

# Recontextualizing Microcounseling Pedagogy in Indonesia: Operationalizing Ivey's Microskills Pyramid through Asia as Method

Nanang Erma Gunawan\*<sup></sup>, Chici Pratiwi<sup></sup>

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Colombo St. No.1, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author, email: nanang\_eg@uny.ac.id

<https://doi.org/10.17977/um065.v6.i9.2026.10>

## Article history

Submitted: 5 March 2026

Revised: 19 April 2026

Accepted: 26 April 2026

Published: 11 June 2026

## Keywords

Asia as method

Counselor education

Cultural-ethical pedagogy

Microcounseling practicum

Professional formation

## Abstract

This paper envisions a repositioning of undergraduate microcounseling practicum in Indonesian counselor education, namely with the microskills pyramid, combined with Asia as Method as an epistemological and pedagogical orientation. Although microcounseling is a popular model of skills training, prevailing Western assumptions risk epistemic misalignment when implemented uncritically in non-Western settings. Utilizing relational, cultural, and spiritual features of Indonesian society, this article reconceptualizes microcounseling skills as ethical-cultural practices rather than neutral instruments. Taking a design-based pedagogical approach, the paper describes core principles and a modular practicum structure, with a focus on relationality, moral awareness, and existential-spiritual reflection as integral to skill development. This reconceptualization posits microcounseling as a formative site for professional identity development and helps to situate this within wider international discourses on decolonization and pluralizing counselor education pedagogy.

## 1. Introduction

Microcounseling is central to counselor education, serving historically as a gateway experience for helping students build essential helping aspects (attending, listening, empathy, questioning, and influencing) (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2023). This course facilitates the systematic and gradual development of clinical skills in novice counselors such that competence, confidence, and intention, prior to the exploration of increasingly sophisticated theoretical positions and clinical interventions, are fostered. In this tradition, the microskills pyramid formulated by Ivey and associates has emerged as one of the most prominent pedagogically supported models throughout counselor education programs around the world.

Microcounseling as most commonly practiced, despite its pedagogical strengths, is not epistemically neutral. This model of microskills emerged in a Western counseling paradigm informed by individualism, verbal expressiveness, linear communication, and a relatively secular view of human development and psychological change (Ivey et al., 2023). These assumptions are frequently implicitly embedded in how microskills are taught, practiced, and measured in counseling, presenting counseling as primarily intrapersonal and dyadic in nature, as a process directed toward one's insight, autonomy, and action. If adopted uncritically outside the Western framework, these pedagogical assumptions risk creating an epistemic gap between methods of counseling versus the lives of clients and the counselors. This is especially true in an Indonesian situation.

Indonesian culture, by contrast, is more collectivist, with high context communication patterns, and deeply ingrained spiritual and religious worldviews influence the construction of selfhood, suffering, decision making, and relational responsibility among Indonesian people (Geertz, 1973; Mulder, 1998). The processes by which meaning is made are necessarily correlated with relation, harmony, morality, community values and imagined relationship with the other whether this is perceived from the standpoints of religion, belief, spirituality or cosmology of the culture. As a result, counseling in Indonesia often involves implied meanings and feelings, nonverbal expressions, moral considerations, and spiritual interpretations above and beyond the direct speaking experience taught in classical microcounseling modules. Previous multicultural counseling scholarship has constantly highlighted the centrality of cultural responsiveness, ethical competency, and contextual awareness to counselor education (Ratts et al., 2016). But this work is still conducted in accordance with a logic of adaptation, with Western counseling model epistemically foundational, and cultural dimensions inserted as contextual variables or competencies. Although valuable, these approaches may not sufficiently focus on deeper questions of epistemic positioning, or whose ways of knowing, relating, and meaning-making are privileged

within counselor education, and whose are relegated to secondary or invisible status. In doing so, this article pursues Asia as Method as its major epistemological perspective. Asia as Method which was coined by Chen (2010) is not a critique against Western knowledge nor an essentialist promotion of "Asian values." Instead, it is a methodological stance that seeks to strategically invoke Asian histories, philosophies, and social practices as the touchstones for knowledge production, rather than simply as a category of knowledge production. In doing so, Chen makes an appeal for researchers to challenge Western epistemological hegemony while refusing to partake in uncritical cultural romanticism through "dual distancing." Within the field of counselor education Asia as Method represents a critical perspective in considering pedagogical practices as a locus of epistemic contribution rather than adaptations of cultural practices from the West to a Western environment.

Introducing Asia as Method into microcounseling pedagogy includes a reframing of how microskills are understood and taught. Instead of seeing microskills as single isolated practices to be mastered, we can re-envision them as relational, ethical, and metaphorical practices built in both cultural and spiritual lifeworlds. In an environment where relationship harmony, ethics, spiritual awareness, and a sense of collective duty are emphasized, skills like attending, empathy, questioning, confronting, and reframing manifest differently and serve different purposes. Microcounseling, in this light, becomes a kind of technology and, as such, a process of culturally contextual, professional identity formation. Such a reconceptualization is needed and timely in Indonesian counselor education. While undergraduate guidance and counseling (Bimbingan dan Konseling) programs are rapidly developing professional standards for practice in education, outcome-based curriculum, and alignment with internationally accepted standards, there is also a growing imperative to maintain pedagogical models aligned to local epistemologies and social realities. Lacking such grounding, counselor education threatens to reproduce technically proficient but culturally displaced practitioners. Thus, the purpose of this article is to provide an outline of a new model of undergrad microcounseling practicum that is rooted in the microskills pyramid articulated by Ivey and Zalaquett (2023) and localized via Asia as Method. In particular, this article presents a focused practicum plan for the initial counseling session (microcounseling) that integrates the relational, spiritual, cultural, and ethical aspects of Indonesian contexts. This not only aims to help develop a local curriculum but also contributes to larger international discourses on decolonizing and recontextualizing counselor education pedagogy.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. The Microskills Pyramid in Counselor Education

The microskills approach was a systematic pedagogy developed to facilitate novice counselors in learning and practicing early helping skills through systematic practice, feedback, and gradual incorporation (Ivey et al., 2023). A central feature of this approach is the microskills pyramid, which includes a hierarchical organization of counseling skills from the basics of attending and listening skills and influencing to skill integration and personal counseling style. This sequencing indicates that such competence seems to emerge through deliberate skills in a developmental way and not as a result of premature theoretical complexity. The microskills pyramid, an approach in counselor education, has been applied broadly when considering clarity of training, trainability, applicability across theoretical orientations (Cormier & Hackney, 2015). It helps students to identify how they're communicating before they look at what theoretical explanations or interventions they use. Structured microskills training has been consistently shown by empirical and pedagogical literature to enhance counselor self-efficacy, observational acuity, and interpersonal sensitivity, especially in early-stage training (Hill, 2014). Yet the microskills framework also contains tacit epistemological assumptions. It privileges verbal expression, emotional naming, direct questioning, and explicit meaning making as the main means of therapeutic interaction. These assumptions belong to a wider Western tradition of counseling that also privilege individual agency, self-disclosure, and linear problem solving (Ivey et al., 2023). While such assumptions work well in their originating contexts, when placed in sociocultural contexts where communication is indirect, relational rules favour harmony over expressiveness, and meaning is co-constructed through shared values, spirituality, and social roles they may need to be interrogated.

### 2.2. Cultural, Spiritual, and Relational Dimensions of Counseling in Indonesia

Indonesia reflects a sociocultural environment in which counseling interactions are influenced profoundly by collectivist ways of seeing the world, hierarchical social relations, and high context communication styles (Mulder, 1998). People view a variety of personal experiences, including personal distress, decision-making, and life transitions, through relational lenses of family, community, moral duty, and spiritual accountability. As a result, counseling encounters are almost never limited to intrapsychic processes. Spirituality and religiosity form major aspects of Indonesian sense-making. Psychological concerns for many are inextricably interwoven with theological interpretations, existential questions, and perceived relationships with God or transcendent forces. Studies in cross-cultural psychology and counseling have shown this is the case, with empathic presence, moral sensitivity, and relational attunement as more salient in these circumstances than open emotional disclosure or direct confrontation (Ratts et al., 2016). These cultural dimensions have important pedagogical

lessons for microcounseling training. Skills like questioning, confrontation, and interpretation commonly taught as neutral techniques may be perceived as intrusive, disrespectful, or relationally disruptive if taught without cultural and spiritual attunement. In contrast, skills of presence, silence, nonverbal responsiveness, and indirect facilitation may serve therapeutic purposes more. The problem, therefore, is not whether these microskills exist or not, but how these are conceptualized, taught, and enacted within the context of relational norms that are culturally embedded in Indonesia's context.

### 2.3. Multicultural Counseling and Its Epistemic Limits

For counselor education to be culturally responsive, multicultural counseling frameworks have brought significant strides to addressing cultural diversity in counselor education. Recently, models that emphasize multicultural competence, social justice advocacy, and ethical responsiveness have redefined the training of counselors to include more than just technical expertise (Ratts et al., 2016). These frameworks emphasize the significance of self-awareness, knowledge of cultural differences, and culturally appropriate interventions. However, a lot of multicultural counseling scholarship still rests at a Western epistemic center. These findings present cultural considerations largely as contextual modifiers of current theories, rather than as alternative epistemological bases. Consequently, pedagogical practices may continue to construct Western-derived models as the normative baseline and non-Western perspectives as adjuncts or adaptive (Chilisa, 2012). This is particularly true for microcounseling pedagogy, where definitions of skills and performance criteria are seldom interrogated for cultural epistemology. For example, if empathy and/or reflective behaviors differ from culturally meaningful expressions of care and respect, students could be trained to act out such acts in ways that align with Western expressive norms. To address this gap, we need a framework that moves beyond competence toward epistemic repositioning.

### 2.4. Asia as Method: An Epistemological Reorientation

As Chen (2010) suggested, Asia as Method provides an epistemological lens that presents a critical epistemological focus for reworking counselor education pedagogy. Rather than framing Asia in a comparative or adaptation position, Asia as Method advocates for using Asian histories, philosophies and social practices as methodological resources for actively producing knowledge. This approach disrupts the unidirectional flow of theory from Western hubs to non-Western peripheries. One of the main tenets of Asia as Method is that of dual distancing: that is, the idea of maintaining critical distance from Western epistemic power but avoiding essentialist or romanticized portrayals of Asian cultures. This process of engaging local values, relational norms and spiritual worldviews as credible pedagogic tools, without rejecting the utility of established theories outright, is the essence of education practice. On microcounseling, Asia as Method reconceptualizes microskills not as universal tools but as culturally specific relational practices. Skills such as attending, empathy and reframing are conceptualized as practiced in moral, spiritual and communal settings that not only influence counselor intentionality but also client experience. This direction enables the pedagogy of microcounseling to shift from technical replication to a more culturally resonant approach to professional development.

### 2.5. Integrating the Microskills Pyramid with Asia as Method

The integration of the microskills pyramid with Asia as Method concerns the reconstruction of skill acquisition as a relational and ethical process situated within cultural meaning systems. The hierarchical construction of the pyramid of microskills still has pedagogical merit but must be understood from culturally and spiritually informed perspectives at each level in the pyramid. At the very base, attending and listening are presented as presence with moral obligation, centering on humility, respect, and relational safety. Influencing skills are addressed at intermediate levels with a note of harmony, authority, and indirect communication being observed. At the integrative level, personal counseling style is viewed as the expression of cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and professional ethics rather than a technical preference. In so doing, the microcounseling practicum becomes an area of epistemic contribution, and not mere skill transfer. In addition to training students to deliver counseling techniques, students are also guided to reflect on how their cultural location, spiritual outlook, and relational values inform their counseling practice. Thus, Asia as Method allows microcounseling pedagogy to play a role in the development of locally bound forms of counseling knowledge not prominently included in the broader global conversation around counselor education.

## 3. Asia as Method Based Design of the Microcounseling Practicum

### 3.1. Core Pedagogical Principles

The microcounseling practicum design of the paper is informed from the view that counseling skills are not culturally neutral techniques, but situated relational practices embedded in moral, cultural, and spiritual meaning systems. Although the microskills framework offers a well-established developmental framework for counselor training (Ivey et al., 2023), Asia as Method offers the epistemological orientation for understanding, performing, and evaluating these skills within the Indonesian context. The practicum design was informed by three interconnected pedagogical principles:

- a. Relationality as the foundation of skill development,
- b. Microskills as ethical cultural practices rather than neutral techniques, and
- c. Existential and spiritual reflection as integral to the learning process.

These guiding principles reconfigure microcounseling from a technical training model to a formative educational praxis.

### 3.2. Relationality as the Foundation of Skill Development

At the core of this practicum is a relational ontology in which the self is conceptualised not as the autonomous self, but instead as a self in relation. This premise is also in line with sociocultural and cross-cultural theory which claims that meaning, identity, and agency are constructed relationally rather than independently (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In many Asian and Indonesian settings, interpersonal harmony, moral responsibility, and social embeddedness are fundamental for internalizing and interacting with others. Thus, microcounseling skills are framed as expressions of relational presence rather than discrete behavioral competencies. Attending, empathy, questioning, and influencing are presented as ways of being with clients rather than as techniques applied to clients. This orientation aligns with relational cultural theories of counselling that highlight the importance of mutuality, respect, and responsiveness as building blocks of productive helping relationships (Jordan, 2018). In terms of pedagogical principles, it moves the focus away from performance accuracy and toward relational attunement in the classroom. In high-context cultural contexts, meaning is often conveyed implicitly, so students will be encouraged to consider how their presence, tone, timing, and ethical stance shape the counseling relationship. Relationality then acts as the organizing logic of skill acquisition rather than secondary as a result of technical expertise.

### 3.3. Microskills as Ethical Cultural Practices Rather Than Neutral Techniques

There is a second core to the practicum design concept namely its rejection of microskills as value free, universally applicable techniques. While microskills may always be represented as fundamental, transferable tools, critical scholarship has pointed out that counselling strategies and practices are situated within moral, cultural and epistemological traditions (Ratts et al., 2016). Microskills are considered ethical cultural practices of the type which, for the Asia as Method, can be interpreted as implicit assumptions about communication, authority, emotion and change. Questioning, for instance, can be an invitation to make meaning in one place, but an intrusive or face-threatening act in another. Thus, confrontation might be interpreted as supportive guidance or relational violation depending on the cultural norms of harmony and hierarchy. This pedagogy encourages students to think critically not only about how to use microskills, but also why, when and for whom such tools are relevant. Thus, ethical decision-making is built into skill learning, rather than isolated from them as part of the formal curriculum. This model is in a manner consistent with a 21st century contextual focus on ethics as relational and enacted rather than regulated abstractly by codes (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). By positioning microskills as ethical cultural practices, the practicum builds professional judgment and moral sensitivity as well as technical expertise. The students come to see counseling skills as situated actions requiring ongoing calibration to relational context and cultural meaning.

### 3.4. Existential and Spiritual Reflection as Integral to Learning

The third pedagogical principle integrates existential and spiritual reflection within microcounseling education, especially where spirituality and religiosity are key sites of meaning making. Psychological questions in Indonesian society are often concerned with purpose, moral responsibility, and relationships with the transcendent. This exclusion can risk dividing counseling education into disconnected components and decreasing its cultural significance. Through use of existential and meaning-centered perspectives in counseling (Frankl, 2006; Wong, 2012), this practicum enlists reflective tasks that encourage pupils to consider what they value, believe, and assume about human suffering and growth. Rather, reflection is presented as a pedagogic tool for developing self-awareness, ethical clarity, and professional coherence that is critical to the development of students who seek to be professional selves. Asia as Method encourages this co-integration by centering spiritual and existential knowledge as sources of pedagogical understanding, rather than simply peripheral to the conversation. Through reflection, students are taught how cultural narratives, religious traditions, and spiritual worldviews impact both the client's experiences and how they respond to counseling. Reflection on this sort of process is consistent with Schön's (1983) notion of reflective practice, whereby professional competence flows from the intentional encounter with lived experience, rather than being imposed through mere rules-based application alone. Existential and spiritual reflection thus deepens the pedagogy of microcounseling to serve as a space for holistic professional formation rather than technical rehearsal.

Combined, these pedagogical principles give a cohesive design rationale for an Asia-as-Method-based microcounseling practicum. Relationality gives the ontological underpinnings, ethical cultural practice recasts

skill enactment, and existential spiritual reflection sustains professional meaning. Through this integration, microcounseling becomes not merely an introductory skills course, but a foundational site for cultivating culturally grounded, ethically responsive, and epistemically reflexive counselors.

## **4. Recontextualization of the Microcounseling Practicum Modules**

### **4.1. Procedure for the Implementation of the Microcounseling Practicum**

The Microcounseling Practicum is performed in groups of 10–12 students with one or two instructors to allow for in depth skills practice, intensive supervision, and adequate feedback. Practicum activities are conducted in a counseling practicum room per protocol with soundproofing and sound barriers available to ensure counseling conversations cannot be overheard from outside the room, and confidentiality is guaranteed. Students who play the role of counselees within counseling practice sessions are encouraged to draw from real life cases, if only those cases are ethically appropriate to share and observe with other group members. At the beginning of the course, students and instructors concur on strict confidentiality principles, such that all participants are required to keep all case related information shared during practicum confidential and respect confidentiality of such information. Students are obligated to attend all practicum sessions. Attendance, in cases where unavoidable, students are directed to do remedial practice activities, in accordance with the instructions of the instructor, to ensure the continuity of the students' competency. When practicing their single microcounseling skills, the students work in pairs in their assigned groups. This allows for guided role play, lots of practice, and even peer feedback. After all, microcounseling skills have been introduced and practised, students need to complete a simulation of a full counseling session. This simulation can be held in real-time or videotaped depending on room condition and amount of materials. The Microcounseling Practicum is also designed to prepare students for the next Individual Counseling Practicum course. Consequently, student performance in this course is regarded as foundational to progress to the next level of clinical training. The microcounseling practicum presents the full counseling session as the first counseling session. During the Individual Counseling Practicum, students also engage in case conceptualization and complete full counseling sessions, using a specific counseling theory or framework to systematically assist the counselee (usually a peer serving as a client). Both the instructors and the students continuously provide feedback through a microcounseling performance observation instrument created and provided by the instructor during the practicum. This process of feedback is a fundamental part of reflective learning and professional skill development.

#### **4.1.1. Module 1: Foundations of Microcounseling Skills (Sessions 1–2)**

From an Asia as Method perspective, microcounseling training is reoriented from a focus on technical competency to relationality and moral positioning. Therapeutic relationships are conceptualized not only as professional but as human relationships with responsibility and trust. In the Indonesian interpretation, counseling is often seen as an amanah an entrusted duty, charged with ethical, social, and spiritual accountability. This model shifts the therapeutic relationship from a contractual relationship to an ethics-based relationship with a counselor who is present, thus signifying commitment, care, and integrity. The tripartite model in counseling pedagogy is reconceptualized with respect to a relational ontology that integrates counselor, client, and transcendent values. Unlike the value and spiritual variables (which are culturally chosen) as optional, this model suggests that counseling encounters are situated in moral and spiritual meanings that shape the lens through which distress, agency, and change can be viewed and discussed. This framing aligns with recent research explaining that counseling is intertwined with clients' worldviews and existential paradigms (Ratts et al., 2016). This module also reframes ethics education. Instead of focusing on explicit compliance with specific rules, ethics is characterized by an understanding of ethical situationality, which involves actively cultivating reflexivity to power, relational norms, and cultural expectations within the relational context. This perspective aligns with current views of professional ethics as experience and lived practice rather than procedural adherence (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Neuroscience and resilience are not presented as reductionist explanations of behavior, but as additional lenses within the context of clients' stories of meaning, purpose, and hope. The practicum achieves this by interweaving scientific understandings with existential and cultural models that avoid epistemic disintegration and facilitate composite professional knowledge.

#### **4.1.2. Module 2: Basic Listening Skills (Sessions 3–5)**

Listening skills represent an important site for cultural recontextualization. In this practicum, attending is reimagined as full presence, focusing on internal attentiveness and relational availability rather than simply observable behavior outcomes. Presence is conceptualized as a matter of moral and relational stance being present with the client especially important in high context cultures where silence, pacing, and nonverbal signals encode information (Hall, 1976). Empathy is reconceptualized as rasa attunement, placing an emphasis on attunement to implicit emotional states and relational contexts relative to immediate verbal articulation. Despite the pedagogical importance of reflective responding, this indicator is not considered a privileged outcome of empathic engagement. This strategy is congruent with the cross-cultural counseling literature, which

shows that cultural differences may contribute to variance in empathy (Ridley et al., 2021). When questioning skills are approached, it is done explicitly in accordance with culturally based ideals, such as steering clear of interrogative dynamics, preserving relational harmony and deference to hierarchy and norms. Students are educated on the potential of some questioning styles, particularly those that provide direct challenge to and rapid clarification in the questions, to endanger relational safety. As such, reflective, invitational, and process-oriented questions are foregrounded to facilitate meaning making on the understanding-guiding lines while not exerting interpretive authority.

#### 4.1.3. Module 3: Counseling Session Stages (Sessions 6)

The five-stage counseling session model is retained for pedagogical coherence but reinterpreted as a relational narrative process rather than a linear intervention sequence. The initial stage emphasizes the creation of an empathic and morally safe space, foregrounding relational trust rather than procedural rapport building. Client stories are approached as relational narratives, frequently embedded within family, community, and spiritual contexts. Exploration thus extends beyond individual experience to include relational obligations and moral interpretations. Goal formulation is reframed as alignment with family and community values, acknowledging that personal aspirations are often negotiated within collective frameworks. Restorying is conceptualized as meaning reconstruction grounded in cultural wisdom and spirituality. Change is understood less as behavioral correction and more as the restoration of coherence, dignity, and moral direction. Action planning emphasizes meaningful commitment rather than mechanistic goal attainment, ensuring that counseling outcomes remain relationally and culturally sustainable.

#### 4.2. Module 4: Advanced Skills Ethical Influence (Sessions 7–10)

Advanced microcounseling skills involve important ethics, especially around influence and power. In this practicum, confrontation is reframed using the culturally resonant concept of *ngemong* the advice that comes from a place of care, patience, and protective intent. Instead of using this form of direct challenge, counselors gently promote awareness through reflection and relational support. Reframing is a process of reinterpretation from a meaning-oriented perspective, which is guided by clients' values, moral narratives, and spiritual beliefs. This view is consistent with narrative and constructivist perspectives that focus on constructing meaning rather than cognitive correction (Neimeyer, 2009). Counselor self-disclosure acts instead as modeling and exemplification, selectively used to uphold relational authenticity but not as a co-optation of the space in which counseling occurs. Directive interventions and psychoeducation are practiced contextually and in light of the fact that clients are likely to value structured guidance while also expecting relational sensitivity. Influence is thus constructed as an ethical responsibility performed through humility, collaboration, and cultural attunement, rather than as a tool of persuasion.

#### 4.3. Module 5: Integration and the Counselor's Personal Style (Sessions 11–16)

The last module focuses on integration as professional formation, moving from technical consolidation to identity development. Personal style of counseling is seen as person in context and that this counselor's cultural background, values, spiritual orientation, and ethical commitments all factor into the counseling process. This view is consistent with the literature on self, which also emphasizes utilizing the self at the center of effective counseling practice (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). Students go through complete microcounseling sessions and are led to reflect on how their identities contribute to their practice. Criteria of evaluation are not limited to technical proficiency, but include a degree of relational sensitivity, ethical maturity, as well as an understanding of professional boundaries. Reflecting through dialogue/written narrative to articulate how cultural and spiritual grounding guide their emerging professional identity. So the practicum is thus, through integrative process and praxis, a formative space for developing counselors who are not just competent, but also epistemically grounded and ethically responsive about their sociocultural context.

### 5. Pedagogical Implications

#### 5.1. Implications for Undergraduate Guidance and Counseling Curriculum

##### 5.1.1. Microcounseling as Professional Formation Rather Than Technical Training

This reconceptualized practicum reinforces the importance of reframing the work of microcounseling in undergraduate guidance programs and counseling education as a mode of professional formation, and not as narrowly defined training of skills. Although microskills education has so far been characterized as preparatory or mechanical, the Asia as Method school of thought places microcounseling as an area of practice where professional identity, ethical sensibility, and relational consciousness are developed actively. This view is

consistent with contemporary scholarship in counselor education, whereby identity development, reflexivity, and ethical maturity are recognized as key outcomes of early training (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). By integrating cultural, spiritual, and relational components into the microcounseling pedagogy, undergraduate curricula may provide a stronger base to develop a coherent professional self rooted in local contexts and situated within a dialogical dialogue with global counseling discourse.

## 5.2. Implications for Practicum Instructors

### 5.2.1. Instructors as Relational Models and Facilitators of Reflexive Learning

The pedagogical design identified in this article has important implications for the role of practicum instructors. In the Asia as Method approach, instructors are not just seen as assessors of technical competence, but instead are relational models and facilitators of reflective learning. The instructors' presence, modes of communication, and ethical position act as tacit curricula through which students learn how counseling is enacted as a moral and relational practice. Evidence from counselor education research overwhelmingly suggests that supervisor and instructor modeling is critical in forming trainees' counseling identity, ethical reasoning, and use of self (Borders et al., 2015; Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). In high context and relational cultures, this modeling role is even more evident, as students closely observe how authority, care, and guidance are embodied rather than explicitly articulated. From this vantage point, successful practicum instruction necessitates instruction that is reflexive where instructors invite students to interrogate how cultural assumptions, spiritual values, and relational norms shape their counseling practice. Feedback processes transition from corrective commentary to dialogical reflection so that students are able to describe meaning, uncertainty, and ethical tension experienced in practice. This facilitative type of teaching resonates with Schön's (1983) conceptualization of the reflective practitioner, whereby professional learning emerges through guided reflection on lived experience rather than technical prescription. Thus, for instructors, preparation and development are not limited to mastery of microskills but also include training in cultural reflexivity, ethical dialogue, and relational supervision. This transformation recasts practicum instructors as co-participants in epistemic learning, instead of as neutral transmitters of technique.

## 5.3. Implications for the Development of Global Microcounseling Theory

### 5.3.1. Global South Contributions to Counseling Pedagogy

Beyond local curricular reforms, this model is part of a wider discussion about the formation of global microcounseling theory. The vast majority of the literature on microskills is generated in Western epistemic hubs and then spread globally as pedagogical benchmarks (Ivey et al., 2023). Although effective, such an approach risk reproducing epistemic asymmetries in which non-Western contexts serve primarily as sites of application rather than theory generation. Through the operationalization of Asia as Method in microcounseling pedagogy, this article illustrates how Global South contexts can serve as theorized interlocutors as opposed to simply as adaptations of cultures. This example of Indonesia demonstrates how microskills can be re-evaluated from the perspective of relational, moral, and spiritually embedded practices, which thereby broadens the theoretical horizons of what microcounseling can be in practice and how it operates in different contexts. This is in line with recent calls in counselor education to decolonize theory construction and acknowledge plural epistemologies in the profession (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2021). Instead of dismissing conventional microskills frameworks, this approach engages them as a dialogic space, exposing their cultural assumptions while also extending their potential to application through epistemic diversification. Microcounseling becomes a place of knowledge circulation, not just a place of knowledge transfer, wherein the ideas from an Asian framework add value to global pedagogical discourse. Such contributions call on the field to rethink claims of universality and to recognize counseling pedagogy as a culturally situated, dynamic construct shaped through transnational conversations.

## 6. Discussion: From Pedagogical Recontextualization to Epistemic Contribution

This section propels the primary thesis of the article by transcending mere descriptive recontextualization to elucidate its epistemological importance, conceptual originality, and theoretical ramifications for counselor education. Specifically, this discussion elucidates the novel aspects of the proposed model, particularly the transition of microcounseling from a culturally neutral skill set to a culturally situated epistemic practice. It discusses the significance of this shift for professional development and educational design, as well as its divergence from current frameworks that predominantly function within adaptation-oriented or competence-based paradigms (Ivey et al., 2023; Ratts et al., 2016). Instead of restating conventional criticisms of Western epistemic supremacy in counseling, the discourse emphasizes the model's role as a means of epistemic repositioning, wherein Asia as Method serves not merely as a contextual adjunct but as a productive framework for reconfiguring microcounseling pedagogy. The subsequent sections explicate how this reconceptualization

alters the status of microcounseling skills, redirects pedagogical practices towards relational and moral development, and broadens the theoretical framework of global counselor education towards a more dialogical and pluralistic epistemological basis.

### 6.1. Microcounseling Beyond Technique: Reframing the Epistemic Status of Skills

Although the microskills framework has shown persistent pedagogical value in novice counselor training (Ivey et al., 2023), the ubiquitous global approach tends to mask epistemological assumptions which were developed in its original Western context notably assumptions about individualism, verbal expressiveness, and secular rationality. Through recontextualizing microcounseling through Asia as Method, this model shows that microskills are not mere pedagogical tools, but epistemic acts epistemologies of knowing, relating, and constructing meaning in counseling encounters. The ability to attend, be empathetic, confront, and reframe for others operates differently across cultures' understandings of selfhood, responsibility in relationship, and moral order. This observation resonates with broad critiques in counseling and psychology that stress the culturally situated nature of professional knowledge (Ratts et al., 2016). Understood from this perspective, pedagogical recontextualization is not a peripheral adaptation but a type of epistemic intervention. It shows that what counts as "effective" counseling behavior is not separate from culture-bound norms of communication, ethics, and relationality. Thus, microcounseling pedagogy must be conceived as a space for the performance of epistemology, not mere transfer of skills

### 6.2. Asia as Method as Pedagogical Praxis in Counselor Education

For example, an important contribution of this article is to make Asia as Method operational not an esoteric idea, but a pedagogical praxis in counselor education. Chen's (2010) framing of Asia as Method focuses on the strategic deployment of Asian intellectual and cultural resources as a means of decentering Western epistemic dominance, without directly dismissing Western knowledge. When applied to microcounseling pedagogy, this allows for a dialogical engagement with established frameworks instead of binary opposition between "Western" and "non-Western" counseling. In this practicum design, Asia as Method serves as a guiding logic for the sequencing of curriculum, teaching focus, and assessment criteria. Relational harmony, moral sensitivity, and spiritual meaning are not appended as contextual variables but instead are located within organizing principles for skill building. This is in line with decolonial and Indigenous literature, which urges the inclusion of multiple epistemologies in professional education (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2021). Above all, this method sidesteps cultural essentialism. The Indonesian context is not given as a monolithic or fixed cultural space, but as a dynamic social locus where tradition, religion, modernity, and global professional standards converge. Asia as Method offers, therefore, a reflexive pedagogy that calls for interrogative access to both local and global knowledge systems.

### 6.3. Professional Formation and the Moral Dimension of Counseling Practice

Findings of this pedagogical model also feed into the literature regarding training professionals in counselor education. Now more than ever research acknowledges that counselor skills are constituted by more than competence in technical matters, but include ethical maturity, self-awareness, and relational judgment (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). Placing microcounseling as a formative construct in so doing, the model places early skills training as a grounding place for moral and relational awareness. Counseling is viewed as a morally situated practice under this structure, taking place in an environment of values, power dynamics, and social duties in which decisions are formulated. For the focus on amanah, relational accountability, and spiritual significance signify a definition and a way of approaching professionalism beyond regulatory ethics to lived moral practice. This orientation is congruent with Schön's (1983) vision of professional artistry, according to which practitioners are reflective judges in the face of uncertainty, rather than simply applying rules mechanically. This kind of approach is consequential not only for microcounseling pedagogy but for the wider architecture of counselor education programs, especially in contexts in which counseling is required to consider community, spirituality, and societal harmony.

### 6.4. Implications for Global Counselor Education and Knowledge Production

At the larger scope of current policy and practice, this study engages in efforts to reimagine how knowledge is shared within the framework of global counselor education. Pedagogical models, such as microskills training, have historically been refined in Western universities and taken around the world as standard practice. In the non-West, settings have been generally cast as places of application and not of theoretical innovation. This article offers a culturally rooted reconceptualization of microcounseling that advances the argument that Global South contexts can play an epistemic active role in counseling theory and pedagogy. The Indonesian example shows how microskills frameworks can be developed, refined, and recalibrated through the use of different relational and moral logics. Such contributions resonate with calls to pluralize counseling knowledge and acknowledge the

merit in diverse epistemological traditions informing professional practice (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2021). Instead of cleaving the field apart, these contributions will enrich the global counselor education by deepening its conceptual vocabulary and ethical imagination. In this sense, microcounseling is a commonality and multiplicity in pedagogical language it can handle alternative cultural grammars of care, meaning and relational engagement.

## 6.5. Limitations and Directions for Future Inquiry

As this article provides a theoretically informed pedagogical approach, it is still primarily conceptual and design oriented. Future research should empirically examine how students experience and internalize a recontextualized microcounseling practicum, including its impact on counseling self-efficacy, ethical reasoning, and cultural reflexivity. Qualitative investigations of student reflections and supervisor observations would be particularly valuable in illuminating how Asia as Method principles play out in practice. Additionally, comparative studies across cultural contexts could further test the transferability and adaptability of this model, contributing to a more dialogical and inclusive global counseling pedagogy.

## 7. Limitations of the Article

The work of this article has several limitations that should be noted in interpreting its contributions. First, because the current work is mostly conceptual and design centric, the project aims to analyze the theoretical articulation and pedagogical recontextualization of a microcounseling practicum through Asia as Method. Although this model is theoretically and culturally rooted in counseling theory and cultural scholarship, it has not been empirically tested. Thus, any assertion about its pedagogical efficacy is speculative and must be systematically investigated. Second, the recontextualization described here is located in the Indonesian sociocultural setting which, though rich with information, is very heterogeneous in its own right. Indonesia is a heterogeneous country with varied ethnicity, language, religion, and regional ways; the pedagogical practices discussed in this paper should not be taken as universally representative of all Indonesian or Asian contexts. This is a limitation in a more general challenge in culturally oriented scholarship: this tension between the necessity of being specific to a specific context while theoretically extending that context (Chen, 2010; Smith, 2021). Third, while the paper focuses on the spiritual and existential aspects of counseling, it offers few explicit empirical examples of processes by which students navigate such tensions among personal belief systems, professional ethics, and institutional expectations. Alleviating such tensions demands methodological attention and ethical awareness, particularly in pluralistic educational contexts (Ratts et al., 2016).

## 8. Directions for Future Research

This is a conceptual framework that future research needs to expand on through empirical and design-based work. Classroom based observational studies on how Asia as Method principles are implemented during microcounseling training would provide insights into how instructors model for students, what interaction occurs within the group, and how, through the use of reflection, student learning of skills is built. These observations would provide a comprehensive view of the lived pedagogical processes that are not accessible through simply describing the curriculum. In particular, qualitative research on students' reflections and learning stories is advised. Reflective journals, learning portfolios, and in-depth interviews may shed light on how the integration of relational, ethical, and spiritual dimensions into counseling practice occurs for students, and on how it affects their evolving professional identity.

Previous work has indicated that reflective processes are key in counselor training, particularly in the beginning stages of training (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). Moreover, comparative and cross-cultural studies could examine whether this pedagogical model is relevant within other cultural contexts, whether they are within or beyond Asia itself. Drawing on the findings from this theory, such research supports a dialogical approach to our theory development which can enable counselor education to move toward a more pluralistic and globally responsive knowledge base (Chilisa, 2012).

Finally, mixed methods research that examines learning outcomes, including counseling self-efficacy, ethical reasoning, and cultural reflexivity, would support the empirical foundation for Asia as Method based microcounseling pedagogy. Combined, these research avenues can add to the ongoing evolution of microcounseling from a technique-driven training model into a culturally grounded and epistemically inclusive educational praxis.

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has made the case for the immediate revision in microcounseling pedagogy towards the Indonesian condition by stepping from microcounseling as a normative culturally neutral technique-oriented training paradigm. Although the microskills concept holds significant pedagogical potential for counselor education across the globe (Ivey et al., 2023), uncritical integration into non-Western contexts may result in the transfer of epistemic disjunct between counseling practices and the lived cultural, relational, and spiritual experiences of clients and counselors. Given that meaning-making in Indonesia is steeped in relational cohesion, ethical duty, and a spiritual worldview, it is necessary for us to reconceive microcounseling as a culturally

embedded and ethically integrated pedagogical practice. Through operationalizing Asia as Method as an orientation to pedagogy, this paper has shown how microcounseling, therefore, can serve not only as an introductory set of skills but also as an experimental environment for professional identity. Through this frame microskills are reframed as relational and ethical work; existential and spiritual work is a part of the educational process, while counselor formation is an extension of cultural experiences. This shift supports calls in counselor education to center the role of reflexivity, moral judgment and the use of self as fundamental features of professional competence (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014). More broadly, this work has implications within ongoing discursive discussions about epistemic plurality in counselor education. Instead of treating Indonesia or Asia in general as a site of adaptation by which Western-derived theories can be adapted, this paper argues that Global South experiences can and must serve as sites of epistemic input. The engagement with Asia as Method allows counselor educators to critically decenter Western epistemic hegemony while being dialogically engaged with conventional theoretical perspectives (Chen, 2010). This approach does not break up the field, however, but rather does broaden it, developing the conceptual, ethical, and cultural boundaries of counseling pedagogy. In this manner, the reconceptualization of microcounseling proposed here is equally locally relevant and globally applicable. It draws counselor educators' attention to the development of epistemic relations as forms of knowledge production and not knowledge transmission rather as fields of practices and encourages a discourse between cultures, and the dialogues across cultures that will embrace more than one knowledge, experience, relationship, and healing. Future research and curricular proposals would be enriched by carrying this dialogical focus to other cultures, in doing so offering more inclusive, reflexive and globally grounded counselor education.

## Author Contributions

Nanang Erma Gunawan and Chici Pratiwi contributed equally to the conceptualization, theoretical development, pedagogical design, manuscript drafting, and revision of this article. Both 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.

## References

- Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2019). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Borders, L. D., Brown, J. B., & Purgason, L. L. (2015). Triadic supervision with practicum and internship counseling students: A peer supervision approach. *The Clinical Supervisor, 34*(2), 232–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07325223.2015.1027024>
- Chen, K.-H. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smwvj>
- Chilisa, B. (2019). *Indigenous research methodologies*. SAGE Publications.
- Cormier, S., & Hackney, H. (2015). *Counseling strategies and interventions for professional helpers* (9th ed.). Pearson.
- Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Beacon Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Books.
- Hill, C. E. (2014). *Helping skills: Facilitating exploration, insight, and action* (4th ed.). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14345-000>
- Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M. B., & Zalaquett, C. P. (2023). *Intentional interviewing and counseling: Facilitating client development in a multicultural society* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Jordan, J. V. (2018). *Relational-cultural therapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000063-000>

- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224–253. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224>
- Mulder, N. (1998). *Mysticism in Java: Ideology in Indonesia*. Kanisius.
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2009). *Constructivist psychotherapy: Distinctive features*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203882405>
- Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2016). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Guidelines for the counseling profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 44(1), 28–48. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12035>
- Ridley, C. R., Sahu, A., Console, K., Surya, S., Tran, V., Xie, S., & Yin, C. (2021). The process model of multicultural counseling competence. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 49(4), 534–567. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000021992339>
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Skovholt, T. M., & Trotter-Mathison, M. (2014). *The resilient practitioner: Burnout prevention and self-care strategies for counselors, therapists, teachers, and health professionals* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203893326>
- Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Wong, P. T. (2013). Toward a dual-systems model of what makes life worth living. In *The human quest for meaning* (pp. 3–22). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203146286-10>