

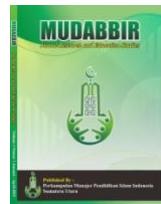


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## The Influence of Counselors' Cultural Background on Objectivity in Counseling: A Study of Civil Servant and Government Employees with Work Agreements Assigned Outside Their Home Regions (A Case Study on Guidance and Counseling Teachers from Outside the Region Assigned in Bireuen Regency)

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### ABSTRAK

Objektivitas merupakan prinsip penting dalam layanan bimbingan dan konseling, terutama bagi konselor yang bertugas di lingkungan budaya yang berbeda dengan daerah asalnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh latar belakang budaya konselor terhadap objektivitas dalam konseling. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional. Populasi penelitian adalah guru Bimbingan dan Konseling (BK) PNS/PPPK yang berasal dari luar Provinsi Aceh dan bertugas di Kabupaten Bireuen, dengan sampel sebanyak 30 orang yang dipilih secara purposive. Instrumen yang digunakan berupa kuesioner skala Likert untuk mengukur dua variabel, yaitu latar belakang budaya (X) dan objektivitas konselor (Y), masing-masing terdiri dari 10 item. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, uji asumsi klasik (normalitas dan linearitas), dan analisis regresi linier sederhana dengan bantuan aplikasi SPSS 25. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa latar belakang budaya konselor berpengaruh secara signifikan terhadap objektivitas konselor, dengan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,002 ( $p < 0,05$ ) dan nilai R Square sebesar 0,332. Artinya, sebesar 33,2% variasi dalam objektivitas konselor dapat dijelaskan oleh latar belakang budayanya. Temuan ini diperkuat oleh teori Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) dan Cultural Humility Theory, yang menekankan pentingnya kesadaran budaya dan sikap terbuka dalam membangun hubungan konseling yang netral dan adil. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesadaran terhadap latar belakang budaya konselor merupakan salah satu faktor penting dalam menjaga objektivitas layanan konseling, khususnya dalam konteks lintas budaya. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pelatihan dan kebijakan penempatan yang memperhatikan kesiapan budaya konselor untuk meningkatkan efektivitas layanan di daerah multikultural.

**Kata Kunci:** Konseling Lintas Budaya, Latar Belakang Budaya, Objektivitas Konselor.

## ABSTRACT

*Objectivity is a crucial principle in guidance and counseling services, especially for counselors assigned to regions with cultural backgrounds different from their own. This study aims to analyze the influence of counselors' cultural background on their objectivity in counseling. The research employed a quantitative correlational approach. The population consisted of guidance and counseling teachers (PNS/PPPK) from outside the Aceh Province who are currently serving in Bireuen Regency. A total of 30 participants were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring two variables: cultural background (X) and counselor objectivity (Y), each consisting of 10 items. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests (normality and linearity), and simple linear regression with the help of SPSS 25. The results showed that the counselors' cultural background had a significant effect on their objectivity, with a significance value of 0.002 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and an R Square value of 0.332. This means that 33.2% of the variation in counselor objectivity can be explained by their cultural background. These findings are supported by the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) and Cultural Humility Theory, which emphasize the importance of cultural self-awareness and openness in establishing neutral and fair counseling relationships. This study concludes that awareness of one's cultural background is a key factor in maintaining objectivity in counseling services, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Therefore, training and placement policies that consider cultural readiness are essential to improve the effectiveness of counseling services in multicultural settings.*

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Counseling, Cultural Background, Counselor Objectivity.

## INTRODUCTION

Counselor objectivity is a fundamental pillar in delivering professional guidance and counseling services, especially in the educational context. This objectivity refers to the counselor's ability to provide services based on the client's data and condition, without being influenced by personal background, stereotypes, or cultural preferences (Ratts et al., 2021). In the context of cross-cultural counseling, the demand for objectivity becomes increasingly complex. Counselors working in cultural environments different from their own are required not only to understand the local culture but also to set aside their own assumptions and cultural values to avoid distorting the counseling process (Hook et al., 2019).

The cultural background of the counselor includes value systems, social norms, communication styles, and ways of understanding problems that are formed from the social environment in which the counselor was raised. According to Ratts et al. (2021), culture not only shapes personal identity but also influences how counselors perceive clients' problems. If not reflected upon critically, this can result in bias during the counseling process. In the context of cross-cultural counseling, counselor characteristics play a crucial role. According to Syukur et al. (2023), a counselor must understand, be

aware of, and demonstrate sensitivity toward culturally sensitive values, be free from prejudice, recognize cultural diversity, and be able to adapt to different cultural contexts.

Within the framework of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) developed by Ratts et al., it is important for counselors to realize that their own cultural background can influence professional decision-making. This competency emphasizes the importance of cultural self-awareness, multicultural knowledge, and cross-cultural advocacy skills as the foundation for maintaining counselor objectivity.

Furthermore, the Cultural Humility Theory (Hook et al., 2019) views that counselors must possess a sense of cultural humility—namely, the willingness to continuously evaluate and reflect on their social and cultural positions. Cultural humility requires awareness of internal biases and sincerity in building equal counseling relationships with clients from different backgrounds.

Various modern theories support the importance of cultural sensitivity and objectivity in counseling practice. The Cultural Humility Theory (Hook et al., 2019) emphasizes the need for cultural humility and self-reflection on personal biases held by counselors. The Multicultural Counseling Competency (Ratts et al., 2021) states that counseling success is highly influenced by the counselor's multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills. Meanwhile, the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2019) explains that the counseling process does not occur in a vacuum but within interconnected social and cultural systems.

The placement of counseling guidance (BK) teachers from outside regions to areas such as Bireuen Regency—which has a strong local cultural identity—raises the potential for significant value differences. In practice (*das sein*), many counselors face adaptation barriers, misunderstandings in nonverbal communication, and misinterpretation of local cultural values. This contrasts with the ideal expectation (*das sollen*), which is counseling services that are fair, empathetic, and objective regardless of where the counselor is assigned.

Several studies support this phenomenon. Oktaviani et al. (2021) revealed that cultural differences affect the effectiveness of communication in counseling. Astuti & Nurhayati (2020) stated that counselors who do not understand the local culture tend to

generalize cases based on personal experience. Research by Amalia & Hartono (2022) found that students are more open with counselors who share similar cultural values.

Moreover, studies by Widiastuti (2020) and Prasetyo et al. (2021) indicate that failure to understand local cultural dynamics results in lower counseling effectiveness. Taufik & Maulana (2019) found a negative correlation between cultural distance and clients' perception of counselor objectivity. These findings are reinforced by Siregar (2022), who stated that understanding local culture is a crucial factor in maintaining counselor professionalism.

However, most previous studies have focused more on variables such as cultural competence, empathy, or general adaptation. Few studies have specifically and quantitatively examined the direct influence of a counselor's cultural background on the objectivity of counseling services in culturally different assignments.

Therefore, this study offers novelty in two aspects. First, it examines the influence of counselors' cultural background in the context of PNS/PPPK (Civil Servant/ Government Employees with Work Agreements) assignments across different regions in Indonesia, with a case study in Bireuen Regency, Aceh. Second, it uses a quantitative correlational approach to measure the direct relationship between two variables that have previously been studied more often through qualitative methods.

Thus, the aim of this study is to quantitatively analyze the influence of counselors' cultural background on objectivity in counseling services, particularly among counseling guidance teachers assigned to Bireuen Regency from outside regions. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of multicultural counseling knowledge and serve as a policy recommendation for the placement and cross-cultural training of counseling guidance teachers in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This research is quantitative with a correlational approach. The aim of the study is to examine the relationship and influence between two variables: cultural background (X) and counselor objectivity (Y). The population consists of all Civil Servant or Government Employees with Work Agreements (PNS/PPPK) counseling guidance teachers who originate from outside Aceh and are assigned to Bireuen Regency. The sample was selected using purposive sampling based on the following

criteria: active as counseling guidance teachers, minimum of 1 year of work experience in Bireuen Regency, and originally from outside Aceh. The total number of samples was 30 individuals. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire in the form of a Likert scale (1-5). The Cultural Background Scale (X) consisted of 10 items covering aspects such as values, language, customs, and communication. The Counselor Objectivity Scale (Y) also consisted of 10 items covering aspects such as neutrality, impartiality, non-discriminatory attitudes, and empathy. Validity was tested using construct validity, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The analysis was conducted using: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), Classical assumption tests (normality and linearity), and Simple Linear Regression to examine the influence of variable X on variable Y.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of a study investigating the influence of counselors' cultural background on their objectivity in counseling services. Data analysis was conducted quantitatively using SPSS version 25. The analytical steps included descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests (normality and linearity), and simple linear regression analysis to determine the extent of the influence of the independent variable (counselors' cultural background) on the dependent variable (counselors' objectivity).

Data were collected from 30 counseling guidance teachers, all of whom are Civil Servant or Government Employees with Work Agreements (PNS/PPPK) from outside the Aceh Province, currently assigned in Bireuen Regency. The instrument used was a Likert-scale questionnaire. Total scores of each variable were analyzed to describe data tendencies and to test the research hypothesis.

The analytical results are presented in tables and discussed in detail to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between the two variables.

**Table 1. Descriptive Analysis**

Variable	Number of Respondents (N)	Mean	Standar Deviation
Counselors' Cultural Background (X)	30	38,40	4,25
Counselors' Objectivity (Y)	30	40,15	3,90

Descriptive results are used to describe the general characteristics of the collected data. These results show that the average respondent's perception of the counselor's cultural background is 38,40 out of a possible maximum score (e.g., 50). This indicates that most counselors perceive their cultural background as relatively strong or dominant. The average counselor objectivity score is 40,15, suggesting that they tend to demonstrate a high level of objectivity in their counseling practice. The standard deviation is relatively small, indicating that respondents' answers do not vary significantly, which means that their perceptions are relatively consistent.

**Table 2. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)**

Variable	Statistic	Data (df)	Significance (Sig.)
X	0,971	30	0,524
Y	0,968	30	0,457

Normality testing was conducted to determine whether the data for each variable followed a normal distribution. This step is essential, as linear regression analysis assumes that the data are normally distributed. If the significance value (Sig.)  $> 0,05$ , the data are considered to be normally distributed. Based on the results presented in the table above, the significance values for both variables (X and Y) are greater than 0,05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data for both variables are normally distributed and meet the assumptions required for regression analysis.

**Tabel 3. Linearity Test**

Independent → Dependent	F-Value	Significance (Sig.)
X → Y	1,475	0,241

The linearity test is conducted to determine whether the relationship between variables X and Y is linear, which is a crucial assumption in regression analysis. If the significance value (Sig.)  $> 0,05$ , the relationship is considered linear. A Sig. value of 0,241  $> 0,05$  indicates that the relationship between cultural background and counselor objectivity is linear, and therefore eligible for further analysis using regression techniques.

**Tabel 4. Simple Linear Regression Test**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,576	0,332	0,309	3,25

Based on the table above, the correlation coefficient  $R = 0,576$  indicates the strength of the relationship between variable X (counselor cultural background) and variable Y (counselor objectivity). A value of 0,576 falls within the range of a moderate to strong correlation, suggesting that a higher level of cultural background awareness among counselors is associated with a higher degree of objectivity in counseling. The  $R^2$  value = 0,332 represents the coefficient of determination, meaning that 33,2% of the variance in counselor objectivity can be explained by the cultural background variable. The remaining 66,8% is attributed to other factors not examined in this study, such as work experience, training, personality traits, and workplace environment. The Adjusted  $R^2$  = 0,309 provides a more accurate estimation for the population by adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. Although slightly lower than  $R^2$ , it still indicates that the model is sufficiently robust for predictive purposes. The Standard Error of the Estimate = 3,25 reflects the average prediction error between the actual values and the values predicted by the regression model. This suggests that the model is reasonably stable, with prediction errors falling within an acceptable range.

**Tabel 5. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	117,36	1	117,36	11,11	0,002
Residual	236,64	28	8,45		
Total	354,00	29			

Based on the results of the study, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was conducted to assess whether the overall regression model is statistically significant. According to the table above, the significance value (Sig.) is 0,002, which is less than 0,05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, suggesting that the counselor's cultural background has a significant effect on counselor objectivity.

Based on the results of a simple linear regression analysis, it was found that the cultural background of counselors has a significant effect on objectivity in counseling. A significance value of 0,002 ( $p < 0,05$ ) indicates that the relationship between the two variables does not occur by chance, but is a statistically significant relationship. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0,332 indicates that the counselor's cultural background is able to explain 33,2% of the variation in the level of counseling objectivity demonstrated by the counselor.

These results reinforce the view that cultural background plays an important role in shaping the perspective, attitude, and professional behavior of counselors in providing services. Counselors who have a high awareness of their own cultural background, and are able to understand and adapt to the local culture where they work, tend to be able to maintain an objective attitude when dealing with clients from different backgrounds.

This finding is in line with the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) framework proposed by Ratts et al. (2021), which emphasizes the importance of cultural self-awareness and multicultural competence in counseling practice. According to this theory, counselors must be able to recognize how their personal cultural value systems and experiences influence the way they interact and make decisions in the counseling process. In addition, the Cultural Humility theory of Hook et al. (2019) also strengthens this finding. This theory emphasizes that counselors must have a culturally humble attitude, namely being open to the client's cultural differences and being willing to continue learning and reflecting on their socio-cultural position. Counselors who have cultural humility tend to show empathy, neutrality, and a non-judgmental attitude in helping clients, which are part of the indicators of objectivity.

Thus, cultural background is not a barrier, but can be a strength if the counselor is able to manage and understand its influence reflectively. Understanding one's own culture and the client's culture will strengthen the counselor's skills in building a balanced and unbiased counseling relationship. The results of this study are also consistent with a number of previous studies. Taufik and Maulana (2019) found that the

greater the "cultural distance" between the counselor and the client, the lower the perception of objectivity felt by the client. This shows the importance of cultural closeness in building trust and acceptance in the counseling relationship. Amalia and Hartono (2022) also found that students are more open to counselors who share cultural values, because they feel more understood and not judged. This study shows that counselors with different cultural backgrounds can still be objective as long as they have a good understanding of the local culture. The results of this study are also consistent with Firman (2018), who emphasized that multicultural counseling can serve as an effective approach to help clients develop their full potential. This approach is grounded in the counselor's ability to recognize the client's cultural and social constructions, supported by appropriate attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. It underscores that counselors who understand and integrate the cultural aspects of their clients are more likely to work objectively and effectively in cross-cultural contexts.

Furthermore, Astuti and Nurhayati (2020) found that a counselor's understanding of the local culture has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the counseling services provided. This finding reinforces the notion that strong cultural awareness enhances both the objectivity and professionalism of counselors in the field.

From a practical standpoint, these findings highlight the importance of incorporating training in cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication skills into the professional development of BK teachers or counselors assigned to different regions. Cultural awareness forms a critical foundation for cultivating objectivity, neutrality, and empathy when assisting students or clients from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the placement of counselors across regions should also take into account their cultural and psychological readiness to prevent potential value conflicts that could compromise the objectivity of their services. Accordingly, policies concerning the placement and training of counseling guidance teachers in culturally diverse areas should be supported by systematic cultural orientation programs.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that counselors' cultural background significantly influences their objectivity in delivering counseling services, particularly when assigned to regions different from their origin. The findings indicate that the higher the counselors' awareness and understanding of both their own and the local culture, the greater their ability to demonstrate objectivity in client interactions. These findings reinforce the principles of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) and Cultural Humility Theory, which emphasize the importance of self-cultural reflection, openness to differences, and cross-cultural relational competence as the foundation for professional objectivity. If unmanaged, cultural background may become a source of bias in counseling. However, when understood and harnessed reflectively, it can enhance the inclusivity and fairness of the counseling relationship. Thus, cultural awareness should not be seen merely as a personal factor but as an integral part of a counselor's professional competence—especially in the context of cross-regional and cross-cultural service delivery. The implications of this conclusion affirm the importance of cultural training, self-reflective practice, and culturally sensitive placement policies in Indonesia's education and counseling systems.

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