

Multicultural counseling: the strategy of social fasilitator of post-conflict education and psychosocial guidance in multicultural society

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Abstract

Multicultural problems that are manifested in patterns of thought, attitude, and behavior of intolerance still occur in Indonesian society over the past decade. It started to become common that certain groups attacked other ethnic and racial groups thereby causing conflict. This is due to the handling of cases that are not ideal and appropriate, situations of intolerance, and social conflicts that have a wide impact, including causing psychological problems such as anxiety, hatred, violence, to depression. This study aimed to critically examine psychological coping strategies carried out in various countries to assist post-conflict victims with trauma, especially in multicultural societies. This study used an integrative review approach to analyze nine selected articles about psychological strategy and social education for post-conflict settings from 2010 to 2021 from reputable journals or publications. The results showed that the post-conflict victim handling strategy in various countries is carried out using psychosocial approaches and counseling/narrative therapy which are considered the most effective to help victims with trauma. Some literature also shows that multicultural skills are an important part of post-conflict psychological handling. This study recommended multicultural counseling as a post-conflict psychological treatment and social education model that is suitable for a society with a high level of diversity.

Keywords: *post-conflict, social education, psychological strategy, multicultural counseling.*



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Introduction

The issue of diversity in Asian society, especially in Indonesia, has always been an interesting topic for discussion. As a country with a very high level of diversity with 730 ethnic cultures, 400 regional languages, and 6 major religions (Tumonggor et al., 2013), these differences often cause significant cultural conflicts. Clash of differences that cannot always be tolerated often creates a risk of conflict that has a negative impact on the victims. On the other hand, in the context of Indonesian society, it has actually been established that diversity is a

wealth of heritage from the past since the days of the Sriwijaya and Majapahit kingdoms. Even philosophers such as Mpu Tantular in his book *Sutasoma* already mentions the basic concept of how to respond to existing differences, through the motto “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa*” (Agustin, 2011). The motto describes the religious harmony that developed at that time in which differences could be overcome with good tolerance.

A multicultural nation is a nation where existing ethnic or cultural groups can coexist peacefully, marked by a willingness to respect other cultures. Multiculturalism emphasizes acceptance of the reality of diversity and plurality in people's lives. Although multicultural understanding has been promoted for a long time, social conflicts related to issues of ethnic, religious, and racial differences still occur frequently. This conflict does not only occur in Asian countries which are known to have high diversity, as several countries in Europe and America also experience many multicultural conflicts (Spring, 2017; Wilson, 2014).

In Indonesia, a series of social conflicts have been recorded, such as the Ambon, Poso, Sampit, Sampang Madura, Balinuraga, Halmahera conflicts, and the 1998 ethnic-based sexual violence (reference). Meanwhile, conflicts and even wars also occurred in various other countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Pakistan, and Colombia (McMullen et al., 2012; Ng & Harerimana, 2016; Rahman et al., 2019; Saenz Galvis & Carmona-Parra, 2021). Starting from the situation observed in Indonesia and countries with a high level of diversity, the researcher intends to study further how psychological treatment is carried out in various places. This is because multicultural conflicts have a tremendous impact on victims, one of which is the tendency to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health problem (Kirmayer, 2019; Nesterko et al., 2020). Even small-level conflicts such as bullying show a risk of mental problems (Kurniawan et al., 2022; McKenney et al., 2002; Yasmin & Nurcahyani, 2020). Hence it is predicted that multicultural conflicts involving physical violence have bigger impacts on people.

Multiculturalism, social conflict, and their impact cannot be separated from nature, mindset, attitude, behavior, and the human psyche. The nature of the human ego, both personally and in groups, greatly influences the way of thinking, attitudes, and behavior in interacting with other people. On the other hand, the human psyche is also strongly influenced by the way of thinking, attitude, and behavior of oneself and others who provide certain experiences that affect their psychological conditions. The process of interaction in a multicultural society, handling of social conflicts, and psychosocial recovery of victims requires a psychological approach to understand the aspects of the human psyche in handling or recovery. Therefore, the study of literature on the issue of post-conflict psychological handling is important, especially for countries with a high level of diversity, one of which is where the researcher reside, namely Indonesia.

In general, psychosocial and psychoeducational approaches are the most frequently used coping strategies to help post-conflict victims (Im et al., 2018; Johnson & Chronister, 2010; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). However, the treatment becomes very complex when the victims are in a multicultural setting because general psychological treatment is usually not sufficient. Numerous literature sources, discuss various post-conflict treatments, especially to assist those who experience severe psychological disorders, trauma, and depression. Therefore, this study attempted to explore information from the existing literature on post-conflict psychological coping strategies to find the most effective strategy ever undertaken. In particular, it will be useful to provide recommendations for handling similar cases in Indonesia and at the same time in various other countries with similar characteristics. The multicultural perspective is the main consideration in the discussion in this study.

Method

The study aimed to critically review studies related to the strategy supporting people post-conflicts in a multicultural setting. The research was based on a bibliographic search using an integrative review approach. The procedure for carrying out this research consists of six stages (Snyder, 2019; Souza et al., 2010; Torraco, 2005) model. First, the researcher prepared the guiding questions, then searched the appropriate literature samples before collecting the data. The next step was to develop a critical analysis of the selected studies and then arranged a discussion of the results before presenting the results of an integrative review. The question that was used in this research was “what post-conflict psychological program was effective and appropriate for a multicultural context?”

The initial stage was searching the articles for the study through Google Scholar. Articles were screened based on the title and abstract found on Google Scholar before the article was accessed in full text. The search keywords used were in Indonesian and English, including “post-conflict”, “strategy/intervention”, “counseling/therapy/psychotherapy”, and “multicultural”. Additional criteria in the selection of articles included articles written in Indonesian and English, articles related to post-conflict strategies through psychological and multicultural approaches, and published in reputable, accredited journals such as DOAJ, Scopus, Thomson Reuters, Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Shinta and Garuda from 2010 to 2021.

The data analysis and synthesis were presented in tables and discussed based on the pattern of findings in the selected studies. The results were classified based on the strategies carried out, research methods, and research findings. The summary findings were then integrated and discussed critically so that the concept of handling post-conflict counsees in a multicultural setting could be understood thoroughly.

Findings and Discussion

There were nine final articles reviewed in this study according to the predetermined criteria. There were seven articles in the form of scientific journals and two research report articles from books. There were three articles published by Elsevier, three by Springer, two by Taylor & Francis, and one by Wiley. Table 1 shows the specifications of each article. The articles were identified based on the method, post-conflict interventions in the article, and the results of the study.

Table 1. The list of reviewed articles

No	Title of the article	Authors	Indexed; Journal (vol, page, year)	Method	Strategy/Intervention for post-conflict	Findings/Results/Recommendations
1	Screening for traumatic exposure and psychological distress among war-affected adolescents in post-conflict northern Uganda	(McMullen et al., 2012)	Springer; Soc Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiology, 47, 1489–1498, 2012	Cross-sectional study (205 adolescents aged 12-19 in northern Uganda)	Assessment tools and intervention therapies (narrative exposure therapy-NET).	Adolescents may continuously suffer from significant psychological stress post-conflict, especially those who experienced extreme violence. Valid screening instruments and psychological interventions for post-conflict are important.
2	War exposure, daily stressors, and mental health in conflict and post-conflict settings: Bridging the divide between trauma-focused and psychosocial frameworks	(Miller & Rasmussen, 2010)	Elsevier; Social Science & Medicine, 70, 7–16, 2010	Literature review (Recent studies about war exposure and daily stressors affecting mental health.)	Trauma-focused clinical treatments (NET)	An integrative and sequential intervention approach with initial treatment of daily stressors and then specific interventions provided for those whose distress does not subside with improved social ecology.
3	Integration or Separation? Addressing Religious and Spiritual Issues in Multicultural Counseling : A National Survey of College Counselors	(Smith et al., 2019)	Wiley; Journal of College Counseling, 22, 194-210, 2019	Survey (216 college counselors)	Multicultural counseling	The results of this survey reinforce recommendations for multicultural perspectives (religious and spiritual topics) to be explicitly integrated into professional counseling
4	Psychological intervention	(Morina et al.,	Elsevier; The British Journal of	Meta-analysis (21 relevant	Psychological interventions	Active treatments for depression produce small to moderate effect sizes.

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	ns for post-traumatic stress disorder and depression in young survivors of mass violence in low- and middle-income countries: meta-analysis	2017)	Psychiatry, 210, 247–254, 2017	studies)		Meanwhile, after adjustment for publication bias, PTSD showed moderate (uncontrolled) and small (controlled) effects.
5	Effectiveness of a brief group psychological intervention for women in a post-conflict setting in Pakistan: a single-blind, cluster, randomized controlled trial	(Rahman et al., 2019)	Elsevier; The Lancet, 39, 1733–1744, 2019	A single-blind, cluster, randomized, controlled trial (306 women in two union councils of rural Swat, Pakistan.)	Counseling and intervention strategies through direct observation of specially designed role plays.	The psychological intervention in the study resulted in clinically significant reductions in anxiety and depressive symptoms at 3 months for women with psychological distress in post-conflict rural settings in Pakistan.
6	Psychological Rehabilitation of Ex-combatants in Non-Western, Post-conflict Settings	(Maedl et al., 2010)	Springer; Trauma Rehabilitation After War and Conflict, 177-213, 2010	Literature review (Studies in Nigeria, Northern Uganda, Eastern DRC, Uganda and Rwanda, South Africa, Somalia, Mozambique, and Liberia)	Mental-health interventions (narrative exposure therapy and interpersonal therapy), and community interventions	NET can be taught to non-medical personnel with various cultural backgrounds and has been chosen as an intervention model to address trauma-related psychiatric disorders in DDR in Rwanda.

No	Title of the article	Authors	Indexed; Journal (vol, page, year)	Method	Strategy/Intervention for post-conflict	Findings/Results/Recommendations
7	Towards an understanding of Colombia's demobilized young women: a person-centered approach	(Saenz Galvis & Carmona-Parra, 2021)	Taylor & Francis; Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 20:3, 250-265, 2021	A thematic analysis (Six interview transcripts of participants of the Government's Programs to Return to Civilian Life)	The Government's Programs to Return to Civilian Life	A fuller range of young women's human experiences and a different psychological understanding explained from person-centred perspective and cultural consideration.
8	Treating and Preventing Psychological Trauma of Children and Adolescents in Post-Conflict Settings	(Crombach et al., 2017)	Springer; Evidence-Based Treatments for Trauma Related Disorders in Children and Adolescents, 483-504, 2017	Literature review (Relevant studies of treating and preventing trauma post-conflict)	Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT); Narrative Exposure Therapy for Children (KIDNET); Narrative Exposure Therapy for Forensic Offender Rehabilitation (FORNET)	A review of research-based mental health interventions in post-conflict environments recommends that local lay counselors be trained. It is used to support the spread of treatment approaches that are effective in strengthening mental health in conflict-affected countries.
9	Social-Psychological Interventions for Intergroup Reconciliation: An Emotion Regulation Perspective	(Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016)	Taylor & Francis; Psychological Inquiry, 27:2, 73-88, 2016	Literature review (Studies about psychological intervention)	An emotion regulation perspective	Emotions play an important role in post-conflict group contexts where emotion regulation can be a key psychological mechanism for achieving reconciliation. The new integrative understanding of inter-group reconciliation explains how socio-psychological interventions relate to emotion regulation to achieve reconciliation.

The results of the analysis and synthesis of nine articles in this study indicate that there are four articles discussing the use of NET in helping post-conflict victims (Crombach et al., 2017; Maedl et al., 2010; McMullen et al., 2012; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). The NET is considered the most suitable approach to assist post-conflict victims because it allows them to avoid the negative effects of major depression and PTSD. Miller and Rasmussen revealed that the NET program with an integrative and structured approach had a good effect on improving the situation of post-conflict victims. In its implementation, initial treatment is carried out to help the victims deal with the stressors that disturb them on a daily basis. The NET is conducted to help the victims be able to process the trauma experienced after the conflict. Eventually, environmental

improvement also needs to be carried out in tandem with the therapeutic process carried out. Community support and improvement in the social environment can lead to better treatment and speedy recovery of the victims.

The results of research by Meadl et al. also show that the NET had been chosen to support the victims of the genocide in Rwanda and was used as a model to address trauma-related psychiatric disorders (Maedl et al., 2010). However, as a clinical approach, the limitations of professionals to provide this service are still a problem. Multicultural conflicts that occur not only in cities but also in regions have created limited access for post-conflict victims to mental health service facilities. In fact, Crombach et al., suggested that training or preparing local counselors with adequate competence is crucial in rural areas (Crombach et al., 2017). McMullen et al., also found that the right instrument to measure the distress experienced by post-conflict victims needs to be prepared. In their study, the relevant instrument was examined (McMullen et al., 2012). With instruments that are able to purposively measure the target, the handling of post-conflict trauma can improve and be more optimal.

Two other articles show that counseling, especially based on multiculturalism, can be an alternative treatment, especially in the context of a society full of diversity, such as Indonesia. Rahman et al. explained that in the context of the conflict in Pakistan, counseling and intervention strategies through direct observation of specially designed role-plays showed a clinically significant effect (Rahman et al., 2019). Even this treatment can reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms at 3 months for women with psychological distress in post-conflict rural settings in Pakistan. On the other hand, Smith et al., explained that the results of a survey of college counselors in America showed that multicultural views such as religious and spiritual topics need to be made explicit in handling post-conflict victims (Smith et al., 2019). Multicultural counseling is very relevant to be given in handling post-conflict victims in areas with different levels of ethnicity, race, and culture such as in Indonesia.

Psychological support is generally discussed in the other three articles and emphasizes the specifics of the conflict and cultural background. For example, in Colombia, Saenz Galvis and Carmona-Parra explained that the government provided the programs to return to civilian life for youth victims of conflict (Saenz Galvis & Carmona-Parra, 2021). Besides emphasizing a person-centered point of view, they also explained that a multicultural perspective was important in the provision of existing psychological support services. In general, the psychological intervention research done by Morina et al., on 21 studies showed that there was a range of treatment effectiveness from small to moderate in reducing depression and PTSD (Morina et al., 2017). This means that with psychological support, post-conflict victims significantly obtain a positive impact.

According to Čehajić-Clancy et al., conflict as a phenomenon related to physical, emotional, and thoughtful responses, always causes problems related to emotional regulation (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016). In their study, they said that one of the treatments to support post-conflict victims is the emotion regulation model. Psychological intervention using an emotional regulation approach can support the achievement of post-conflict reconciliation. The stages of the emotional regulation process can help post-conflict victims become calmer and have a more stable psychological state.

In general, this study found similarities among the nine articles, namely the need for

appropriate psychological interventions for post-conflict victims. The NET is generally considered to be the most enabling and effective program in this context. What is interesting and the focus of the researchers' attention is the multicultural context that is expressed and implied in the articles being analyzed. Each article shows the need to consider a multicultural perspective in handling post-conflict victims. It is even shown that the context of conflict that can occur anywhere means that the counselor/psychologist tasked with assisting needs to have a good understanding of diversity. This anticipates retraumatizing that can happen if the counselor cannot understand the cultural background of the victim properly.

Multicultural counseling is a paradigm that emphasizes the importance of understanding the diversity and suitability of responses given by counselors/psychologists to their counsees (Ford et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2014; Yan & Lam, 2000). The multicultural view may have long been considered, although studies show that this view is not as fully implicit in the practice of professional counselors as was found in a study by Smith et al., (2019). This study finds that the concept of multicultural counseling can be an important part of handling post-conflict victims who may suffer from major depression or PTSD other than NET. It is possible that the practice of NET has also developed a view of multiculturalism, but by suggesting a multicultural counseling model, young counselors or professionals have the opportunity to help post-conflict victims. It does not have to be a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist who can provide help.

Conclusion

Based on the literature found and analyzed in this study, it can be seen that in general, social education, psychosocial and psychological support programs that are mostly carried out post-conflict aim to help victims avoid severe psychological problems such as major depression and PTSD. Psychological support is mostly given in the form of therapy or counseling which is known as narrative exposure therapy (NET). This counseling is one of the mainstay programs in post-conflict management because it can meet the individual needs of those who are experiencing severe psychological problems. In the implementation of this therapy/counseling, sensitivity to individual differences and building trust are very important. Furthermore, multicultural competence turned out to be an important thing for counselors to help post-conflict victims. The study found that multicultural counseling as a counseling paradigm that prioritizes understanding diversity and recognizing individual differences can be a model that can be applied to post-conflict handling, especially in multicultural environmental settings. The concept of multicultural counseling is not only suitable for the post-major conflict context but is also relevant to serve as a model of social education in the context of minor conflicts in everyday life in a plural society.

Although this study has attempted to carefully and critically examine the relevant literature, the study is still quite narrow because it only involved nine articles. Further research needs to be done by enlarging the sample of articles so that the variety of post-conflict psychological supports can be mapped more comprehensively. This will be useful in mitigating post-conflict psychological problems so that the adverse effects of conflict can be minimized. In addition, further research can also map psychological treatments based on the region and culture/characteristics of each country. In the end, this study recommends the idea of post-conflict multicultural counseling to become a psychological treatment and social education that is relevant to the context of a diverse and pluralistic environment. Multicultural competence is considered capable of accommodating the risk of trauma for victims of the conflict that can occur if counselors do not understand and respect their cultural background.

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