



Communication Skills of Counselors in Bugis Culture: An Analysis of To-Riolo's Thought using Gadamerian Hermeneutics

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore and uncover the meaning of integrating To-Riolo's philosophical thought into counselor communication skills grounded in Bugis cultural values. Employing a qualitative research design, the study uses the Gadamerian hermeneutic method, which emphasizes the analysis of the part and whole to understand and interpret the text deeply. The findings reveal several key communication skills embedded in To-Riolo's teachings: orderly communication (*mattarêtte*'), communication-based on *ade*, *rapang*, and *ênrênge madecenngge gau* (traditional norms and ethical considerations), and empathic listening as expressed through concepts such as *iisênngi riolo'paunna* (understanding the words of predecessors), *naisseng to rapanngge* (understanding the interlocutor), *ênrênge adê'e* (weighing norms), *kuae wari'e* (considering timing and context), and *naenggêrranngi madecenngge paunna' patujue ênrênge gau' patujue* (attentively listening to words and actions that are appropriate). This study implies that these culturally rooted communication skills can be developed into a culturally sensitive model for counselor communication within the Bugis community.

KATA KUNCI

Keterampilan
Komunikasi; Konselor;
Budaya Bugis;
Pemikiran To-Riolo;
Hermeneutika
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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali dan menemukan makna integrasi pemikiran filosofis To-Riolo ke dalam konsep keterampilan komunikasi konselor yang berakar pada nilai-nilai budaya Bugis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif, studi ini menerapkan metode hermeneutika Gadamerian yang menekankan analisis bagian dan keseluruhan untuk memahami dan menafsirkan teks secara mendalam. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan beberapa keterampilan komunikasi utama yang terkandung dalam ajaran To-Riolo, yaitu komunikasi yang tertib (*mattarêtte*'), komunikasi berdasarkan *ade*, *rapang*, dan *ênrênge madecenngge gau* (norma tradisional dan pertimbangan etis), serta komunikasi empatik yang diungkapkan melalui konsep-konsep seperti *iisênngi riolo'paunna* (memahami kata-kata para leluhur), *naisseng to rapanngge* (memahami lawan bicara), *ênrênge adê'e* (menimbang norma), *kuae wari'e* (memperhatikan waktu dan konteks), serta *naenggêrranngi madecenngge paunna' patujue ênrênge gau' patujue* (mendengarkan dengan seksama kata-kata dan tindakan yang tepat). Penelitian ini mengimplikasikan bahwa keterampilan komunikasi yang berakar pada budaya tersebut dapat dikembangkan menjadi model keterampilan komunikasi konselor yang sensitif budaya dalam komunitas Bugis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom is part of the cultural heritage that should be preserved and developed, especially in the practice of guidance and counseling in Indonesia. This preservation contributes to strengthening the academic identity and profession of guidance and counseling and expands its knowledge base (Aswar, Irawan, et al., 2020). By exploring indigenous culture, the Indonesian people are encouraged to build awareness of their original cultural values,

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fostering pride and independence in developing theories and practices without fully relying on external theoretical frameworks (Sakti et al., 2024). Counselors in the Nusantara region have the potential to formulate counseling approaches and communication skills that are contextual by exploring local wisdom values that develop in each area (Tohirin et al., 2021).

One manifestation of this cultural richness can be found in the Bugis community (Ilham & Rahman, 2024). This community has a cultural heritage from a Bugis figure who lived in the past and was known for his wisdom in giving positive and constructive views toward the Bone king, named *To-riolo*. *To-riolo* means “people of long ago” in the Bugis language and delivers teachings and life mandates known as *paseng* (Teng & Saleh, 2022). Etymologically, *paseng To-riolo* refers to ancestral mandates or the words of those from long ago, which are considered obligations to be obeyed by people living today (Mattulada, 2015).

The wisdom and intellectual insight shown by *To-riolo* became the main motivation for the author to study its relevance more deeply in the context of the helping professions, especially in guidance and counseling. Counselors are professionals with knowledge, multicultural awareness, and communication skills who provide client services (Tsilmak et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2024). In delivering counseling services, counselors use various skills that support the effectiveness of their practice. One essential skill in counseling skills is the ability to communicate, which is the primary foundation for building a productive relationship with clients alongside other technical skills (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

Communication skills are one of the fundamental competency’s counselors must have in counseling practice. In general, communication holds a central position in human life, not only in the counseling context (Martin & Johnson, 2024). In counseling, success or failure in the communication process significantly impacts the quality of the relationship between counselor and client, as well as the process of self-development and problem-solving faced by the client (Hariko, 2024). Therefore, counselors must continuously improve their understanding and skills in communication (Ridley et al., 2021). Ideally, deepening this understanding begins by conceptualizing communication skills from a philosophical perspective to build a stronger conceptual foundation that supports optimal counseling practice. For this reason, exploring the conceptual meaning of communication skills through *To-riolo*’s thoughts contributes significantly to developing communication skills within guidance and counseling based on local culture or counseling in Nusantara that is more contextual and rooted in Indonesian cultural wisdom.

Research focusing on developing guidance and counseling studies based on Nusantara culture has shown significant growth in recent decades. Various researchers, academics, and guidance and counseling practitioners in Indonesia have carried out this effort to develop counseling approaches that are contextual and rooted in local cultural values. Sugiharto et al. (2019) showed that Motivational Interviewing counseling training based on Javanese local wisdom can improve the competence of school counselors. Meanwhile, Amirullah et al. (2020) examined the heroic values of Makassar figures such as Sultan Hasanuddin and Syekh Yusuf Al-Makassari in shaping client identity through the values *siri’ na pacce’*, *kualleangi tallanga natoaliya*, and the *badik* philosophy. In the same year, Aswar et al. (2020) introduced the thoughts of Bugis philosopher Arung Bila, namely *mappasinrupae*, *mappalaiseng*, and *mappasitinaja* into the multicultural counseling framework, and together with Mappiare-AT et al. (2020), successfully reflected on Puang Rimagalatung’s ideas through the values *assimaturuseng* and *maradeka*. Fitriana et al. (2021) examined ideal characters in Bugis *pappaseng* relevant to guidance and counseling services, such as the values *siri* and *pesse*, *awaraningeng*, *reso*, *alempureng*, *getteng*, and *appasitinajang*. Finally, Aswar et al. (2023) succeeded in developing an indigenous counseling concept based on Bugis culture through *Kajaolaliddong*, enriching the knowledge base of counseling rooted in local wisdom.

From various previous studies on guidance and counseling based on local culture, there has been notable progress in integrating local wisdom values into counseling service approaches. However, most of these studies still focus on analyzing philosophical values sourced from texts or cultural advice (such as *pappaseng*, ancestral advice, or heroic values) and have not deeply explored the thoughts of traditional leaders or elders (*To-riolo*) as representatives of local philosophers in society, especially from the Bugis ethnic group. Furthermore, the direct connection between *To-riolo*’s thought and counselor communication skills has not been widely addressed, leaving a gap in developing culturally based counselor communication skill models.

The novelty in this research lies in exploring and elaborating on *To-riolo*’s thought as a legacy of Bugis local philosophy, rich in social communication values, which is then integrated into the concept of counselor communication skills. This study uses a Gadamerian hermeneutic approach to discover the substantive meaning of *To-riolo*’s thought that can enrich guidance and counseling practice, especially in a multicultural context. The ultimate goal of this research is to contribute a new perspective to the development of counselor communication skills that are both universal and contextual and in harmony with Indonesian local culture, especially Bugis culture.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach using the Gadamerian Hermeneutic (GH) research method. As explained by Gilhus (2021), the GH approach emphasizes interpreting texts, focusing on understanding the consciousness and experiences implied within the text to obtain an authentic and deep meaning from the analyzed text. White and Cooper (2022) also emphasize that the interpretative approach in qualitative research centers on the concept of the understanding of understanding, which is an effort to comprehend how understanding itself is formed. In the context of the Gadamerian Hermeneutic method, the essence lies in analyzing the relationship between the part and the whole. To clarify this process, Alvesson and Sköldböck visualize it as the following interpretative circle:

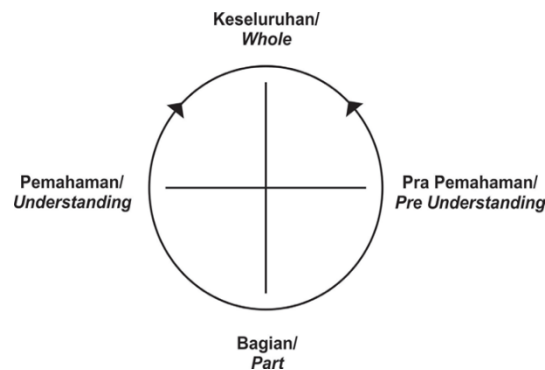


Figure 1: Circle of Part and Whole (Sköldböck & Alvesson, 2017)

2.2 Research Site and Year

This research was conducted at the South Sulawesi Provincial Library in Makassar City, South Sulawesi Province, in 2025. The study was conducted over one month, from April to May 2025. This study applied a hermeneutic approach, specifically using the interpretative circle of "part and whole" analysis. As outlined by Mappiare-AT (Aswar et al., 2023), the stages of the interpretative process include: (1) Interpretation of the parts, where the researcher acts as a reader who carefully examines words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, interpreting and grouping them into specific themes or subthemes; (2) Interpretation of the whole, in which the researcher connects the parts to form a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the overall meaning of the text; (3) Understanding the underlying meaning, where the researcher explores the relationship between the meanings that emerge from the text (as the interpreted) and their subjective understanding (as the interpreter) to gain a deep and authentic comprehension of the text.

2.3 Research Subjects

The data source in this study is textual, with the primary data derived from the Latoa manuscript by B.F. Matthes, as transcribed and translated in the book *LATO: The Political Anthropology of the Bugis People* by H.A. Mattulada (2015). This text was selected because it contains the intellectual legacy of To-Riolo, a wise figure in Bugis society known for his paseng teachings. The analysis focuses on parts of the text that represent values related to communication skills. Within the Gadamerian hermeneutic context, this text is treated as a "speaking subject," while the researcher is the interpreter who listens and understands through interpretative dialogue.

To reinforce and deepen the interpretation of the primary text, this research utilizes secondary data sources such as books, academic journals, and relevant articles, particularly those discussing Bugis cultural contexts, local values, counseling communication skills theories, and Gadamer's hermeneutic approach.

The focus of this research includes the material object, *To-Riolo's* thoughts in the Latoa manuscript as transcribed and translated in H.A. Mattulada's (2015) book, and the formal object: the meaning of counselor communication skills interpreted through a Gadamerian hermeneutic approach, aiming to discover its conceptual relevance to culturally based guidance and counseling practices.

2.4 Data Collection

The primary instrument in this research is the researcher, who is willing and able to observe, assess, make judgments, and draw conclusions objectively. The researcher's Bugis ethnic background and knowledge of the Bugis language support the interpretation process.

In addition, a supplementary data analysis guide was used. Primary data collection involved reading and interpreting the *Latoa* manuscript specifically To-Riolo's thoughts as presented in H.A. Mattulada's (2015) book *LATO: The Political Anthropology of the Bugis People*. Secondary data collection was conducted through online searches for relevant books, academic journals, and articles related to the study.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis technique involved intensive reading, data collection, and text interpretation, focusing on understanding the consciousness and experiences implied in the text, which were then analyzed in connection with hermeneutic studies. Hermeneutics involves interpreting, understanding, and translating.

The formula used in this study follows the Gadamerian hermeneutic model, which includes: (1) Pre-understanding; (2) Understanding; (3) Part; (4) Whole (Sköldberg & Alvesson, 2017).

2.5 Research Procedure

The research procedure follows the methodological flow outlined above. To-Riolo's philosophical texts are analyzed through three stages within the interpretative circle of "part and whole" to uncover the deep meaning of counseling concepts rooted in Bugis culture. The stages include: (1) Interpretation of the parts of the conversation text, covering words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. At this stage, each part is contextually interpreted and organized into subthemes. Findings from this stage include key elements of counselor communication skills within Bugis culture; (2) Holistic interpretation, where the previously interpreted meanings are synthesized to form a unified and coherent understanding of the text as a whole; (3) Interpretation of the underlying values, the final stage where the researcher delves into and interprets the deeper meanings to identify core concepts that serve as the foundation for understanding Bugis culture-based communication skills in counseling.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on the *Latoa* manuscript found in B. Chr. B.F. Matthes (1872) featured in the book *Latoa: Antropologi Politik Orang Bugis* with transcription and translation by H. A. Mattulada (2015), documented several notable philosophical thoughts from the Bugis people. In this Gadamerian hermeneutic study of counselor communication skills found in the ideas of *To-riolo*, the analysis is grounded in these sources. Essentially, *To-riolo* conveyed several key ideas on how people should speak and communicate with others. These ideas include:

a. Orderly Communication (*mattarêtte*)

Makkêdatopi to-rioloe, sininna mappauko gau'e mattarêtte'pi namadeceng, seuani, issenngi maja'e, penessaiwi madecenngge, maduanna, issênngi makkuae, penêssaiwi tèmakkuae, matêllunna, issênngi macekoe, penessaiwi malêmpu'e, ianaro riasêng mattarette. Meaning: "To-riolo said, every act of speaking is only good if it is orderly. First, know what is wrong, understand what is right; second, know what is true, understand what is false; third, know what is deceitful, understand what is honest that is what is meant by order."

This text suggests that communication skills are essential for counselors. First, "*seuani, issenngi maja'e, penessaiwi madecenngge*" implies that counselors must distinguish between negative and positive behavior in speech and clients' attitudes. Second, "*issênngi makkuae, penêssaiwi tèmakkuae*" means counselors must recognize the difference between truth and error in the client's narrative and implied meanings. Third, "*issênngi macekoe, penessaiwi malêmpu'e*" suggests that counselors should detect deception but uphold honesty in communication by making moral judgments and deeply understanding the client's character and intentions.

b. Communication Based on *ade'*, *rapang*, and Ethical Conduct

Makkêdatopi nakko to-rioloe, mappauko, in-ngêranngi adê'e, ênrên-nge rapanngge, muenn-gêrattoi gau'-mua-sênngge patuju, naia muparanrengi ada, mupasitai ponna cappa'na adae, nainappa mupoada, apa' iaritu ada madecenngge enrenngge gau' madecenngge, ade'pa natettongi, na made-ceng, enrênngge na patuju, muparionronnai enrênngge natania onrona salamui. gau'mu, adadammu, naonroi. Meaning: "To-riolo said, when you speak, remember the *ade'*

and *rapang*, and act in ways you believe are right. Focus on these when you speak; connect the beginning and end of your words before expressing them. A good word and good action are only truly right when grounded in *ade'*. Place both your actions and words appropriately. Even if you believe them to be right, they are still wrong if they're not placed correctly."

This text reflects several counselor communication skills. First, "*mappauko, in-ngéranngi adê'e, ênrên-nge rapanngé, muenn-gêrattoi gau'muasênngé patuju, naia muparanrengi ada*" implies that counselors must speak based on values and ethical norms (*ade'* and *rapang*). Second, "*mupasitai ponna cappa'na adae...*" highlights the importance of thoughtful communication counselors should ground their responses in *ade'* and consider their words carefully to ensure a reflective and responsive dialogue. Third, "*na made-ceng...*" means that counselors should place words and actions appropriately, creating structured communication rather than impulsive reactions. Even good words can be harmful if used at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

c. Empathic Listening Communication (*iisênngi riolo'paunna, naisseng to rapanngé, ênrênngé adê'e, kuae wari'e*)

Makkedatopi narekko mabbalio iisênngi riolo'paunna muinappa baliwi, musapparenni gau' situru'e adê'e ênrên-nge sara'e, kuae rapangnge, maka mottongênngi adanna taue, naia mupa-têttongi pabbali ada, apa' iaritu na tania balinna taue, ... ssappa' tongêttongênngi, rapanngé, ênrênngé adê'e, kuae wari'e naenggêrranngi madecenngé paunna' patujue ênrênngé gau' patujue. Meaning: "To-riolo said, when you answer a word, first understand that word. Match it with actions that align with *ade'*, *sara'* (customary law), and *rapang* (social norms). These guide a response that genuinely fits the message. People may laugh at you and consider you unwise if you respond with something unrelated. Therefore, it is proper for leaders like *Arung Mangkau'* and *Pabbicara* to fully understand *rapang*, *ade'*, and *wari* and always remember to speak with good and truthful words."

This text implies several important communication skills for counselors. First, "*iisênngi riolo'paunna muinappa baliwi*" means that counselors must deeply understand the client's words before replying. Second, "*musapparenni gau' situru'e adê'e ênrên-nge sara'e, kuae rapangnge...*" suggests that counselors should respond in ways grounded in the client's cultural values *ade'*, *sara'*, and *rapang*. Misinterpreting the client's context can lead to irrelevant or even embarrassing responses. Finally, "*ssappa' tongêttongênngi, rapanngé, ênrênngé adê'e, kuae wari'e...*" emphasizes the need for counselors to grasp these cultural frameworks fully and always aim to respond with thoughtful and appropriate communication.

3.2. Discussion

The communication skills counselors possess are considered a key factor that significantly influences the success of the counseling process (Tasmara et al., 2023). These skills encompass a set of specific competencies in delivering and responding to messages, which counselors use to guide clients in finding suitable solutions to their problems (G. Corey, 2019).

a. Structured Communication (*mattarêtte'*)

In the first text attributed to *To-Riolo*, it is implied that a counselor must be able to distinguish between positive and negative behaviors in both the speech and attitudes of the client. This highlights the need for counselors to be sensitive to verbal and non-verbal expressions during the counseling process to respond appropriately and empathetically (Choi et al., 2024). Metin & Doğan (2025) noted that this sensitivity is important because a counselor's ability to read clients' verbal and non-verbal communication plays a major role in building an effective and trustworthy therapeutic relationship.

Moreover, counselors should not only listen to the content of the client's story but also be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, including understanding the implicit meanings in the client's narrative. This aligns with Enjang (2023), who explains that counselors capable of interpreting implicit messages and emotional contexts can offer more accurate interventions, especially in cases involving inner conflict, trauma, or personal issues that are not easily expressed.

Additionally, counselors must be perceptive enough to recognize manipulation or dishonesty from the client yet continue to respond with integrity, empathy, and goodwill (Rahmi, 2021). The counselor's role is to morally judge and deeply understand the client's character, background, and intentions (Suranata et al., 2022). This is supported by the humanistic perspective of Carkhuff and Truax (as cited in Laela et al., 2023), which asserts that counselors who respond empathetically without judgment are more effective in facilitating client behavioral change. Praekanata et al. (2024) also stress the importance of counselor integrity in maintaining honest, open, and understanding-based communication, especially when working with clients with complex problems.

b. Communication Based on *adê'*, *rapang*, and *enrennge madecenngge gau*

In the second text, *To-Riolo's* thinking reflects that counselor communication should be grounded in ethical values (*adê'*) and community norms (*rapang*) and structured to convey messages ethically and thoughtfully. This supports the findings of Corey et al. (2018), who emphasize the importance of ethical principles such as respect for the client's dignity, integrity, and professional responsibility as foundations of counseling communication.

Cottone et al. (2021) reinforce this perspective, highlighting that failure to incorporate ethical norms in communication can hinder counseling success. Furthermore, Fitrianiingsih et al. (2024) state that counselor communication should always align with the professional code of ethics to maintain client trust and prevent ethical violations.

Counselors are expected to ground their communication in *adê'* (ethical values) and to reflect carefully before responding to client questions so that the beginning and end of a conversation are meaningfully connected, enabling reflective and responsive communication. This is in line with Arifin et al. (2025), who argue that effective counseling communication must be rooted in the moral and cultural values of the client to build trust and a strong therapeutic alliance.

Research by Muwakhidah et al. (2023) also underscores the importance of not responding to client questions hastily. Responses that are too fast or spontaneous, without reflection, often neglect the emotional and cultural context of the client, which can reduce communication effectiveness. Enjang (2023) similarly notes that even a well-intentioned statement, if delivered at the wrong time or in the wrong manner, can still be perceived as inappropriate and may negatively impact the client's psychological state.

c. Empathic Listening Communication (*iisênngi riolo'paunna, naisseng to rapanngge, ênrênngge adê'e, kuae wari'e; and naenggêrranngi madecenngge paunna' patujue ênrênngge gau' patujue*)

In the final text of *To-Riolo's* thought, it is expressed that a counselor should first deeply understand the client's words or statements before offering a response. Research by Aminah (2018) explains that through active listening, counselors can grasp and interpret the messages conveyed by the client, allowing them to respond effectively and support the counseling process as a whole.

This aligns with more recent research by Tustonja et al. (2024), which shows that communication skills, especially active listening and verbal empathy, significantly contribute to building positive therapeutic relationships and enhancing counseling effectiveness. Furthermore, counselors are expected to respond to conversations based on values, social laws, and community norms that are part of the client's cultural background (Ridley et al., 2021).

According to Martin & Johnson (2024), counselors must avoid misinterpreting the context of the client's statements, as doing so can result in irrelevant responses or even personal embarrassment in front of the client. Lastly, counselors must understand *rapang*, *adê'*, and *wari'* and consistently remember to speak with goodness and truth when counseling clients. This is supported by Aswar et al. (2023), who assert that counselors must internalize *rapang*, *adê'*, and *wari'* during guidance and counseling services as an essential expression of human authenticity, while continuously recalling and using kind and truthful words.

4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Implications for Schools and School Counselors

Schools, particularly guidance and counseling teachers, can use self-management as an intervention method to address students' academic procrastination. Guidance and counseling programs can be more targeted by incorporating self-management strategies into the curriculum to help students manage their time and academic responsibilities more effectively.

4.3 Implications for Students

Students can apply self-management techniques not only in academic settings but also in their daily lives, thereby enhancing their independence and discipline. This technique helps students recognize procrastination habits, understand the triggers of such behavior, and implement strategies to overcome them.

4.3 Implications for Future Researchers

This study can serve as a reference for further research, particularly in guidance and counseling, to explore the effectiveness of self-management techniques in addressing various academic and non-academic issues. Future

studies may involve larger samples or combine self-management with other intervention methods to evaluate its broader effectiveness. Thus, this research makes a meaningful contribution to the field of education, especially in supporting students to overcome academic procrastination through self-management techniques.

5. CONCLUSION

This study identifies several forms of communication skills reflected in the teachings of *To-Riolo*. First, is structured communication (*mattarêtte*), emphasizing precision, order, and clarity in delivering messages. Second is communication-based on the principles of *adê*, *rapang*, and *ênrênge madecenngé gau*' a form of communication rooted in norms, ethics, and wise actions aligned with traditional customs. Third is communication grounded in empathic listening, expressed through phrases such as *iisênngi riolo'paunna* (understanding the words of predecessors), *naisseng to rapanngé* (understanding the conversation partner), *ênrênge adê'e* (weighing norms), *kuae wari'e* (considering time and context), and *naenggêrranngi madecenngé paunna' patujue ênrênge gau' patujue* (carefully attending to appropriate words and actions). These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing a Bugis counselor communication skills model that integrates local values into more effective and meaningful modern counseling practices.

To-Riolo is known in Bugis culture as an ancestral figure who passed down life teachings and guidance known as *paseng*. *Paseng To-Riolo* refers to ancestral mandates or advice regarded as a moral and cultural obligation for future generations. In this context, the thought of *To-Riolo* holds significant value as part of local wisdom that remains relevant today. This study views *To-Riolo's* intellectual heritage as a valuable cultural asset, particularly for developing counselor communication skills grounded in local values within the Indonesian context. By using *paseng* as a philosophical and ethical foundation, this research seeks to reintroduce traditional values as a source of inspiration in guidance and counseling practices that are contextual and rooted in local culture.

Future research is recommended to develop and empirically test a culturally grounded model of counselor communication skills that incorporates the traditional Bugis values reflected in *mattarêtte*, *adê*, *rapang*, and empathic listening expressions such as *iisênngi riolo'paunna* and *kuae wari'e*. Such research could explore how integrating these elements into counselor education, and practice enhances communication effectiveness, builds deeper counselor-client rapport, and supports culturally responsive counseling. Additionally, cross-cultural or comparative studies may help evaluate the adaptability and relevance of these local wisdom-based communication practices in broader counseling contexts.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have contributed equally and substantially to this work. Their contributions include the conception and design of the study, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, as well as the drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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