

# Analysis of Multicultural Counseling and Social Justice Competencies Framework amid Cultural Diversity for Counselor Professionalism in Indonesia

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doi: 10.17977/um065.v6.i3.2026.4

## Article history

Submitted: 7 January 2026

Revised: 20 February 2026

Accepted: 21 February 2026

Published: 22 February 2026

## Keywords

Counselor multicultural

Framework competence

Multicultural competence

Multicultural counseling

## Abstract

The increasing cultural diversity in social life necessitates that counselors possess adequate multicultural competencies to effectively serve clients from various backgrounds. Considering a client's cultural context is essential to prevent bias and stereotypes, thereby enhancing counselor professionalism when addressing the diversity inherent in each student. This study aims to explore and analyze the importance of multicultural counseling competencies for counselors by reviewing existing literature. The primary objective is to synthesize findings from previous research to highlight key competency frameworks relevant to contemporary practice. This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The study analyzed 30 journal articles, consisting of 14 international and 16 national journals from the 2013-2023 period. Literature was obtained through a systematic Google Scholar search using the keyword "Multicultural Counseling Competence." Data analysis involved qualitative synthesis of findings from selected articles. The findings consistently emphasize the critical importance of Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC). These frameworks are identified as essential, comprehensive packages of multicultural competencies that professional counselors need to work effectively in diverse settings. This study confirms that MCC and MSJCC are fundamental to ethical and effective counseling practice in multicultural contexts. The results serve as a crucial reference for policymakers to formulate evidence-based policies addressing students' needs from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the findings provide a valuable foundation for designing counselor training programs, particularly in culturally rich nations like Indonesia, to strengthen professional competence in multicultural counseling.

## 1. Introduction

School Counselors have an obligation to continuously develop their professionalism in their work. One aspect of this is the development of pedagogical competence in mastering cultural foundations in educational practice (Standar Kualifikasi Akademik Dan Kompetensi Konselor, 2008). Multicultural competency is a provision for counselors in understanding counselees more deeply, seeing different perspectives based on the counselee's perspective and not immediately giving certain judgments when dealing with counselees with different cultural backgrounds (Gustama et al., 2025). Every individual has unique characteristics that are influenced by their environment and culture, including counselors and students who have their own cultural backgrounds. Counselors who are culturally incompetent may engage in discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice (Panggabean, 2024). Multicultural competency prevents counselors from being biased, racist and ethnocentric towards the counselees they meet (Villalba & Erford, 2023). Especially in the context of education, it is important for counselors to observe students from a different cultural lens.

McMahon et al. (2014) presented the importance of the ecological model for school counselors in the hope of helping students from multicultural backgrounds for the positive development of children and adolescents. This model aims to understand and address various factors that directly influence student development, namely the family-school-community environment, so that counselors are expected to take an active role in collaborating, defending students' rights, and taking the initiative in developing students' academic success and well-being (McMahon et al., 2014). Indonesia consists of various tribes and cultures that are rich in the uniqueness of the cultural colors of each province in Indonesia. In other words, it can be said that the Indonesian nation is a picture of the unity of the richness of cultural diversity (multicultural), where each individual and tribe with their respective cultural characteristics are interrelated (Akhmadi, 2017). This certainly needs special attention in dealing with students in schools who come from different cultural diversity.

The school environment is one of the places where students' character is formed, for example, helpfulness, good morals, and humility (Sumarni et al., 2024). This can be found in the local cultural wisdom in Indonesia, so that the personality of Indonesian students is reflected in the diverse cultural identity of Indonesia. Cultural diversity includes ethnic diversity, gender, cultural background, regional geography, race, physical condition (disability constraints) and age, followed by socio-economic diversity, religion, aspects of social relationships, personal profiles, religion, and intellectual strength (Redman, 1999; Sue & D, 2003). This is an important aspect that needs to be considered, especially for counselors or Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers who are in direct contact with students in schools that are rich in cultural backgrounds. Interaction between students with certain languages, characteristics and cultural behaviors will create interesting and challenging social interactions. The presence of counselors in bridging cultural diversity between students is a key factor in understanding the mindset and behavior of counselees. Therefore, counselors need to be equipped with multicultural competencies in order to prevent conflicts that arise due to differences in perception from different cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, counselors also play a role in preventing the emergence of stereotypical labels on students from certain cultural backgrounds.

The Indonesian nation with its diversity and cultural richness can be a potential strength in uniting the nation, but it cannot be denied that this can also trigger conflict in social life considering the different interests of various groups (Muhammad, 2019). If this diversity cannot be handled properly, then conflicts can arise that lead to division. In handling potential conflicts, counselors need to be prepared to carry out multicultural counseling, in order to understand the concepts of other cultures so that counselors are able to provide targeted assistance according to the client's cultural perspective (Gani, 2019). This is very necessary because students as the center of BK services are cultured individuals, who act as catalysts and developers of culture (Masturi, 2015). The counselor's comprehensive understanding of multicultural counseling is also beneficial for the ethics of implementing the BK process (Masruri, 2016). Considering that multicultural counseling is a counseling activity that focuses on several aspects of the client in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and gender (Yusuf, 2016).

One of the efforts to equip counselors to have multicultural competence is to instill three important characteristics, namely: The first is awareness, where counselors actively reflect on their own cultural background, including values, beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices. The second is skills, which bridge counselors in their internal understanding and therapeutic actions. The third is knowledge, or the foundation itself (Campbell et al., 2018). The tripartite model comprises three key aspects: 1) understanding the beliefs, values, biases, and behaviors of individuals, 2) understanding the knowledge and perspectives of diverse cultures, and 3) employing suitable intervention skills and cultural strategies (Sue & Sue, 2012). Seeing the reality of interdependent world change, it is not impossible for counselors to provide effective interventions in dealing with the global community population from diverse cultures (Clarke, 2013). This means that the effectiveness of intervention depends on the counselor's ability to see and work with complex and interconnected realities.

However, a critical multidimensional gap persists in the literature regarding multicultural counseling competencies in the Indonesian educational context. At the theoretical level, established frameworks such as MCC and MSJCC have been developed within Western individualistic paradigms, raising fundamental questions about their transferability to Indonesia's collectivist cultural orientation where communal values and social harmony shape interpersonal dynamics differently. Empirically, while isolated studies have examined multicultural counseling in Indonesia, these investigations remain fragmented across diverse settings with no systematic effort to synthesize findings or identify coherent patterns specific to the Indonesian context. Compounding these limitations is Indonesia's extraordinary cultural complexity—encompassing over 1,300 ethnic groups coexisting without a single dominant majority—which presents a uniquely horizontal diversity landscape that fundamentally differs from the majority-minority dynamics addressed in Western literature, yet no research has critically examined how existing competency frameworks apply to such complex multi-group contexts. This study addresses these interconnected gaps by systematically synthesizing fragmented Indonesian studies alongside international literature to provide the first comprehensive understanding of multicultural counseling competencies applicable to Indonesian educational settings.

Empirical research and scholarly discussions have centered on the multicultural aspect for over thirty years, highlighting the necessity for counselors to possess multicultural competence and to engage effectively and ethically with diverse client populations (Barden & Greene, 2015; Hill et al., 2013). Nowadays there is a gap in the needs of clients, deficiencies in counseling services related to acculturation and cultural understanding, so that experts provide several meaningful strategies for mental health professions, including counselors to provide better services for clients with different cultural backgrounds (Ting & Shen, 2017). Multicultural counseling requires counselors who can understand aspects of power differences that occur in social interactions, organizational structures, social and political constructs that describe individual identities that affect a person's mental health (Brown et al., 2014).

Counselors are expected not only to meet clients' basic needs but also to advocate for their social well-being and personal development (Arthur, 2014). In response to the growing demand for multicultural competence in counseling, the profession has increasingly embraced multiculturalism and social justice as

fundamental values (ACA Code of Ethics As Approved by the ACA Governing Council Mission, 2014). Experts have developed specific competencies, such as Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) and Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC), to ensure counselors possess the necessary awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively serve diverse populations. This research journal will further explore the importance of MCC and MSJCC for counselors (Hilert & Tirado, 2019; Ratts & Pederson, 2015). The purpose of this study is to systematically review the literature regarding the importance of multicultural counseling competencies (MCC and MSJCC) and their relevance for counselors in the context of cultural diversity in Indonesia.

## 2. Method

This research method is the SLR (Systematic Literature Review) method. In this method, researchers will review, identify, evaluate and interpret available research. The data collected is qualitative, namely sentence statements or research results written by the author to be used as research data. Where this method is a way to identify, review and reinterpret what is found through previous literature and follow the steps that have been set (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this study, which was conducted on December 5, 2024, there are five stages in implementing a literature review: (1) collecting various literature with the Google Scholar search engine using the keyword "Multicultural Counseling Competence"; (2) literature selection; (3) review of literature sources; (4) drawing literature results; and (5) discussion of literature results. The stages of preparation are described in Figure 1.

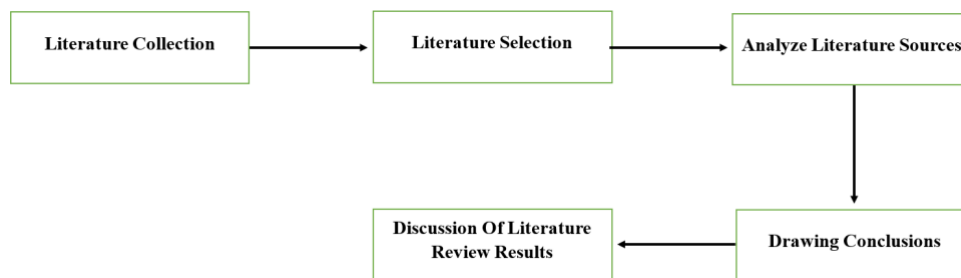


Figure 1. Stage of Literature Review

The first step was to search for literature through Google Scholar by entering several keywords, including “multicultural” or “multicultural counselor” or “multicultural counseling” or “multicultural competence” or “multicultural counselor competence” or “counselor competence.” Next, articles are selected based on inclusion criteria, which include articles that discuss counselor competence, multicultural competence, school counselors, multicultural counselors, and were published between 2013 and 2023. Exclusion criteria included general counselors (psychology), those with a work background rather than an educational background, discussions of personality, professional, or social competencies, or topics outside the context of pedagogical competencies. After reviewing titles and abstracts, 25 articles were selected for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted using a narrative model, which involved collecting literature in a specific subject area, summarizing it, and synthesizing it (Mahwati, 2024).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Multicultural Counseling Competence Analysis

For a counselor personally, it is important to have self-awareness of the beliefs and behaviors of his cultural background as an attribute in developing multicultural competencies and increasing the effectiveness of counselors when working with counselors who come from cultural pluralism. In addition, counselors must demonstrate confidence in their abilities during intervention sessions, even when dealing with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Counselors who are competent in multiculturalism demonstrate awareness of cultural backgrounds, experiences, attitudes, and values, and are able to understand and recognize limitations, feeling comfortable with the ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity of their clients. In equipping counselors with multicultural counseling skills, one aspect that needs to be looked at further is Multicultural Counseling Competence (MCC) (Barden & Greene, 2015; Clarke, 2013; Ratts & Pederson, 2015). The importance of culture-based counseling services has been spearheaded in recent years. This is also reinforced by the MCC model that has been tested among adults (Kassan & Sinacore, 2016).

MCC refers to the counselor's understanding of racial and cultural distinctions among groups, awareness of personal attitudes and values, and proficiency in applying suitable counseling techniques when working with diverse cultural groups. MCC is understood as encompassing the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary for counselors to effectively engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, MCC also contains the meaning of the counselor's ability to provide counseling services to counselors from diverse cultures, where counselors need to show understanding, appreciation and response to the values, behaviors,

beliefs and norms of counseling culture. MCC is also known as a 3-dimensional model, namely: 1) awareness and behavior; 2) knowledge; and 3) skills (Barden & Greene, 2015; Carey, 2021; Guzmán et al., 2013; Ting & Shen, 2017).

MCCs equip counselors to acknowledge the impact of diversity in social interactions, stemming from organizational structures as well as social and political contexts. Although counselors need to obtain education related to personal bias and self-awareness, counselors still need to pay special attention to the influence of special treatment, bias, and prejudice experienced by counselors from certain cultural backgrounds, so as not to aggravate the situation experienced by counselors during counseling sessions. It is important for counselors to have qualified knowledge related to the culture owned by counselors, especially for counselors who come from minority groups. A significant challenge arises when counselors have not adequately developed MCC.

Literature highlights gaps in the acquisition of skills and practical aspects among aspiring counselors in the realm of MCC. For example, in a study, it was found that prospective white counselors did not have sufficiently developed levels of MCC compared to their fellow counselors of different ethnicities. Therefore, it is necessary to examine several MCC training approaches to see the effectiveness of MCC in forming multicultural competencies in counselors. The research conducted shows that current multicultural training has not provided a meaningful impetus in the process of exploring cultural competence. The training also needs to consider aspects of experience and ethnic and racial backgrounds (Berger et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2014; Campbell et al., 2018; Hill et al., 2013).

In responding to these challenges, several studies related to evaluation, training and educational approaches related to MCC have been conducted in various forms to improve the multicultural competence of counselors which can be described in the table below:

**Table 1. Research: Evaluation, Training and Educational Process of Multicultural Counseling Competence**

No	Research	Information
1.	MCC framework	The framework related to cultural competence was developed as a standard for prospective counselors to obtain appropriate and integrated multicultural education in the educational curriculum and help counselors to have cultural and ethical sensitivity to different counseling. The content of this framework refers to 3 aspects, namely: 1) awareness: identifying individual biases and assumptions; 2) Knowledge: have an accurate understanding of the cultural background of the counselor; and 3) skills: using counseling interventions that are appropriate to the counseling culture (Kassan & Sinacore, 2016).
2.	MCC evaluation on school counselors	The results of the study illustrate that some school counselors already have MCC awareness, but the implementation of the MCC needs to be manifested in the form of real behavior and practice. This can test whether the MCC self-report can reflect the actual performance of the counselor in the school. On the other hand, the results of the study also showed that school counselors of color, had higher multicultural competence based on the MCCTS-R subscale (Guzmán et al., 2013).
3.	MCC Evaluation conducted by State School Counselor Licensure Examinations	1) The results of the study show that a licensed and standardized test is needed to measure the curriculum and educational training of prospective counselors (Carey, 2021). 2) Professional associations and accredited institutions need to develop the MCC taxonomy by involving diverse stakeholders, namely: school counselor practitioners, counselors and researchers as well as community members who can collaborate on this project. Public views and feedback can increase the validity and usefulness of this taxonomy.
4.	MCC training and self-reflection skills	1) Multicultural competency training needs to consider the background and experience of prospective counselors (Hill et al., 2013). 2) Multicultural competency training programs need to develop a point of view, providing a cultural lens to assist counselors in understanding the counselor's point of view (Clarke, 2013). 3) Multicultural training needs to provide self-reflection skills to confront the assumptions, behaviors, values and beliefs embraced by prospective counselors. Self-reflection analysis is seen as a key component in reflective thinking and reflective judgment (Clarke, 2013).
5.	MCC training through contemplation and mindfulness practice	1) In the study, one of the approaches taken to teach prospective counselors about MCC is through contemplation. When prospective counselor educators guide the class to have a discussion related to values, biases, special treatment and pressures experienced by certain racial, ethnic and cultural groups, then these educators can ask prospective counselors to use mindfulness meditation as a form of self-discovery and introspection (Zajonc, 2013). 2) The study looked at the possibility of integrating a contemplative approach in multicultural counseling courses, where educators can ask some questions to prospective counselors related to their cultural biases, followed by reflection and discussion related to self-awareness. On the other hand, educators can encourage prospective counselors to apply mindfulness in their learning process to explore self-

No	Research	Information
		awareness, so that they can help prospective counselors in processing the emotional dynamics that arise during the course (Hilert & Tirado, 2019).
6.	MCC training and mindfulness practices	The results showed that the mindfulness subscale (nonreacting and describing) contributed to the variance in the MCC (awareness and knowledge) subscale which showed a relationship between mindfulness and MCC, where mindfulness practice was an important factor for developing MCC (Campbell et al., 2018).
7.	MCC Training through Community Service: Webinar	The results of the study show that community service activities in the form of webinar training to develop MCC and MSJCC have provided a new perspective for counselors in carrying out individual counseling and group counseling. When counselors understand cultural diversity as one of the important aspects in counseling problem-solving, counselors can use cultural understanding as a strength by using cultural values in helping counselors to solve the problems they face (Wibowo et al., 2022).
8.	Effective MCC education process	The results of the study show that prospective counselors value active and experiential learning more because it can lead prospective counselors to a deeper understanding of the needs in the field. Therefore, the education of prospective counselors needs to shift from didactic academic learning to active learning by using diverse frameworks to offer opportunities for prospective counselors to interact with real situations and apply their knowledge in real cases (Brown et al., 2014).
9.	Educator experience of prospective counselors related to MCC	The results of the study show that when prospective counselor educators teach multicultural counseling, this can create a strong emotional bond between teachers and students. This shows that there is an ecological system that emerges in the social aspect. This can help prospective counselors to develop their multicultural competencies, which contain a learning process through real experiences (Milan & Bridges, 2019).
10.	Self-report MCC and multicultural pedagogy	Based on the results of the MCC self-report, there is a need to carry out a practical reconceptualization of the current multicultural pedagogy to focus more on experience and direct involvement with counseling from different cultures in order to help prospective counselors in increasing multicultural awareness and skills (Barden & Greene, 2015).
11.	MCC and its relation to gender, level of education and professional experience	A study involving 102 counselors in Malaysia found no significant variation in MCC among counselors based on gender, education level, and professional experience. This indicates that these factors do not determine MCC proficiency. However, additional research is necessary to validate these findings (Md Shah, 2019).

Based on the above studies, there are also challenges that counselors will face, including challenges in applying mindfulness interventions in large classes, challenges in applying multicultural competencies in Indonesia, and unique challenges for counselors in minority environments in developing their multicultural competencies. The first challenge is in the implementation of mindfulness-based and mindfulness-multicultural interventions. The main challenge with this type of intervention is classroom management, as large classes require adequate space, calmness, and the educator's ability to maintain the focus of all students simultaneously. The second challenge is student engagement in mindfulness practices. Additionally, there is the limitation of time for reflection with each student. Regarding mindfulness-multicultural interventions, the first challenge is the perception of mindfulness practices as spiritual or religious practices. The second is the language barrier, which requires instructions to be conveyed in various languages that are easily understood.

The second challenge is the implementation of MCC in Indonesia. Several studies mentioned above state that Indonesia has diverse ethnic groups and cultures, therefore the implementation of MCC is very relevant and important for counselors in Indonesia to be able to prevent conflicts. Some of the challenges identified include the development of comprehensive knowledge about each culture, the lack of national standardization of MCC training and its integration into professional counseling education in Indonesia, and the gap between awareness and skills, as counselors may have cultural awareness but still lack practical skills in applying counseling sessions. Some of the above studies also highlight effective MCC development strategies that counselors can implement, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Effective MCC Development Strategies for Counselors**

No	Evaluation	Training	Education Process
1	Test standardization: standardized and licensed tests are needed in evaluating the MCC aspect of the counselor, as well as testing the effectiveness of MCC test kits in the field (Self report MCC, MCCTS, etc.).	MCC training using self-reflection skills: considering that one of the tripartite aspects of the MCC model is awareness, it is important for prospective counselors and counselors to hone their self-reflection skills to understand their abilities, beliefs and cultural values.	Active learning : based on several studies, there is an important emphasis regarding the MCC education process, where MCC is not enough to be taught within the confines of class and pedagogy, but it is necessary to take a special approach by applying active learning.
2	Supervision: continuous supervision is needed in the practice of counseling	MCC training and mindfulness practice : Based on several studies, there is a relationship between MCC	Experiential learning : in improving the MCC of prospective counselors, educators need to launch experiential learning that

No	Evaluation	Training	Education Process
	services in schools to improve the MCC of counselors.	and mindfulness where mindfulness practice is an important factor in developing MCC, especially to help counselors in conducting self-introspection.	can offer a new dimension for prospective counselors in seeing real situations and relevant cases so that prospective counselors can use the right strategies when faced with real situations.
3	Taxonomy and MCC framework: develop taxonomy and MCC framework in accordance with relevant needs in the field, related to the growth of a pluralistic population.	MCC training through contemplation: educators can involve contemplation activities when teaching prospective counselors to see cultural issues that occur in society in depth.	Direct involvement with counsellors: in increasing multicultural awareness and skills, prospective counselors need to have direct involvement with counselors in order to understand the counsellor's point of view from their cultural lens, so that prospective counselors can be enriched with broad insights related to cultural peculiarities and values possessed by counselors.
4		MCC training uses a variety of approaches: MCC training for counselors needs to continue to be encouraged in various forms, both in the form of webinars, seminars, and school training that can help counselors to develop cultural awareness and provide new insights for counselors in carrying out individual counseling and group counseling for students with diverse cultural backgrounds.	Honing skills: When viewed based on the tripartite MCC model which includes awareness, knowledge and skills; So an important aspect that needs to be strengthened is skills. Some of the research results that have been described show that skills training is still needed for prospective counselors, because it is found that many counselors already have sufficient awareness and knowledge related to multicultural competence, but are still lacking in the aspect of skills.

The above study assessed counselors' multicultural competence using the standardized MCCTS-R and Self-Report MCC tests, but this method sometimes does not reflect actual performance (Barden & Greene, 2015). Therefore, the following are some alternative assessment methods that can be conducted: first, multicultural case study analysis, which involves creating a conceptualization of the case and a culturally sensitive intervention plan, with the assessment focused on the ability to identify cultural factors, power, and oppression. Second, observation through simulation or role-play, involving simulated counseling sessions conducted by counselors and clients from specific cultural backgrounds. Third, performance evaluation in counseling supervision, which is conducted through direct supervision when prospective counselors handle clients in the field.

Counselors are sometimes faced with minority cultures in their work. At the same time, they are required to continuously develop their overall competencies, including professional, pedagogical, social, and personal skills. Interestingly, the literature mentioned above states that counselors of color (minorities) actually demonstrate higher multicultural competencies than their colleagues from majority groups (Ratts et al., 2016). Some of the challenges they may face include emotional strain, as minority counselors are often unconsciously positioned as representatives of their entire cultural group. The second challenge is microaggressions, subtle comments or actions that are defamatory, even unintentional.

Third is imposter syndrome, in which being in an academic environment dominated by a majority group can trigger feelings of inadequacy or doubt about one's own abilities. And the fourth is the lack of support and relevant mentors. Strategies for navigating a majority environment include setting professional boundaries, seeking peer support from fellow minority counselors, creating a safe space for sharing experiences, developing strategic responses, using supervision with experts, deepening self-reflection skills, active participation in professional organizations, and participation in advocacy.

### 3.2. Analysis of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC)

The Multicultural Counseling and Social Justice Competencies (MSJCC), developed by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis, offer counselors a framework for integrating multicultural competencies and social justice into counseling theory, practice, and research. The conceptual framework of the MSJCC is represented as a visual map illustrating the relationship between constructs and competencies outlined in the MSJCC. It uses quadrants to highlight how identity intersects with dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression that influence counseling relationships. This framework encompasses various levels that contribute to multicultural competence and social justice: (1) counselor self-awareness, (2) counseling perspectives, (3) counseling relationships, and (4) counseling and advocacy interventions. The MSJCC evolves through three dimensions: aspirational competence, attitudes and beliefs, and knowledge, skills and actions (AKSA). Socio-ecological models integrated into

counseling and advocacy interventions provide counselors with multi-layered strategies for individual counseling and advocacy for social justice.

The first core circle about counselor awareness, namely privilege, power, and oppression. This model states that counselee problems often arise from oppressive systems (racism, sexism, discrimination), and counselors who do not understand this concept will tend to view their problems purely as individual pathologies. The second circle focuses on the individuals involved in the counseling process, who are not seen as isolated entities but as individuals with intersecting identities. The third circle is about the counseling relationship and praxis, focusing on the counseling relationship itself and influenced by previous environmental factors. The fourth circle is about action, meaning that the knowledge and awareness from the previous circles must be translated into real and effective interventions. In summary, MSJCC is a learning spiral that begins with critical reflection on the system and oneself, moves toward a deep understanding of the client, is realized in a fair therapeutic relationship, and culminates in real action.

MSJCC's conceptual framework provides an important foundation for the development of educational methods and training methods. This concept aims to cultivate cultural counselors by: (1) recognizing the complexities of identity, (2) recognizing the negative effects of abuse on mental health and well-being, (3) recognizing individuals in their social contexts, and (4) incorporating different forms of counseling (e.g., individuals, families). The pedagogical recommendations associated with these competencies are intended to assist teachers and counselors in effective teaching while incorporating the principles of the MSJCC (Ratts & Pederson, 2015).

### 3.2.1. Understanding Identity Complexity

The main theoretical basis of the MSJCC is to recognize identity complexity as a dynamic and socially intricate phenomenon. It suggests a new perspective on cultural identity, emphasizing that the process of forming and defining social identities is more complex than previously thought. Traditional views of cultural identity in counseling literature may not fully apply to today's diverse society. Early conceptualizations often focused on historically marginalized ethnic and racial groups, overlooking intergroup variations and interactive influences of sociocultural identities, such as religious minorities and individuals affected by socioeconomic disparities (Ratts et al., 2016).

The use of a constructivist teaching approach has shown that students are deeply engaged in engaging activities that promote self-discovery and transformation. Educators and advisors have long aimed to promote personal growth and introspection in themselves and their students. Research has shown that students can broaden their horizons through this approach. Integrating constructivism with counseling pedagogy facilitates discussions on the development of intersectional cultural identities. Such a framework encourages students and teachers to reflect on their own perspectives before engaging in experiential learning. By using constructivist principles to shape instructional strategies, counselor educators can better align their approaches with the foundation of the MSJCC principle: understanding the complexity of identity (Chan et al., 2018; Ratts et al., 2016; Stevens-Long et al., 2012).

#### 3.2.1.1. Teaching Strategies

Within the constructivist approach, counselor educators use two instructional approaches to understand client identity: clinical case vignettes, intersectional encounters, and critical self-reflection exercises. Each approach follows a foundational framework that recognizes the complex and dynamic sociocultural nature of identity, which aligns with the first theoretical principle of MSJCC. Case vignettes, specifically designed to enhance student excellence at MSJCC, are used by advising educators to incorporate a constructivist approach to cultural identity into the curriculum. Odegaard and Vereen's research on grounded theory highlights that case vignettes are a preferred method for describing identity complexity, addressing the effects of oppression, and effectively contextualizing client issues. Case sketches can incorporate intersectionality to challenge categorical thinking and assumptions about identity. For example, when teaching case theory, treatment planning, and practice, these sketches can help broaden perspectives on identity factors such as gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic class, and disability.

Critical self-reflection exercises represent another activity that uses a constructivist approach to help students understand the intricacies of identity through introspective activities. Within counselor education, self-reflection is essential to promoting multicultural competence and social justice awareness. Experiential activities that incorporate self-reflection enhance students' multicultural abilities, as highlighted in the Teaching Initiative Group's Educational Best Practices Report. Self-reflection motivates students to recognize and challenge assumptions and biases in their learning journey, facilitating a deeper understanding of their own lives and perspectives. This practice promotes an open mind and prepares empathetic students to explore clients' experiences and journeys. By applying a constructivist framework to self-reflection, students can develop the ability to view situations through the perspectives of their clients in their future practice.

### 3.2.1.2. Effectiveness of Cultural Immersion Experience

This strategy is the most effective. The strategy of cultural immersion in the experience is carried out by attending two types of events in places of worship that are different from their own, and secondly, by cultural celebrations that are alien to them. In addition, they must identify other marginalized cultures through observation and experience for the purpose of discussion. This strategy is in line with the concept of experiential learning through direct immersion in a different cultural environment. They not only learn theoretically, but also experience, observe, and reflect on cultural and social dynamics in a tangible way. This experience can serve as an activating experience that awakens awareness and motivation for social justice (Messerschmitt-Coen et al., 2022).

### 3.2.2. Recognize the Negative Effects of Oppression

Constructivist frameworks allow teachers and counselors to teach, while recognizing how oppression affects mental health and contributes to the formation of cultural identity. In this way, constructivism aligns with other core tenets of the MSJCC, encouraging discussions of cultural identity in the context of social experiences and histories of oppression and privilege. Social justice research shows that racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class differences have a detrimental effect on emotional well-being. By presenting bullying as a phenomenon that negatively affects mental health, students can be more open to talking about these challenging topics and understanding their role as counselors and individuals (Casado Pérez & Hunt, 2020).

#### 3.2.2.1. Teaching Strategies

Students benefit greatly from understanding how oppression impacts mental health and well-being. To enhance student awareness, the counselor recommends two teaching strategies: (a) delivering case studies that illustrate these effects, and (b) emphasizing the connection between cultural identity and mental health within a broader social context, particularly in exploring how community dynamics influence individual well-being. The instructional approach includes a supportive structure where educators assist students in integrating challenging concepts effectively. One method involves utilizing specialized materials and optimizing teaching effectiveness when addressing topics related to bullying and mental health. The instructional approach or scaffolding is effective in building language together through discussion, helping students from dominant groups to be ready to face challenging discussions about oppression and privilege. In addition, by breaking down complex concepts into smaller parts and sequencing them, students can build their confidence and ability to apply concepts in clinical practice (Melamed et al., 2020).

### 3.2.3. Understanding Individuals in Environmental Contexts

The third important aspect of the MSJCC involves understanding counseling in its context. Diversity emphasizes the importance of looking at individuals through a meaningful lens, understanding how they are affected and influenced by various social norms, including those that lead to injustice and oppression. To understand the impact of discrimination on mental health and to examine its impact on individuals, it is important. Ratts says that by using an instructional framework to identify and empathize with individuals, counseling coaches can help students develop cultural skills to explore not only cultural identity but also how identities and social experiences form.

Ratts suggests that social attitudes are essential for understanding individual and local influences. Constructivism also plays an important role in helping students identify themselves as creators of meaning in a broader context. Accepting a constructivist view of identity is essential in identifying and critically examining potentially problematic ideas about cultural identity. Counseling teachers should be aware of the limitations of "traditional" language and language limitations, including how language develops sign awareness. The concept of mental health is shaped and updated through language, demonstrating the value of postmodern frameworks. For example, the ongoing revision of diagnostic language in the DSM encourages classroom discussions about how schools shape language and influence definitions and experiences in their mental health.

#### 3.2.3.1. Teaching Strategies

Understanding the mutual influence between individuals and their social systems is essential to building the foundation of the MSJCC. Integrating constructivist and intersectional frameworks into counseling programs and services is essential. Instructional strategies are based on an intersectional framework, which focuses primarily on how context shapes the formation of cultural identity. One study highlighted the importance of contextual factors in shaping the development of sociocultural identity. The use of intersectional case studies assists counselor educators in improving students' understanding of individuals in the context of their environment.

#### 3.2.3.2. Reflection of the Common Point

Greenidge & Smith (2013) Emphasize the importance of adopting a transformative model in multicultural counseling education. Intersectional self-reflection activities adopt a transformative approach, allowing trainees

to understand that the formation of cultural identity occurs beyond simple intersections. Gyawali et al. (2019) integrate the concept of intersectionality into the following principles: (a) recognize multiple categories of identity for analysis, (b) recognize diversity within each identity category, and (c) emphasize the importance of contextual examination in individual analysis.

### 3.2.3.3. Effectiveness of Cultural Identity Analysis Strategies

This strategy is applied by identifying the three non-selective identities (race, ethnicity, gender) that are most prominent in oneself. They then answered a series of reflective questions about how they were aware of this identity, the social messages they received, their advocacy skills, the impact of this identity in counseling, and how this identity intersects with other identities. According to Messerschmitt-Coen et al. (2022), this strategy is effective because it explicitly teaches the concept of intersectionality. Counselors are encouraged to understand that identity is not singular but multi-layered and influences themselves. This understanding is essential to avoid stigmatizing opinions and stereotypes against clients and to offer holistic and culturally sensitive consulting services.

### 3.2.4. Integrating Social Justice Advocacy

Building this foundation marks a growing trend in career counseling, highlighting the integration of social responsibility into all service processes. In the context of multicultural competence, this trend aims to clarify and emphasize the role that counselors and educators play in promoting social justice. MSJCC expands the traditional model of knowledge, awareness, and competence into four developmental competencies: (a) attitudes and beliefs, (b) knowledge, (c) competence, and (d) action. Action competencies, essential to achieve social justice outcomes, emphasize the importance of educators and counsellors integrating these skills to cultivate culturally competent and socially responsible Counselors in Training (CITs).

#### 3.2.4.1. Teaching Strategies

According to Helen Merrell-James et al. (2019), the fourth competency of MSJCC shows that tutoring educators must train students proficiently using an action-oriented framework. They advocate for the use of CCNs to strengthen students' multicultural counseling skills and emphasize its positive effects, such as familiarizing students with systemic factors that affect human health and developmental outcomes. This approach also reinforces CIT's commitment to being a socially responsible practitioner. Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick (2008) recommend integrating social justice competencies into teaching and creating opportunities for advocacy and learning through structured training, services, and support networks. According to Melamed et al. (2020), this strategy emphasizes the importance of socially responsible and action-oriented practices in the counseling profession. This strategy is effective in developing skills because it has been shown to strengthen students' multicultural counseling skills, improve systemic understanding by familiarizing students with systemic factors that affect human health outcomes and development, and increase community involvement in training activities, strengthening student self-determination, civic engagement, and effectiveness (Melamed et al., 2020).

#### 3.2.4.2. Provide Advocacy Training and Service Learning Opportunities

Educators, counselors, and counseling programs adhere to established accreditation standards and codes of conduct, ensuring that students are given the opportunity to engage deeply with these experiences in programs and courses. An illustrative example can be found at a university affiliated with an author, where all first-year students must complete a 200-hour non-clinical social justice internship. During a six-month period at an approved location, students actively participate in writing, advocacy, organizing, and training, and gain hands-on experience in promoting social justice and equity in a diverse community environment.

The counseling program plans to introduce additional simulations and training focused on civic activism. For example, all students, faculty, and staff at other universities affiliated with different authors must participate in immersive, interactive workshops that offer hands-on experience. This simulation is based on well-documented research on women's experiences after being released from prison. Educators, counselors, and counseling programs adopt policies that promote advocacy and community engagement. For example, counselor educators may examine the implementation of attendance policies or classroom guidelines that encourage student participation in civic activism.

The second strategy to support counselors in integrating social justice advocacy into the classroom is called eco-webbing. Eco-webbing allows students to conceptualize issues effectively by connecting them to a broader social context, which is in line with key aspects of MSJCC's fourth foundation. Williams et al. (2015) describe eco-webbing as a method designed to empower CIT to visually map different layers of social and ecological influence, fostering concrete ideas for systemic action and change. The eco-webbing process involves three stages: (a) identification of important information, (b) distillation of key information and themes, and (c) reflection. Counselors in training (CIT) reflect on how individuals are placed in relational, cultural, and social contexts relevant to counseling. For example, an educator may encourage CIT to explore their relationship with

the client and consider aspects such as (a) family relationships, (b) the emotional dimension of counseling practices (such as eating together versus eating alone), (c) social influences on beauty standards and body image, and (d) access to food.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to integrate strategies between Multicultural Counseling Competence (MCC) and Multicultural Counseling and Social Justice Competency (MSJCC) as the primary foundation for counselor effectiveness in navigating a pluralistic society. Theoretically, the findings confirm that service effectiveness no longer relies solely on technical mastery, but rather on the synergy between self-awareness of bias, a systemic understanding of cultural identity, and courage in advocacy. By integrating the Socio-Ecological Model, counselors are guided to view client problems not only as individual issues but as manifestations of broader social structural pressures. This positions multicultural competence as a crucial instrument in mitigating social impacts often overlooked in conventional counseling practice. Practically, this competency transformation requires a three-stage educational design that moves from internal reflection to external action through measurable experiential learning. Implementation strategies such as standardized evaluation and ongoing supervision are crucial to ensure that social justice values are not merely understood as theory but internalized in counselors' professional behavior. As an original contribution, this research offers an applicable framework for developing educational psychology curricula, both in Indonesian and global contexts, to produce culturally sensitive practitioners. This synthesis is expected to bridge the gap between theory and actual needs in the field, ensuring that counseling services remain relevant and equitable amidst increasingly complex population dynamics.

#### Author Contributions

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

#### Funding

No funding support was received.

#### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

#### Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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