


# Reducing Cross-Cultural Social Conflict through Information Services: A Guidance and Counseling Action Research Study

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## ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural social conflict remains a common challenge in multicultural educational settings, particularly among adolescents who interact with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Limited understanding of cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings, prejudice, and social tensions that negatively affect students' social relationships and learning environments. Therefore, effective interventions are needed to promote intercultural understanding and reduce the occurrence of cross-cultural social conflict. This study aimed to reduce cross-cultural social conflict through the implementation of information services among Grade XII KKO-PPLP students at SMAN 15 Medan. The study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action design based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, consisting of two action cycles. The participants were 36 students enrolled in Class XII KKO-PPLP at SMAN 15 Medan. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation.

The findings revealed a consistent reduction in cross-cultural social conflict throughout the intervention process. During the pre-cycle stage, students demonstrated moderate to high levels of conflict across several indicators, including cultural value conflicts, social norm conflicts, behavioral conflicts, conflict experiences, attitudes toward conflict, and conflict resolution efforts. Following the implementation of information services, the average conflict score decreased from 97 in the pre-cycle stage to 94 in Cycle I and further declined to 86 in Cycle II. The results also showed substantial improvements in students' understanding of cultural diversity, tolerance toward differences, and constructive conflict resolution skills. Observational findings further indicated positive behavioral changes, including greater openness, improved interpersonal relationships, and more harmonious interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds. In conclusion, information services were found to be effective in reducing cross-cultural social conflict and promoting multicultural understanding among students. The findings highlight the importance of integrating multicultural content into school guidance and counseling programs as a strategy for fostering tolerance, social harmony, and positive intercultural relationships within diverse educational environments.

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## Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental pillars in shaping the character and intellectual development of a nation. Through education, individuals acquire not only academic knowledge but also the social, cultural, and moral values necessary for successful participation in society. Consequently, education plays a strategic role in preparing future generations to live harmoniously within diverse communities.

Students constitute a central element of the educational process. They come from diverse cultural backgrounds, bringing unique dynamics to social interactions within school environments. Although diversity represents a valuable social asset, it may also give rise to conflict when not effectively managed. Differences in language, customs, values, and cultural norms can contribute to misunderstandings and social tensions within educational settings.

In the multicultural context of Indonesia, cultural differences frequently serve as a source of social conflict, including disputes rooted in ethnic identities. A common phenomenon is the tendency of certain groups to perceive their culture as superior to others. As a result, during conflicts, individuals are often viewed primarily through the lens of group identity rather than as unique persons, thereby reinforcing divisions and social polarization.

Cross-cultural conflicts are increasingly evident in schools, particularly in institutions with heterogeneous student populations. Students' inability to understand and appreciate cultural differences is one of the primary factors contributing to such conflicts. These conflicts not only disrupt the learning environment and students' social relationships but may also negatively affect academic performance. Therefore, systematic efforts are required to identify and understand social

issues arising from intercultural interactions in order to develop appropriate and sustainable solutions.

Limited understanding of cultural diversity among students may lead to disagreements and intercultural conflicts. In this regard, school counselors play a crucial role in fostering awareness of the values embodied in Indonesia's national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* which emphasizes the importance of coexistence despite differences (Supriyatna, 2019).

One relevant approach to minimizing intercultural conflict is the provision of effective and communicative information services for students. Within educational settings, information services aim to enhance students' knowledge, awareness, and social skills, enabling them to develop inclusive attitudes and appreciation for diversity. These services also function as educational tools for promoting a harmonious and tolerant school environment. Through guidance and counseling services, students can gain a deeper understanding of cross-cultural conflicts and learn constructive ways to address them, particularly through information services provided within schools (Salsabilah, 2021).

Access to accurate and relevant information can help students address existing problems, prevent the emergence of new difficulties, and support the development and maintenance of their personal potential. Furthermore, information plays an important role in encouraging individuals to become more open and to actualize their rights and capabilities effectively. According to Prayitno and Amti (2017), information encompasses useful knowledge regarding opportunities and requirements related to various educational pathways available now and in the future. Similarly, Nourrish (2013) argues that information should be disseminated to individuals across different age groups, particularly students within formal educational institutions. One important type of information that students need to acquire is knowledge related to intercultural understanding, which can be delivered through cross-cultural counseling information services (Hidayat, 2018).

Agung Anak Ngurah (2013) describes cross-cultural counseling as the "fourth force" in the development of counseling approaches, following psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic perspectives (Adhiputra, 2021). Delati and Hanum (2018) argue that human beings differ fundamentally both as individuals and as members of society. These differences emerge from human cognitive and reasoning capacities, which ultimately give rise to culture. The term \*culture\* originates from the Sanskrit word *buddhayah*, the plural form of *buddhi*, meaning intellect or reason (Koentjaraningrat, 2018; Soekanto, 2018). Accordingly, culture can be understood as all aspects of human thought, values, and behavior shaped through intellectual and social processes.

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human life and may occur both between individuals and among groups (Noor et al., 2025). Conflicts generally arise from differences in interests, beliefs, or perspectives. When individuals or groups insist on maintaining opposing viewpoints without compromise and exhibit low levels of tolerance, conflict becomes increasingly difficult to avoid.

Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by a heightened potential for conflict. According to Susan (2009), adolescents experience complex changes involving physical development, behavioral patterns, social roles, and identity formation. These developmental dynamics often generate tensions and challenges, including difficulties in navigating intercultural social interactions.

Information services are closely associated with the core functions of counseling, particularly the function of understanding. Through adequate access to information, individuals are expected to develop objective, positive, and dynamic perspectives toward themselves and their environment. Such understanding can facilitate effective decision-making, promote productive activities, and support the realization of individual potential (Hidayat, 2018).

Cross-cultural counseling places particular emphasis on differences in race, ethnicity, and cultural background. Etymologically, the concept of culture derives from the words *budi* (mind or intellect) and *daya* (power, effort, or capability). Cross-cultural counseling represents the integration of counseling principles and cultural understanding and may be defined as a counseling process that occurs within the context of cultural differences between counselors and clients, including differences in social environment, ethnicity, and value systems (Rahmawati, 2020).

Despite the recognized importance of multicultural awareness and cross-cultural counseling, empirical studies examining the effectiveness of information services in reducing cross-cultural social conflict among senior high school students remain limited. In particular, there is a need for evidence-based interventions that enhance students' understanding of cultural diversity and foster

tolerance within heterogeneous school environments.

Therefore, this study aims to reduce cross-cultural social conflict through the implementation of information services among students of Class XII KKO-PPLP at SMAN 15 Medan. Specifically, the study focuses on improving students' understanding of cultural diversity, strengthening mutual respect, and fostering tolerant social behaviors through guidance and counseling information services. It is expected that the intervention will contribute to more harmonious social interactions and reduce the potential for cross-cultural conflict within the school environment.

## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action Research design to examine cross-cultural issues within the school environment, identify appropriate solutions, and implement improvements through practical interventions in the form of information services (Dewi et al., 2024). Guidance and Counseling Action Research is a systematic approach that enables practitioners to address educational and counseling-related problems through the implementation of planned actions followed by continuous evaluation and reflection.

According to Hopkins (1993), Kemmis (1982), and McTaggart (1991), as cited in Tampubolon (2014), action research is a strategy that allows educators to identify and resolve problems through concrete interventions conducted within a cyclical research framework. This approach emphasizes continuous improvement through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The present study adopted the action research model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four interconnected stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher identified the problem of cross-cultural social conflict and designed information service interventions aimed at enhancing students' understanding of cultural diversity and promoting tolerance. The action stage involved the implementation of the planned information services. Subsequently, observations were conducted to monitor students' responses, participation, and behavioral changes throughout the intervention process. Finally, reflection was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and to determine necessary improvements for the subsequent cycle.

The action research process was implemented through successive cycles until the predetermined indicators of success were achieved. This cyclical procedure enabled continuous refinement of the intervention and facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of information services in reducing cross-cultural social conflict among students.

### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 36 students enrolled in Class XII KKO-PPLP at SMAN 15 Medan, Indonesia. All students in the class were included as research participants and received the information service intervention throughout the action research process. The participants represented a culturally diverse student population, making them an appropriate group for examining issues related to cross-cultural social conflict and multicultural interaction within the school environment.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through observations, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to monitor students' participation, responses, and behavioral changes during the implementation of the information services. Questionnaires were administered to assess students' levels of understanding and attitudes toward cultural diversity and cross-cultural interactions. Interviews and documentation were used to complement and validate the findings obtained through observations and questionnaires.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in students' levels of multicultural understanding and cross-cultural social interaction across the research cycles. Qualitative data obtained from

observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed through data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of information services in reducing cross-cultural social conflict among students.

## Result and Discussion

### Results

#### Pre-Cycle Stage

The pre-cycle stage began with an initial assessment to determine the level of cross-cultural social conflict among Grade XII KKO-PPLP students at SMAN 15 Medan. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 36 students. The results indicated that cross-cultural social conflict remained at moderate to high levels across most of the measured indicators.

Regarding cultural value conflicts, 2 students were categorized as low, 29 as moderate, and 5 as high. For social norm conflicts, 3 students were classified as low, 21 as moderate, and 12 as high. Similarly, in the behavioral conflict dimension, 3 students were categorized as low, 24 as moderate, and 9 as high. The indicator of cross-cultural social conflict experiences revealed that 3 students were in the low category, 23 in the moderate category, and 10 in the high category. For attitudes toward cross-cultural social conflict, no students were categorized as low, while 29 students were classified as moderate and 7 as high. Finally, in terms of conflict resolution efforts, 2 students were categorized as low, 26 as moderate, and 8 as high.

Across all indicators, cultural value conflict emerged as the weakest dimension, as it contained students in the low category and the fewest students in the high category. These findings suggest that students still experienced difficulties in understanding and appreciating cultural differences, thereby increasing their vulnerability to cross-cultural social conflicts.

#### Cycle I

Cycle I was implemented through the provision of information services designed to reduce cross-cultural social conflict. Following the intervention, observations, reflections, and evaluations were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the service implementation among the 36 participating students.

Observational findings revealed that student participation was initially limited. Many students appeared hesitant and reluctant to express their opinions. However, as the counselor adopted a more communicative approach and emphasized that there were no incorrect responses during discussions, student participation gradually increased during subsequent sessions.

Questionnaire results indicated a slight reduction in cross-cultural social conflict, reflected by an increase in the intervention effectiveness percentage from 69.3% during the pre-cycle stage to 70.4% in Cycle I. Although this improvement suggested positive progress, the magnitude of change remained relatively small and had not yet fully met the predetermined success criteria. Consequently, the intervention was continued into Cycle II to achieve more substantial outcomes.

#### Cycle II

Cycle II was implemented as a follow-up to the reflections conducted after Cycle I, incorporating improvements in the delivery of information services. Observational data obtained from the 36 participants indicated a significant improvement in students' ability to manage and respond to cross-cultural social conflict.

The results showed a total score of 1,045, corresponding to 80.63%, which was categorized as very good. Reductions in cross-cultural social conflict were evident across all measured dimensions, including cultural value conflicts, social norm conflicts, behavioral conflicts, experiences of cross-cultural conflict, attitudes toward cross-cultural conflict, and conflict resolution efforts.

Overall, the findings from Cycle II demonstrate that the intervention successfully enhanced students' understanding of cultural diversity, strengthened attitudes of tolerance, and improved their ability to resolve conflicts constructively in everyday social interactions.

## Comparative Analysis of Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, a comparison was conducted across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages. The results revealed a gradual reduction in students' levels of cross-cultural social conflict throughout the intervention process.

During the pre-cycle stage, the mean questionnaire score was 97, indicating a relatively high level of cross-cultural social conflict. Following the implementation of information services in Cycle I, the mean score decreased to 94, reflecting an initial reduction in conflict levels. Although this change represented positive progress, it was not considered sufficient to achieve the intended intervention outcomes.

Subsequently, in Cycle II, the mean score decreased further to 86, indicating a substantial reduction in cross-cultural social conflict. These findings demonstrate that the intervention successfully achieved the established indicators of success. Therefore, the information service program can be considered effective in reducing cross-cultural social conflict among students.

## Discussion

The findings of this study can be further understood through the perspective of multicultural counseling and multicultural education. According to Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, multicultural competence involves awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable individuals to interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The reduction in cross-cultural social conflict observed throughout the intervention indicates that students developed a greater awareness of cultural diversity and became more capable of engaging in constructive interactions with peers from different cultural groups. These findings suggest that information services can serve as an effective medium for fostering multicultural understanding and promoting positive interpersonal relationships within culturally diverse school environments.

The results are also consistent with the Multicultural Education Theory proposed by James A. Banks. Banks argues that educational institutions should provide learning experiences that help students appreciate diversity, develop intercultural understanding, and cultivate democratic values. One of the primary goals of multicultural education is to prepare students to function effectively in pluralistic societies by fostering respect, tolerance, and social inclusion. The significant reduction in cross-cultural social conflict observed in this study indicates that the information services successfully facilitated students' understanding of cultural diversity and encouraged more respectful and harmonious social interactions. These outcomes support Banks' assertion that educational interventions can play a crucial role in promoting intercultural competence and reducing prejudice among students.

Furthermore, the findings can be explained through Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into social groups, often leading to in-group favoritism and out-group bias. In multicultural school environments, such tendencies may contribute to misunderstandings, stereotypes, and social conflict among students from different cultural backgrounds. The information services implemented in this study provided opportunities for students to recognize common values, appreciate differences, and develop a broader social identity that transcended ethnic and cultural boundaries. Consequently, students became more willing to engage positively with peers from different groups, thereby reducing the likelihood of cross-cultural conflict.

The effectiveness of information services may also be understood through Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura. Bandura emphasizes that individuals acquire new attitudes and behaviors through observation, modeling, social interaction, and reinforcement. During the intervention, students were exposed to examples of positive intercultural communication, collaborative discussions, and reflective activities that encouraged constructive responses to cultural differences. Through repeated exposure to these learning experiences, students gradually internalized more adaptive attitudes and behaviors, which contributed to the reduction of cross-cultural social conflict. This theoretical perspective explains why the intervention influenced not only students' knowledge but also their observable social behaviors.

The findings have important practical implications for school counselors and educational practitioners working in multicultural settings. First, school counselors should integrate multicultural themes into guidance and counseling programs to promote students' understanding of cultural diversity and strengthen intercultural communication skills. Second, information services can be

utilized as a preventive intervention to reduce prejudice, stereotypes, and potential conflicts among students from different cultural backgrounds. Third, counselors should collaborate with teachers, school administrators, and parents to establish an inclusive school climate that values diversity and encourages respectful interactions. Such collaborative efforts are essential for fostering social harmony and supporting students' personal and social development within multicultural educational environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single class consisting of 36 students from one school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the intervention was implemented over a relatively short period, making it difficult to determine the long-term sustainability of the observed behavioral changes. The study also relied primarily on questionnaire data, observations, and reflections, which may not fully capture the complexity of students' intercultural experiences and social interactions.

Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples from different schools and cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies may provide valuable insights into the long-term effectiveness of information services in reducing cross-cultural social conflict. Additionally, future researchers may compare the effectiveness of various guidance and counseling interventions, such as group counseling, multicultural counseling programs, peer mentoring, or experiential learning approaches, in promoting intercultural understanding and reducing conflict among students. Further investigation into the influence of family background, school climate, and community diversity may also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting cross-cultural social conflict in educational settings.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that information services are effective in reducing cross-cultural social conflict among Grade XII KKO-PPLP students at SMAN 15 Medan. Prior to the intervention, students exhibited moderate to high levels of cross-cultural social conflict, particularly in relation to differences in cultural values, social norms, behaviors, and conflict resolution strategies. Following the implementation of information services through two action research cycles, a consistent reduction in conflict levels was observed across all measured indicators.

The intervention not only enhanced students' understanding of cultural diversity but also fostered greater tolerance, mutual respect, and constructive approaches to conflict resolution. Improvements were evident in students' abilities to appreciate cultural differences, understand diverse perspectives, and engage in more harmonious social interactions. The progressive reduction in conflict levels from the pre-cycle stage through Cycle I and Cycle II confirms the effectiveness of information services as a guidance and counseling intervention for promoting intercultural understanding and reducing social tensions in multicultural educational settings.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on multicultural education and counseling by providing empirical evidence that information services can function as an effective preventive and developmental strategy for addressing cross-cultural social conflict among adolescents. The findings underscore the importance of integrating multicultural content into school guidance and counseling programs and highlight the strategic role of school counselors in fostering inclusive, respectful, and harmonious school environments. Consequently, information services may be considered a valuable approach for strengthening students' multicultural competence and supporting positive social relationships within culturally diverse schools. Overall, the study highlights that developing students' multicultural awareness through systematic guidance interventions is not only essential for conflict prevention but also for preparing young people to participate effectively in increasingly diverse and interconnected societies.

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