


Integration of Ethno-Counseling in Preserving Local Wisdom Values in Batak Mandailing Traditional Wedding Ceremonies

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian culture is a rich and diverse mosaic, reflecting the complexity and beauty of a country consisting of thousands of islands and more than 300 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group brings unique cultural riches, ranging from different languages, arts, and customs. These cultural traditions and practices, such as traditional ceremonies, dance, music, and handicrafts, reflect historical heritage and serve as bridges connecting generations. Amid globalization and modernization, Indonesian culture remains a strong foundation, enriching people's lives with local values and deep identity (Tsarwat & Arifullah, 2024). Through preserving and respecting this cultural diversity, Indonesia is able to maintain the uniqueness that differentiates it on the world stage and makes a significant contribution to global cultural richness (T, 2024).

According to (Sihabudin, 2022), human life depends on culture. Culture greatly influences every aspect of human life and occurs thoroughly according to demands and needs. From waking up to going to sleep, human activities cannot be separated from cultural influences. Culture is indeed long-life because every event experienced by humans is closely related to culture. (Munawaroh et al., 2022) explained that culture is the result of human wisdom or intelligence for the perfection of life, and the word culture is a compound of culture, which means the power of the mind.

So culture means the power of the mind through creativity, intention, and taste. Culture, which results from creativity, intention, and feeling, becomes a manifestation of human potential, which is

actualized and benefits humans again. This aligns with culture, which precipitates human activities and work (Foreva, 2021).

Most cultures in Indonesia maintain traditional traditions that reflect the richness and diversity of this country. From Sabang to Merauke, various ethnic groups and local communities practice unique traditions, from elaborate traditional ceremonies to distinctive performing arts and handicrafts. These traditions show the diversity of Indonesian culture and how each community has unique ways of celebrating its identity and values (Susanti & Lestari, 2021). This diversity encompasses various aspects of life, such as belief systems, languages, and ways of life, each contributing to cultural diversity. By preserving and celebrating these traditions, Indonesia maintains its rich cultural heritage and strengthens the sense of unity and pride amidst the existing diversity. These traditional traditions symbolize the nation's cultural richness and show how important it is to recognize and preserve diversity as an integral part of national identity (Yusra & Aryanto, 2023).

As a cultural heritage of the past, traditional traditions contain wisdom values that are relevant and significant for today's society (Setia & Imron, 2021). These values not only reflect society's views and practices in the past but also serve as a solid foundation for facing challenges and opportunities in the future. The past, with all its traditions and customs, offers a valuable source of inspiration, which can help individuals and communities to understand their identity and direct the direction of their lives. Various cultural heritage and local wisdom values have developed from generation to generation as basic capital for realizing national identity and character. Therefore, it is necessary to inventory, codify, and revitalize these local wisdom values by regenerating them and placing them in the current context (Nurhayati et al., 2021).

The Mandailing tribe is an ethnic group that has a 99% Muslim majority among other ethnic groups, namely Gunungtua. Customs and culture are ancestral heritage that still exists in society because customs and culture are the order that has regulated life in society for generations. A civilized society is more orderly in carrying out various social life issues. Likewise, the customs and culture are still used by people in various regions in Indonesia, especially in Mandailing. The reality in society shows that speakers and communities of oral traditions are decreasing (Noviza et al., 2022). This results from the natural inheritance process not going as expected while cultural changes are happening quickly. Faced with this reality, the only thing important in maintaining oral traditions in traditional ceremonies as knowledge for the present and the future is the system of inheritance of Mandailing customs and culture (Septrisya et al., 2021).

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding and integrating local cultural values, such as Dalihan Natolu in the Batak Mandailing tribe, into marriage counseling practices. In the context of modernization and globalization, many local traditions are starting to erode and lose relevance. This study aims to show that traditional values, when applied appropriately in counseling, can not only support the harmony of marriage relationships but also maintain a strong cultural identity. Thus, this research is urgently needed to fill the gap in the literature on local culture-based counseling and offer a more relevant and effective approach in supporting prospective couples in maintaining a balance between traditional values and the demands of modern life.

Traditions and cultural practices, such as traditional ceremonies, dance, music, and handicrafts, reflect historical heritage and function as bridges connecting generations (Uyun, 2023). Amid globalization and modernization, this tradition remains important, enriching society with local values and deep identity. The Mandailing tribe, the majority of whom are Muslim in Gunungtua, is an example of the importance of cultural preservation. As traditional practices face threats from rapid cultural change, the integration of ethno-counseling becomes critical. This approach helps systematically preserve and revitalize local wisdom, ensuring the continuation of cultural identity and community cohesion (Nasution et al., 2021).

By focusing on the traditional wedding ceremony of the Mandailing community, this research highlights how ethno-counseling can play a vital role in maintaining and transmitting cultural values, thereby encouraging a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indonesia's diverse heritage. Counselors are expected to be able to understand their clients thoroughly. Efforts to achieve this understanding can be realized by recognizing the culture and background that influence the counselee's thoughts, behavior, ideas, views, and beliefs (Majdi, 2024).

Literature Review

Ethno-Counseling

Ethno-counseling departs from the concept of community counseling by emphasizing the importance of understanding and appreciating cultural diversity in counseling practice (Marhamah et al., 2015). The concept of community counseling prioritizes a holistic and local context-based approach, which considers social dynamics and a community's specific needs (Hwang, 2009). Ethno-counseling develops these principles in more depth, integrating an understanding of the unique culture, traditions, and values of each ethnic group or community (Lestari, 2023). Community Counseling is a counseling service that focuses on empowering people as a community. Community counseling helps members (counseling) and their community to solve problems that exist in their community (Prasetyo, 2013). Community counseling uses a multifaceted approach (different forms) to assist counseling, combining directive and non-directive approaches. This approach is intended to help community members (counseling) live more effective lives and prevent problems that are expected to arise by community members (Rahmawati, 2023).

According to Chakim et al. (2023), community counseling services are a type of counseling service that pays great attention to the situation of individuals and groups in society. Community Counseling was founded in North York in 1995 and offers various services to the general public (Budiyono, 2022). Community counseling provides assistance to individuals or groups in society who need it and is sustainable to ensure the security of services that provide support and change to the community by combining a community approach that is inclusive and sensitive to the social context with special attention to cultural aspects, ethno-counseling offers a method that more relevant and effective in dealing with individual and group problems. This approach ensures that the counseling process focuses on personal issues and considers cultural factors that influence the client's experiences and perspectives. As a result, ethno-counseling allows counselors to provide more in-depth and appropriate support to the client's cultural context, promoting sustainable and harmonious well-being in diverse communities (Prasetyo, 2013).

Ethno-counseling existed among indigenous peoples and was practiced according to their traditions in various ethnic groups worldwide before modern Guidance and Counseling emerged, which is now a good start. We have sought for centuries to understand ourselves, offer counseling, develop our potential, realize opportunities, and, in general, help ourselves in ways related to formal guidance practices (Disassa & Into, 2020).

Ethno-counseling emerged as a response to the need for a more inclusive and relevant approach to guidance and counseling, especially in multicultural societies. Initially, many counseling theories and practices developed in Western countries did not fully consider other countries' diverse cultural contexts. As time passed, experts began to realize that a "one size fits all" approach was ineffective in culturally diverse contexts (Sari & Setiawan, 2020).

Batak Mandailing Tradition

As a result of initial observations and interviews on August 27 2021 with one of the traditional leaders in Gunungtua regarding the Mandailing Batak tribe, namely Mr. Maraganti Siregar, information was obtained that the Mandailing Batak tribe is one of the six Batak tribes in North

Sumatra. The Batak tribe is divided into six parts, namely Toba Batak, Angkola Batak, Mandailing Batak, Simalungun Batak, Dairi Batak, and Karo Batak. In general, each Batak tribe has its own territory. Like the Angkola Batak and Mandailing Batak, who generally inhabited the South Tapanuli area in ancient times.

In line with Bagarna Sianipar's explanation, the Batak tribe is divided into six parts, namely Toba Batak, Angkola Batak, Mandailing Batak, Simalungun Batak, Dairi Batak, and Karo Batak. In general, each Batak tribe has its own territory. Like the Angkola Batak and Mandailing Batak, who generally inhabited the South Tapanuli area in ancient times. Meanwhile, the Batak tribe has spread to various regions in Indonesia (Sianipar, 2013).

Mandailing Batak is a tribe from Mandailing Natal, South Tapanuli, Padang Lawas, and Padangsidempuan districts in North Sumatra. The origin of the name Mandailing has various versions. Mandailing or Mandahiling can come from the words mandala and hiling or holing, which means the center of Kalinga State or what is familiarly known as Kalinga. Kalinga comes from the Sanskrit word Lingga, which means man, and the affix "ka" or "ha", so Kalingga or Halingga means manhood (Pohan, 2021).

The Mandailing people have an attitude in the form of holong and domu, namely in the form of life instructions and ideals of Indigenous people, which make it a valuable guide for indigenous people to achieve peace and happiness. The Mandailing people have a quite unique tradition, namely mangupa. For the Mandailing people, one of the life guidelines for achieving happiness is by *mangupa* (Imron et al., 2021).

In the Mandailing Batak tradition, there is the *Mangupa* or *Upah-upah* ceremony, which originates from South Tapanuli, North Sumatra. *The Mangupa* ceremony aims to return *the tondi* (soul) to the body and ask for blessings from God Almighty so that you are always safe healthy and have good fortune in life. Efforts to summon tondi to the body are carried out by presenting a set of ingredients (*pangupa* set) and *pangupa* advice (*hata pangupa; hata wageupah*) which are prepared systematically and carried out by various parties consisting of parents, kings, and other traditional parties (Siregar, 2022).

Dalihan Natolu Tradition

According to Kurniawan, for the Mandailing Batak community, norms are the most important part of implementing customs. According to Batak Mandailing beliefs, norms are instructions and guidelines that must be obeyed and implemented in the life of the *Pastak Ni Paradaton* community (a society that highly respects and preserves the customs and traditions of their ancestors). Norms function as rules for implementing customs. The existence of norms is a frame and boundary in the pretext of natolu society. Thus, it is hoped that the values contained in the *dalihan natolu* custom can be used as an intervention model in counseling. Furthermore, Ento-counseling is a counseling approach that uses local wisdom as a means of intervention in dealing with counselee problems (Kurniawan, 2021).

Based on the explanations regarding the *mangupa* tradition in the Mandailing Batak tribal community above, it can be concluded that the *mangupa* tradition in the Mandailing Batak tribal community is a ritual that involves the touch of the soul between the one who is upa and the one who is forging, reflecting love as human nature. In every *mangupa* ceremony, the emotional atmosphere is often inevitable, so almost all participants shed tears. *Mangupa* is one of the Mandailing people's way of expressing gratitude to God.

This *Mangupa* tradition is usually held as group prayer and eating together, with various traditional dishes served. *Mangupa* is not just a meal, but a ceremony full of meaning, where through prayer and food, participants share togetherness, affection, and appreciation for the blessings given by the Almighty. Every element in the *mangupa* ceremony has deep symbolism (Sianipar, 2013). The

food served, the prayers offered, and the togetherness felt all symbolize gratitude, togetherness, and love among community members. This tradition is one of the ways the Mandailing people maintain and preserve cultural values and strengthen social ties between them (Imron et al., 2021).

In the context of traditional Mandailing weddings, *Mangupa* has a very important role (Imron et al., 2021). This ceremony is part of a series of wedding processions, where the family and community gather to give blessings and prayers to the newlywed couple (Taskin Yilmaz et al., 2019). Through the *Mangupa* ceremony, the values of norms, love, and togetherness upheld by the Mandailing community are confirmed and passed on to the next generation. Newlyweds not only receive blessings but also advice and life guidelines that will help them build a harmonious and prosperous family. Thus, the traditional Mandailing wedding ceremony is not only a sacred moment to formalize the marriage bond but also an important medium for strengthening and passing on local wisdom and cultural values passed down from generation to generation (Septrisya et al., 2021).

Rationale of the Study

Traditions and customs inherited from the past hold wisdom values relevant to society's current conditions, making them an important basis for shaping our future. Referring to local culture is significant in maintaining identity and responding to the challenges of the times. Apart from being a form of preserving local wisdom, efforts to be based on the cultural matrix itself are a practical necessity. Differences in geographical, social, and anthropological-ethnocentric contours measure the uniqueness of each culture. As a human endeavor, local wisdom is often expressed through expressions like "for example," which appear in traditions such as *Mangupa*.

The *Mangupa* or *Upah-upah* ceremony, originating from South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, aims to return the tondi to the body and ask for blessings always to be safe, healthy, and have cheap sustenance (Siregar, 2022). In the context of traditional Mandailing weddings, *Mangupa* is an integral part of the ceremony. This ceremony contains important symbols that strengthen family and community ties and convey life advice from ancestors to the newlyweds. *Pangupa*, a traditional book containing life instructions, was described by the Panusunan Bulung king as life advice whose truth is recognized by the Mandailing people (Imron et al., 2021). Thus, the traditional Mandailing wedding ceremony is a cultural ritual and a means of maintaining local wisdom values that are relevant in modern life.

Objective

This research aims to explore cultural values to enrich the science of guidance and counseling. Specifically, this research focuses on the *Mangupa* tradition in the Mandailing Batak community, especially in wedding ceremonies which are rich with rituals and symbols. This tradition reflects local wisdom through the kinship system, customs, and social norms. By identifying these values, the research aims to develop more contextual and meaningful ethno-counseling, helping individuals understand and overcome problems according to their cultural background.

METHODS

Design

The design used is a case study. The term case study is often used in connection with ethnography. Case study researchers focus on programs, events, or activities involving individuals, not groups (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In the context of a traditional Mandailing wedding, this case study will explore how the *Mangupa* ceremony, as an integral part of the wedding procession, contains essential Dalihan Natolu values. *Mangupa* functions as a symbolic ritual and a medium for conveying life advice, blessings, and moral guidelines to the newlywed couple during wedding ceremonies. This research will identify the elements of local wisdom contained in *Mangupa* and

evaluate how these elements can be applied in guidance and counseling services. Thus, this research aims to develop a relevant and contextual concept of ethno-counseling, which can help resolve clients' problems by considering strong and meaningful local cultural values.

Participants and Research Procedures

Respondents consisted of 1 husband and wife couple who were relevant to the context of marriage with the *Mangupa Dalihan Natolu* tradition. The setting or place in this research was Gunungtua Julu village, Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province. This research was conducted from 2020 to 2022. Data was collected on traditional marriage ceremonies at the medium level or manonga at Mandailing traditional marriage ceremonies. The research focused on one of the traditions found in the Mandailing Batak tribe community during the *Mangupa* Mandailing traditional ceremony, which was held on August 21 2020 at the Mandailing traditional marriage ceremony between Helmin Syahputra Rambe (January 27 1991) and Sri Wahyuni Siregar, S.Pd .I (28 December 1991). The person who leads the *Mangupa* traditional ceremony is Mr. Maraganti Siregar. The series of research procedures can be seen in Figure 1.

The counseling services are made in a group counseling setting or ethno-counseling integrated into the *Dalihan Natolu* culture consisting of researchers as counselors and 3 Mandailing ethnic married couples as respondents, with a series of activities consisting of 1) Introduction and Preparation; 2) Data Collection; 3) Transmission of Cultural Values; 4) Guidance Intervention; 5) Evaluation and Reflection; 6) Follow Up.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used in this research is a phenomenological approach, which involves collecting data from various sources such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation will be implemented by comparing information obtained through various data collection methods. Data analysis was conducted inductively, where researchers identified patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged from the data without using pre-existing theoretical structures. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand the *Mangupa Dalihan Natolu* tradition.

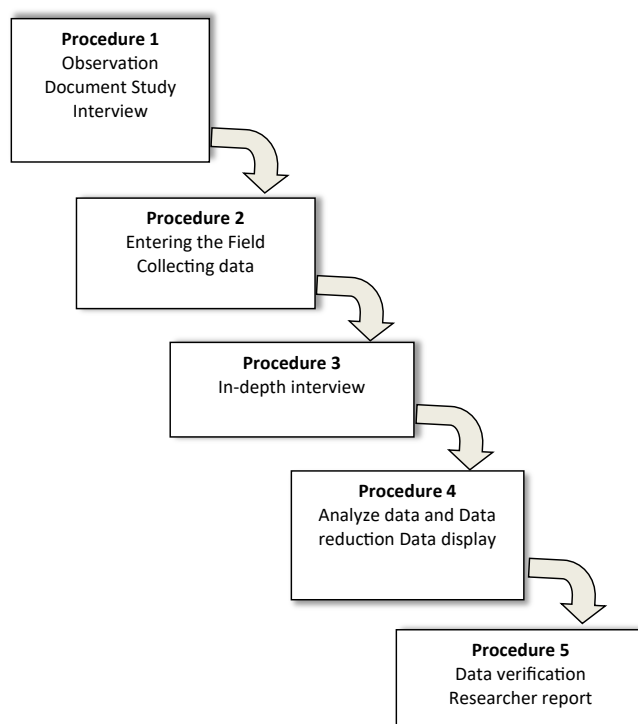


Figure 1. Procedure Research

Table 1. *Dalihan Natolu* Tradition Values

Draft	Meaning in Bahasa	Meaning
Nada mangilak tano tinggangan ni udan	Tidak terhindar tanah dari tertimpa hujan	This means that a person cannot reject the fate that has happened to him
Sada buat tu jolo, dua buat tu pudu	Satu ambil ke depan, dua ambil ke belakang	This means that we must be accountable for every action
Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata	Jangan menanam bambu yang tidak berakar	This means don't do useless work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Cultural Values of the Dalihan Natolu Tradition

In the development of ethno-counseling, the *Mangupa* tradition is used as a basis for intervention techniques. The following are several examples of parables or similes, which can be seen in table 1. The local wisdom values that will be studied in developing the ethno-counseling model are the *dalihan natolu cultural* values of the Mandailing Batak community in North Sumatra. (Kurniawan, 2021) stated that for the Mandailing Batak community, norms are the most important part of implementing customs. According to Batak Mandailing beliefs, norms are instructions and guidelines that must be obeyed and implemented in the life of the *Pastakpastak ni Paradaton* community. Norms function as rules for implementing customs. The existence of norms is a frame and boundary in the pretext of natolu society.

Thus, it can be understood that the development of value-based ethno-counseling *Mangupa Dalihan Natolu* Batak Mandailing offers a unique and relevant approach in counseling. This model integrates the principles of local Mandailing Batak wisdom, aligning with the principles of developmental counseling, which emphasizes sustainable support for individual growth. By adopting traditional values such as social harmony, family responsibility, and highly upheld cultural norms, this ethno-counseling seeks to provide more contextual and in-depth guidance. The hope is that through this approach, individuals will receive support that suits their developmental needs, build strong character, and be integrated with their cultural identity (Supiyah & Susanti, 2018). In this way, the counseling process not only helps overcome personal problems but also strengthens cultural values that contribute to forming a positive and sustainable personality (Wiryasaputra, 2023).

The development of *Mangupa Dalihan Natolu* values-based ethno-counseling for the Mandailing Batak community offers a unique and relevant approach to counseling by integrating local wisdom principles, such as social harmony, family responsibility, and cultural norms. In wedding traditions, the *Mangupa* ceremony is a medium for giving blessings and life advice to the bridal couple, reflecting deep cultural values (Siregar & Satyadi, 2019). Adopting these values in an ethno-counseling model seeks to provide contextual and in-depth guidance, supporting individual growth while strengthening their cultural identity. This helps individuals overcome personal problems and strengthens the cultural values that shape their character in a positive and sustainable way.

The Values Contained in the Dalihan Natolu Tradition are Interpreted in Counseling

After implementing culture-based group counseling in the context of the *Dalihan Natolu* wedding tradition, group members began to explore their experiences related to aspects such as love, harmony, mutual sharing, joint decision-making, and seeking sustenance. It appeared that the

students' faces became more relaxed silent with meaning, and they began to get used to smiling. This shows that applying *Dalihan Natolu* cultural values in counseling sessions has helped them understand. Through a counseling process that emphasizes respect for local traditions and values, group members begin to feel more connected to their cultural identity and can apply this learning in their daily lives, including in the context of marriage and social relationships that are in accordance with *Dalihan* cultural norms. Natolu.

Providing ethno-counseling services in a group setting linked to the *Dalihan Natolu* tradition aims to integrate local cultural values into the counseling process. In this setting, group counseling is conducted with a focus on the principles of *Dalihan Natolu*. During the session, group members are invited to explore and discuss their experiences related to these cultural aspects in the context of marriage, such as love, harmony, and joint decision-making (Yuniariandini, 2016). Through this approach, participants are expected to be able to understand and apply cultural values in their daily lives, strengthen social relationships, and improve their emotional and social well-being in accordance with *Dalihan Natolu* cultural norms. In the context of ethno-counseling in a group setting with three couples getting married using the *Dalihan Natolu* tradition, the stages carried out can be detailed as follows.

Introduction and Preparation

At the Introduction and Preparation stage in ethno-counseling for three couples who were getting married using the *Dalihan Natolu* tradition, the activity began with an ethical explanation regarding the purpose and process of counseling, including integrating cultural values in their marriage. Next, an emic introduction is carried out, in which each couple is introduced to the principles of *Dalihan Natolu* culture and how these values are relevant to their married life. During this stage, the counselor also explains the informed consent process to ensure all participants understand and agree to the method. Background information is collected to understand each couple's cultural context so counseling can be tailored to their needs and cultural norms.

"...Welcome! In this session, we will focus on how Mandailing Batak traditional values can be applied in your wedding preparations. Have you heard about these traditional principles before?..." Counselor

"...I know a little about customs, but I still don't understand how to apply them to marriage..." Counselee

"...No problem. We will discuss how to apply traditional principles in your marriage in depth. We will keep all discussions confidential. If you encounter difficulties, we will find a solution together with an approach that suits your culture..." Counselor

"...Okay, we are ready to start..." Counselor

Data Collection

In the Data Collection stage, the counselor will conduct in-depth interviews with each couple to understand their cultural background, hopes, and challenges leading up to their marriage. Apart from that, the counselor will also observe how Mandailing Batak cultural values are applied in wedding preparations. The data collected will be used to identify relevant *Dalihan Natolu* cultural values and evaluate their application in the context of marriage. This activity aims to ensure that the guidance provided is in accordance with cultural principles and helps couples better deal with wedding preparations.

"...to understand your cultural background, hopes, and challenges leading to the wedding. Apart from that, I will observe how Mandailing Batak traditional values are applied in this preparation. Is there anything specific you want to discuss or a challenge you are facing?..." Counselor

"...We want to discuss how traditional values can help us in wedding planning..." Counselor

"...Okay, we will focus on that. During this process, I will also analyze how these cultural values are applied in your marriage. This will help us in providing proper guidance..." Counselor

"...Thank you, we are ready to start..." Counselor

Presentation of Cultural Values

At the Conveying Cultural Values stage, the counselor will integrate the principles of Dalihan Natolu with activities that link traditional values with marriage preparation. The counselor will explain the application of the concept of "*Nada mangilak tano tinggangan ni udan*", which means accepting fate gracefully, in the context of marriage. Through discussions and practical exercises, couples will be guided to understand how these values influence their wedding decisions and plan traditional rituals accordingly. This approach aims to help couples accept and integrate cultural values in their marriage while honoring their predetermined destiny.

"...In this session, we will discuss the traditional values of Batak Mandailing, especially the concept of '*Nada mangilak tano tinggangan ni udan*', which means accepting fate with grace. How do you think this value can be applied in your wedding preparations?" Counselor

"...We feel this value is significant. Sometimes, there are things we cannot control, and it is important to accept them well..." Counselees

"...Exactly. We will examine how these values influence your wedding decisions and preparations. For example, how to face challenges or uncertainty with a positive attitude. We will also plan traditional rituals that reflect these values..." Counselor

"...That sounds very helpful. We want to ensure that we prepare for our wedding with full respect for customs and are prepared for any eventuality..." Counselor 2

"...Good, let's start by planning concrete steps and traditional rituals that will support the implementation of this value in your marriage..." Counselor

In ethno-counseling groups based on "*Sada for tu jolo, dua for tu pudi*", activities involve discussions where couples discuss their marriage plans focusing on social and moral responsibilities. The counselor guides the couple to design wedding steps that follow cultural values and can be accounted for, including planning traditional rituals and their respective roles. This process also includes reflection and feedback to ensure that each decision is in line with the cultural responsibilities that are upheld, ending with an evaluation to assess the suitability of the wedding preparations with the principles of these responsibilities.

"...As we discussed previously, now we will focus on applying the principle of '*Sada for tu jolo, dua for tu pudi*' in planning your wedding. How do you plan every aspect of the wedding so that it can be accounted for?..." Counselor

"...We have started to arrange every detail of the wedding, including traditional rituals and their respective roles. We ensure that every step is in accordance with cultural values and can be accounted for..." Counselee 1

"...Very good. Let's see how your decisions about these preparations will affect your family and society. Have you considered the impact?..." Counselor

"...Yes, we have discussed with the family and tried to ensure that all our decisions have their approval and support. We are also ready to adjust if there is input..." Counselee 2

"...That's very good. Next, we will evaluate your plans and decisions to ensure they align with this cultural principle of responsibility. This will help you conduct your marriage with full respect and awareness..." Counselor

The principle of "*Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata*" or "don't do useless work" emphasizes the importance of efficiency and beneficial results in every step of wedding planning. The counselor will help the counselee to ensure that every decision and action in the marriage process has a clear purpose and provides real benefits, both for the couple, family, and society. This principle encourages couples to avoid unproductive efforts and ensure their efforts are targeted and effective, aligned with their cultural values.

"...Now we will discuss the principle of '*Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata*', which means 'do not do useless work.' How do you ensure that all your wedding preparations are efficient and don't waste time?..." Counselor

"...We have mapped out every step of the wedding preparations with clear goals. We also ensure that every decision and action provides real benefits and follows our cultural values..." Counselees

"...Very good. Are there any aspects of the preparation that could be improved or focused more on to make it more effective?..." Counselor

"...We are evaluating some plans that feel less relevant and trying to reduce things that don't significantly contribute to our marriage..." Counselor 2

"...That's a good step. Make sure all your efforts are focused and produce results that match expectations. This will help ensure that every action in your wedding preparations is productive and beneficial..." Counselor

Guidance Intervention

At the Guidance Intervention stage in ethno-counseling, a series of activities involves several key steps. First, counselors provide direct guidance to couples on applying cultural values to the concrete situations they face in preparation for marriage. Next, the counselor assists the couple in overcoming challenges that may arise using *Dalihan Natolu* cultural principles as a guide. Counselors also facilitate group discussions where couples can share experiences and strategies, and get constructive feedback. Finally, the counselor evaluates the effectiveness of the intervention and makes adjustments if necessary to ensure that the guidance provided is aligned with the couple's cultural values and needs.

"...Now, we will focus on guidance intervention. How do you plan to apply the principles of *Dalihan Natolu* culture in wedding preparations?..." Counselor

"...We have begun to integrate cultural values into every aspect of planning. For example, we discuss with families to ensure all decisions are custom-made..." Counselee 1

"...That's a good step. Have you faced any challenges in this process?..."

Counselor

"...Sometimes it is difficult to reconcile all opinions, especially when there is a difference between what the family wants and what we think is important..."

Counselee 2

"...It is important to continue communicating and find a solution that satisfies all parties. Let's discuss strategies to overcome these differences so the marriage process runs smoothly..."

Counselor

"...Okay, we will try that approach and hope to find common ground that fits our values..."

Counselee 1

Evaluation and Reflection

In the Evaluation and Reflection stage in ethno-counseling, the counselor and counselee evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by assessing how the *Dalihan Natolu* cultural principles have been applied in wedding planning and the impact on the couple's relationship. The counselor facilitates a reflective discussion in which couples share their experiences, challenges faced, and accomplishments achieved. This process also includes an assessment of the achievement of counseling goals and identifying areas that may need to be improved or adjusted. Evaluation results are used to provide constructive feedback and develop recommendations for the next steps, ensuring that guidance remains relevant and effective in the adopted cultural context.

"...Now, let's reflect on how Dalihan Natolu cultural values were implemented during wedding preparations. What do you think about this process?..."

Counselor

"...In general, we feel that applying cultural values helps us make decisions that are more appropriate for the family..."

Counselor 1

"...We experienced difficulties aligning our views with existing traditions..."

Counselor 2

"...Can you tell us more about your challenges and how you overcame them?..."

Counselor

"...The main obstacle is differences in views from the extended family. We hold meetings more frequently to find common ground..."

Counselee 1

"...Apart from that, some family members are still confused about several aspects of the culture we apply..."

Counselee 2

"...How do you think this process is going and what can we improve in the future?..."

Counselor

"...Overall, the process was positive, but we need more time to understand some cultural values that are not yet completely clear..."

Counselee 1

"...We agree. Several parts need deeper explanation so that everything can be more coordinated..."

Counselor 2

"...Thank you for your input. We will focus on explaining unclear aspects and finding ways to resolve existing problems..."

Counselor

Follow-up

In the Follow-up stage, the counselor works with the couple to implement recommendations from the previous evaluation. The main activities in this stage include preparing a concrete action plan to overcome the identified challenges and optimizing the application of *Dalihan Natolu* cultural values in their wedding planning. The counselor also arranges follow-up sessions to monitor the

couple's progress, provide additional support, and adjust strategies if necessary. The goal is to ensure that couples can integrate cultural principles more effectively and solve problems that arise in a way consistent with the values discussed so that they are ready to face marriage with more confidence and harmony.

"We have started holding meetings with families to explain some cultural aspects that were previously poorly understood." Counselor 1

"We also created an action plan that included regular discussions about cultural values and how we would integrate them into wedding preparations." Counselor 2

"Good, that's an excellent first step. Have any new obstacles or problems arisen?" Counselor

"There are still some family members who have difficulty understanding some aspects of culture, so we need to find more effective ways to explain." Counselor 1

"Sure, we can look for better methods of communication. Additionally, let's schedule a follow-up session to evaluate progress and make adjustments if necessary." Counselor

"We agree. Thank you for your guidance, we will continue according to plan and contact you if there are any problems." Counselee 2

"Thank you. I will monitor your progress and am available to provide additional support. See you in the next session." Counselor

Discussion

Group ethno-counseling activities in the context of the Batak Mandailing tradition include several essential stages. In the Introduction and Preparation stage, counselors and participants get to know each other and explain relevant *Dalihan Natolu* cultural values, such as "*Sada for tu jolo*" which emphasizes responsibility. Next, during Data Collection, interviews and observations were conducted to understand the cultural background of the participants and how these values were applied in their marriages. In the Conveying Cultural Values stage, the counselor introduces cultural values using terms such as "*Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata*" to teach the importance of avoiding useless work. In the Guidance Intervention stage, counselors help couples implement cultural values in their marriage preparations. Finally, in the Evaluation and Reflection stage, the counselor and participants evaluate the counseling process and results, identify challenges, and plan improvements. In the Follow-up stage, action plans are developed to address existing issues and ensure effective implementation of cultural principles, with follow-up sessions to monitor progress and provide additional support.

Ethno counseling can be explained as an extraordinary, unique element that unites people in their livelihoods at all times, in all societies, and seeks to help individuals experiencing emotional or psychological stress and behavioral problems (Sarwono & Kunci, 2018). This includes the system of extended families, clans, tribes, tribal chiefs, taboos, various forms of initiation, and close relationships with ancestors and elders (Bedi, 2018). Ethno counseling can include providing direction to people such as teenagers who cannot find the right way to determine attitudes and make decisions (the act of "guiding" someone in a profession and offering suggestions for life skills, showing some possible thoughts, feelings, and actions, for example, issues related to resolving family disputes, providing guidance to parents who are lonely, confused, unloved, sick and suffering (Zayts-Spence et al., 2021).

The philosophical basis of guidance and counseling can be obtained from various sources, one of which is extracted from the nation's cultural treasures in traditional values that apply in society (Souza, 2014). In line with the development of ethno-counseling (Sellers et al., 2012), it has been argued that developmental counseling not only aims to make individuals more independent about the feelings they face but also aims to build an appropriate social network life both for themselves and with others so that they can develop. The basic assumption of this statement is that human personality can develop optimally if the interaction between the individual and the (cultural) environment goes well. Cultural and social aspects provide strength in individual development.

Implications

The implication of applying ethno-counseling in the context of the Mandailing Batak tradition is that the integration of local cultural values in the counseling process can strengthen cultural identity and provide more relevant and contextual emotional support for individuals. By adopting cultural principles such as responsibility (*Sadabuat tu jolo*) and avoiding useless work (*Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata*), ethno-counseling allows couples who are getting married to understand and apply cultural values in their daily lives. them, strengthening social and family relationships and improving their psychological well-being. This also underscores the importance of understanding and respecting local wisdom in guidance and counselling, which can enrich the counseling process and help individuals overcome challenges in a way that is consistent with their cultural norms.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

This study has several limitations, including the number of respondents being limited to only three couples, which may not fully reflect the variety of cultural experiences in the Mandailing Batak community. In addition, the location focus is only on Gunungtua Village, and the data collection methods used, such as interviews and observations, can influence the results and generalization of the findings. These limitations also include cultural aspects that this study may not fully represent.

For further research, it is recommended that more respondents be involved to get a broader perspective and expand the research location to various Batak Mandailing regions to understand differences in traditions. Additional data collection methods like focus groups and longitudinal studies will help obtain a more comprehensive picture. Additionally, cross-cultural research can explore the adaptability of ethno-counseling in various cultural contexts, and long-term evaluations are needed to assess the effectiveness of this model in improving well-being and integrating cultural values.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of integrating Mandailing Batak cultural values in ethno-counseling, especially in the context of marriage. By adopting cultural principles such as "*Sadabuat tu jolo*" (every action must be accountable) and "*Ulang disuan bulu naso marmata*" (do not do work in vain), ethno-counseling offers an in-depth and contextual approach to guidance and counseling. Through a process that includes an introductioncultural values, data collection, delivery of values, intervention, and evaluation and follow-up, this culture-based counseling can help couples prepare for their marriage with a better understanding of relevant traditional values.

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