

Enhancing Multicultural Adaptation among Junior High School Students through Classical Guidance Services : An Action Research Study

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ABSTRACT

The increasing cultural diversity within educational settings requires students to develop effective multicultural adaptation skills in order to interact harmoniously with individuals from different backgrounds. However, many adolescents continue to experience difficulties in accepting diversity, building intercultural relationships, and adjusting to multicultural environments. This study aimed to improve students' multicultural adaptation abilities through classical guidance services. The study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action Research design using a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach implemented in two cycles. The participants consisted of 38 seventh-grade students from SMP Wage Rudolf Supratman 2 during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through multicultural adaptation questionnaires, structured observations, interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality testing, and paired-samples *t*-tests, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The findings revealed a consistent improvement in students' multicultural adaptation abilities across the intervention cycles. The mean score increased from 84.03 (55%) in the pre-cycle stage to 112.10 (74%) in Cycle I and further increased to 136.20 (90%) in Cycle II. Improvements were observed across all dimensions of multicultural adaptation, including adaptation to cultural diversity, building mutual trust, understanding others' perspectives, and creating harmonious interactions. The results of the paired-samples *t*-test indicated a statistically significant difference between students' adaptation levels before and after the intervention ($p < .001$). Qualitative findings further demonstrated positive behavioral changes, including greater openness, increased respect for diversity, stronger interpersonal trust, and more inclusive social interactions. In conclusion, classical guidance services were found to be effective in enhancing students' multicultural adaptation abilities. The findings highlight the importance of integrating multicultural values into school guidance programs and provide practical implications for school counselors in promoting inclusive and harmonious educational environments.

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Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation characterized by remarkable ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. This diversity has created a multicultural society in which the ability to adapt and interact effectively within heterogeneous environments has become an essential competency for students. As educational institutions increasingly serve students from diverse backgrounds, the development of adaptive and intercultural competencies has become a critical objective of contemporary education.

The concept of adaptation, originally derived from biology, is understood in the social sciences as an individual's ability to adjust to the demands of both physical and social environments (Enti Agestia et al., 2024). Similarly, Hurlock (2003) defines adjustment as a mental and behavioral process through which individuals cope with internal needs, tensions, frustrations, conflicts, and environmental demands. Effective adjustment enables individuals to establish harmony between themselves and their surroundings, including family, school, and broader social environments (Susanti & Widuri, 2013).

During adolescence, adjustment becomes particularly important because adolescents experience a transitional stage characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. Difficulties in adjustment may lead to various psychosocial problems, including challenges in social interaction, low self-confidence, and tendencies toward social withdrawal. Within school settings, such difficulties may be reflected in students' limited participation in social activities, reluctance to collaborate with peers, and indifferent attitudes toward their surrounding environment.

The term multicultural is rooted in the concept of culture and refers to the coexistence of multiple cultural groups within a social environment. Such diversity requires individuals to develop

attitudes of mutual respect, acceptance, and appreciation of differences. Multicultural education aims to help students understand the realities of diversity while fostering tolerance, empathy, and positive social skills. Consequently, the ability to adjust effectively within multicultural environments represents an important developmental competence that should be cultivated from an early age (Siwabessy & Hastoeti, 2008).

Given these considerations, classical guidance services may serve as a strategic intervention for supporting students' adjustment in multicultural environments. Through structured guidance activities, students can develop social awareness, interpersonal skills, and adaptive behaviors necessary for successful interaction within diverse social contexts. However, the implementation of classical guidance services in schools often remains general in nature and does not always address students' specific needs related to multicultural adjustment. As a result, the effectiveness of such services in promoting students' adaptive capacities may be limited.

Therefore, there is a need for guidance interventions specifically designed to strengthen students' adjustment abilities in multicultural settings. The present study aims to improve students' adjustment skills through classical guidance services among seventh-grade students at SMP Wage Rudolf Supratman 2 during the 2024/2025 academic year. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more responsive and contextually relevant guidance programs that support students' social and personal adjustment within increasingly diverse educational environments. Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of multicultural education and student adjustment, limited research has examined the effectiveness of classical guidance services as an intervention for improving multicultural adjustment among junior high school students. Moreover, empirical evidence derived from guidance and counseling action research in multicultural school settings remains relatively scarce.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action Research (*Penelitian Tindakan Bimbingan dan Konseling* [PTBK]) design. PTBK is a systematic inquiry aimed at identifying problems, developing solutions, and implementing improvements through the application of practical interventions, in this case, classical guidance services. Although PTBK is generally categorized as qualitative research, it may incorporate quantitative data to support the evaluation of intervention outcomes. The findings are primarily presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the intervention process and its effects (Kunandar, 2011).

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and outcomes of the intervention, this study integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The combination of these approaches enabled the researcher to examine not only measurable changes in students' adjustment abilities but also the processes and experiences underlying those changes (Rosmala Dewi, 2024).

Participants

The participants in this study were all students enrolled in Class VII-C at SMP Wage Rudolf Supratman 2 during the 2024/2025 academic year. The class consisted of 38 students, all of whom participated in the study. A total sampling technique was employed, whereby every student in the class was included as both a respondent and a participant in the classical guidance intervention. The participants served as the primary target group for the action implemented throughout the research process.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of a series of classical guidance services designed to enhance students' adjustment abilities within a multicultural environment. The guidance sessions were implemented through a cyclical action research process involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. Through these activities, students were encouraged to develop greater awareness, acceptance, and adaptive skills necessary for effective interaction within diverse social and cultural settings.

Data Collection

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were obtained through instruments measuring students' adjustment abilities, while qualitative data were gathered through observations, field notes, and reflective records generated during the implementation of the guidance sessions. The use of multiple data sources enabled the researcher to evaluate both the outcomes and the processes of the intervention.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in students' levels of adjustment across the action research cycles. Qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation to identify patterns related to students' behavioral changes and participation throughout the intervention process. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of classical guidance services in improving students' adjustment abilities within a multicultural environment.

Result and Discussion

Results

Multicultural Adaptation Ability Classification

Following the administration of the questionnaire, each student's responses were scored by summing the values obtained across all items. The total scores were subsequently classified into three categories: low, moderate, and high levels of multicultural adaptation ability.

The maximum possible score was 152, while the minimum possible score was 38. Based on the score range and interval calculations, the criteria for classifying students' multicultural adaptation ability were established as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification Criteria for Multicultural Adaptation Ability

Score Range	Frequency	Category
38–75	0	Low
76–113	38	Moderate
114–152	0	High

The results indicate that all 38 participants were classified within the moderate category, with scores ranging from 76 to 113. No students were categorized as having either low or high levels of multicultural adaptation ability. These findings suggest that the multicultural adaptation ability of students in Class VII-C at SMP Wage Rudolf Supratman 2 was at a moderate level prior to the intervention, indicating a need for educational efforts to strengthen students' understanding of multiculturalism and diversity.

Pre-Cycle Results

The pre-cycle questionnaire results revealed that students' overall multicultural adaptation ability was categorized as moderate. Across the four dimensions assessed—adaptation to cultural diversity, building mutual trust, understanding others' life perspectives, and creating harmonious interactions within multicultural environments—the majority of students were classified within the moderate category. A small proportion of students remained in the low category, while no students reached the high category.

More specifically, the percentage of students classified within the low category ranged from 5.3% to 7.9% across the four dimensions. The absence of students in the high category indicated that multicultural adaptation skills had not yet developed optimally. These findings provided the rationale for implementing classical guidance services as an intervention to improve students' multicultural adaptation abilities.

Cycle I Results

The results of observations conducted during Cycle I demonstrated that students' multicultural adaptation ability reached the good category, with a total score of 676 (74%). These

findings indicate an initial improvement following the implementation of the intervention, although the targeted level of achievement had not yet been fully attained.

Across all dimensions—including adaptation to cultural diversity, building mutual trust, understanding others' perspectives, and creating harmonious interactions—students achieved scores ranging from 72% to 76%. These results suggest that students had begun to demonstrate greater acceptance of differences and more positive interactions within multicultural environments.

Nevertheless, observational data also revealed that several adaptive behaviors had not yet been consistently demonstrated in everyday interactions. Acceptance of differences, appreciation of alternative perspectives, and openness in establishing social relationships still required further reinforcement. Therefore, although students' multicultural adaptation ability reached the good category during Cycle I, additional intervention was considered necessary to achieve optimal outcomes.

Cycle II Results

The results of the Cycle II questionnaire indicated substantial improvements across all dimensions of multicultural adaptation ability. Students achieved high-category scores on all indicators, including adaptation to cultural diversity, building mutual trust, understanding others' life perspectives, and creating harmonious interactions within multicultural settings.

These findings reflect the successful implementation of the classical guidance intervention in enhancing students' multicultural adaptation ability. Students not only demonstrated greater capacity to adapt to cultural differences but also showed improved abilities to establish trust, appreciate diverse perspectives, and engage in harmonious interactions within multicultural environments. The fact that all students achieved the high category further suggests that the intervention objectives were successfully attained.

Triangulation Analysis of Cycle I, Cycle II, and Observational Data

The triangulation of questionnaire and observational data from Cycles I and II demonstrated a consistent improvement in students' multicultural adaptation ability. During Cycle I, most students were categorized as moderate based on questionnaire results, while observational findings indicated good to very good levels of adaptation. Following Cycle II, all students progressed to the high category according to questionnaire data, which was consistent with observational findings predominantly categorized as very good.

These results indicate that the improvements were not merely perceptual but were also reflected in students' actual behaviors. The mean multicultural adaptation score increased from 84.03 (55%) during the pre-cycle phase to 112.10 (74%) in Cycle I. Although this represented substantial progress, it did not yet meet the predetermined success criteria. Following Cycle II, the mean score increased further to 136.20 (90%), surpassing the success indicators established for the study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Normality Test

A Shapiro–Wilk normality test was conducted because the sample size consisted of fewer than 50 participants. The results indicated significance values of 0.123 for the pre-cycle phase, 0.220 for Cycle I, and 0.076 for Cycle II. All values exceeded the significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed and met the assumptions required for subsequent parametric statistical analyses.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
sebelum perlakuan	,127	38	,128	,954	38	,123
sesudah perlakuan 1	,104	38	,200*	,962	38	,220
sesudah perlakuan 2	,119	38	,193	,948	38	,076

Paired-Samples t-Test

The results of the paired-samples *t*-test comparing Cycle I and Cycle II scores revealed a significance value of $p < .001$. This finding indicates a statistically significant difference between students’ multicultural adaptation scores before and after the intervention. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

These findings demonstrate that classical guidance services were significantly effective in improving the multicultural adaptation abilities of seventh-grade students at SMP Wage Rudolf Supratman 2 during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Table 2. Paired Sample T-Test Results

		Paired Samples Test						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Std. Error Mean	Lower			
Pair 1	sesudah perlakuan 1 - sesudah perlakuan 2	-24,15789	4,57092	,74150	-25,66032	-22,65547	-32,580	<.001

Discussion

The primary finding of this study demonstrates that classical guidance services were effective in improving students’ multicultural adaptation abilities. This improvement was evident across all four dimensions assessed, namely adaptation to cultural diversity, building mutual trust, understanding others’ life perspectives, and creating harmonious interactions within multicultural environments. Initially, most students exhibited moderate levels of multicultural adaptation, with a small proportion categorized as low. Following the implementation of the intervention, students demonstrated substantial improvements in both questionnaire scores and observable behaviors, indicating enhanced multicultural awareness and social adjustment skills.

A comparison between Cycle I and Cycle II further illustrates the effectiveness of the intervention. During Cycle I, students’ multicultural adaptation abilities reached the good category, with an average achievement of 74%. Although students began to show greater openness toward cultural differences and improved interpersonal interactions, several adaptive behaviors were not yet consistently demonstrated. In contrast, the results of Cycle II revealed a significant increase, with average achievement reaching 90% and all students categorized within the high level of multicultural adaptation. Moreover, observational data indicated that students became more confident in interacting with peers from different cultural backgrounds, demonstrated stronger mutual trust, and displayed more inclusive and harmonious social behaviors. These findings suggest that the continuous implementation and refinement of classical guidance services across action research cycles contributed significantly to students’ developmental progress.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of guidance and counseling interventions in fostering social competencies and multicultural awareness among adolescents. Earlier studies have reported that structured guidance programs can enhance students’ interpersonal skills, tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that classical guidance services not only improve students’ understanding of multicultural values but also facilitate observable behavioral changes within daily social interactions. The integration of questionnaire data and observational findings further strengthens the evidence regarding the effectiveness of the intervention in promoting multicultural adaptation.

The findings may also be understood through the framework of Multicultural Education Theory proposed by James A. Banks. Banks emphasizes that multicultural education seeks to cultivate respect for diversity, equal opportunities, and positive relationships among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Educational experiences should enable students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for successful participation in diverse societies. The

improvements observed in students' abilities to accept cultural differences, appreciate diverse perspectives, and engage in harmonious interactions indicate that the classical guidance intervention successfully supported the development of multicultural competencies. These outcomes align with Banks' assertion that educational programs should actively foster intercultural understanding and social inclusion.

The results are further supported by the Social Adjustment Theory developed by Elizabeth B. Hurlock. According to Hurlock, adjustment is a dynamic process through which individuals achieve harmony between personal needs and environmental demands. Successful adjustment is reflected in positive social relationships, emotional stability, and effective participation within social contexts. The significant improvements observed in students' abilities to build trust, understand others' perspectives, and maintain harmonious interactions suggest that the intervention contributed to the development of healthier adjustment patterns. These findings reinforce Hurlock's view that adaptive behaviors can be strengthened through supportive educational experiences and positive social environments.

The effectiveness of classical guidance services can also be explained through Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura. Bandura argues that individuals acquire new attitudes and behaviors through observation, modeling, imitation, and reinforcement. Throughout the guidance sessions, students were exposed to discussions, collaborative learning activities, and examples of constructive multicultural interactions. These experiences provided opportunities for students to observe positive social behaviors, practice adaptive responses, and receive reinforcement from both counselors and peers. Consequently, students gradually developed greater openness, empathy, and acceptance of cultural diversity. This theoretical perspective helps explain why improvements were evident not only in self-reported questionnaire responses but also in students' observable behaviors during classroom interactions.

The findings have several important practical implications for guidance and counseling practitioners working in multicultural educational settings. First, school counselors should design and implement guidance programs that explicitly address multicultural awareness, intercultural communication, empathy development, and social adjustment skills. Second, classical guidance services can serve as an effective developmental and preventive intervention for promoting positive interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Third, counselors should collaborate closely with teachers, school administrators, and parents to create inclusive school environments that encourage respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding. Such collaborative efforts are essential for fostering students' multicultural competencies and supporting their successful adjustment within increasingly diverse educational contexts.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research involved only one class consisting of 38 students from a single junior high school, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. In addition, the intervention was implemented over a relatively short period and focused primarily on students' multicultural adaptation abilities. Other factors that may influence multicultural adjustment, such as family background, peer relationships, school climate, and previous intercultural experiences, were not examined in depth. Furthermore, the study relied primarily on questionnaire and observational data, which may not fully capture the complexity of students' multicultural experiences.

Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples across different educational settings and geographical regions. Longitudinal studies may also be conducted to examine the long-term sustainability of multicultural adaptation following guidance interventions. In addition, future researchers may explore the effectiveness of alternative guidance and counseling approaches, such as group counseling, peer mentoring, multicultural experiential learning, or digital guidance programs. Investigating the influence of contextual variables, including family support, school culture, and community diversity, may further contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of multicultural adaptation among adolescents.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that classical guidance services are effective in enhancing students' multicultural adaptation abilities. Prior to the intervention, students' multicultural adaptation was categorized as moderate, with a mean score of 84.03 (55%). Following

the implementation of classical guidance services in Cycle I, the mean score increased to 112.10 (74%), indicating a substantial improvement in students' ability to adapt to multicultural environments. To strengthen and sustain these improvements, the intervention was continued in Cycle II, resulting in a further increase in the mean score to 136.20 (90%). This progression confirms that the intervention produced meaningful and consistent improvements in students' multicultural adaptation abilities.

Beyond the quantitative improvements, the findings revealed positive changes in students' attitudes and behaviors toward cultural diversity. Students demonstrated greater openness to differences, stronger interpersonal trust, improved understanding of diverse perspectives, and more harmonious interactions with peers from different cultural backgrounds. These findings suggest that classical guidance services can serve as an effective developmental intervention for fostering multicultural competencies and promoting positive social relationships among adolescents.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on multicultural education and guidance and counseling by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of classical guidance services in strengthening students' multicultural adaptation. The findings highlight the importance of integrating multicultural values into school guidance programs and underscore the role of school counselors in facilitating students' social adjustment within diverse educational environments. Therefore, classical guidance services may be considered a valuable strategy for promoting inclusive, respectful, and harmonious interactions in multicultural school settings.

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