

Multicultural Self-Efficacy of Undergraduate Students Majoring in Guidance and Counseling

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: June 06 ,2026 Accepted: September 08,2026 Keywords : Multicultural self- efficacy, Guidance and counseling, Undergraduate student DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22679898	<i>Knowing the level of multicultural self-efficacy would be helpful for undergraduate students pursuing degree in guidance and counseling and guidance and counseling study program as well. The objective of this study was to describe their multicultural self-efficacy in relation to learning context in college. 201 undergraduate students (186 females and 15 males) majoring in guidance and counseling of 7 public universities in Indonesia participated in the survey. A 42 item-questionnaire named Multicultural Self-Efficacy Scale for Student (MESS) was administered via Google Form. Analysis was done as appropriate on the analysis of variance level according to demographic data. Findings indicated that students have moderate to high multicultural self-efficacy. Female students had slightly higher score than their male peers. In addition, students of western part of Indonesia has slightly higher multicultural self-efficacy compared to their peers of middle and eastern part region.</i>

Introduction

Students who pursue bachelor degree in guidance and counseling will be projected to become prospective school counselors. During their years of study, they gain exposure to widen their perspective, awareness, attitude, and skill to work with others. Specifically, they encounter diverse instructors and peers who come from various regions with culture formed and firmly rooted in certain race, religious, age, gender, and cultural backgrounds, customs, and traditions. Students who have broad and positive multicultural perspective and high self-efficacy are assumed to be more likely *understanding how to relate with each other, knowing means appreciating others*, expressing cultural values, *be inspired to put culture to courses*, collaborating with peers. They in turn will get benefit from culturally experience during their academic years.

Although Indonesia has been recognized as a leading society in practicing their diversities (e.g. Kamil & Mukminin, 2015), current situation is mixed as seen from a number ethnic and religious conflict, such as in West Kalimantan (Nakaya, 2018). A study of Mangundjaya (2010) showed cultural change among seven major ethnic in Indonesia (Javanese, Sundanese, Minang, Batak, Balines, Malay, and Ambonese) particularly in company level. She found a shift in work values from collectivist to individualist, and feminine to masculine. Irawan's study (2017) of expatriates' perceptions toward Indonesian culture concluded that they perceived Indonesian has collectivism and low uncertainty avoidance culture. A research of the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (2019) showed that understanding multicultural and religious understanding at an alarming level among high school students, students at higher education, teachers, and lectures. Study of Budirahayu, Wijayanti, and Baskoro (2018) found unclear understanding of youth to multiculturalism impacting the way they perceived it as plurality or diversity. They identified a part of them was contributed by social media which tended to report more on conflicts and disputes among groups.

Considering such situation, in order to be successful in their pursuing degree, Robinson and Savitsky (2020) suggested students of guidance and counseling to have self-awareness in the tier of multicultural competence and the foundation that knowledge and skills are built upon. As following up, they have to have adequate multicultural self-efficacy---belief that would influence their thoughts, motivations, actions, affects, and the selection of her/his environment (Bandura, 1982). There are at least three reasons why they need to develop adequate multicultural self-efficacy not only during years of learning but also for shake of their future career. First, educational institutions are mini communities (Dewey, 1907) and individuals were representations of their social environment, where culture was part of such environment (Breakwell, 2014). In a small community, they need to build a multicultural academic atmosphere. In turn, it will increase self-awareness, critical thinking, knowledge and skills, awareness to think comprehensively, shared learning experiences, and produce better work. It had been proved by a longitudinal study of Villarando (2002) where rich multicultural college experience had influence on students' positive satisfaction.

Second, as future school counselors, they will encounter and give various counseling services to students from

different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, in order for relationships with students to have a therapeutic impact, they need to learn how to develop multicultural perspective as soon as they enter college. Third, they will also have to interact with educators and parents from various cultural backgrounds. A harmonious relationship in the world of work will have an impact on the productivity of school counselors in providing services (Martin, 2014). This demand suggests students to have adequate multicultural self-efficacy since they are in college. Unfortunately, multicultural self-efficacy is not a legacy but has to be learned by students through cognitive processes, motivation, affection, and selection (Bandura, 1994).

Studies of multicultural understanding or cultural diversity have been published in various professional literatures. The findings are mixed and difficult to generalize. Among them are the forces that drive the similarities and differences that exist within a group of students in assignments (Picherit-Duthler, 2014), student perceptions of the responsibility of educators in multicultural education (Yilmaz, 2016), teachers' perceptions of their multicultural competence in teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds (Lehman, 2017). The results of these studies indicate that not all respondents have positive multicultural perception.

Meanwhile, studies on multicultural efficacy have been carried out by a number of researchers addressed to students majoring in education and various teachers. For example, multicultural attitudes and efficacy of teacher education students (Nadelson et al, 2012), multicultural efficacy of secondary school teachers in Korea (Roh, 2016), multicultural efficacy of educational study program students (Mansuri, 2017), factors related to multicultural efficacy and the multicultural attitudes of early childhood-high school teachers (Strickland, 2018). The results of these studies indicate the importance of adequate multicultural efficacy of students, teachers, and school counselors in educational settings in schools and colleges.

Concept of self-efficacy has connected to various human functioning, including multicultural self-efficacy. Research on measuring multicultural self-efficacy has been carried out by a number of researchers, for example a multicultural teacher efficacy measurement instrument (Guyton & Wesche, 2005), a measure of teacher attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy regarding multicultural education in Kosovo, a multi-ethnic European country (Yildirim & Tezki, 2016). The results of these studies had proved possibility of measuring multicultural efficacy comprehensively and profiling the subjects based on chosen indicators accurately.

Having high level of multicultural self-efficacy needs handful of efforts. Reflecting from Gallavan's (2007) finding of novice teachers tending to teach the ways they were taught, teach students who cooperate and behave in ways that were similar to ways the teacher behaves, and did not want to teach topics and issues associated with multicultural education, it is possible for students to do the same ways in term of urging their own culture. It had been underlined that the more multicultural training and experiences that counselors have, the higher they rate their capabilities to work on multicultural tasks in schools (Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, & Johnston, 2008), having the ability to adapt skills to meet both individual and multicultural uniqueness and to bring about positive change through counseling (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2018; Pederson, 2002). Guidance and counseling students should assume that becoming a professional multicultural school counselor have to be started in college level. At the level of professional development, multicultural self-efficacy will develop through a process of exploration, examination, integration, and personalization (Muro & Kottman, 2001). For this reason, not all students have adequate multicultural efficacy which may limit the quality of peer relationships in current academic situations and in the future world of work. Students who fail to understand and accept peers with different cultural backgrounds will find it difficult to provide empathy for peer conditions. If it continues, there is a concern that the student will become school counselors who are unable to provide services based on sincere acceptance, empathy, and authenticity as emphasized by Rogers (1980).

Culture is not a simple matter. In multicultural community, it may come into conflict and trigger hostility particularly in macro level when it is addressed to society's wider needs and politics. Undergraduate students of guidance and counseling should be able to convince themselves to develop adequate multicultural self-efficacy. In the midst of cultural change, it is under question whether those students are prepared well to challenge it and guidance and counseling study program or department have had information pertaining multicultural self-efficacy level of their students in relation to challenging cultural situation in Indonesia recently. In order to ensure that such information is available, a research has to carry out.

Method

Referring to Borg and Gall (2000), this survey method is aiming to determine the existence of multicultural self-efficacy of undergraduate student majoring in guidance and counseling. Demographically, the respondents of this study were composed of students between 17-23 years old (mean=20, SD=6.3). Among them 150 females and 51 males. They attended 7 public universities of Indonesia consisting of State University of Medan, Sriwijaya University, Indonesia University of Education (western zone), Mulawarman University, Public University of Makassar, Cendana University (central zone), and Pattimura University (eastern zone). The Head of Guidance and Counseling Study Program of each public university was gotten contact with in accordance with the permission obtained from Deans of Faculty of Education Science and Faculty of Teacher Training and

Education Science. Prior to administering the instrument, respondent filled out informed consent.

To measure students' self-multicultural efficacy, researchers administered a 42 item-questionnaire named Multicultural Self-Efficacy Scale for Student (MESS). The scale was a self-assessment reflecting students' belief toward their multicultural capabilities which composed of 5 subscales namely respect any culture (9 items), communication (9 items), cultural values (6 items), cultural awareness (9 items), and flexibility (9 items). In line with Bandura (2006), the MESS asked students to score on the scale between 1-10. High scores indicated high belief of their multicultural capabilities and low scores were vice versa. In addition to peer review of the MESS's items, its validity was analyzed by using Pearson correlation formula. It was .59. The reliability was measured by referring to Cronbach's alpha (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2010). Its reliability was .953. The MESS was formatted into Google Form and its link sent to the Head of Guidance and Counseling Study Program of each public universities upon obtaining the Deans' approval. Finally, it was forwarded to their students. Administering the MESS was completed by two weeks.

Once the data collection time was completed, the data were downloaded from the Google Site in Excel form. The demographic data for the sample were categorized into institution, gender, and age. Lastly, they are transferred to SPSS for analysis. Data analysis were addressed to describe students' multicultural self-efficacy as a whole by using graphic showing percentage of low to high multicultural self-efficacy of the students, reported the difference of mean score and standard deviation students' score according demographic categories by using analysis of variance.

Results and Discussion

Chart 1 presents means and standards deviations of scores on the five subscales of multicultural self-efficacy: respect any culture, communication, cultural values, cultural awareness, and flexibility. Table 2 and 3 present the analysis of variance for gender and institution.

Chart 1 Students' Self-Multicultural Efficacy

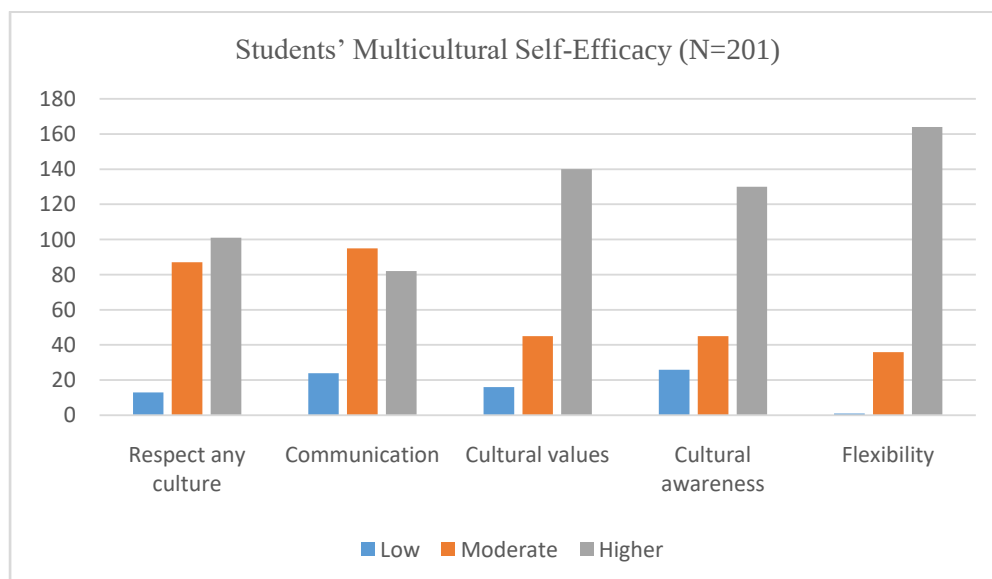


Table 1. Students' Multicultural Self-Efficacy by Gender

Subscales	Female (N=186)		Male (N=15)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Respect any culture	70.39	10.891	70.13	10.405	0.87	1.9719
Communication	67.2	11.481	67.87	11.747	0.216	1.9719
Cultural values	52.83	6.413	50.33	8.068	1.42	1.9719
Cultural awareness	77.53	10.73	77.93	10.416	0.14	1.9719
Flexibility	77.49	10.004	78.87	9.054	0.514	1.9719

Table 2. Students' Multicultural Self-Efficacy by Region of Institutions

Subscales	Western Indonesia (N=89)		Central Indonesia (N=58)		Eastern Indonesia (N=54)		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Respect any culture	71.36	9.825	70.76	11.336	68.31	11.75	0.384	0.05
Communication	68.44	10.735	67.31	12.363	65.22	11.596	0.338	0.05
Cultural values	53.33	5.692	52.09	7.742	52.11	6.535	0.660	0.05
Cultural awareness	78.52	8.851	77.47	12.763	76.09	11.027	0.415	0.05
Flexibility	78.29	8.618	77.5	10.09	76.56	11.694	0.877	0.05

Multicultural self-efficacy can be considered as a powerful instrument to understand culturally diverse student relationship regardless what related skills they have. As Bandura (2006) pointed out, efficacy was concerned with people's beliefs in their perceived capabilities to execute given types of performances. In this study context, such performances are related to students' capabilities to multicultural matter as the object of interest. Finding of this study revealed that 61.4% of students have high level of multicultural self-efficacy, 30.6% are in moderate level, and 8% in low level. These suggest that majority students are more likely to relate with others who are culturally different from themselves. Further analysis shows that communication and respect any culture subscales are lower than other subscales. Meanwhile, students' score in flexibility subscale places the highest indicating their belief to be able adjusting their behavior when they interact with students of other cultures.

Concerns about culture are frequently exposed in relation to initiatives for gender equality since it is considered with reference to social construct rather than biological ones (West & Zimmerman, 1991). In relation to multicultural, both males and females of one culture are expected to have similar self-efficacy regardless their roles in their culture. Present study shows that both groups are not different significantly in all subscales of multicultural self-efficacy. However, there are mean variation among the subscales, in which mean score of cultural value subscale was the lowest both for males and females. The highest mean score was in cultural awareness and flexibility subscales meaning the students tend to believe in their capabilities to gain adequate knowledge of their own culture as well as others' culture and to adjust their behavior to other culture context. Cultural values are conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluation (Schwartz, 1999). Since they operationally define ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, it seems the mean score of cultural awareness and flexibility subscales and cultural value subscale of both groups are not consistent.

Such findings are different from some previous researches in the context of perceived various efficacy which tends to consider females to have different level of self-efficacy compared to males (Schoen & Winocur, 1988). Another example, study of Fallan and Opstad (2016) indicated female students to have significantly lower self-efficacy strength than their male peers despite some exception due to gender-personality interaction. In addition, study of Burger et al (2010) revealed similar conclusion that women had lower academic self-efficacy than men at the point of entry in their undergraduate engineering education. Meanwhile, a meta-analysis of Huang (2013) found females displayed higher language arts self-efficacy than males. On the other hand, males exhibited higher mathematics, computer, and social sciences self-efficacy than females.

Not all studies indicating male student self-efficacy are higher than female. Study of Busch (1995) proved mixed-result of gender differences in self-efficacy related to academic performance. The female students had significantly lower self-efficacy in computing and marketing and higher self-efficacy in statistics than the male students. Moreover, Whitcomb et al (2019) found inconsistent gender differences in self-efficacy among students majoring in engineering by various disciplines. It is obvious that in some societies, males have more access for longer education than females and in turn they will have more opportunity to dominate society resources includes constructing culture in the future.

Present study has involved undergraduate students majoring in guidance and counseling across seven universities in western, middle, and eastern regions of Indonesia. Their ethnicity and culture may be different but the most important is how their belief of being capable to encounter peers coming from other cultures during their academic years. Data of the current study displayed in Table 2 indicate that students' multicultural self-efficacy strength of the seven universities are different statistically. The order of multicultural efficacy mean scores seems placing students of Cendana University at the first place and followed by students of Public University of Medan, Sriwijaya University, Pattimura University, Indonesia University of Education, Public

University of Makassar, and lastly Mulawarman University. This study does not analyze culture origin of students specifically since each university basically attended by students coming from surrounding region of the universities. In other words, majority students enrolled at each university represent main culture nearby. For instance, students of Pattimura University mostly are Ambonese and those of Indonesia University of Indonesia majority are Sundane. Considering such data, it is surprising that students of Cendana University reach the first order since communal conflicts have taken place in Kupang City, home of this university (Tule, 2000). The conflict probably has driven community to live harmoniously by appreciating one and each other culture. Meanwhile, a communal conflict also occurs in Province of Maluku, where Ambon, the capital city, is the home of Pattimura University (Joss, 2000). Compared to Kupang incidence, conflict in Maluku is very bloody and betraying “Pela Gandong” cultural legacy (Godlif& Patra, 2018). The last case, however, cannot explain directly the influence of such campus location on the level of students’ multicultural self-efficacy.

Similar to data category by gender, student data according to their institution region, among five subscales, the cultural values subscale places the lowest mean score. Since the items of cultural values are addressed to discover student belief of being able to understand their own culture as well as other cultures, it is interesting to explain some possibilities. Cultural values as part of culture itself are constructed by society and may consist of aesthetic spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, and authenticity value (Throsby, 2003). They give a shape to the culture and the society. These are relatively stable and difficult to change because they are rooted in social institutions and the social norms. They are considered as the references to practice culture in term of how people routinely think, feel, and behave accordingly. The lowness students’ mean scores of culture value subscales compared to others subscales may be associated with the nature of items asking the students to acknowledge with full awareness the advantages and disadvantages of their own culture as well as others. Since the items touch very sensitive part of culture the student may consider their culture full of advantages and the others are viseversa.

The dominance of moderate to high levels of students’ multicultural self-efficacy identified in this study is a good sign for guidance and counseling study program that their students will have harmonious campus live. Their multicultural self-efficacy still can enhance by numerous strategies. According to Bandura (1999) there are four sources that influence self-efficacy. They are enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. In light of enactive mastery experiences as the most influential source of efficacy, those respondents who place high level probably have satisfying experience in which they have preconception of capability to relate culturally diverse people. They also may be able to overcome challenging friendship with different people, try hard and win under pressure conditions, or have amount of external support, and meet suitable conditions under which they perform well. The finding of Kim (2005) should be considered since prior experience in are not always relate to addressed self-efficacy.

The study has explored the multicultural self-efficacy of students who majoring in counseling. Findings should take into account some limitations. Firstly, participants may not be representative of all Indonesian students since their population are so many, spreading from Province of Aceh to of Papua. Further study is needed to convince more accurate data. The study has to involve students majoring in guidance and counseling from private universities since they are out of numbers compared to public universities. Second, this study has not considered their culture origin in its analysis so that the data only cover such efficacy according to their campus domicile. Next research will include such consideration.

Conclusion

The multiculturalism has been a great attention of those who work in guidance and counseling field. As a multicultural nation, Indonesia needs school counselors who are able to provide essential services to culturally diverse students. All have to be started by prospective school counselor when they are pursuing bachelor degree in college. Universities behave as a community, receiving various students with different backgrounds, while integrating culturally diverse students remains a challenge. Measuring student multicultural efficacy is a fair way to predict their multicultural behavior in the future as well as for variety academic purposes. This study has added new information in guidance and counseling literature. Finding of the research shows that students majoring in guidance and counseling have moderate to high multicultural self-efficacy. Specifically, female students indicate higher efficacy than their male peers. Another indication found in this study is students of western Indonesia has slightly higher multicultural self-efficacy compared to their peers of middle and easter part of Indonesia.

Recommendations

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