

ANALYSIS OF THE INTEGRATION OF *KATO NAN AMPEK* VALUES IN MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING TO ENHANCE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF MINANGKABAU COMMUNITIES

Hidayatul Hasna¹, Sawaluddin², Saluna Novana³, Raihana Asmarini⁴, Wenda Asmita⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M.Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia, Hidayatulana09@gmail.com

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Abstract

Integrating local values into a multicultural counseling approach is an important step in enhancing cultural sensitivity in counseling practice. This study aims to analyze and integrate Minangkabau cultural values, particularly *Kato Nan Ampek* as the four fundamental principles of communication in Minangkabau culture, into the context of multicultural counseling to improve the mental health of Minangkabau communities. The method used in this study is a literature review by examining various relevant sources related to multicultural counseling and the values of *Kato Nan Ampek*. Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach through processes of data collection, classification, and interpretation from various references. The findings indicate that the integration of *Kato Nan Ampek* values into multicultural counseling practices provides a more contextual approach that aligns with clients' cultural backgrounds. These values contribute to improving polite communication skills, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and strengthening individuals' social and cultural values. Therefore, the application of counseling based on local wisdom has significant potential to enhance the mental health of Minangkabau communities in a more holistic and sustainable manner.

Keywords: Kato Nan Ampek; Multicultural Counseling; Mental Health; Minangkabau Community

1. Introduction.

Indonesia can be described as a strategic nation that is rich in diversity, including differences in law, religion, ethnicity, customs, and cultural variety. Culture can also be understood as everything related to and connected with the social, economic, and geographical conditions of Indonesia. Through culture, a nation is able to establish and express its unique identity (Nasution and dkk 2020). One of the cultures in Indonesia is Minangkabau culture. From the past to the present, the social order of Minangkabau society has been considered highly structured and ideal, as it is grounded in comprehensive values and norms derived from customary traditions and Islamic teachings (Silalahi and Nasution 2018).

The Minangkabau community embraces the philosophy "*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*," which reflects the integration of customary law and Islamic teachings in regulating social life. These values function not only as guidelines for communal living but also shape individuals' character, mindset, and ways of interacting and resolving problems. One form of local wisdom that embodies these values is the concept of *Kato Nan Ampek*, which consists of *kato mandaki*, *kato manurun*, *kato mandata*, and *kato malereng*. This concept governs polite and context-appropriate communication, thereby helping to maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships (Maizura, Indreswari, and Eva 2025).

Amid the rapid development of the times and the forces of modernization, society is faced with increasingly complex life challenges. This condition has contributed to the rise of mental health issues, as individuals often experience psychological pressure due to social changes, value conflicts, and limitations in managing emotions and interpersonal relationships (Herimanto and Winardo 2008).



In addressing these issues, guidance and counseling services play an important role. Counseling not only focuses on problem-solving but also helps individuals understand themselves and their environment. Therefore, a counseling approach that can accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds is needed—namely, multicultural counseling. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity among counselors in understanding clients' values, norms, and belief systems (Sumadi 2016).

Therefore, studies on the integration of Minangkabau local wisdom values—particularly *Kato Nan Ampek*—into multicultural counseling practices remain limited. In fact, these values hold significant potential for fostering effective and contextual therapeutic communication. The integration of cultural values into the counseling process is believed to enhance the quality of the counselor–client relationship and support the effectiveness of services in improving mental health (Khairiah and Silvianetra 2022).

Based on the above, this study aims to analyze and integrate the values of *Kato Nan Ampek* into multicultural counseling as an effort to enhance the mental health of Minangkabau communities.

2. Methods.

This study employs a library research method, which involves collecting and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the research topic. The data sources in this study were obtained from books, scientific articles, journals, and other publications discussing multicultural counseling, mental health, and Minangkabau cultural values, particularly *Kato Nan Ampek*. Data collection was conducted by systematically and organizedly reviewing credible and relevant references. The collected data were then classified based on key themes, such as the concepts of multicultural counseling, mental health, and the values within *Kato Nan Ampek*. Subsequently, the data were analyzed and synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the integration of cultural values in counseling practice.

The data analysis in this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, involving the description and interpretation of information obtained from various literature sources. The researcher then conducted a deeper analysis to examine the relationship between multicultural counseling concepts and the values of *Kato Nan Ampek* as a foundation for building effective therapeutic communication. Through this process, it is expected to gain an understanding of how the integration of these values can contribute to improving the mental health of Minangkabau communities.

3. Results and Discussion.

3.1 The Concept of *Kato Nan Ampek* in Minangkabau Culture.

The Minangkabau community positions *Kato Nan Ampek* as a very important part of its culture. In Minangkabau tradition, “*kato*” is a specific term that refers to communication (Zulkifli, Rahmi, and Iswanti 2025). The use of *kato* in everyday life requires a deep and meaningful understanding for the Minangkabau community. By understanding this concept, individuals are able to communicate effectively, which can elevate their dignity and social standing in the eyes of others (Reihan et al. 2023).

Thus, communication skills can be closely associated with moral character, encompassing intellect, conscience, and the lived experiences of the customary community (M. Nasroen, n.d.). To maintain norms of politeness in everyday language, Minangkabau culture provides a guideline known as *Kato Nan Ampek* (the four forms of speech). Those who do not practice it are referred to as *indak tau di ampek* (those who do not understand the four). *Kato Nan Ampek* is a system of speech rules in the Minangkabau language, in which usage depends on the social relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor in daily life. This concept represents one of the fundamental social orders within Minangkabau society (Handra, Assyifa, Rahmadani, and Putra, Renaldi 2025).

Kato Nan Ampek, in the selection of speech forms, is influenced by several norms of politeness, which include:

1. *Kato mandaki* (ascending speech): speech used by younger individuals when addressing those who are older, or by someone of lower social status when speaking to someone of higher status. Examples include communication from a younger person to an elder, a student to a teacher, or an employee to a superior.
2. *Kato manurun* (descending speech): speech used by older individuals when addressing younger ones, or by someone of higher social status when speaking to someone of lower status. This includes communication from elders to younger people, uncles (*mamak*) to nieces/nephews, teachers to students, or superiors to subordinates.
3. *Kato malereng* (slanted/indirect speech): used when addressing respected individuals, such as in-laws. More broadly, it refers to speech between individuals of relatively equal status but within formal or respectful relational contexts, such as between in-laws (e.g., parents-in-law and children-in-law).
4. *Kato mandata* (level/flat speech): commonly used among peers or individuals of equal status who share close relationships, such as close friends or cousins. In this context, communication tends to be more flexible and informal, as both speaker and listener are of similar age and social standing (Jamaris 2002).

The values of *Kato Nan Ampek* play a strategic role in counseling, particularly as a model of professional communication grounded in Minangkabau local wisdom. As guidelines for ethical communication, these values help counselors build harmonious and empathetic relationships with clients. By understanding and applying these values, counselors can respect clients' cultural backgrounds and ensure that the counseling process is conducted effectively (Supriyanto, Hartini, and Hayati 2014).

3.2 Multicultural Counseling as a Contextual Approach.

Multicultural counseling is an approach used to address issues arising from cultural diversity. Multiculturalism, as a perspective, recognizes the existence of differences among groups of individuals, minimizes divisions within groups, and views the world as composed of diverse cultures created by society, which become a source of uniqueness and richness in individuals' lives. Issues related to cross-cultural or multicultural contexts are often interpreted differently by people, making them complex to understand and resulting in varied meanings just as cultural diversity itself gives rise to multiple interpretations (Margaretha, Hastuti, and Marheni 2017).

Multiculturalism represents the recognition of cultural pluralism that fosters concern and efforts to ensure that minority groups are integrated into society, while society accommodates their cultural differences so that the uniqueness of their identities is acknowledged (Sumadi 2016).

In general, guidance programs are implemented to help clients gain a better understanding of themselves, solve the problems they face, and direct themselves toward developing their potential in an optimal way, so that they can achieve personal well-being and contribute positively to society (Salahudin and Anas 2010).

3.3 Contribution to the Mental Health of the Community.

The integration of *Kato Nan Ampek* values into multicultural counseling makes a significant contribution to improving the mental health of Minangkabau communities. The application of communication patterns aligned with cultural norms such as *kato mandaki*, *manurun*, *mandata*, and *malereng* helps counselors build more empathetic relationships while respecting the client's social

position. This fosters a sense of acceptance, safety, and psychological comfort, which are essential foundations for the success of the counseling process (Maizura, Indreswari, and Eva 2025).

In addition, the values of *Kato Nan Ampek* play a role in helping individuals reduce internal conflicts that arise from tensions between cultural values and the demands of modern life. A culturally aligned counseling approach enables individuals to understand themselves more holistically without losing their cultural identity. This is consistent with the principles of multicultural counseling, which emphasize the importance of aligning cultural values with the intervention process. (Supriyanto, Hartini, and Hayati 2014).

The values within *Kato Nan Ampek* also support the improvement of emotional regulation skills. Polite and well-directed communication patterns help individuals express their feelings in adaptive ways, enabling them to manage stress and conflict more constructively. Emotional regulation is one of the key indicators of mental health (Mansur Teuku Mutaqin 2020).

On the other hand, the application of *Kato Nan Ampek* also strengthens harmonious social relationships. Interactions grounded in mutual respect and understanding can enhance social support and reduce interpersonal conflict. In this context, positive social relationships function as a protective factor in maintaining individuals' mental health (Maizura, Indreswari, and Eva 2025).

Thus, the integration of *Kato Nan Ampek* values into multicultural counseling not only enhances the effectiveness of therapeutic communication but also contributes to creating more optimal mental well-being among Minangkabau communities.

3.4 Implementation of *Kato Nan Ampek* Values in the Counseling Process

The implementation of *Kato Nan Ampek* in counseling functions as an instrument for building rapport or a positive relationship grounded in local ethics. Counselors use *kato mandaki* to show respect to clients who are older, and *kato manurun* when providing guidance to younger clients, thereby creating a mutually respectful atmosphere that helps prevent psychological barriers during the counseling interview process. This communication pattern ensures that therapeutic messages are delivered in ways that are most acceptable within the cognitive and social structures of Minangkabau society (Khairiah and Silvianetri 2022).

Kato Nan Ampek functions as a medium to enhance clients' self-awareness regarding their social behavior. In the counseling process, clients are encouraged to reflect on how they communicate within their environment based on these four principles. Thus, counseling not only addresses personal problems but also serves as character education that strengthens clients' mental resilience in facing social conflicts within the community (Amir, Mohammad 2001).

The *implementation* of *Kato Nan Ampek* is understood as the counselor's ability to adapt communication by aligning verbal and nonverbal techniques with the profile of the client. This concept requires counselors to have a high level of sensitivity toward the person they are engaging with, ensuring that therapeutic messages can be received without psychological barriers (Khairiah and Silvianetri 2022).

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the integration of *Kato Nan Ampek* values into a multicultural counseling approach is a relevant and effective strategy for improving the mental health of Minangkabau communities. As a communication system grounded in local wisdom, *Kato Nan Ampek* not only serves

as a guideline for ethical language use but also plays an important role in fostering harmonious and respectful interpersonal relationships.

The application of the principles of *kato mandaki*, *kato manurun*, *kato mandata*, and *kato malereng* in the counseling process has been shown to strengthen the therapeutic relationship (rapport), enhance clients' sense of safety and acceptance, and minimize psychological resistance. This makes the counseling process more contextual, adaptive, and aligned with the client's cultural values. Furthermore, the integration of these values contributes to increased self-awareness, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced social communication skills.

The broader impact includes the development of healthier social relationships, reduced interpersonal conflict, and improved overall psychological well-being. Therefore, counseling based on local wisdom such as *Kato Nan Ampek* not only enriches multicultural counseling practices but also represents a strategic approach to preserving cultural values while enhancing the quality of mental health within Minangkabau communities. Accordingly, the development and implementation of counseling models that integrate local cultural values should continue to be encouraged in guidance and counseling practices in Indonesia.

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