervention techniques.

2. Tactical Strategy: Steps to Implement of Strengths-Based Multicultural Counseling

Multicultural awareness is essential for Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers to provide effective services to a diverse range of clients. This awareness presents both a challenge and a necessity for Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the 21st century, especially within Indonesia's multicultural society, which is transitioning from traditional to modern dynamics. Future Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must develop multicultural competencies to address clients' expectations and problems effectively, enabling them to lead productive lives in alignment with societal norms.

Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should view strengths-based multicultural counseling as a long-term relationship with significant implications for problem-solving. It is their responsibility to help students navigate differences and interpret values meaningfully in their lives. Practically, counseling skills for multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers can be divided into three key stages: exploration, understanding, and action (LeBeauf & Maddux, 2009). Mastering these stages is crucial for effective counseling.

Implementing Strengths-Based Multicultural Counseling involves several key steps to ensure Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers are effectively addressing clients' needs while respecting their cultural backgrounds and inherent strengths. These steps include:

- 1) **Develop Cultural Awareness.** Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must first reflect on their own cultural biases, values, and experiences. Understanding one's own cultural background and how it influences perceptions and interactions is essential for developing cultural competence. Engage in continuous learning about different cultures and communities to better understand clients' worldviews, traditions, and experiences.
- 2) **Establish a Culturally Inclusive Environment.** Create a counseling space that feels safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive. This includes respecting diverse cultural expressions, using culturally relevant resources, and being open to different communication styles. Actively show respect for clients' cultural identities and experiences, making sure that the client feels understood and validated.
- 3) **Build Trust Through Empathy and Respect.** Establish trust by actively listening to clients and demonstrating empathy. Understand that clients' cultural backgrounds shape their experiences and challenges, and respect their viewpoints. Be aware of power dynamics and ensure that the counseling relationship is collaborative, where the client's strengths are recognized and highlighted.
- 4) **Identify and Focus on Client Strengths.** Instead of focusing solely on problems or deficits, highlight the client's inherent strengths, skills, and resilience, shaped by their cultural background. Encourage clients to recognize their own strengths and explore how these can be used to overcome challenges and promote positive change.
- 5) **Cultural Assessment.** Assess the client's cultural context and how it influences their identity, coping strategies, and behaviors. This step includes understanding the client's cultural values, traditions, and any external factors (such as discrimination or marginalization) that may be influencing their experiences. Use culturally appropriate assessment tools and be sensitive to the nuances of each client's background.
- 6) **Collaborative Goal Setting.** Work together with the client to set goals that align with their cultural values and aspirations. Ensure that goals are realistic and culturally appropriate, while empowering the client to take active steps toward achieving them. Focus on solutions that leverage the client's strengths and resilience, and create a plan that supports the client in their cultural context.
- 7) **Incorporate Cultural Competence in Interventions.** Use counseling techniques that are culturally relevant and tailored to the client's background. This may include adapting traditional counseling models to incorporate cultural considerations, using culturally appropriate metaphors or examples, and being mindful of nonverbal communication. Integrate the client's cultural worldview into the counseling process, ensuring that interventions honor and reflect their cultural identity.
- 8) **Ongoing Self-Reflection and Supervision.** Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should engage in regular self-reflection and seek supervision to continuously improve their cultural competence. This involves reflecting on their interactions with clients, identifying areas for growth, and addressing any biases that may arise during the counseling process. Participate in training and professional development opportunities to stay updated on multicultural counseling practices and theories.
- 9) **Evaluate and Adjust Counseling Approaches.** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of counseling interventions and make adjustments as necessary. Be flexible and responsive to the client's evolving needs, ensuring that the counseling process remains relevant and effective. Solicit feedback from clients to understand their experiences and make improvements to the approach as needed.
- 10) **Advocacy and Social Responsibility.** Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers should recognize their role in advocating for social change and the reduction of systemic barriers that impact marginalized communities. Support clients by guiding them in navigating societal challenges such as racism, sexism, and discrimination, and advocate for systemic changes that promote equality and inclusion.

Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers can effectively implement strengths-based multicultural counseling and create a positive, culturally responsive therapeutic environment that fosters client growth and well-being.

The explanation of the five directions of achievement of strengths-based multicultural counseling above implies that the strengths-based multicultural counseling movement is a revolutionary force that has become the center of attention in the counseling profession. These forces are forging a paradigm shift whereby culturally biased constructs of fundamental concepts such as mental health, psychological maturity, human development, psychological disorders, and appropriate assistance strategies are being expanded to include more respectful and

culturally responsive ways of thinking. Schools that are perceived as culturally responsive make a society out of cultural diversity, have the same academic expectations for every student, deliver a curriculum that reflects multiple cultures, provide ways for students and staff to deal with racial/cultural tensions, and actively employ diverse and committed employees.

Strengths-based multicultural counseling is a comprehensive assistance framework that is based on multicultural competencies and oriented towards social justice. Since human behavior is heavily influenced by context, multicultural Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers use strategies that facilitate the healthy development of both their clients and the communities that nourish them. An understanding of the intricacies of local culture and the attitudes that accompany intercultural differences is related to shifts in inter-civilizational relations that affect patterns of relations between individuals and between groups of individuals (Vavrus. 2002). In this case, anyone involved in intercultural studies is required to have a global perspective. Perhaps this perspective is not directly related to the counselor's understanding of counselor behavior but provides a perspective on how a counselor performs counseling services positions in global developments.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion highlights that the primary focus of multiculturalism lies in recognizing the uniqueness and distinctiveness of separate groups, which helps in addressing individual differences. As a result, strengths-based multicultural counseling can generally be described as a process where both the counselor and the client come from different backgrounds. These differences may stem from unique cultural socialization, traumatic experiences, or being raised in a particular ethnic environment. Intercultural relations pose significant challenges, and the effectiveness of counseling depends on various factors, with one of the most crucial being the relationship and mutual understanding between the counselor and the client.

Counseling relationships are often more effective and easier to establish when the counselor and client share a similar cultural background or are familiar with each other's cultural context. However, Counselors and Guidance and Counseling Teachers must be sensitive to the client's background and specific needs. Without this sensitivity, misunderstandings can occur, leading to frustration or even harm to the client. Effectively managing diversity and cultural differences requires developing self-awareness and a deep understanding of others. The differences between the counselor and client should not negatively influence the counseling process, and the counselor must remain attuned to the client's unique needs to avoid misunderstandings and foster a supportive, respectful environment.

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