

Ethnocounseling as an Emerging Framework for Culturally Grounded Guidance and Counselling in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Guidance and counselling (GC) services in Indonesia have historically been influenced by counselling theories developed in Western sociocultural contexts, which may not fully align with Indonesia's collectivistic, religious, and culturally diverse society. This conceptual article employs an integrative literature review and qualitative content analysis to examine ethnocounseling as an emerging, culturally grounded orientation for GC services in Indonesia. Relevant literature was identified from academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and nationally indexed databases, covering publications from 2000–2025. The reviewed sources comprised theoretical works on multicultural counselling, ethnopedagogy, community counselling, indigenous psychology, and Indonesian local wisdom. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis to identify conceptual patterns related to theoretical foundations, model development, and implications for counsellor practice. The analysis discusses: (1) limitations of Western-oriented counselling models in Indonesian contexts; (2) multicultural counselling as a theoretical foundation for culturally responsive practice; (3) the contribution of ethnopedagogy and community-based approaches to ethnocounselling development; (4) the illustrative application of the Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu tradition of the Batak Mandailing community as a potential cultural foundation for counselling practice; and (5) implications for counsellor professional development. The study proposes three competency domains for ethnocounseling-oriented counsellors: cultural understanding competence, culturally responsive counselling skills, and the ethical integration of local wisdom into counselling practice. The findings suggest that ethnocounseling may represent a paradigmatic reorientation of GC by encouraging greater alignment between counselling practice, local cultural values, and community realities. However, the Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu-based model remains illustrative and requires further empirical validation through field-based research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Amid the accelerating forces of globalisation, Indonesia's cultural diversity remains a fundamental element shaping individual identity, interpersonal relationships, and community life. Local cultural traditions function not only as systems of social norms but also as sources of collective meaning, social cohesion, conflict negotiation, and character formation [1]. In guidance and counselling (GC), culture occupies a central position because human development and psychological experiences are always embedded in particular sociocultural environments. Therefore, the effectiveness of counselling services depends not only on counsellors' technical competence but also on their ability to understand how clients construct meaning through cultural values, beliefs, and social practices. Hidayah et al. [2] argue that developmental and comprehensive guidance and counselling should be informed by contextual theories that reflect the realities of students and communities. Similarly, Riyadi et al. [3] and Sari [4] emphasise that Indonesia's philosophical principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) provides an important foundation for recognising cultural diversity as a resource for educational and counselling practices.

Despite Indonesia's cultural richness, guidance and counselling practices remain substantially influenced by theories and intervention models developed in Western sociocultural contexts, particularly those originating in North America and Europe. These approaches have contributed significantly to the development of modern counselling; however, many of their underlying assumptions are shaped by individualistic, autonomy-oriented, and secular perspectives that may not fully align with Indonesian collectivistic, relational, and religiously informed social realities [5], [6]. The application of counselling models without sufficient cultural adaptation may create tensions when clients' values, family relationships, spiritual orientations, and community identities differ from the assumptions embedded in those models. Pedersen [7] introduced multiculturalism as a major development in counselling theory, while subsequent scholarship, including the Multicultural and Social Justice Counselling Competencies (MSJCC), has emphasised that effective counsellors must recognise cultural identity, power relations, and social contexts in counselling [8], [9]. More recently, Ratts [10] and Hays [11] have argued, through the Multicultural and Social Justice Counselling Competencies (MSJCC), that counsellors should not only possess multicultural competence but also integrate social justice perspectives and cultural responsiveness throughout the counselling process.

However, multicultural and culturally responsive counselling approaches generally position culture as a dimension that counsellors must understand and accommodate rather than as the primary epistemological source for developing counselling theories and intervention mechanisms. This distinction is important because developing culturally grounded counselling requires more than increasing counsellors' awareness of cultural differences. It requires systematic investigation of how indigenous knowledge systems, social relationships, symbolic practices, and community values may inform counselling concepts and processes. Recent scholarship has increasingly discussed indigenous psychology, indigenous counselling, and culturally responsive interventions; however, research specifically developing ethnocounseling frameworks grounded in Indonesian local

cultural systems remains limited. Existing Indonesian studies have largely focused on multicultural competence among counsellors, the cultural adaptation of existing counselling models, or the role of local wisdom in character education and social development. Evidence regarding how specific cultural traditions can be conceptually translated into counselling principles, ethical guidelines, assessment processes, and intervention strategies remains relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, the scholarly gap is not the absence of discussion of culture and counselling, but rather the limited development of counselling models in which local cultural knowledge serves as a foundational source for constructing counselling approaches.

Conceptually, ethnocounseling differs from several related approaches. Multicultural counselling primarily emphasises counsellors' competence in understanding and working effectively with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Indigenous counselling focuses on knowledge systems and practices developed within particular cultural communities as alternatives or complements to dominant psychological paradigms. Community counselling emphasises collective resources, social networks, and ecological contexts to address community needs. Ethnocounselling intersects with these perspectives but specifically emphasises the systematic exploration and integration of culturally embedded meanings, values, and practices into counselling concepts and processes within a particular cultural setting [12], [13], [14].

Nevertheless, local cultural knowledge should not automatically be assumed to be therapeutic, ethical, or universally applicable. Cultural traditions may contain values that support psychological well-being, but they may also include assumptions, power relations, or practices that require critical examination. Therefore, integrating cultural practices into professional counselling requires careful assessment of their psychological relevance, ethical compatibility, inclusivity, client autonomy, and empirical support. Cultural familiarity alone is insufficient justification for adopting a practice within counselling services.

Addressing this conceptual and practical gap, this article proposes ethnocounseling as an emerging culturally grounded orientation for guidance and counselling in Indonesia. Ethnocounseling positions local wisdom not merely as contextual background but as a potential source of counselling values, relational principles, and intervention mechanisms, while recognising the need for critical evaluation and professional validation. The study develops this framework through conceptual analysis supported by insights from the Mangupa *Dalihan Na Tolu* tradition of the Batak Mandailing community. This tradition is examined not simply as cultural heritage but also as an illustrative example of a social system that involves interpersonal support, reconciliation, identity formation, and community-based problem resolution. The contribution of this study lies in proposing a culturally grounded framework that connects Indonesian local wisdom with contemporary guidance and counselling theory. Rather than claiming that a single cultural tradition represents a universal counselling model, this study offers a conceptual foundation for further empirical investigation into how indigenous cultural resources may contribute to culturally responsive counselling practices in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative narrative literature review and qualitative content analysis to synthesise theoretical developments and empirical evidence on ethnocounseling within the Indonesian cultural context. The narrative review design was selected because it enables an integrative examination of diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical findings while facilitating the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework for culturally grounded guidance and counselling [15]. The study was conducted between January and April 2026. Literature searches were conducted across three major academic databases: Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The review focused on publications between 1991 and 2024, a period that began with Pedersen's [7] seminal work on multicultural counselling and extended to recent developments in culturally responsive and indigenous counselling.

The primary data sources consisted of: (1) a doctoral dissertation on ethnocounseling based on the *Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu* tradition of the Batak Mandailing community, which served as the principal empirical reference [16]; (2) seminal textbooks and theoretical works on multicultural, indigenous, and culturally responsive counseling; and (3) peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Literature was identified using the keywords *ethnocounseling*, *multicultural counselling*, *indigenous counselling*, *local wisdom counselling*, *culturally responsive counselling*, and *bimbingan konseling kearifan lokal*. Sources were selected through purposive sampling based on four inclusion criteria: (1) publications addressing multicultural, indigenous, or ethnocounseling theories; (2) empirical or conceptual studies related to local wisdom and counselling practices; (3) publications written in English or Indonesian; and (4) works providing theoretical or empirical contributions relevant to the development of culturally grounded counselling. Publications lacking sufficient methodological or theoretical rigour, duplicated records, and non-scholarly sources were excluded from the review. Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis. All selected publications were read repeatedly, classified according to their theoretical orientation, methodological characteristics, cultural context, and principal findings. The doctoral dissertation was examined in greater depth to identify indigenous counselling values embedded in the *Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu* tradition and their relevance to counselling theory and practice.

The analysis employed qualitative content analysis, with inductive coding. Initially, meaningful units on cultural values, counselling principles, intervention techniques, and therapeutic mechanisms were identified. These codes were subsequently organised into broader thematic categories through constant comparison across the literature. Finally, the synthesised findings were integrated with contemporary theoretical frameworks, including the Multicultural and Social Justice Counselling Competencies (MSJCC) [10], Cultural Humility [17], Southeast Asian Indigenous Psychology [17], and local wisdom-based counselling frameworks in Indonesia [18], [19] to construct a conceptual model of ethnocounseling. To enhance the trustworthiness of the review, triangulation of literature sources was employed by comparing evidence from seminal theoretical works, empirical journal articles, and the doctoral dissertation. The credibility of the findings was further strengthened through iterative cross-checking of themes and interpretations across multiple sources to ensure conceptual consistency and analytical rigour. Because this study relied

exclusively on publicly available documents and previously published academic literature, it did not involve human participants or require informed consent. Accordingly, no formal ethical approval was required.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1 Genealogi Konseling Multikultural: Akar Etno-Konseling

Ethno-counselling did not emerge in isolation; rather, it represents a continuation of the multicultural counselling movement that has evolved over the past six decades. Understanding this genealogy is essential for positioning ethno-counselling within the broader intellectual development of guidance and counselling. One of the earliest milestones was Pedersen [20] warning about the phenomenon of the culturally encapsulated counsellor, a counsellor whose worldview is confined to a single cultural perspective and who is therefore unable to recognise or understand clients' cultural frames of reference. Although this concern was first articulated more than six decades ago, it remains highly relevant in contemporary counselling practice [21]. During the 1970s and 1980s, multicultural counselling became institutionalised as a distinct field within the counselling profession. This period was marked by the establishment of the Association for Multicultural Counselling and Development (AMCD), the emergence of specialised scholarly journals, and the introduction of the first multicultural counselling competency framework by Sue et al. [9]. Their seminal model identified three fundamental domains of multicultural competence: awareness, knowledge, and skills. This tripartite framework subsequently became the foundation for counsellor education and professional practice and was further refined and operationalised by Ratts [10].

Pedersen made a particularly influential contribution [7], characterising multiculturalism as the "fourth force" in counselling, alongside psychoanalysis, behaviourism, and humanistic counselling. Writing in the *Journal of Counselling & Development*, Pedersen argued that, because all human behaviour is embedded in cultural contexts, cultural competence should not be regarded as an optional professional attribute but rather as a sine qua non for ethical and effective counselling practice. This perspective was further reinforced by Sue [22], who contended that every counselling interaction is inherently multicultural, regardless of apparent cultural similarities between counsellor and client. The most significant contemporary advancement in multicultural counselling is the development of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counselling Competencies (MSJCC) by Ratts [10], which were formally endorsed by both the Association for Multicultural Counselling and Development (AMCD) and the American Counselling Association (ACA).

Building on earlier competency models, the MSJCC introduced a fourth dimension of action that emphasises counsellors' responsibility to advocate for social justice alongside the traditional domains of awareness, knowledge, and skills. The framework also introduced the concept of multicultural and social justice praxis, highlighting the integration of critical self-reflection with transformative action in counselling practice. The genealogy of ethno-counselling has also been enriched by the emergence of the indigenous psychology movement led by Kim et al. [23]. This movement challenges the presumed universality of

Western psychological theories and advocates developing psychological knowledge grounded in the unique cultural contexts of diverse societies. In Southeast Asia, indigenous psychology has generated substantial scholarship on culturally embedded psychological constructs, including *kapwa* (shared identity) in the Philippines, *diskarte* and *bayanihan* as culturally rooted coping strategies, and the Dalihan Na Tolu philosophy in Indonesia, which emphasises kinship, reciprocity, and communal responsibility [17]. These developments demonstrate that the indigenous wisdom of the Indonesian archipelago constitutes not merely a cultural heritage but also a scientifically meaningful foundation for the advancement of culturally grounded counselling theories and practices recognised by the international scholarly community.

3.1.2 The Epistemological Foundation of Ethno-Counseling in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the epistemological foundation of ethno-counselling is rooted in the concept of ethnopedagogy, as developed by Sugara et al. [24] and Hastuti et al. [25] at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Ethnopedagogy conceptualises local knowledge and local wisdom as valuable sources of innovation, learning, and life skills that can be mobilised to enhance individual and community well-being. Rather than merely incorporating cultural content into educational processes, ethnopedagogy positions indigenous wisdom as an epistemological framework that shapes how human development, education, and professional services are understood and practised. Ethno-counselling extends the principles of ethnopedagogy into the domain of guidance and counselling through one crucial innovation.

Local wisdom is not treated solely as educational content or contextual background; instead, it serves as the foundation for counselling concepts, intervention techniques, and therapeutic processes [16]. Consequently, counsellors practising ethno-counselling are expected to move beyond simply understanding their clients' cultural backgrounds. They actively employ indigenous values, rituals, symbols, and community practices as legitimate therapeutic resources throughout the counselling process. In this perspective, culture functions not merely as the context for counselling but as an integral mechanism through which counselling interventions are conceptualised and implemented. Ethno-counselling is also informed by the principles of community counselling [12], which define it as a series of interventions designed to empower individuals and communities by utilising the strengths and resources inherent within the community itself. Its primary orientation is outreach, bringing counselling services into clients' sociocultural environments rather than expecting clients to seek assistance exclusively in culturally neutral counselling settings. Within the framework of ethno-counseling, this community-based approach positions counselors as integral members of clients' social systems. Instead of assuming the role of detached external experts, counselors become part of supportive social networks that understand and respect the cultural contexts in which clients live. This approach is particularly relevant in Indonesian society, where trust in counselors is established not only through professional competence but also through demonstrated respect for local traditions, communal values, and indigenous social norms [13].

Another important theoretical contribution to the development of ethno-counselling is the concept of cultural humility, originally introduced by Ratts [10]. The concept of cultural competence, which may imply attaining a finite level of expertise, emphasises an ongoing commitment to self-reflection, openness, and lifelong learning. Counsellors recognise that they can never fully understand every dimension of their clients' cultural experiences and therefore remain willing to learn from clients while inviting dialogue and correction regarding the meanings embedded in their lived cultural realities. The principle of cultural humility aligns closely with the philosophy of ethno-counselling. When counsellors incorporate the values embedded in the *Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu* tradition or other forms of indigenous wisdom into counselling practice, they should do so with humility rather than assuming the authority of "cultural experts." Instead, counsellors serve as collaborative facilitators who work alongside clients to explore the meanings, relevance, and therapeutic potential of local wisdom within the clients' everyday lives. Such a collaborative orientation not only enhances culturally responsive counselling but also safeguards the authenticity of indigenous knowledge by recognising clients and their communities as the primary custodians of their own cultural heritage.

3.1.3 Ethno-Counseling as a New Paradigm in Guidance and Counselling

Ethno-counselling can be understood as a unique cultural element that unites communities in everyday life through various social structures and practices, including extended family systems, clans, ethnic affiliations, traditional leaders, taboos, initiation processes, and close relationships with ancestors and elders. These cultural mechanisms have existed and functioned as systems of meaning, social regulation, and collective support long before the emergence of modern guidance and counselling practices [16]. More operationally, ethno-counselling can be defined as a counselling approach that systematically integrates the cultural values, traditions, and belief systems of particular ethnic communities into the counselling process, aiming to provide culturally relevant, sensitive, and empowering assistance within clients' sociocultural contexts. In Indonesia, ethno-counselling involves professional counsellors internalising local wisdom values into counselling practices to generate interventions that are culturally resonant and meaningful to clients [16]. Why ethno-counselling is called a "new paradigm" rather than just a "new approach". Using the framework by Kuhn [26] about the scientific revolution, a new paradigm not only offers different theories, but changes the way we look at problems, questions that are considered valid, and the way we look for answers.

Designating ethno-counselling as a "new paradigm" rather than merely a "new approach" requires further conceptual clarification. Drawing upon the framework of scientific revolutions [26], a new paradigm does not simply introduce alternative theories or techniques; rather, it transforms the fundamental ways in which phenomena are understood, the questions considered legitimate, and the methods employed to seek answers. However, the application of Kuhn [26] framework in this context should be understood analogically, emphasising the scope and depth of the transformation proposed by ethno-counselling rather than claiming that it has fully fulfilled all philosophical criteria of a scientific revolution, such as anomaly, crisis, and paradigm incommensurability as originally conceptualized by

Kuhn [26]. Within this qualified interpretation, ethno-counselling represents a paradigmatic shift across three fundamental dimensions. First, an ontological shift occurs from viewing individuals as independent, self-contained units of analysis to understanding human beings as cultural-relational entities whose existence is inseparable from their social and communal contexts. This perspective implies that psychological problems do not emerge solely from individual internal processes but are embedded within broader networks of family, community, cultural identity, and social relationships. Consequently, psychological well-being and problem resolution must be understood and addressed within the sociocultural systems in which individuals are situated.

Second, an epistemological shift involves moving beyond the assumption that legitimate knowledge about human beings can only be generated through Western positivist scientific traditions toward recognising epistemic pluralism, in which indigenous knowledge systems and local wisdom constitute valid sources of understanding human experiences and well-being. Oral traditions, customary narratives, indigenous proverbs, collective rituals, and cultural practices are not merely forms of traditional belief; rather, they constitute complex knowledge systems that offer psychological, social, and ethical insights relevant to human development and counselling practice. Third, an axiological shift reflects a movement away from prioritising individualism, autonomy, and personal achievement as the dominant values of counselling toward recognising collectivism, relationality, harmony, and spirituality as equally legitimate, and in many contexts, more culturally appropriate orientations. Within Indonesian society, where communal relationships and spiritual meanings remain central to social life, ethno-counseling proposes that counseling goals should not be limited to individual adjustment but also encompass relational balance, social connectedness, cultural continuity, and collective well-being. Therefore, ethno-counselling represents more than an adaptation of existing counselling models to local cultural contexts. It proposes a fundamental reorientation in how counsellors understand human nature, construct knowledge about psychological well-being, and determine the values underlying counselling practice. From this paradigmatic perspective, ethnocounselling provides a theoretical foundation for developing culturally grounded counselling models responsive to the lived realities of Indonesian communities.

3.2. DISCUSSION

3.2.1 Mangupa Dalihan Na Tolu as an Illustrative Foundation for Ethnocounseling Development in Indonesia

The Mangupa (or Upah-upah) tradition of the Batak Mandailing community provides an illustrative example of how indigenous cultural knowledge may contribute to the conceptual development of ethnocounseling in Indonesia. Mangupa is a customary ceremony traditionally conducted to provide encouragement, prayers, advice, and symbolic restoration of *tondi* (inner vitality or spiritual strength) for individuals experiencing important life transitions, including marriage. The ceremony involves collective participation from family members within the framework of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, a Mandailing kinship system consisting of three relational positions: *Mora* (the wife's giving family or respected advisory group), *Kahanggi* (same-clan relatives who provide solidarity and

support), and *Anak Boru* (the receiving family responsible for customary obligations). Through these relationships, Mangupa functions as a cultural mechanism for expressing social support, transmitting values, strengthening identity, and maintaining communal harmony [27], [28].

However, it is important to distinguish between a cultural ritual, a therapeutic resource, and a professional counselling intervention. As a cultural ritual, Mangupa represents a community-based practice embedded within Mandailing social, spiritual, and familial traditions. As therapeutic resources, certain elements within Mangupa, such as advice, symbolic meaning, collective support, and culturally meaningful narratives, may offer potential avenues for reflection, emotional support, and personal development [16]. Nevertheless, these elements should not be automatically considered equivalent to professional counselling techniques. A cultural practice becomes a professional counselling intervention only when it has undergone ethical assessment, collaborative adaptation with the community, informed client consent, practitioner preparation, and empirical evaluation regarding its appropriateness and effectiveness.

The conceptual relationship between Mangupa and counselling was initially explored through an ethnographic study of the tradition [16]. This research identified several values that may be relevant to counselling practice, including interpersonal trust, social support, empathy, spiritual meaning, and relational responsibility. However, these findings originated from a specific cultural context and should be interpreted as an illustrative foundation rather than evidence that Mangupa-based approaches are universally applicable to all Indonesian clients. Further empirical studies involving diverse populations, counselling settings, and practitioner perspectives are required before broader professional applications can be established. One potential contribution of the Mangupa tradition lies in its emphasis on relationality. Unlike some counselling perspectives that primarily emphasise individual autonomy, Mangupa reflects a collectivistic orientation in which personal development is closely linked to family relationships, community responsibilities, and spiritual values. This orientation resonates with multicultural counselling perspectives, emphasising that effective helping relationships should consider clients' cultural meanings and social contexts. Nevertheless, the presence of relational values within a culture does not automatically mean that every cultural expectation is appropriate for counselling purposes. Counsellors must critically examine cultural practices, considering issues of autonomy, equality, psychological safety, and individual differences, before integrating them into professional services.

Based on the interpretation proposed by Ghoffar et al. [16], the symbolic roles within *Dalihan Na Tolu* may be used as metaphors to understand possible counsellor functions. Importantly, these roles should not be interpreted literally as replacing professional counsellor responsibilities with kinship positions. Rather, *Mora*, *Kahanggi*, and *Anak Boru* represent conceptual analogies for different dimensions of helping relationships.

The *Mora* metaphor represents the counsellor's function as a source of wisdom, protection, and constructive guidance. In professional practice, this does not mean counsellors assume authority over clients' decisions, but rather that they provide ethical guidance while respecting client autonomy. The *Kahanggi* metaphor represents the

counsellor's role as a supportive companion and facilitator, encouraging dialogue, reflection, and relational understanding. Meanwhile, the *Anak Boru* metaphor symbolises the counsellor's practical, facilitative role in assisting clients to organise resources, manage processes, and develop constructive solutions.

These symbolic interpretations suggest possible connections with contemporary counselling approaches that emphasise counsellors as helpers, advocates, and facilitators within social contexts [29]. However, the metaphorical adaptation of cultural concepts requires careful consideration, as cultural symbols may carry meanings that vary across generations, social groups, and individual experiences. Therefore, counsellors should avoid assuming that clients automatically identify with or accept particular cultural interpretations. Clients must retain the freedom to accept, reinterpret, modify, or reject cultural resources introduced during counselling. Another culturally meaningful element within Mangupa is the use of *umpama* (Mandailing customary proverbs) as a medium for transmitting moral reflection and life guidance. Several expressions contain values related to acceptance, responsibility, resilience, and relational commitment. For example:

Table 1. *Umpama*, Their Meanings, and Relevance to Counselling

Umpama (Bahasa Mandailing)	Translation and Meaning	Counseling Relevance
<i>Nada mangilak tano tinggangan ni udan</i>	"No land can avoid being touched by rain" — human beings cannot escape certain realities or circumstances determined by life.	Encourages acceptance of unavoidable life situations and the development of psychological flexibility in responding to realities beyond personal control.
<i>Sada buat tu jolo, dua buat tu pudi</i>	"Take one step forward, take two steps backwards" — every action carries consequences and must be accounted for.	Emphasises responsibility and awareness of consequences in decision-making, particularly in building and maintaining marital relationships.
<i>Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata</i>	"Do not plant bamboo without roots" — avoid pursuing efforts that lack a meaningful foundation or realistic direction.	Promotes realistic planning, purposeful goal orientation, and reflective decision-making in personal and family life.

Source: Ghoffar (2024), edited by the author

The use of *umpama* shares similarities with narrative approaches in counselling, as both employ stories, metaphors, and meaning-making processes to facilitate reflection. Nevertheless, the difference is that indigenous narratives originate from collective cultural histories rather than being constructed solely within therapeutic interactions. Therefore, their usefulness depends on whether clients experience these narratives as meaningful and supportive within their own cultural identities. Based on the synthesis of relevant theories and the findings of Ghoffar [16], the development of ethno-counselling in Indonesia requires

the formulation of three domains of counsellor competencies that extend beyond conventional counselling standards. First, Cultural-Reflexive Competence refers to counsellors' ability to recognise their own cultural assumptions, biases, and worldviews, and to understand how these factors influence the counselling process.

This competence involves comprehensive knowledge of the history, traditions, social structures, and value systems of clients' cultural communities, including their ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. Within the MSJCC framework, Ratts [10] conceptualises this dimension as counsellor self-awareness, a fundamental prerequisite for the development of other domains of multicultural counselling competence. Second, Cultural-Relational Competence refers to the ability to establish therapeutic relationships that are consistent with clients' culturally embedded relational norms. This includes an understanding of social hierarchies, gender roles, kinship structures, communication patterns, and customary interaction systems. In the Mandailing cultural context, this competence requires counsellors to appropriately position themselves within the framework of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, enabling them to be recognised not merely as professional outsiders but as respectful participants in the client's social and cultural system. Third, Cultural-Technical Competence refers to counsellors' ability to adapt conventional counselling techniques or develop culturally meaningful interventions that align with clients' cultural realities.

This includes the use of stories, *umpama*, indigenous metaphors, symbolic rituals, and local value systems as legitimate therapeutic instruments. Azalia [13] demonstrated that even cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) can be integrated with local wisdom in Sumatra, illustrating the flexibility and potential of culturally grounded therapeutic adaptation. The principles of Mangupa-based ethno-counselling among the Batak Mandailing community should not be understood as an exclusive model limited to a single ethnic tradition. Rather, it represents a conceptual framework that may inspire the exploration of other indigenous cultural resources throughout Indonesia. Hidayah et al. [18] demonstrated that Pappaseng values within Bugis culture have substantial potential as a foundation for multicultural counselling. Similarly, research on integrating Nias cultural values, including *Hasthalaku*, into counseling practices has shown potential to strengthen social harmony and interpersonal relationships [19].

Considering Indonesia's more than 1,300 ethnic groups, the development of ethno-counselling presents both significant opportunities and considerable challenges. The opportunity lies in the richness of Indonesian cultural traditions, each of which may contain valuable counselling resources, techniques, and contextually meaningful intervention frameworks. However, several challenges remain, including the need for systematic ethnographic investigations, nationally recognised competency frameworks, and comprehensive counsellor training programs that prepare practitioners to integrate indigenous knowledge responsibly into counselling practice. It is important to emphasise that the counsellor role model and the cultural-technical competencies described in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 are derived from a single ethnographic case study of the Mangupa tradition among the Batak Mandailing community [16]. Therefore, the proposition that ethno-counselling represents a "new paradigm" for Indonesian guidance and counselling should be understood as a conceptual argument requiring further empirical examination across diverse

cultural traditions and ethnic communities, rather than as an empirically verified generalisation applicable to all Indonesian cultural contexts.

Furthermore, Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture provides a regulatory foundation for Indonesian educational and counselling institutions to contribute to cultural preservation and development. Within this framework, ethno-counselling represents a concrete contribution by integrating local wisdom into professional counselling practice. It does not merely utilise indigenous knowledge as a therapeutic resource but also contributes to the preservation, revitalisation, and meaningful transmission of cultural heritage within contemporary society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the conceptual foundation of ethno-counselling as a culturally grounded orientation to guidance and counselling in Indonesia. The findings indicate three central conclusions. First, ethno-counselling offers a culturally grounded conceptual orientation that positions local cultural knowledge as a potential source for understanding human experiences, counselling relationships, and helping processes within specific sociocultural contexts. Second, the Mangupa Daliha Na Tolu tradition of the Batak Mandailing community illustrates how indigenous values, relational systems, and cultural narratives may contribute to the development of culturally responsive counselling perspectives. However, this case serves as an illustrative example rather than as evidence of a universally applicable counselling model for all Indonesian communities. Third, the development of ethno-counselling requires further empirical investigation and ethical validation before cultural practices can be integrated into professional counselling interventions.

The theoretical implications of this study lie in expanding discussions of culturally responsive counselling by highlighting the potential contributions of indigenous knowledge systems alongside established multicultural counselling perspectives. In practice, the study suggests that counsellor education and professional development may benefit from greater attention to cultural humility, critical cultural understanding, and responsible engagement with local wisdom. However, such integration should be conducted cautiously to avoid cultural essentialism and should prioritise clients' autonomy, consent, and diverse interpretations of cultural values. This study is limited by its conceptual nature and its reliance on a single cultural illustration derived from the Mangupa Daliha Na Tolu tradition. Future research should therefore examine diverse Indonesian cultural contexts through empirical studies, including ethnographic investigations, intervention development, and outcome evaluations, to determine how indigenous cultural resources may be ethically and effectively incorporated into guidance and counselling practice.

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