Indigenous Pastoral Counseling Model in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore indigenous pastoral counseling practices in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, focusing on the integration of local cultural values into the process. The main problems identified were the lack of counseling approach contextual to local culture, as well as challenges such as limited resources and stigma regarding psychological problems. Specifically, this research mapped existing pastoral counseling practices, identified local cultural elements, and developed an effective indigenous model. A qualitative case study design was used to collect data through in-depth interviews with church leaders, pastoral counselors, and congregation members, as well as participant observation and document analysis. The results showed that integrating local cultural values, such as in-depth dialogue, family and community inclusion, as well as the use of cultural rituals and symbols, increased the effectiveness of pastoral counseling. This approach helped the congregation feel more holistically connected and supported. However, challenges such as limited resources and stigma remained barriers. A critical discussion connected the result to theories of culture-based counseling, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that integrated spiritual, psychological, and social aspects. The development of an indigenous pastoral counseling model contextualized to local culture could improve the quality of the services in Halmahera. Strategies such as capacity-building for counselors, collaboration with educational and mental health institutions, and stigma-reduction awareness campaigns were needed to optimize indigenous pastoral counseling practices. This research contributed to the development of pastoral counseling that was more inclusive and relevant to local cultural contexts.

Keywords: Indigenous Pastoral Counseling, Local Cultural Values, Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, Holistic Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral counseling is a key element in the spiritual and social life of the church, helping individuals face challenges through a holistic approach. However, in a diverse community such as Halmahera, a universal approach to pastoral counseling is often ineffective because the concept fails to account for deeply rooted local cultural values. The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, as a religious institution, faces unique challenges in serving the congregation, which has a strong cultural background and traditions. A pastoral counseling approach accommodating indigenous (local) values is needed to be more relevant and effective in addressing the spiritual and psychological needs of the congregation. Indigenous counseling grounded in local culture has become an increasingly pertinent topic, emphasizing the importance of integrating values, beliefs,

and practices into the process. In the context of Halmahera, where the community has strong traditions and beliefs, an indigenous approach can increase the effectiveness of pastoral counseling. However, there has been limited research specifically mapping and developing indigenous models in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera. This creates a gap between theory and practice, as well as affecting the development of more inclusive and contextual pastoral care.

In a global context, research on indigenous counseling has received significant attention. Several research have shown the importance of integrating local culture into counseling practice. Culture-based counseling can enhance the effectiveness of psychological interventions, particularly in the community with strong traditions and beliefs (Smith, L. C., Chambers, D. A., & Bratini, 2019). This research confirms that an indigenous approach increases community acceptance of counseling services and improves outcomes. Gone examined the importance of an indigenous approach in the Native American community. Counseling that integrates local cultural values can help individuals overcome trauma and improve psychological well-being (Gone, 2013). These results are relevant to Halmahera context, where the community has strong traditions and beliefs, making an indigenous approach a potential solution for increasing the effectiveness of pastoral counseling. Moodley and West also examined the importance of integrating local culture. The results show that culture-based counseling can help individuals address psychological issues more effectively, specifically in the community with strong traditions and beliefs (Moodley, R., & West, 2005). This suggests the importance of developing an indigenous pastoral counseling model relevant to cultural and spiritual context of Halmahera community.

In Indonesian context, research on indigenous counseling is still limited. However, several investigations have reported the importance of integrating local culture into counseling practice. Sutanto examined the importance of an indigenous approach in Javanese community (Sutanto, 2018). This is relevant to Halmahera context, where the community has strong traditions and beliefs, making an indigenous approach a solution to increase the effectiveness of pastoral counseling. Haryanto examined the importance of an indigenous approach in Indonesian Christian community (Haryanto, 2020). These results show the importance of developing an indigenous pastoral counseling model relevant to cultural and spiritual context.

The research questions considered include 1) What are the current forms and characteristics of pastoral counseling practices in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, 2) what local cultural elements can be integrated into pastoral counseling model, and 3) what strategies can be developed to build effective and relevant indigenous pastoral counseling in Halmahera context. Therefore, this research aims to map pastoral counseling practices currently implemented in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, identify local cultural elements integrated into the model, and develop an indigenous model relevant to cultural and spiritual context of the community. Theoretically, this research contributes to the field of pastoral counseling by introducing an indigenous approach grounded in local culture, enriching the existing literature, particularly in the context of the community with strong traditions and beliefs. Practically, the results provide a more effective pastoral counseling model for the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera to address the spiritual and psychological needs of the congregation. The model can serve as a reference for other churches in regions with similar cultural contexts, enabling more inclusive, contextual pastoral care.

In the context of the Evangelical Christian Church, this research makes a significant contribution. The church is among the most influential religious institutions in the region, which plays a role in serving the congregation with a strong cultural background and traditions. This research is important for the development of pastoral counseling science and has direct implications for improving the quality of church services and well-being of Halmahera community. The integration of local cultural values into pastoral counseling is expected to increase the effectiveness and help individuals address spiritual and psychological issues.

Several other relevant investigations support this research. Wampold reported that counseling based on local culture could increase the effectiveness of psychological interventions, specifically in the community with strong traditions and beliefs (Wamplod, 2015). These results showed the importance of developing an indigenous pastoral counseling model relevant to cultural and spiritual context of Halmahera community. Sue and Sue examined the importance of an indigenous approach to counseling in a culturally diverse community (Sue, D. W., & Sue, 2016). This is relevant to the context of Halmahera, where the community has strong traditions and beliefs, making an indigenous approach a solution to increase the effectiveness of pastoral counseling.

Pedersen examined the importance of integrating local culture in counseling. The results found that counseling based on local culture assisted individuals in coping with psychological problems more effectively (Pedersen, 2002). This shows the importance of developing an indigenous pastoral counseling model relevant to cultural and spiritual context of the community. Helms examined the importance of an indigenous approach in a culturally diverse community (Helms, 2015). Comas-Díaz also examined the importance of

integrating local culture into counseling (Comas-Díaz, 2012). Hwang examined the importance of an indigenous approach to counseling in a culturally diverse community (Hwang, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative case study design to explore indigenous pastoral counseling practices in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with church leaders, pastoral counselors, and congregation members, as well as participant observation during counseling activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with guided questions covering topics such as counseling experiences, the integration of local cultural values, the effectiveness of pastoral counseling, and development strategies. Participatory observation enabled the understanding of local cultural rituals and symbols in counseling practices. Document analysis, such as notes and cultural literature, was also used to strengthen the results (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the integration of local cultural values. The analysis process comprised data transcription, coding, theme identification, and interpretation, conducted in emic and etic hermeneutic stages (Petrus, 2023b). Triangulation was used to ensure validity by comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, documents) and methods. Research ethics were maintained through informed consent, data confidentiality, and the principle of non-maleficence. Furthermore, internal validity and reliability were maintained through member checking and consistent use of an interview guide (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006) (Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results in depth, in line with the focus. There are five important themes to be addressed, namely: (1) socio-psychographic-cultural conditions of Halmahera community, (2) mapping pastoral counseling practices, (3) integration of local cultural values in pastoral counseling practices, and (4) strategies for developing indigenous pastoral counseling.

Socio-Psychographic-Cultural Conditions of Halmahera Community

Social and Community Structure

Halmahera community has strong collectivist values, where family and community play a role in individuals' lives. Important decisions are often made collectively, and individuals tend to prioritize group interests. Brewer and Chen (2017) stated that the collectivist community prioritized group interests over personal ones. Psychologically, collectivist values in Halmahera community strengthen social identity and a sense of solidarity, enhancing a sense of connection to and responsibility for the group's success. This norm promotes empathy, cooperation, and social harmony. However, stress and identity conflict are created when individuals must sacrifice personal interests for the good of the group, affecting psychological well-being.

Social structure of Halmahera community has a clear hierarchy, where traditional leaders and religious figures have significant influence in decision-making and conflict resolution. This reflects the importance of traditional authority in Halmahera community, where leaders and religious figures have significant influence in decision-making (Petrus, 2019). Gelfand et al. (2017) explained that the community with a high level of hierarchy respected traditional authority. Psychologically, the hierarchical social structure strengthened respect for and trust in traditional authorities such as traditional leaders and religious figures. This promotes a sense of psychological security and stability because individuals feel a foundation and certainty in decision-making and conflict resolution. Respect for traditional authority also strengthens social identity and a sense of belonging to enhance group cohesion. However, this psychological aspect can lead to strong submissiveness and passive compliance, which may limit individual autonomy and reduce space for free expression or debate, impacting psychological dynamics such as a sense of freedom and self-control in social contexts.

Psychographics and Mental Health

A strong stigma has been reported in Halmahera community regarding psychological issues. Many individuals are reluctant to obtain professional help for fear of being perceived as weak or unfaithful. This affects efforts to improve the community's mental health and well-being. Corrigan et.al showed that stigma could affect access to mental health services. This reinforces negative perceptions, inhibiting the desire and confidence to seek help, as individuals feel ashamed, fear being looked down upon, or feel a loss of social respect (Corrigan, P. W., Druss, B. G., & Perlick, 2018). Therefore, cultural stigma limits practical access to mental health services and is deeply rooted in social norms and beliefs that affect the recovery process and psychological well-being of the

community. Despite facing various challenges, the community shows a high level of resilience and adaptation. In this context, reliance on internal resources and social support can help in overcoming life's difficulties (Ungar, 2018).

Culture and Tradition

Halmahera community possesses a rich and diverse array of local cultural values, including oral traditions, art, and religious rituals. These values affect individuals' perspectives and behaviors in the daily lives. Local cultural values affect individuals' perspectives and behaviors (Kitayama, S., Park, J., & Uskul, 2017). This cultural richness shapes perceptions and attitudes toward life, social norms, and self-identity, strengthening a sense of kinship, solidarity, and collective identity. The values influence individuals' worldviews, shape the evaluation of experiences, and guide daily behaviors, including adherence to traditions and customary norms, which are expressed through various rituals and cultural practices (Petrus, 2023). Therefore, this rich and diverse local culture psychologically shapes the mindsets and actions of the community.

Religion and culture are closely connected in Halmahera community. This is because religious practices are often integrated with local cultural traditions and values, creating harmony between spiritual and cultural aspects (Cohen, A. B., Malka, A., & Rozin, 2019). The integration harmonizes spiritual and cultural aspects, strengthening collective identity and deepening the meaning of beliefs, while facilitating the acceptance and continuation of religious rituals and traditions. Psychologically, the integration strengthens a sense of harmony, meaning in life, and social cohesion, while maintaining cultural and religious stability.

Mapping of Pastoral Counseling Practices Currently Carried Out at the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera

Dominant Counseling Approach

A spiritual and biblical approach dominates pastoral counseling practices at the Evangelical Christian Church. Pastoral counselors frequently cite Bible verses and draw on theological principles to provide advice and guidance. The congregation highly values this approach as the highest source of authority in spiritual lives. Furthermore, prayer is a central element of counseling process. Pastoral counselors often invite the congregation to pray as part of the healing and recovery process. Prayer is seen as a means of connecting individuals with God and seeking spiritual solutions to problems. The dominant spiritual and biblical approach to counseling is consistent with the results of Pargament and Saunders, where spiritual and religious interventions can have a significant positive impact on the healing and recovery process. However, an approach focusing on spiritual aspects and ignoring psychology and society can reduce counseling effectiveness (Pargament, K.I., & Saunders, 2007). This is particularly relevant since the congregation expressed the need for a more holistic approach.

The Role of Local Culture in Counseling

Different efforts to integrate local cultural values into counseling practice have been reported, even though spiritual and biblical elements dominate the approach. For example, pastoral counselors often use language and analogies familiar to Halmahera culture to facilitate communication and understanding. This shows an awareness of the importance of contextualizing counseling in local culture. In Halmahera culture, family and community play an important role in an individual's life. Pastoral counseling often includes family or community members as part of the problem-solving process. This reflects the strong collectivist values inherent in the community. Locally based pastoral counseling increases the effectiveness of psychological interventions (Gone, 2013). However, local cultural integration should be carried out carefully to avoid cultural biases that may reduce counseling effectiveness (Hwang, 2006).

Challenges in Counseling Practice

The main challenge facing the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera is limited resources, including the number of trained pastoral counselors and the availability of adequate counseling facilities. This leads to a high workload for existing pastoral counselors and limits congregational access to counseling services. Stigma regarding psychological problems remains strong in Halmahera community. Many congregations are reluctant to obtain counseling for fear of being perceived as weak or disloyal. This challenge affects the church's efforts to provide more comprehensive support to congregations. Patel suggested the need for comprehensive interventions to reduce stigma and increase the capacity of mental health services (Patel, V., Saxena, S., Lund, C., Thornicroft, G., Baingana, F., Bolton, P., …& UnUtzer, 2018). Stigma and limited resources remain major challenges in increasing access to mental health services to date.

Congregation Response to Pastoral Counseling

Congregants who have received pastoral counseling services report high levels of satisfaction. In this context, pastoral counseling helps individuals to better face life's challenges and strengthen faith. Some congregants also expressed the need for a more holistic approach, focusing on spiritual, psychological, and social aspects. This indicates the need to develop a more inclusive and contextual model of pastoral counseling. Sue and Sue explained that holistic and contextual counseling were crucial in increasing the effectiveness of psychological interventions (Sue, D. W., & Sue, 2016). Therefore, an approach that integrates spiritual, psychological, and social aspects in counseling is needed.

Pastoral Counseling Development Efforts

The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera has made several efforts to enhance pastoral counselors' capacity through training and development. These efforts remain limited and require additional support to ensure that pastoral counselors have the skills to address the various challenges faced by the congregation. The church has collaborated with local and national institutions to improve the quality of pastoral counseling services. This includes the exchange of knowledge and resources, as well as efforts to reduce stigma associated with psychological problems. Counselor training and self-development, as well as collaboration with various competent parties, improve the quality of counseling services (Wamplod, 2015). Therefore, this research suggests the need for comprehensive interventions to improve counselor capacity and reduce stigma associated with psychological problems.

Integration of Local Cultural Values in Pastoral Counseling Practice

Language Use and Cultural Analogies

Pastoral counselors often use local languages during counseling to facilitate communication and understanding. Using local languages helps congregants feel more comfortable and connected with counselor. This can enhance the effectiveness of counseling communication. Pastoral counselors also adopt analogies and local cultural stories to explain spiritual and psychological concepts (Kirmayer, L. J., Gone, J. P., & Moses, 2018). The stories convey life values (Petrus, 2019a), and this helps congregants better understand counseling messages. Wampold showed that the use of analogies and cultural stories could enhance understanding and relevance in counseling (Wampold, 2015).

The Role of Family and Community

In Halmahera culture, family plays a role in an individual's life. Pastoral counseling often includes family members as part of problem-solving process. This approach reflects the strong collectivist values inherent in the community. Petrus also found that a collectivist spirit could guide individuals to behave in accordance with values and orientations (Petrus, 2019a). Falicov suggested that family inclusion enhanced counseling effectiveness. This primary social unit plays a crucial role in supporting, strengthening, and guiding individuals through norms, values, and communication mechanisms. Family participation in the therapy process also increases understanding and acceptance of change, as well as strengthens the social support network essential for successful intervention (Falicov, 2018). Psychologically, this concept provides a sense of security, trust, and cohesion during recovery and personal development, supporting the success of a holistic psychological approach.

Pastoral counselors include the community in counseling process, specifically in cases requiring broader social support. This helps congregants feel supported in facing challenges. Ungar suggested that social support enhanced individual resilience and adaptation. In this context, the community serves as a solidarity network, providing a sense of acceptance, respect, and support in the face of psychological or life-threatening challenges. Community participation increases collective resources and strength as well as creates a conducive environment for individuals to develop resilience and adapt positively (Ungar, 2018). Psychologically, this strengthens an individual's self-confidence and emotional stability in facing challenges to increase the process of recovery and personal growth.

Local Rituals and Traditions

Pastoral counseling practices often integrate local religious rituals and traditions. For example, communal prayer, blessings, and traditional ceremonies are often part of counseling process. This is crucial in Halmahera community because the problems faced are related to cultural beliefs, which are handled culturally (Petrus, 2019a). The integration of religious rituals can increase the effectiveness of spiritual counseling (Pargament, K. I., Exline, J. J., & Jones, 2017). Rituals are often an integral part of life and are frequently performed in specific situations and contexts for physical and psychological healing (Petrus, 2021). The use of religious rituals as part of the healing and counseling process strengthens spiritual bonds, provides meaning and hope, and facilitates

acceptance and positive change in individuals (Petrus, 2019). This integration also increases a sense of connectedness and social support in the community, which are crucial for the success of the spiritual and psychological process. The integration of local rituals and traditions strengthens individuals' self-confidence, calmness, and emotional stability, increasing the effectiveness of any religious intervention or counseling.

Pastoral counselors use local cultural symbols in counseling process. For example, the use of traditional objects or local religious symbols helps the congregation feel more connected to the process. Geertz stated that the use of cultural symbols increased the connectedness and relevance of counseling (Geertz, 2018). These symbols strengthen emotional bonds and spiritual meaning of individuals to understand and accept therapeutic messages, and affirm cultural identity in the recovery process. Furthermore, local cultural symbols facilitate more effective communication and strengthen mutual understanding and trust between counselors and clients to increase the relevance and success of psychological interventions.

Challenges in Local Cultural Integration

Some pastoral counselors acknowledge limited knowledge of local culture. This affects optimal integration of local cultural values into counseling. Sue et al. showed that limited cultural knowledge could hinder counseling effectiveness. Even though local cultural integration has great potential, stigma and resistance persist from some groups with more traditional or conservative views (Sue, D. W., Sue, D., Neville, H. A., & Smith, 2019). This affects efforts to develop more inclusive and contextual counseling models. Therefore, Corrigan et al. cautioned that stigma and resistance could affect innovation in counseling (Corrigan, P. W., Druss, B. G., & Perlick, 2018).

Indigenous Pastoral Counseling Development Strategy in the Context of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera

Training and Development of Pastoral Counselors

An important strategy is to increase the capacity of pastoral counselors through training and development. This training should comprise aspects of indigenous counseling, including a deep understanding of local values, culturally relevant counseling methods, and the integration of spiritual and psychological aspects. The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera has conducted training for pastoral counselors, including local cultural experts, to discuss traditional values, such as the importance of family and community in problem-solving. Counselors are also taught counseling methods that integrate prayer and traditional rituals. Training programs should be ongoing and include regular evaluations to ensure that pastoral counselors have adequate skills to address the various challenges facing the congregation. The church has developed an ongoing training program that includes quarterly evaluation sessions to ensure counselors can effectively apply indigenous counseling methods.

Wampold et al. found that ongoing counselor training and self-development could enhance the effectiveness of the process (Wampold, B. E., Flückiger, C., Del Re, A. C., Yulish, N. E., Frost, N. D., & Pace, 2017). From a psychological perspective, this training strengthens competence, confidence, and adaptability to various client situations to provide more appropriate and empathetic interventions. Self-development also increases therapeutic awareness, enriches the methods and strategies used, and strengthens interpersonal relationships with clients. The improvement of counselors' skills and competencies increases recovery and positive therapy outcomes, promoting the success of psychological interventions.

Integration of Local Cultural Values in Counseling

Pastoral counselors should use local language and cultural analogies in counseling process to facilitate communication and understanding. This helps the congregation feel more comfortable and connected to counselor. A pastoral counselor used Halmahera folktale about surviving a storm to explain the concept of resilience in facing life's challenges. The congregation felt more connected because the stories were familiar to culture. Pastoral counseling should include the family and community as part of problem-solving process. This approach reflects the strong collectivist values of the community and helps the congregation feel socially supported. In cases of family conflict, pastoral counselors include the entire family in the sessions to ensure all parties feel heard and supported. Ongoing counselor training and self-development can enhance the effectiveness of the process (Wampold, B. E., Flückiger, C., Del Re, A. C., Yulish, N. E., Frost, N. D., & Pace, 2017).

Development of Indigenous Counseling Models

The development of an indigenous counseling model must include spiritual, psychological, and social aspects. This model should be directed to the unique needs of the congregation, considering local cultural values and the challenges faced by the community. The church has developed counseling model that combines prayer, psychological support, and community participation. In cases of the loss of a family member, counselors provide

spiritual support through prayer and include the community in providing social support. The indigenous counseling model must integrate local rituals and traditions into the process. This helps the congregation feel that counseling is not only spiritual but also cultural. In cases of troubled marriages, pastoral counselors hold traditional ceremonies, including the extended family, to strengthen bonds and resolve conflicts.

Sue et al. showed that the application of a holistic and contextual counseling model increased the effectiveness of the process. This is because the approach considers all aspects of the individual, including biological, psychological, social, and cultural elements (Sue, D. W., Sue, D., Neville, H. A., & Smith, 2019). The church needs to pay attention to counseling designs and models directly in line with real-life conditions, including sociological, biological, and psychological factors (Petrus, 2023). By considering the client's life context, counselors can design more relevant and personalized interventions and address the root of the problem more comprehensively. This approach also strengthens the therapeutic relationship by respecting the client's unique experiences and values, while facilitating a more sustainable and harmonious process of change.

Reducing Stigma Against Psychological Problems

Churches can conduct awareness campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding psychological issues. These campaigns should include education about the importance of mental health and the benefits of pastoral counseling. Churches have held mental health seminars, including community and traditional leaders, to reduce stigma and allow congregants to obtain counseling service. Pastoral counselors should use an inclusive approach that values and validates congregants' experiences. This helps reduce stigma and encourages more congregants to obtain counseling. Pastoral counselors use a non-judgmental approach and consistently validate congregants' feelings.

Awareness campaigns can effectively reduce stigma surrounding psychological issues by increasing public understanding of mental disorders and reducing negative perceptions (Corrigan, P. W., Druss, B. G., & Perlick, 2018). These campaigns help change misconceptions and beliefs about individuals with psychological issues, promoting greater social acceptance and support. Psychosocially, this increased awareness reduces discrimination and creates a space for individuals to obtain help without fear of being judged, thereby increasing access to and the effectiveness of mental health intervention.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, indigenous pastoral counseling in the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera has reported significant potential in enhancing counseling service effectiveness by integrating local cultural values. This approach emphasizes in-depth dialogue, family and community engagement, and the use of cultural rituals and symbols, helping congregants feel more holistically connected and supported. The method facilitates harmonious conflict resolution and strengthens social and spiritual bonds in the community. Culturally based counseling has been shown to improve acceptance and outcomes, particularly in communities with strong traditions of collectivism.

This research identified several challenges, such as limited resources, stigma against psychological problems, and the need for a more holistic approach. To address the challenges, a comprehensive strategy is needed, including increasing counselors' capacity through ongoing training, collaborating with educational and mental health institutions, and running awareness campaigns to reduce stigma. Developing an indigenous pastoral counseling model that integrates spiritual, psychological, and social aspects can improve the quality of pastoral counseling services. Therefore, a culturally based approach is relevant in Halmahera context and serves as a reference for developing indigenous pastoral counseling in other communities with similar cultural characteristics.

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