



Building Students' Character through Multicultural Counseling Using a Sincerity and Commitment Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the concept of multicultural guidance and counseling and to describe the role of the sincerity and commitment approach in strengthening students' character. The research method employed is a literature review that analyzes various relevant scholarly sources, including books and journal articles addressing multicultural counseling, character education, and the sincerity and commitment approach in guidance and counseling services. The findings indicate that integrating multicultural counseling with a sincerity and commitment approach supports the development of positive student character, such as mutual respect, empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility. The study concludes that the sincerity and commitment approach in multicultural counseling is an effective strategy for fostering positive character development among students. The implications of this study suggest that school guidance and counseling teachers should integrate this approach into the planning and delivery of counseling services to foster an inclusive, character-based educational environment.

KATA KUNCI

Karakter;
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Pendekatan
Ketulusan dan
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ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep bimbingan dan konseling multikultural serta mendeskripsikan peran pendekatan ketulusan dan komitmen dalam memperkuat karakter peserta didik. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kajian pustaka dengan menganalisis berbagai sumber ilmiah yang relevan, termasuk buku dan artikel jurnal yang membahas konseling multikultural, pendidikan karakter, serta pendekatan ketulusan dan komitmen dalam layanan bimbingan dan konseling. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi konseling multikultural dengan pendekatan ketulusan dan komitmen mampu mendukung pengembangan karakter peserta didik, seperti sikap saling menghargai, empati, toleransi, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan ketulusan dan komitmen dalam konseling multibudaya merupakan strategi yang efektif untuk membentuk karakter positif peserta didik. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru bimbingan dan konseling perlu mengintegrasikan pendekatan tersebut dalam perencanaan dan pelaksanaan layanan konseling di sekolah guna menciptakan lingkungan pendidikan yang inklusif dan berkarakter.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as a country with a very high level of cultural diversity, as evidenced by the presence of hundreds of ethnic groups, local languages, customs, and value systems that continue to live and develop dynamically within society. This diversity not only constitutes a national identity but also reflects the complexity of Indonesia's social life. In the context of education, this multicultural reality is clearly evident in the diverse backgrounds of students from different social, cultural, and value systems (Nissa et al., 2024). Each student brings a unique cultural framework that shapes the way they think, behave, communicate, and interpret learning

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experiences. Consequently, education cannot be understood merely as a process of knowledge transfer, but rather as a process of character formation rooted in cultural and human values (Umami, 2024).

In formal education, students' cultural diversity continues to increase alongside high population mobility influenced by economic, social, and educational access factors (Makhrisa & Pradikto, 2025). Interregional migration leads to intensive cultural encounters within school environments, both in academic and social interactions. In this regard, schools function as multicultural spaces where various cultural identities converge within a shared environment (Utomo & Zubaidah, 2025). While this condition offers potential for enriched values, perspectives, and social experiences, it also presents challenges in fostering inclusive character development, particularly in fostering tolerance, empathy, and the ability to live harmoniously amid differences.

Guidance and counseling services play a strategic role in responding to the dynamics of individual diversity (Rachmawati et al., 2025). Guidance and counseling teachers (counselors), as professional practitioners, are not only responsible for assisting students in addressing personal, social, and academic issues, but also play a crucial role in supporting students' holistic personality and character development (Syah et al., 2025). To perform this role effectively, counselors must possess multicultural competence, including the ability to understand students' cultural backgrounds, demonstrate sensitivity to differences, and integrate cultural values into the counseling process in an ethical, professional, and human-centered manner.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized that multicultural counseling is a relevant and practical approach within pluralistic and heterogeneous societies (Wijayanti et al., 2024; Yusuf, 2018). Culture serves as a key element in understanding human behavior, psychological dynamics, and patterns of social interaction (Gulo, 2023; Wanudyastuti et al., 2025). The integration of local and national cultural values into counseling services has been shown to foster more inclusive counseling environments, enhance students' sense of safety and acceptance, and increase active engagement in the counseling process (Juariah et al., 2025). As a result, positive character traits such as empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, and heightened social awareness can be developed.

Nevertheless, most existing studies primarily focus on conceptual and technical aspects of counselors' multicultural competence, such as cultural knowledge, cross-cultural communication skills, and sensitivity to differences in values and beliefs. Fundamental relational dimensions, such as counselors' sincerity and commitment in building counseling relationships, have received relatively limited attention. In fact, the counselor-counselee relationship lies at the core of the counseling process and plays a decisive role in determining the quality of interaction, depth of understanding, and long-term effectiveness of students' character development.

A gap in the literature indicates that studies explicitly integrating sincerity and commitment approaches in multicultural counseling remain scarce, particularly in strengthening students' character. Sincerity reflects attitudes of empathy, honesty, and unconditional acceptance toward counselees, while commitment is manifested through consistency, professional responsibility, and the continuity of counseling services. These values play a strategic role in establishing meaningful counseling relationships with long-term impact; however, they have not yet been systematically formulated as a conceptual framework within multicultural counseling.

In multicultural counseling, the relationship between counselor and counselee must be understood as an encounter between individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds, values, morals, and beliefs. Such differences require counselors to prioritize wisdom, self-awareness, and professional attitudes without imposing personal values on counselees. Principles of mutual respect, appreciation, and acceptance of differences serve as the foundation of the counseling process, ensuring that services are not merely technical in nature but also reflect humanitarian values and social ethics relevant to communal life.

This study aims to analyze and synthesize findings from previous research on student character development through multicultural counseling using a sincerity and commitment approach, employing a Systematic Literature Review method. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual mapping of the role of sincerity and commitment values in multicultural counseling practice. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of guidance and counseling scholarship and to serve as a practical reference for counselors in designing and implementing humanistic, inclusive, and culturally responsive counseling services aligned with Indonesia's multicultural context.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a literature study approach using qualitative analysis methods. This approach aims to conduct an in-depth examination of scholarly sources relevant to the role of multicultural counselors in streng-

thening students' character through sincerity and commitment. The focus of this study is directed toward the role of multicultural counselors in character building among students, particularly through the values of sincerity and commitment within counseling services. The scope of the review includes concepts of multicultural counseling, character education, and the application of sincerity and commitment values in counseling practices within educational settings.

2.2 Study Data Sources

The data sources used in this study comprise secondary data from scholarly articles, national and international journals, and relevant research reports that demonstrate academic credibility.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: To ensure the relevance and quality of the analyzed sources, this study establishes the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria are as follows: 1) Literature discussing multicultural counseling and/or the role of counselors in educational contexts; 2) Sources examining character strengthening or character values within counseling services; 3) Scholarly articles, journals, and research reports that have undergone a peer-review process; 4) Literature that explicitly or implicitly addresses sincerity, commitment, empathy, or humanitarian values in counselling; 5) The exclusion criteria include: 6) Literature that is not directly related to multicultural counseling or student character development; 7) Non-scholarly sources, such as popular opinions, blog articles, or writings lacking clear methodological foundations; 8) Literature with insufficient methodological information or that cannot be academically justified.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a systematic search of academic databases using relevant keywords such as multicultural counseling, character education, counselor roles, sincerity, and commitment. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, and credible research reports, which were then screened for relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to the research objectives. This approach ensured a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively in several stages, including in-depth reading of selected sources, thematic categorization, comparison of findings across studies, and interpretation of concepts and research results aligned with the study's focus.

The final stage of the study involved synthesizing the findings and drawing conclusions by integrating the results of the literature analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of multicultural counselors in strengthening students' character. This synthesis presents the study's findings, derived from prior literature, and serves as the basis for formulating conclusions and theoretical and practical implications.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Based on the analysis, character development among students can be achieved through multicultural counseling using a sincerity-and-commitment approach. This study specifically focuses on strategies for strengthening students' character through multicultural counseling that emphasizes sincerity and commitment in the counseling process. The research findings are subsequently summarized and systematically presented in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of Literature Review Findings

No.	Aspect Examined	Key Findings	Implications for Strengthening Students' Character
1	Role of Multicultural Counselors	Multicultural counselors function as facilitators who understand students' cultural backgrounds, values, and identities within the counseling process.	Students feel respected and accepted, fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and openness.

No.	Aspect Examined	Key Findings	Implications for Strengthening Students' Character
2	Sincerity Approach in Counseling	Counselors' sincerity is reflected through empathy, honesty, and unconditional acceptance of students.	Enhances students' self-confidence, sense of safety, and honesty in self-expression.
3	Counselor Commitment Approach	Counselor commitment is demonstrated through service consistency, professional responsibility, and sustained guidance.	Cultivates values of responsibility, discipline, and perseverance among students.
4	Integration of Cultural Values in Counseling	Counseling services that accommodate local and multicultural values are more effective in character formation.	Students develop attitudes of respect toward diversity and cultural identity.
5	Impact of Multicultural Counseling on Character	Multicultural counseling contributes to the development of positive character traits, such as empathy, tolerance, and prosocial behavior.	The formation of inclusive, ethical, and humanistic-oriented student character.
6	Relationship between Sincerity and Commitment	Sincerity and commitment mutually reinforce the effectiveness of multicultural counseling services.	—

Based on the literature review presented, it can be concluded that multicultural counseling that integrates sincerity and commitment makes a significant contribution to the development of students' character. Counselors' understanding of students' cultural backgrounds facilitates the establishment of inclusive and mutually respectful counseling relationships, enabling students to feel accepted without discrimination. The sincere approach, demonstrated through empathy, honesty, and unconditional positive regard, strengthens students' trust and openness in the counseling process, which in turn supports the development of character traits such as honesty, self-confidence, and social empathy. Meanwhile, counselors' commitment, reflected in service consistency and professional responsibility, plays an important role in instilling values of discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. Furthermore, integrating cultural values into counseling services enhances students' tolerance and appreciation of diversity, enabling character development in a holistic, sustainable manner closely aligned with students' social realities.

3.2. Discussion

a) Building Character

Character education has become a significant priority in many countries as a strategic effort to prepare a superior generation, not only for individual development as citizens but also for the sustainability of social and national life (Utomo & Alawiyah, 2022). Character education is understood as a deliberate, planned, and comprehensive effort integrated into all aspects of school life to foster students' character development optimally. It is a systematic process aimed at shaping students' personalities, values, and attitudes so that they develop into moral, responsible, and principled individuals. Through character education, students are introduced to and habituated to moral, ethical, and social values essential to everyday life.

The primary goal of character education is to produce a generation that excels not only academically but also possesses strong social skills, the ability to interact positively with their environment, sensitivity toward others, and the capacity to make moral and responsible decisions. Accordingly, students are expected to grow into individuals with strong character, well-integrated personalities, and the maturity needed to face life's challenges. Therefore, character education should not be viewed as a natural or incidental process, but rather as a consciously designed and systematic effort to instill, nurture, and internalize moral values within students (Kamaludin & Rizal, 2025).

Essentially, character education represents an earnest endeavor to understand, shape, and develop moral values that govern both individual and social life (Nawali, 2018). This process is not solely oriented toward students' personal interests but also aims to cultivate awareness of their roles as members of society and

responsible citizens. In this sense, character education serves as a fundamental foundation for developing high-quality human resources who are both competitive and ethical within social, cultural, and national contexts.

Suwartini (2017) explains that strong human resource character is reflected in several key attributes: religious values manifested through faith, honesty, trustworthiness, and sincerity in action; moderation, characterized by non extreme attitudes, fairness, openness, and the ability to cooperate within diversity; intelligence, demonstrated through rational thinking, a love of knowledge, open mindedness, and an orientation toward progress; and independence, reflected in self reliance, discipline, responsibility, frugality, and respect for time. These characteristics serve as important indicators of the effectiveness of character education in educational settings.

The formation of strong and sustainable student character requires the strategic role of multicultural counselors who demonstrate sincerity and commitment in supporting counselees' positive character development. Multicultural counselors function not only as service providers but also as companions who understand students' cultural backgrounds, values, and life experiences. With a sincere, committed approach, counselors can establish humane, inclusive counseling relationships, enabling character-strengthening processes to occur effectively and in harmony with students' cultural diversity.

b) Multicultural Counselors

Multicultural counselors are essential for students who live and develop within diverse social environments. A deep understanding of multicultural counseling and cultural differences is a fundamental prerequisite for counselors to attain multicultural counseling competence. This competence includes the ability to understand counselees' values, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds, enabling counselors to provide services that are sensitive, relevant, and aligned with students' individual characteristics (Abadi et al., 2024). Without such understanding, counseling processes risk communication barriers and misconceptions that may reduce service effectiveness.

In practice, counseling services do not operate effectively continuously due to differences in culture, values, and perspectives between counselors and counselees. Therefore, counselors are required to actively identify and address potential barriers to ensure that counseling processes remain smooth and responsive to counselees' needs (Umar & Salahudin, 2025). Conceptually, multicultural counseling provides a strong foundation for the development of counseling theory and practice, leading to its growing recognition as a significant theoretical strength within the counseling profession. Multicultural theory does not stand alone but can be integrated with major counseling theories, such as psychodynamic traditions, cognitive-behavioral theory, and existential-humanistic approaches, to form a comprehensive framework for understanding human growth and development as unique and diverse social beings.

Counselor competence in multicultural counseling is closely related to mastery of foundational knowledge, interpersonal communication skills, and cultural skills that enable effective interaction with counselees from diverse backgrounds (Putri et al., 2024). This competence can also be developed through transformative learning approaches that emphasize self-reflection, critical awareness, and the meaning-making of life experiences. In the context of language arts and counseling guidance, such approaches are rooted in existential philosophy, transformative learning theory, and practical methods such as bibliotherapy and creative writing. These methods serve as media that help counselees understand themselves, process experiences, and develop character in a deeper, more meaningful way (Pabbajah et al., 2019).

c) Multicultural Guidance and Counseling Models

Multicultural counseling refers to a counseling relationship in which counselors and counselees differ in cultural backgrounds, including race or ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and value systems and belief structures. These differences influence how individuals interpret problems, express emotions, and respond to the counseling process. Therefore, multicultural counseling requires counselors to possess a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity and the ability to adapt counseling approaches in a culturally and ethically appropriate manner. Widyanka et al. (2025) identify three primary models in multicultural counseling: the culture-centered model, the integrative model, and the ethnomedical model.

d) Culture Centered Model

The culture-centered model emphasizes the importance of cultural congruence and understanding between counselors and counselees. From this perspective, Western cultures generally emphasize individualism, cognitive orientation, personal freedom, and material achievement. In contrast, Eastern cultures tend to prioritize collectivism, emotional orientation, deterministic worldviews, and spiritual values. However, these distinctions are

not absolute or dichotomous; instead, they exist along a continuum in which individuals may exhibit a combination of values derived from multiple cultural traditions.

This model is grounded in the understanding that counselors and counselees often hold different cultural assumptions, even when they originate from similar cultural backgrounds. Counselees may not fully understand counselors' cultural beliefs, and counselors may have limited awareness of counselees' cultural values. In some cases, both parties may not be fully aware of or willing to articulate the cultural beliefs underlying their behaviors. Therefore, the core of the culture-centered model lies in the counselor's ability to understand deeply rooted cultural norms that function as value systems and shape individuals' thought patterns and actions in everyday life.

e) Integrative Model

The integrative model views individuals as the product of complex interactions among multiple cultural factors and life experiences. This model encompasses several key dimensions, including individuals' reactions to racial oppression, the influence of the dominant culture, the influence of traditional culture, and individual and family experiences and resources. These dimensions interact dynamically to shape how individuals perceive themselves, their environment, and the challenges they encounter.

Although it is difficult to isolate the influence of each variable distinctly, the counseling process becomes more effective when it begins with an accurate assessment of the counselee's traditional cultural background. Traditional culture encompasses the totality of life experiences that support individual development, both consciously and unconsciously, including inherited values that contribute to collective unconscious patterns. Consequently, the effectiveness of counseling within this model largely depends on the counselor's ability to evaluate the counselee's traditional cultural values and to balance these considerations alongside the influence of the dominant culture and personal experiences.

f) Ethnomedical Model

The ethnomedical model was first introduced by Ahmed and Fraser in 1979 and later refined by Alladin in 1993 as an approach to cross-cultural counseling. This model emphasizes the importance of understanding concepts of health, disorder, and healing from the counselee's cultural perspective. Each culture possesses its own interpretations of the causes of psychological problems, the manifestation of symptoms, and the strategies considered appropriate for treatment.

Within the ethnomedical framework, counselors are expected to identify and respect counselees' belief systems, including traditional practices, spiritual beliefs, and culturally grounded views of mental well-being. This approach enables counselors to bridge differences between modern scientific perspectives and counselees' cultural beliefs, thereby making the counseling process more relevant, acceptable, and effective. The ethnomedical model positions culture as a primary lens for understanding the counselee's experience rather than as a barrier to the counseling process.

4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are expected to assist future researchers in identifying and selecting relevant literature on character development in multicultural counseling using sincerity and commitment approaches. In addition, this study provides practical insights for school counselors in understanding effective strategies for strengthening students' character through multicultural counseling practices. The results may serve as a reference for developing counseling programs that emphasize humanistic values and cultural sensitivity in educational settings.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that integrating multicultural counseling with sincerity and commitment approaches plays a significant role in strengthening students' character. The integration of these approaches allows counseling services to respond more sensitively to students' diverse cultural backgrounds, values, and lived experiences. Through sincere and committed counselor-student relationships, students are more likely to feel accepted, respected, and understood, which supports the internalization of positive character traits such as empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, and social responsibility, by acknowledging cultural differences as strengths rather than barriers, multicultural counseling creates an inclusive environment that encourages students to develop healthy interpersonal attitudes and constructive ways of relating to others within a diverse school community.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that counselors can effectively support character development by implementing multicultural counseling practices grounded in sincerity and professional commitment. Sincerity, reflected in empathy, honesty, and unconditional acceptance, helps build trust and openness during the counseling process, while commitment ensures consistency, responsibility, and continuity of support for students. When these values are embedded in counseling practice, counselors are better positioned to guide students in reframing perspectives, managing emotional challenges, and making ethical decisions. As a result, multicultural counseling that emphasizes sincerity and commitment not only addresses students' immediate concerns but also contributes to the long-term development of resilient, ethical, and socially aware individuals.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors declare that the article entitled "Building Students' Character through Multicultural Counseling with Sincerity and Commitment Approaches" was developed through active contributions in formulating the research ideas, determining the focus of the study, collecting and selecting relevant literature, conducting analysis and synthesis of previous research findings, and drafting and refining the manuscript in accordance with academic writing standards. The authors are fully responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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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