

GENDER ISSUES IN MULTICULTURAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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Abstract

This study aims to deeply analyze gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling practices in Indonesia and formulate a conceptual model of counseling that is gender-equitable and sensitive to the local cultural context. The research approach used is qualitative with a phenomenological design, with participants consisting of school counselors, guidance and counseling lecturers, and prospective counselor students who were purposively selected. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The results showed that counselors' understanding of gender is still normative and influenced by cultural and religious values. Gender bias and stereotypes are still evident in counseling practices, while the counseling strategies applied tend to emphasize social harmony rather than individual empowerment. The main obstacle lies in the lack of training and institutional support for gender-perspective counseling. This study produces a conceptual model that integrates three main dimensions: counselors' awareness, knowledge, and skills in dealing with gender issues in multicultural contexts.

Keywords: gender, multicultural counseling, feminist counseling, cultural bias, empowerment

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam isu-isu gender dalam praktik bimbingan dan konseling multibudaya di Indonesia serta merumuskan model konseptual konseling yang berkeadilan gender dan sensitif terhadap konteks budaya lokal. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologis, dengan partisipan terdiri atas konselor sekolah, dosen bimbingan dan konseling, serta mahasiswa calon konselor yang dipilih secara purposif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis dengan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman konselor tentang gender masih bersifat normatif dan dipengaruhi oleh nilai budaya serta agama. Bias dan stereotip gender masih tampak dalam praktik konseling, sedangkan strategi konseling yang diterapkan cenderung menekankan harmoni sosial daripada pemberdayaan individu. Hambatan utama terletak pada kurangnya pelatihan dan dukungan institusional terhadap konseling berperspektif gender. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model konseptual yang mengintegrasikan tiga dimensi utama: kesadaran,

pengetahuan, dan keterampilan konselor dalam menghadapi isu gender dalam konteks multibudaya.

Kata kunci: *gender, konseling multibudaya, konseling feminis, bias budaya, pemberdayaan*

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, gender issues have received increasing attention in guidance and counseling studies, especially in multicultural contexts. Rapid social change, increasing awareness of gender equality, and the complexity of human identity in the global era require the counseling profession to adopt a more inclusive and diversity-sensitive approach. Conventional approaches rooted in Western values are often considered less responsive to the lived experiences of women, men, and individuals with non-binary gender identities in various cultural contexts. This shows the need for a new paradigm in counseling that not only pays attention to the psychological dimensions of individuals, but also the social, cultural and structural dimensions that influence the construction of gender identity.

In counseling practice in Indonesia, the diversity of cultures, religions, and value systems is a complex reality. Indonesia's pluralistic society presents its own dynamics for counselors, especially when dealing with clients who experience gender role conflict or gender-based discrimination. In many cases, traditional values still influence views on the roles of men and women. Women are often faced with social pressure to fulfill certain expectations such as being an obedient wife and mother, while men are required to be dominant, rational and economically empowered. This social pressure can lead to psychological inequalities, such as low self-esteem in women, gender identity crisis in adolescents, and unreported gender-based violence. In this context, counselors need to understand that gender issues are not just individual problems, but also the result of cultural constructions that influence the way a person understands himself and others.

The theories used to review this issue are multicultural counseling theory Sue et al., (2022) and feminist theory in counseling Browning et al., (1999). Multicultural counseling theory emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills for counselors to work effectively with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Multicultural counseling requires counselors to understand that a person's psychological experience cannot be separated from their social and cultural context. Meanwhile, feminist counseling theory stems from the belief that gender inequality is the result of patriarchal social structures that oppress and limit individual potential. Therefore, feminist counseling is not only oriented towards individual healing, but also towards empowerment and social transformation. In a multicultural context, combining these two theories allows for a counseling approach that is more sensitive to both cultural and gender dimensions.

Several previous studies have shown the importance of gender sensitivity in counseling practice. First, research by Kivimäki, (2024)) in *Introduction to the Research Handbook on Conflict Prevention* shows that conflicts in families often stem from inequality of gender roles. Women tend to bear a greater emotional burden and domestic work, while

men have a dominant role in family decision-making. This inequality has an impact on the emergence of household stress and conflict that requires an equality-based counseling approach.

Secondly, research by Goodman & Gorski, (2014) found that counseling practices in various countries are still influenced by Eurocentric and masculine norms, which often ignore the experiences of women and gender minorities. They asserted the need for decolonization in counselling education and practice to be more appropriate to local contexts and plurality of identities. Third, Hoshino & Cameron, (2008) research on *Narrative Art Therapy within a Multicultural Framework* shows that narrative and expressive therapies can be effective tools in understanding silenced gender experiences in patriarchal societies. Through art and narrative, clients can express their identity and emotional experiences more authentically. Fourth, Undurraga et al., (2025) research from the University of Edinburgh criticizes the assumed “neutrality” of the person-centered therapy approach, which tends to normalize Western styles of emotional expression. In Asian cultures, for example, calm and non-verbal emotional expression is considered natural and polite. This view confirms that counseling approaches that ignore cultural and gender differences in expression have the potential to alienate clients. Fifth, research by (Razak, 2011) through *The Impacts of Globalization on Mental Disorders: An Effective Solution From Islamic Perspective* introduced an Islamic value-based psychotherapy model that emphasizes the balance between spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. In the context of gender, this model is relevant because it places men and women as human beings with the same spiritual potential before God, different from gender stereotypes that place women as subordinate parties.

This research is different from previous studies because it does not only discuss gender equality in the context of Western counseling or simply integrate local cultural values, but seeks to examine gender issues within the framework of multicultural guidance and counseling based on humanistic and spiritual values. This research combines psychological, sociocultural and religious dimensions that are often separated in conventional approaches. This approach is novel because it emphasizes the balance between feminist counseling theory, multicultural counseling, and Islamic psychotherapy, which together provide a more complete perspective on gender identity, social roles, and power dynamics in relationships between individuals and society. Another novelty of this research lies in its efforts to develop a conceptual model of guidance and counseling that is able to bridge gender issues in Indonesia's multicultural society. This model is expected to help counselors understand clients' gender experiences not only as personal issues, but also as a reflection of broader social and cultural structures. This approach is relevant for the development of the counseling profession in Indonesia, which has been dominated by Western approaches and has not been fully adaptive to the local context.

The urgency of this research is very high because gender issues in Indonesia still cause various social and psychological problems. Data from Komnas Perempuan shows an increase in cases of gender-based violence every year, while in the field of education, gender stereotypes still influence students' career choices and social roles. In the context

of education and counseling guidance, this issue can be seen from the limited gender perspective in the curriculum and counseling practices in schools and universities. Many counselors have not been equipped with an in-depth understanding of gender equality and its impact on clients' mental health, interpersonal relationships, and life decision-making. In fact, according to Arredondo et al., (1996), guidance and counseling with a gender perspective can help individuals understand their full potential, overcome social barriers, and build a healthy self-identity.

In addition, the urgency of this research is also related to the increasing diversity of gender identities in modern society. The emergence of non-binary gender and LGBTQ+ discourses often pose ethical dilemmas for counselors in conservative societies. Counselors need to have cultural sensitivity and ethical skills to assist clients with different backgrounds and beliefs without losing professional integrity or local values. In this case, a multicultural approach combined with an understanding of religious values can be a bridge to avoid polarization between the liberal Western approach and the traditional values of Indonesian society. The purpose of this research is to analyze in depth the various gender issues that arise in multicultural guidance and counseling practices, as well as formulate a conceptual approach that is able to answer the challenges of cultural and gender diversity in Indonesia. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify the forms of gender issues faced in multicultural counseling practices; (2) examine the relevance of feminist theory, multicultural theory, and spiritual values in addressing gender issues; (3) develop a conceptual model of counseling that is gender-equitable and sensitive to the Indonesian cultural context. Through this research, it is hoped that a new understanding of how the guidance and counseling profession can play a role in realizing gender equality and social harmony in a pluralistic society will be born. Gender-perspective multicultural counseling not only functions as a means of psychological healing, but also as a social instrument to build a just, empathetic and inclusive society. Thus, this research is expected to enrich the scientific literature on counseling in Indonesia, as well as make a practical contribution to the development of counselor education curriculum, professional training, and gender-equitable education policies.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study design, because it focuses on an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of counselors and clients related to gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling practices. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to explore subjective meanings that arise from the real experiences of individuals in certain social and cultural contexts, so as to reveal the complexity of the relationship between gender, culture, and counseling practices. The research subjects consisted of school counselors, guidance and counseling lecturers, and prospective counseling students who were selected by purposive sampling, namely based on certain criteria such as experience in providing cross-cultural counseling services, understanding of gender equality, and active involvement in counseling practices in a multicultural environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis (such as counseling guides, training modules, and gender-related educational institution policies).

Data collection procedures were conducted in stages while maintaining the principles of research ethics, including participant consent and confidentiality of information. The researcher acted as the main instrument in the data collection and analysis process. The analysis technique used was phenomenological thematic analysis with the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing essential meaning (Miles et al., 2020). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, peer discussion, and member checking with participants to ensure the conformity of interpretations with their experiences. The results of the study are expected to produce an in-depth description of how gender issues are perceived and faced in multicultural guidance and counseling practices in Indonesia, as well as formulate a conceptual model of counseling that is gender-equitable and relevant to the local cultural context.

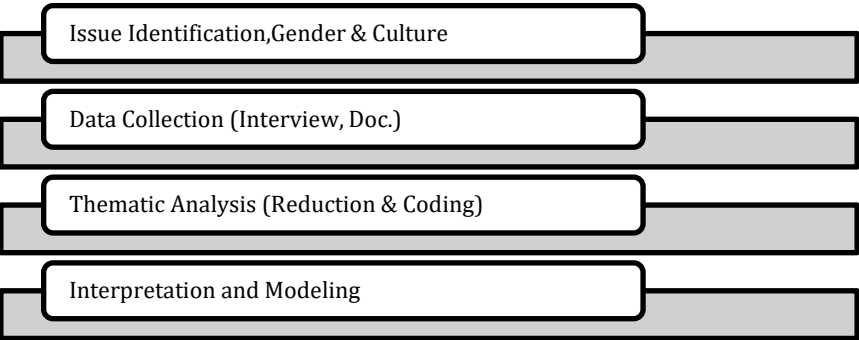
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological design to deeply understand counselors' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in dealing with gender issues in a multicultural environment. The researcher explored how counselors understand the meaning of gender equality, identify gender bias in counseling practices, and develop approaches based on culture and local values.

The research process was conducted in four main stages:

- 1. Initial exploration phase - gathering general information about gender issues in educational institutions and counseling practices.
- 2. Main data collection stage - through in-depth interviews and document analysis of counseling guidelines.
- 3. Data analysis stage - reduction, categorization and identification of key themes.
- 4. Verification and interpretation stage - integrating the findings with multicultural counseling theory and feminist theory.

Figure 1. Phenomenological Research Design



Overview of Participants and Research Context

The research was conducted in three higher education institutions and two secondary schools in urban and semi-urban areas in Indonesia, with a total of 15 participants consisting of school counselors, guidance and counseling lecturers, and prospective counseling students. They have diverse cultural backgrounds (Javanese, Bugis, Banjar,

Sundanese, and Madurese) and different experiences of counseling practice. The emerging social context shows that most counselors are still dealing with traditional norms regarding gender roles. For example, women are considered more appropriate to take care of emotional and family matters, while men are identified with rationality and leadership. This affects the way counselors assess client problems and choose approaches in counseling sessions.

Key Research Findings

The thematic analysis resulted in five major themes that describe gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling, namely:

1. Counselors' conceptual understanding of gender and culture.
2. Forms of gender bias and stereotypes in counseling practices.
3. Counselors' strategies in dealing with gender and cultural differences.
4. Barriers and challenges in implementing gender-perspective counseling.
5. Efforts to develop a multicultural counseling model based on gender equality.

These five themes become the main framework in interpreting the research results.

Table 1. Summary of Research Results

MAIN THEME	DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING PRACTICE
COUNSELORS' CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER AND CULTURE	Most counselors understand gender as a difference in social roles between men and women, but do not see it as a social construction that can change according to cultural context. Awareness of local culture is strong, but not yet integrated with an understanding of gender.	Increased gender literacy is needed for counselors to be able to see the interrelationship between social, cultural, and psychological roles of clients.
FORMS OF GENDER BIAS AND STEREOTYPES IN COUNSELING PRACTICE	Bias comes in the form of expectations of “ideal” behaviors based on gender, such as assuming women should be patient and men should be strong. These stereotypes influence the direction of counselor interventions.	Counselors need to be trained to recognize their own biases and apply critical reflection to avoid reinforcing gender inequality in the counseling process.
COUNSELOR STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH GENDER AND	Counselors use an empathic approach, non-confrontational communication, and	A multicultural approach needs to be combined with a gender perspective that promotes equality and

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	understanding of local cultural values. However, this strategy often emphasizes social harmony over client empowerment.	courage for clients to make decisions.
BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES	The main challenges are lack of training on gender perspective counseling, limited institutional support, and cultural resistance to equality issues.	Institutional policies and professional training that support the implementation of gender-sensitive counseling are needed.
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF GENDER-PERSPECTIVE COUNSELING	Establish a conceptual model that integrates local cultural values (deliberation, mutual cooperation, spirituality) with the principles of gender equality and multicultural empathy.	This model can be used as the basis for curriculum development for counselor education in Indonesia.

Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

1. Counselors' Conceptual Understanding of Gender and Culture

Most counsellors understand gender in simple biological and social contexts, but have not fully internalized the idea that gender is a social construction influenced by culture and history. Some counselors are aware that Indonesian culture is very diverse, but have not been able to combine this cultural understanding with a critical analysis of gender structures. This causes the counseling approach to be normative, maintaining the value of “social harmony” without questioning possible inequalities.

This highlights the importance of integrating multicultural counseling theory Sue et al., (2022) and feminist theory Browning et al., (1999) in counselor training. A strong conceptual understanding will help counselors assess client problems more comprehensively, including the social, cultural, and gender factors that surround them.

2. Gender Bias and Stereotypes in Counseling Practice

Bias and stereotypes arise both consciously and unconsciously in the counseling process. For example, counselors sometimes judge women's emotional behavior as “weakness”, while angry expressions in men are considered natural. In some cases, counselors still view the issue of domestic violence as a private matter that should be resolved internally, not as an issue of gender power imbalance. This phenomenon confirms the need for counselor self-reflection (self-awareness) as part of multicultural competence. In line with Rahim, (2023) theory on interpersonal conflict management, awareness of social position and personal values will help counselors manage value conflicts without judgment or reinforcing gender bias.

3. Counselors' Strategies in Dealing with Gender and Cultural Differences

Counselors in the field develop adaptive strategies that are aligned with local cultural values. For example, deliberation, patience, and religious approaches are used to maintain good relationships with clients. However, these approaches often emphasize social harmony over individual empowerment, especially for women or gender minority groups. This result shows the need to balance between cultural values (collectivism) and the principle of empowerment. In multicultural counseling, counselors need to position the client as a subject with voice and agency, not just a recipient of advice. Thus, counseling is not only a means of social reconciliation, but also a space for personal transformation.

4. Barriers and Challenges to the Implementation of Gender-Perspective Counseling

The main challenges found in this study include three main aspects:

- Structural aspects: Lack of policy support and institutional training related to gender and multiculturalism in counselor education.
- Cultural aspect: Community or institutional resistance to gender issues because they are considered contrary to local or religious values.
- Personal aspect: The lack of critical reflection and practical experience of counselors in dealing with cases of gender bias.

The combination of these three factors explains why the application of gender-sensitive counseling is still limited. Stronger institutional strategies such as the development of training modules, ethical guidelines, and professional reflection forums for counselors are needed.

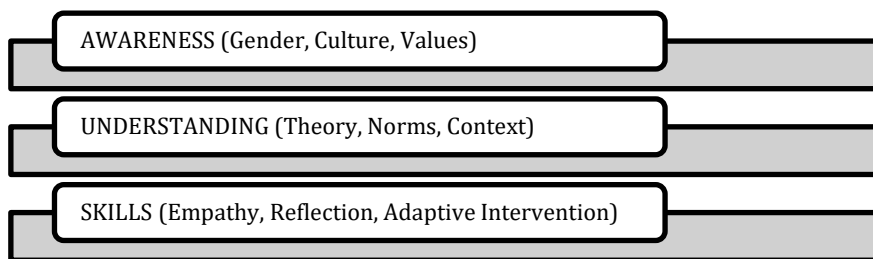
5. Conceptual Model of Gender-Perspective Multicultural Counseling

From the results of data interpretation, researchers developed a conceptual model of multicultural counseling with a gender perspective based on three main dimensions:

1. Awareness dimension: Counselors are aware of the role of gender, culture, and power in shaping client identity.
2. Knowledge dimension: Counselors understand gender theory, local cultural values, and relevant social issues.
3. Skills dimension: Counselors have the ability to apply empathic, reflective, and contextual counseling strategies.

This model can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Gender-Perspective Multicultural Counseling



The model asserts that awareness and knowledge without skills will not result in changes in praxis. Counsellors need to internalize all three dimensions in a balanced manner in order to provide equitable and empowering counselling services to all clients, regardless of their gender identity or cultural background.

DISCUSSION

The results showed that gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and spiritual context of Indonesia's diverse society. Field findings indicate that most counselors understand gender within a normative framework that is still influenced by traditional and religious values, while critical awareness of the inequality of social roles between men and women is still limited. This condition indicates that counseling practice in Indonesia is in a transitional stage between the conventional paradigm centered on the value of social harmony and compliance towards a new paradigm that emphasizes equality, diversity, and empowerment. In this context, the multicultural counseling theory proposed by Sue, (2001) is a relevant framework to explain these dynamics. Sue and Sue asserted that effective counselors in a multicultural context must develop three main dimensions of competence: awareness of self-values and biases, knowledge of the client's culture and value system, and skills in applying counseling strategies that are appropriate to the client's background. Based on the research results, the awareness and knowledge dimensions appear to be developing among Indonesian counselors, but the practical skills dimension still faces various obstacles, especially in applying the principles of gender equality without violating prevailing cultural and religious norms.

The limited understanding of gender in counseling practice is rooted in patriarchal social construction. As explained in feminist counseling theory Brown et al., (2015), gender identity is formed through the interaction between social structures, individual experiences, and symbolic power that regulates the behavior of men and women. In Indonesian counseling practice, these norms often limit women's space, especially in the context of decision-making, emotional expression, and public roles. Some counselors still see assertive female behavior as a form of impropriety, while dominant male expressions

are considered to be in accordance with their nature. This shows that gender bias is not only owned by clients, but also by counselors who bring their own cultural values into the counseling room. Correspondingly, Shen et al., (2023) asserts that feminist counseling aims to remove unequal power relations between counselors and clients, and encourage critical awareness of unjust social systems. Thus, gender-perspective counseling is expected not only to be a means of individual recovery, but also an instrument of social change that leads to equality and justice. In the multicultural context of Indonesia, the main challenge is how the principles of feminism can be applied without causing cultural and religious resistance that is still strong in some communities.

The research findings also show that gender biases and stereotypes often appear subtly through social expectations of the roles of men and women. This phenomenon can be explained through Rahim, (2023) conflict *management* approach, which states that conflicts over values and social roles are an inevitable part of human interaction. In the context of counseling, gender conflict occurs when a client's personal values conflict with the surrounding social norms or cultural expectations. For example, women who want to pursue a career often face social pressure to prioritize domestic roles, while men who want to express emotions openly are considered weak. Counselors who are unaware of this value conflict tend to take an *avoiding* or *obliging* position in order to maintain harmony, whereas a more constructive strategy is *integrating* various perspectives to reach a common understanding. Rahim's view is in line with the need for counseling that does not suppress differences, but instead makes differences a source of learning and psychological growth. In other words, counselors need to see gender conflict not as a problem to be eliminated, but as an opportunity to encourage reflection and self-transformation for both clients and counselors.

In addition, the results showed that some counselors developed adaptive strategies based on local values such as deliberation, patience, mutual cooperation, and emotional balance. This approach is rooted in Indonesia's collectivistic culture that places social harmony above individual interests. However, in practice, this harmony orientation often makes counseling lose its critical power against structures of gender injustice. This is in contrast to the spirit of feminist counseling that emphasizes empowerment and courage to challenge oppressive social norms. To bridge these two approaches, an integration of multicultural counseling and feminist counseling adapted to the context of local values is needed. This approach can be referred to as *gender-sensitive multicultural counseling*, which is counseling that respects cultural values without ignoring the principles of gender justice. In practice, counselors can use reflective strategies by helping clients understand the cultural roots of their beliefs and behaviors, while still encouraging awareness that every individual has the right to determine his or her life path freely and with dignity.

The theory of *Islamic Psychotherapy* developed by Razak, (2011) provides an alternative framework that is highly relevant in the context of Indonesia's religious society. Islamic psychotherapy emphasizes the balance between the spiritual, social, and emotional aspects of human beings. In this view, men and women are seen as beings with the same spiritual potential to develop towards balance (*mizan*). Thus, the Islamic approach in counseling does not contradict the principle of gender equality, but rather enriches the

understanding that equality is rooted in spiritual values about humanity. This approach helps Indonesian counselors to integrate religious values with social justice principles without losing cultural authenticity. Through a spiritual orientation, counseling not only serves to heal psychological wounds caused by gender inequality, but also restores individuals to an inner balance rooted in a relationship with God. In multicultural practice, this is particularly important as it helps counselors maintain a balance between cultural sensitivity and ethical responsibility to universal human values.

The main barriers found in this study include limited counselor training on gender and multiculturalism, lack of institutional support, and resistance to equality discourses that are perceived to be against local traditions. According to S. Sue et al., (2009), counselors working in multicultural contexts must understand that social systems often reinforce structural inequalities that affect clients' psychological well-being. Without this awareness, counselors risk reinforcing stigma and discrimination. In the Indonesian context, strengthening the professional capacity of counselors needs to be done through self-reflection-based training, cross-cultural supervision, and the development of counselor education curricula that explicitly include gender issues. Counselors also need to master empathic and non-confrontational cross-cultural communication skills in order to be able to face value resistance with a persuasive approach. In this case, Rahim's theory of conflict resolution styles is again relevant: an integrative approach that combines rational and emotional perspectives proves more effective for building understanding without causing resistance.

The conceptual model generated in this study - which emphasizes three main dimensions: awareness, knowledge and skills - reinforces the idea that gender-perspective counselling should be reflective and transformative. Awareness leads counsellors to recognize their own positions and biases; knowledge provides the theoretical and cultural basis for understanding clients; while skills enable the application of effective and ethical strategies in the face of value differences. The integration of these three dimensions is in accordance with the framework of the *Tripartite Model of* multicultural counseling competence developed by (D. W. Sue et al., 2022). This model is also in line with Brown et al., (2015) view of feminist counselors who not only understand equality theory, but are also able to bring it to life in practice through empathy and client empowerment. In the local context, this model finds relevance because it is able to bridge cultural values that emphasize social balance with universal values of gender justice. Thus, gender-perspective multicultural counseling is not just an adaptation of Western theory, but a transformation of praxis rooted in human values and spirituality unique to Indonesia.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that the application of a gender perspective in counseling has broad implications for the development of educational curricula and institutional policies. The education of prospective counselors needs to include issues of gender, power, and culture as an integral part of the formation of professional competencies. This is important because counselors are not only required to have technical skills, but also critical awareness of the social structures that affect clients' lives. As stated by Rahim, (2023), social and value conflicts that are not managed constructively can lead to tension and dysfunction in interpersonal relationships. In the educational

context, counselors' ability to manage the value conflict between tradition and gender equality will determine their success in creating a safe, open, and equal counseling space for all clients. Educational institutions are also expected to develop counseling codes of ethics that affirm a commitment to gender justice and respect for cultural diversity.

From the overall discussion, it appears that gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling cannot be seen as a peripheral issue, but as an integral part of counselor professionalism. Gender awareness and cultural sensitivity are prerequisites for humanistic and effective counseling. In a plural society like Indonesia, counselors are required not only to understand cultural differences, but also to have a moral commitment to the values of justice and equality. This research confirms that the ideal counseling approach is one that is able to combine counselor self-reflection, respect for local culture, and orientation towards client empowerment. Theories of multicultural counseling, feminism, conflict management, and Islamic psychotherapy, if critically integrated, will produce a complete counseling paradigm - one that not only soothes inner conflicts, but also fosters human social and spiritual awareness. Thus, this research provides a conceptual contribution to the development of counseling theory and practice in Indonesia, as well as a basis for the formation of gender-just, cultured, and faithful counselors.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender issues in multicultural guidance and counseling in Indonesia is a complex phenomenon influenced by social, cultural, and spiritual factors. The results show that most counsellors have an initial awareness of the importance of gender equality, but this understanding is still limited to the conceptual level and has not been fully internalized in counselling practice. Gender biases and stereotypes are still found, both explicitly and implicitly, in the way counselors interpret client behavior, formulate problems, and choose interventions. Local cultural values that emphasize social harmony often lead counselors to emphasize aspects of compliance and balance rather than empowerment and the courage of clients to express themselves equally.

This finding strengthens the relevance of multicultural counseling theory (Sue & Sue, 2016) and feminist counseling theory (Brown & Root, 1990) that emphasize the importance of awareness, knowledge, and skills in understanding and managing social and gender differences. The integration of Indonesian cultural values and Islamic spirituality as proposed by Tajudin Ninggal (2025) enriches the framework with moral and religious dimensions that place equality as part of human nature. The conceptual model generated from this research - encompassing counselor awareness, understanding and skills - provides a practical basis for the development of counselor education and service policies that are more equitable and inclusive.

Thus, this research confirms that gender-perspective multicultural counseling is not just about understanding differences, but about upholding psychological and social justice. Gender and culturally just counselors have an important role in building a harmonious, empathic, and equal society, in accordance with the human values and spirituality of the Indonesian nation.

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