

School Counselor's Perception of Multicultural Guidance and Counseling

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

multicultural;
school counselor;
guidance and counseling

Article history:

Received 2021-12-30

Revised 2021-02-12

Accepted 2022-04-23

ABSTRACT

Having a deep multicultural perception is a must for school counselors who serve students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Describing their perception of the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling is the main objective of this study. Fifty middle and high school counselors participated in this study. Data of their perception were collected by administering a 10-item questionnaire in an online version which requires them to respond on a scale of 1-10, ranging from not important to critical, encompassing cognitive, affective, and practice dimensions. The main findings of this study revealed that school counselors have similar perceptions on the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling either in cognitive, affective, or practice dimensions, according to demographic data categories of gender, age, and years of experience. The significant difference is only found as they are categorized into middle and high school counselors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite modest differences among school counselors regarding their professional identity dimension (Zulfikar et al., 2018), school counselors in Indonesia are educators who have a particular task in guidance and counseling service in school settings. They provide services to student's academic, personal/social, and career development, particularly for junior high and high school students. In the Indonesian constellation, providing such services is not easy for school counselors since they have to relate with various students and school staff from different cultural backgrounds. Disputes about the definition precise of culture (Daya, 2001) affect how the guidance and counseling field constructs it in its theories and practices related to multicultural (Dana, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Day-Vines, 2004; Wilcox, Franks, Taylor, Monceaux, & Harris, 2020). (Guterman, 2015), for example, identified gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, age, spirituality, religion, and family

structure domains of culture. They might present and influence the quality of school counselors' and students' relationships. One of the critical implications of such domains is how to accommodate them to provide appropriate service that fulfills students' developmental needs. The multicultural encounter between school communities can have a positive or negative impact on the school community, such as on the counseling process (Coleman, 1995), learning climate (Altugan, 2015; Kang & Chang, 2016), or interpersonal relationships (Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004). School counselors who have adequate multicultural perception will be ready to relate to students in a productive psycho-pedagogical atmosphere where the context of the students' world can be understood comprehensively. On the other hand, those with low multicultural perceptions will experience various collisions in dealing with the community at school.

There are three reasons why school counselors need to develop adequate multicultural perception. First, in Dewey's perspective (1907), educational institutions were small communities. School counselors and students come from various cultural backgrounds and relate to one another. In order to achieve the common goal of being psycho-pedagogically successful, they need to establish a developing multicultural relationship atmosphere. This atmosphere will increase self-awareness of cultural influences on interactions among them in each guidance and counseling service. Second, school counselors deal with students who come from various cultural backgrounds. In order to build relationships with students to have a therapeutic impact, they need to have good multicultural insight professionally. Third, counselors also deal with teachers and parents from different cultural backgrounds in addition to students. A harmonious relationship in the working world, namely with colleagues and parents as first and foremost educators, would influence the productivity of school counselors in providing necessary services (Martin, 2014). This demand requires them to develop good multicultural insights continuously.

Studies on multicultural understanding in various settings have been published in some professional kinds of literature, such as the existence of multiculturalism in the school (Chen, Basma, Ju, & Ng, 2020), student perceptions of the responsibility of educators in multicultural education (Yilmaz, 2016), teachers' perceptions of their multicultural competence in teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds (Lehman, 2017), and measuring school counselor competence of multicultural counseling (Greene, 2018; Shi & Carey, 2021). These studies indicated that education had to consider multicultural as an essential aspect of its practice, and not all respondents had positive perceptions of multicultural.

There are some multicultural issues in school counselors' perception of what multicultural competencies are believed to be mastered so that guidance and counseling services will be effective. Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) have noticed three primary areas of multicultural counseling competencies that are widely accepted: counselors' awareness of their assumptions, values, and biases, understanding of the worldview of the culturally different client, and development of appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. From research by Chao, Okazaki, & Hong (2011) and Chiu, Matsumoto, & Ward (2013), it could be inferred that cultural competency differences were parts of social dynamics, and they could not be uniform or insisted to other cultural groups.

The rationale of school counselors having to have a positive multicultural perception clearly can be understood from the viewpoint of Lee and Park (2013), where cultural diversities were natural and influenced human interaction, and all counseling occurred in multicultural settings. It means having a positive multicultural perception will drive them to develop multicultural awareness. These services will be less effective if they ignore the multicultural aspects of the counseling relationship. Interpersonal relationships and the relationship of school counselors with colleagues and parents will only be effective if they have sufficient multicultural perception and awareness.

Adequate multicultural perception grew and fostered in the family environment and continues to develop in educational institutions and communities. At the professional development level, the multicultural perception of school counselors might develop further through exploration, examination, integration, and personalization (Muro & Kottman, 2005). For this reason, all school counselors may have a different level of multicultural perception that may limit the quality of relationships with students in therapeutic situations. School counselors who fail to understand and accept counselees with different cultural backgrounds will find it challenging to provide services based on genuine acceptance, empathy, and authenticity, as emphasized by Rogers (Thorne, 2003). If it exists over a prolonged period, there is a concern that their student will become individuals who do not show empathy to their peers.

For this reason, to ensure that multicultural guidance and counseling has taken place in school settings properly and effectively, it is necessary to carry out research aimed at exploring school counselors' point of view on the importance of multicultural in their guidance and counseling services. By having the intended finding, this study will give a perspective to the field on how school counselors provide multicultural-based guidance and counseling services. In addition, the study also provides insight to teachers and high school students about the nature and benefit of such services for the accomplishment of their development tasks.

2. METHODS

50 out of 225 school counselors were used instead of guidance and counseling teacher---registered as members of the Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association (ABKIN) of the South Sumatra Region participated in the online survey. Demographically, the respondents consisted of 12 males and 38 female school counselors. The mean age of school counselors was 38.16 years (SD = 10.55); their mean years of experience was 8.48 (SD = 8.48). Among them were 31 middle school counselors and 19 high school counselors. An instrument named Questionnaire of School Counselor' Perception on Multicultural Guidance and Counseling was developed by researchers. It was a 10 items-self-report questionnaire measuring their multicultural perception of cognitive, attitude, and practice domains. The number of statements consisted of 4 cognitive perception items, 3 affective perception items, and 3 practice perception items. Each item asked respondents to rate a score on a scale of 1-10 (1 = not essential and 10 = important). The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested properly. The validity of each item was between .42 to .67. Questionnaire reliability was .897, and the inter-item correlation among items was between .39 and .80. The questionnaire was administered to respondents by using the online platform Google Form. Respondents were contacted by posting the announcement asking for involvement voluntarily as respondents of current research on the social media of WhatsApp Group. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine which groups significantly differed according to demographic data categories. At this point, the data of counselors' perceptions were described in general and compared in more detail based on their gender (male and female), age of school counselors (≤ 25 , 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, and ≥ 51 years old), school level of assigned counselors (middle school and high school), and school counselor years of experience (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, ≥ 21) since in such categories might give more perspectives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main emphasis of the present study was to focus on describing school counselors' perception of multicultural guidance and counseling in terms of the differences in some demographic data. So, analysis was addressed to demographic data in general and differences statistically in gender, age groups, institution level, and years of experience of school counselors.

First, data analysis of 50 counselors' perceptions of multicultural guidance and counseling revealed an average score of 8.408 (SD=1.637). Specifically, average scores in cognitive, affective, and practice domains were 8.60 (SD=1.497), 8.46 (SD=1.649), and 8.10 (SD=1.763). Such data indicated that

school counselors have a positive perception of the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling. Comparing the average scores of the three domains, it seemed the lowest and more spread was the practice domain score.

Meanwhile, more specific data analyses according to demographic categories were presented in the following tables.

Table 1. School counselors' perception of multicultural guidance and counseling by gender

Subject Category (Gender)	Cognitive (Mean & SD)	Affective (Mean & SD)	Practice (Mean & SD)	t test
Male (N=12)	\bar{x} = 8.9167 SD=1.2734	\bar{x} = 8.6389 SD= 1.5703	\bar{x} = 8.16667 SD=1.69270	\bar{x} male= 85.3333 \bar{x} female= 83.8684 Sig. = .743
Female (N=38)	\bar{x} = 8.4211 SD=1.6396	\bar{x} = 8.5175 SD= 1.6088	\bar{x} = 8.2632 SD=1.6707	Sig. (2-tailed) =.692

Table 2. School counselors' perception of multicultural guidance and counseling by age

Subject Category (Age)	Cognitive (Mean & SD)	Affective (Mean & SD)	Practice (Mean & SD)	Mean	SD	F test
≥51	\bar{x} = 8.8333 SD=1.3412	\bar{x} = 8.9333 SD=.9444	\bar{x} = 8.725 SD=1.0857	88.200	10.11929	\bar{x} total = 84.22 SD
46-50	\bar{x} = 9 SD=1.2247	\bar{x} = 9 SD=1.5	\bar{x} = 8.5833 SD=1.8809	88.333	13.31666	total=10.992 Homogeneity
41-45	\bar{x} = 8.75 SD=2.4908	\bar{x} = 9.5 SD=.5322	\bar{x} = 8.9375 SD=2.1746	90.500	6.35085	Sig.= .551 >.05
36-40	\bar{x} = 8.3809 SD=1.6271	\bar{x} = 8.7619 SD=1.5781	\bar{x} = 8.1071 SD=1.6406	83.857	10.35098	ANOVA Sig. = .99 >.05
31-35	\bar{x} = 8.9 SD=1.3733	\bar{x} = 8.6667 SD=1.2685	\bar{x} = 8.75 SD=1.3349	87.700	7.70353	
26-30	\bar{x} = 8.0238 SD=1.6001	\bar{x} = 8 SD=1.9254	\bar{x} = 7.5615 SD=1.8168	77.714	12.39372	
≤25	\bar{x} = 8.3333 SD=.5163	\bar{x} = 6.5 SD=2.3452	\bar{x} = 7.625 SD=.9161	75.000	9.89949	

Table 3. School counselors' perception of multicultural

guidance and counseling by the institution				
Subject Category: Education Level	Cognitive (Mean & SD)	Affective (Mean & SD)	Practice (Mean & SD)	t/F test
High school	\bar{x} = 8.4035 SD=1.6440	\bar{x} = 8.3684 SD= 1.7205	\bar{x} = 7.9736 SD=1.7068	\bar{x} high school= 82.2105 SD high school = 10.880 \bar{x} middle school= 89.2500
Middle school	\bar{x} = 8.8889 SD= 1.2823	\bar{x} = 9.0555 SD=.9839	\bar{x} = 8.8541 SD= 1.0868	SD middle school = 9.106 Sig. = .419 > .05 Sig. 2-tailed = .048 < .05

Table 4. School counselors' perception of multicultural guidance and counseling by years of experience

Subject Category (Years of Experience)	Cognitive (Mean & SD)	Affective (Mean & SD)	Practice (Mean & SD)	Mean rank	K test
≥21	\bar{x} = 9.0555 SD= 1.5519	\bar{x} = 9.2777 SD=1.0178	\bar{x} = 9.25 SD=1.1515	36.50	\bar{x} total = 84.22 SD total=10.992
16-20	\bar{x} = 8.6667 SD=.9701	\bar{x} = 8.6111 SD=.9785	\bar{x} = 8.2916 SD=.9990	25.58	Homogeneity test Value of Sig.= .023
11-15	\bar{x} = 8.5556 SD=2.1182	\bar{x} = 9.4074 SD=1.1183	\bar{x} = 8.4444 SD=2.0625	30.67	<.05
6-10	\bar{x} = 8.3725 SD= 1.3260	\bar{x} = 8.3921 SD=1.2013	\bar{x} = 8.1617 SD=1.5986	21.85	Non-Parametric test (Kruskal Wallis Test)
0-5	\bar{x} = 8.4444 SD=1.6808	\bar{x} = 7.7222 SD=2.3004	\bar{x} = 7.6667 SD=1.73	21.25	Chi-Square = 6.650 Asymp. Sig. =.156

Second, data in Table 1 showed the difference between the mean scores of male and female counselors, where \bar{x} the male was 85.3333 and \bar{x} Female was 83.8684. The result of t_{test} .743 ($p>.5$) indicates that the variance of both groups is acceptable. To prove whether the difference was significant, 2 tailed data calculation was made where the value of sig. 2-tailed <.05, the difference would be significant. The result shows the value of sig. 2-tailed = .692 >.05 indicating both groups are not difference. This means there is no statistically significant difference between the means of the different gender of the school counselors.

Third, school counselors' multicultural perception difference was analyzed regarding their ages. Table 2 showed that the mean scores of school counselors' multicultural perceptions among seven age categories were different. School counselors who were 41 years old and above had the highest mean scores; meanwhile, novice school counselors who were 26 years old and below had the lowest mean score. The data indicated that the older the school counselors, the more positive their multicultural perception. A one-way ANOVA test was done to determine the differences among these groups. First, the data were checked for their variance homogeneity to do such a test. Data in table 2 revealed that the value of homogeneity (sig.) was .551. This value indicated that the homogeneity of variance requirement was fulfilled (.551>.05). In the one-way ANOVA test, the difference in group variance

would be significant if its value (sig) is $<.05$. Since the value is $.99 > .05$ (Table 2), the seven age category groups do not differ significantly. It means school counselor perceptions across ages were relatively similar also.

Forth, in terms of school counselors' perception of the institution where they are working, as displayed in Table 3, data of mean scores and standard deviation of both groups showed that descriptively both groups were different (\bar{x} high school = 82.2105 and \bar{x} middle school = 89.25000). However, according to the t_{test} , the value of t is $.419$ ($p = .05$). To figure out whether both groups were significantly different, the data were calculated further, showing the value sig. 2-tailed = $.048 < .05$. It indicated that both groups were different significantly. It means middle school counselors' multicultural perceptions were higher than those of high schools.

Fifth, as previously mentioned, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent (unrelated) groups. As Table 4 shows, the value of homogeneity of the 4 groups only reaches $.023 (<.05)$, which implies it does not fulfill the parametric test requirement. To such value, the Kruskal Wallis test of non-parametric method replaced ANOVA for further test. The decision was based on a significant difference if the value of $Asymp. Sig. <.05$ and continued to test the difference by matching each data group. Table 2 shows the value of $Asymp. sig. = .156 > .05$, which indicated there was no difference in the mean score of both groups. It meant middle school counselors' perception was better than high schools.

A general portrait of school counselors' perception of the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling in the present study gives an impression that they positively perceive cognitive, affective, and practice dimensions. These findings predict that all of them are willing to provide related services that consider cultural aspects for the benefit of their students. Instead of this good news, however, their profile on specific demographic data characteristics needs further discussion. For example, in terms of gender, data analysis shows that both male and female school counselors have similar perceptions of the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling in their practice. Male school counselors have a unique tendency where their cognitive scores' dimension is greater than the practical and practice dimension, and the affective dimension is greater than the practice dimension.

Meanwhile, their counterparts show slight differences in all dimensions, with the lowest, in the practice dimension. The meaningful difference between both groups is in a cognitive dimension where male school counselors' scores surpass their counterparts. Are these data will predict male school counselor is better than a female one? A study on the role of motivational interviewing by Artkoski and Saarnio (2013) indicated that female therapists were significantly more positive toward clients than were male therapists. However, both suggested further study, particularly on measuring treatment processes and outcomes.

Age sometimes is considered a significant factor in a career. It is related to maturity. The current study portrays older school counselors have higher scores slightly than their younger counterparts. They presumably have been more knowledgeable, more experienced, and have a better performance than younger ones. However, the finding indicates that among five age groups of school counselors, their perception is not significantly different, although the data descriptively reveal slight differences among all groups. School counselors of 41-45 years old are in the first rank, followed by those who are 46-50, >50, and 31-35 years old. The lowest scores belong to school counselors of <26 years old. Considering such data, it is questionable why their perception of multicultural guidance and counseling tends to be similar. A possible account of this finding is that they may not expand or develop

their knowledge and perspective regarding the multicultural. Another factor may relate to their less experience implementing multicultural guidance and counseling in their practice.

In addition to chronological age, years of experience of school counselors are determined to have an impact on performance. The present study categorizes school counselors' years of experience into five categories. Obtained data show that school counselors with more than 20 years of experience have the best perception of multicultural guidance and counseling than their counterparts. The second is followed by those of 11-15 and 16-20 years of experience. However, the difference scores between these groups statistically are not significant. A possible explanation would refer to Isari, Effendi, and Suhaili's (2017) study, which indicates that years of experience are not significant in school counselor performance in considerable group guidance. This example implies less influence of experience years on such school counselors' perception. It is acceptable by many that school counseling experience will play a significant role in shaping cognitive, affective, and practice of guidance and counseling. In turn, they would be preferable to students for helping them in counseling settings. The longer they are on duty, the more they have experienced. Another explanation may refer to the study of Helms and Rode (1982) and (Ponzo, 1985), that counselor age and attractiveness will somewhat influence or annoy counseling rapport and self-disclosure, although several differences exist among female and male college students. Counselors who start their profession at a younger age may have been experienced and competent by a certain age. When getting older, their competencies may increase, but their attractiveness decreases. Considering such age or attractiveness of counselors as preferred options, middle and high school students may choose the latter rather than the former (Hanum & Purwanto, 2020)

In Indonesia's context, private and high school middle and high schools are mandated to hire school counselors to benefit student well-being. It is different from elementary schools, which are not required to hire this profession. The student population determines the number of school counselors hired. So, the current study is only focused on middle and high school counselors' perceptions. Gained data from the study give evidence of different perceptions between middle and high school counselors. The first group's scores are higher than the latter in dimensions soon of perception, especially in the affective and practice domain. There is the possibility to explain, which implies middle school counselors are more likely to have more time to relate with their students than their counterparts in high school counselors, as reflected by the study (Wright, Filter, Nolan, & Sifer, 2012). Their finding indicated that school psychologists' main contributing aspects to multicultural competence's self-perception were frequency of experience with other cultures and training. High frequency of experience seemed significantly correlated with higher perceptions of multicultural competence.

An essential finding of this study is related to the last of 10 items of the questionnaire responded to by school counselors: "Provide flexibility to students in deciding by referring to their cultural perception." 23% of all respondents perceived this valuable domain item as less critical. This data may have some meaning in the intervention contexts. For example, school counselors may consider that the cases do not relate to culture. They can be a personal matter, and the solution should not look on. In their professional experience, students' culture may be assumed to be an associated factor of their problem, so school counselors prefer to solve such a problem by discussing students' culture and its influence on their present problem. Cultural influence neglect was found in a study by Merlin-Knoblich and Chen (2018), in which school counselors preferred not to enact some multicultural education behaviors because they were not needed. These participants may have been indicating a belief that these behaviors are not necessary to their school or that these behaviors are not needed by

their students. In this sense, they contradict the meaning of multicultural counseling, which values cultural, ethnic, and gender background (Sue & Sue, 2013). The meaning is further strengthened by (Santos, 2013), where individuals in social life join a community with various ethnicities, religions, cultures, ethnicities, and genders.

A multicultural perspective should generate school counselors' awareness that student individuality can be identified through various cultures and groups, which challenges them to provide appropriate guidance and counseling services. School counselors have an essential task of providing multicultural-based interventions appropriate for all school populations (Curry & Milsom, 2018). This need is also increasing because students who are sensitive to culture also show that they are more at risk of meeting more counselors due to various cultural-related problems (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, Holcomb-McCoy, & Mitchell, 2009). Building relationships and understanding between school counselors and counselees from different cultures is challenging since both do not always share mutual assumptions (Laungani, 2004). An example mentioned by Fu (2014) in her case study of a Cambodian American counselee is that building rapport takes time, and her treatment runs slow. The finding of Dodson (2013) showed that Caucasian school counselors perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than African-American school counselors. Caucasian school counselors may have perceived themselves to be more culturally aware since they work with students that may be culturally different from them. In addition, the finding of Holcomb-McCoy (2005) showed that school counselors at least somewhat be qualified in all of the multicultural competence domains.

This study justifies how important to understand school counselors perceiving the importance of multicultural guidance and counseling in their profession for better services to their students. Instead of such an achieved objective, this study has some limitations. The major limitation of this study is the small respondent size who participates, although the respondents have been contacted by using their organization network. The potential population of the study was 225 school counselors, and those who responded to the questionnaire were only 50 respondents resulting in limited confidence in generalizing the findings. Another limitation is using a small number of items of designed instruments. Its ten items may not picture respondents' perceptions comprehensively. The future study has to involve more school counselors from other regions proportionally or target all school counselors in Indonesia. Some demographic data need to be explored for further research, such as cultural diversities of school communities where school counselors work, cultural origin, and education level of school counselors. A more comprehensive instrument for measuring the school counselors' perception is suggested for future study.

4. CONCLUSION

Having a clear perception of multicultural guidance and counseling is a challenging effort for school counselors who want to provide their service effectively to culturally diverse students. Despite significant differences among middle school and high school counselors, the results of this study show that middle and high school counselors' perception is coherent in cognitive, affective, and practice dimensions. They value multicultural as an essential part of their guidance and counseling service since by considering them, they may understand their students better and approach them effectively. The findings are meaningful in the more excellent possibility that school counselors provide guidance and counseling services that accommodate and consider their student culture for effective results. As an implication, school counselors need to strengthen their positive perceptions and continue to apply them to their service to students. Despite such findings, the study is limited in terms of the number of its participants and the small number of questionnaire items. It may not capture their perception holistically and be addressed to generalize the findings. Future studies have to address school counselors of other regions or even Indonesia, their culture backgrounds, and education level to be comprehensive. A more comprehensive instrument is suggested to develop for future study.

Acknowledgments: The authors give thanks to members of the Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association region of South Sumatera for their participation in this study. Special thankfulness is addressed to Rector of Sriwijaya University, who has to provide a research grant to accomplish this study.

Conflicts of Interest: “The authors of this article declare that there is no conflict of interest in doing the research and publishing the article of research result.”

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