

Enhancing Counseling Services for Disabilities: A Culturally Rooted Framework of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh*

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Abstract. People with disabilities in Indonesia still often face barriers in accessing counseling services, whether physical, psychological, or social aspects. This situation certainly has a significant impact on their well-being. It is not uncommon for people with disabilities to withdraw from social life due to the perceived distance and stigma between them and the general public. In fact, counseling should serve as a safe space for people with disabilities to receive guidance and empathetic support. To achieve inclusive counseling services, a counseling approach rooted in local culture is needed so that the interventions provided are socially and emotionally accepted by clients. The local wisdom that can be integrated into counseling is the cultural values of *Silih Asah, Silih Asih, Silih Asuh*. This study aims to examine how the principles of *Silih Asah, Silih Asih, Silih Asuh* can be adapted into counseling approach for people with disabilities. This research uses a qualitative method in the form of a literature study by analyzing existing sources such as journals, scientific articles, and other relevant literature.

Key words: Counseling services, *silih asah silih asih silih asuh*, disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Essentially, God created humans in an equal state, however, it is humans themselves who choose to differentiate among one another, whether in terms of appearance or attitude (Aloewie, 2000). According to Thohari (2014) disability refers to a condition in which an individual experiences physical, sensory, or mental impairments that result in the inability to optimally perform social function within society. The term 'difabel' is an abbreviation of 'differently abled,' emerging as a softer alternative to the term '*penyandang cacat*' (person with disability) that is considered stigmatizing (Suharto, 2011). According to Republic Indonesia law No. 8 of 2016, persons with disabilities are defined as individuals who have physical, mental, intellectual, and/or sensory limitations for a long period of time, and who, in interacting with their environment, encounter barriers and difficulties in fully and effectively participating with others on the basis of equal rights. The stigma attached to persons with disabilities, often perceived as less complete, poses a barrier to their full acceptance within social life (Noviasari & Nurwati, 2020). Consequently, this stigma contributes to lower self-esteem among persons with disabilities and hinders their ability to develop their potential (Wijaya et al., 2024).

Every region certainly has its own distinctive cultural value, which shapes the basic character and influence the way people think, behave, and act (Pratama & Budiyo, 2024). These values generally function as guiding references for action and as criteria for imposing sanctions or granting reward for certain behaviors (Ristianah, 2020). The need for cultural adaptation in multicultural counseling relevant to the Indonesian cultural context certainly requires more in-depth research. In fact, Indonesia's unique cultural heritage offers many potentials that can be used to develop new approaches, models, adaptations, and strategies in counseling. This makes it possible to contextualize approaches with the communities being served (Nurmawati, 2024). One such local wisdom that can be integrated into the counseling process is the value of local wisdom from the Sundanese. *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* contains moral values of goodness in building togetherness through an inclusive society (Hidayatuloh, 2020).

A research conducted by Hidayat (2023) on the internalization of local wisdom values in the field of guidance and counseling showed that local wisdom values have high relevance in the development of guidance and counseling. This can strengthen culturally based counseling approaches to be more aligned with individual needs. Another research by Sinaga & Gulo (2020) on multicultural counseling assistance for persons with disabilities using local wisdom revealed that multicultural counseling with local wisdom can be applied both to persons with disabilities and the general public as a form of appreciation of existing diversity. Furthermore, research by Rizka (2011) on the application of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* values as an effort to prevent juvenile delinquency by building communication, showing

mutual affection, teaching ways of socializing and empathy towards others, instilling religious values, and strengthening emotional bounds among family members.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2020, there are around 22.5 million persons with disabilities in Indonesia. This certainly serves as an indicator of the large need for inclusive, high-quality counseling services that are in line with the local cultural context. However, research discussing cultural adaptation in counseling remains limited, and there is a lack of practical information on how to conduct interventions for certain populations (Suhron, 2016). This highlights the need to improve contextual counseling based on local wisdom (Nurmawati et al., 2025). Counseling should be based on local cultural knowledge and practices rather than relying solely on foreign cultural frameworks. This is expected to be socially and emotionally relevant to the general public as well to special populations. Counseling that is overly focused on Western culture tends to be less suitable for clients in Indonesia (Mensah, 2019). Another obstacle arises in that not all segments of society can understand or access counseling based on local wisdom. Therefore, public education is necessary to ensure that cultural values are understood by all segments of society (Mubarok et al., 2025).

This article aims to examine the principles of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* so that it can be adapted into a counseling approach for persons with disabilities. This emphasizes the need to develop a new approach suited to the characteristics of these individuals. For greater effectiveness, counseling should be adapted and modified to the Indonesian cultural context, such as the *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* values (Noviana et al., 2022). Through the application of counseling based on local cultural values, it is expected that the therapeutic effect will increase, functioning as a means of healing for the counselee (Benish et al., 2011).

METHODS

The research uses a qualitative research method with a literature review design. This approach involves a systematic analysis of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, books, and other relevant academic sources, to provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for the research. The literature review method was chosen because it allows the researcher to access and synthesize knowledge from diverse perspectives, enabling a critical examination of existing findings and theoretical frameworks. This method facilitates the formulation of the comprehensive conclusions that are grounded in established scholarship. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to identify conceptual gaps and explore potential applications of local wisdom values within the counseling context. Specifically, this research focuses on examining how the Sundanese cultural values of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* can be adapted and implemented into counseling approaches for persons with disabilities, thereby aligning therapeutic practices with culturally relevant frameworks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Disability

The term difabel/disability is an abbreviation of different abled, which represents a softened alternative to the expression '*penyandang cacat*' (persons with disability), which is still considered stigmatizing (Suharto, 2011). The choice of the term 'disability' aligns with the official terminology used in international discourse and documentation. This terminology was further reinforced through the enactment of Law No. 9 of 2011 concerning the Ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Mustika & Pradikta, 2022). According to Kasim et al (2010), disability is a concept that describes the outcome of interaction between individuals with physical, mental, or intellectual limitations and the attitudes and environments that hinder their ability to fully participate in society.

In accordance with Law No. 8 of 2016, disabilities are categorized into four types:

1. Physical disabilities, including amputation, flaccid paralysis, rigidity, paraplegia, cerebral palsy, post-stroke conditions, and others
2. Intellectual disabilities, including learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, and personality disorders
3. Mental disabilities, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders.

4. Sensory disabilities, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, and speech impairment

Findings from the literature review indicate that the main barriers faced by persons with disabilities in Indonesia encompass physical limitations, psychological challenges, and various forms of explicit and implicit discrimination (Bariun et al., 2025). Consistent with earlier statements, individuals with disabilities still have limited access to public facilities and disability-friendly counseling services (Subroto & Muktya, 2024). This aligns with Sholeh's (2015) view that persons with disabilities continue to receive insufficient attention, particularly in terms of opportunities and facilities. Furthermore the negative stigma they face often contributes to low self-confidence and self-esteem. Discrimination is also perpetuated by service models that remain based on western cultural frameworks, which are, in other words, not yet adapted to local wisdom values (Prayogi, 2024).

Referring to the above discussion, several previous studies have found that counseling involving families and communities can enhance service effectiveness (Agrina & Zulfitri, 2012). Wijaya et al. (2024) demonstrated that participatory community counseling can significantly improve self-esteem among persons with disabilities. Such approaches have also been shown to reduce feelings of social isolation. Thus, the existing body of research serves as a foundation to strengthen the urgency of developing counseling models that integrate local wisdom values in addressing the barriers still faced by persons with disabilities today.

Guidance and Counseling

Guidance is defined as the process of providing assistance to individuals in order to make important choices that will affect their lives (Gladding, 2012). Meanwhile, counseling is defined as a reciprocal relationship between the counselor and the client, which takes place in a meeting (counseling) where a counseling interview occurs (Ngalimun & Ihsan, 2020). Guidance and counseling are services that provide assistance to students, individuals, or groups with the aims of helping them foster independence and develop their potential optimally in the personal, social, learning, and career aspects (Gibson & Mitchell, 2011). Guidance and counseling offer a safe and comfortable space for every individual who comes to explore their thoughts and feelings (Levy & Adjapong, 2020). The impact of guidance and counseling on individuals' growth and development include providing strategic support to overcome existing challenges, helping individuals face difficult situations, and assisting individuals in being courageous to make decisions and positive changes. In addition, guidance and counseling can certainly help improve mental and emotional well-being so that individuals can achieve their quality world (Puspitasari & Kurniasari, 2024).

From several pieces of research analyzed by the researchers, it was identified that the effectiveness of guidance and counseling for persons with disabilities is greatly influenced by cultural sensitivity (Putri et al., 2024). This is supported by the findings of Mubarak et al. (2025), which revealed that local wisdom values can enhance emotional closeness between counselor and client. In addition, Valencya et al stated that multicultural counseling integrating local values has proven effective for individuals with disabilities in terms of self-acceptance. One of the local wisdom values that can shape positive behavior and prevent negative behaviors is the value of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* (Mulyani et al., 2024).

Guidance and Counseling with Local Wisdom

The primary purpose of developing and applying the science of guidance and counseling is to help individuals achieve well-being and overcome problems, thereby improving their quality of life (Gibson & Mitchell, 2011). Various methods have been developed to generate new foundational knowledge, and one method currently being advanced is guidance and counseling, an important aspect to consider is the foundation of counseling being applied. Although counseling as a discipline encompasses several foundational approaches, the application of socio-cultural foundations will provide significant strength and impact, considering that the essence of an individual is shaped by the socio-cultural environment in which they live (Halid, 2021). Sociology contributes greatly to understanding the dynamics of human groups as well as their influence on social order and processes of social change (Hariko, 2016).

In practice, local wisdom based counseling requires an aesthetic approach that serves as a guideline to direct individuals toward virtuous behavior (Halid, 2021). In this context, aesthetics means that counselors need to contribute to creating a supportive, comfortable, and peaceful environment for clients. Such an environment enables clients to feel safe to open up and fosters their commitment to

actively participate in the counseling process (Setyorini, 2024). In local wisdom based counseling, various elements may be involved, such as family, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists, depending on their needs. A supportive environment can also facilitate the achievement of optimal counseling goals.

Local wisdom refers to an identity or cultural value rooted in a community and passed down from generation to generation. One example of local wisdom that can be applied in counseling for special populations is the Sundanese local wisdom as know as *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh*. According to Suryagala (2013), *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* means:

- a. *Silih Asah* in sundanese means mutually sharpening, mutually educating, mutually expanding experiences, and fostering activity. Asah also refers to the ability to exercise self-control, methods for individuals to learn something, tools for self-regulation, and means to assess self-equality
- b. *Silih Asih* means mutually loving, caring, and showing patience. It is also understood as behavior that demonstrates sincere affection with the aim of creating shared happiness treating others with love and compassion
- c. *Silih Asuh* means mutually guiding. The term *asuh* itself has various meanings, such as guiding, protecting, nurturing, paying attention, fostering, and helping one another. Key indicators include equality, respect, sincerity, and togetherness

Applying the values of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* in counseling for persons with disabilities has strong relevance. The integration of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* in counseling reflects a transformation of values, combining multicultural concept with the essence of *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* in community life. This creates harmony that enhances serves not only as a problem solving process but also as a means of empowerment aligned with local wisdom and the principles of social inclusion (Sue & Sue, 2016).

Culturally based counseling is more socially and emotionally relevant both to the general public and to special populations (Nurmawati et al., 2025). This is because culture is deeply rooted in the lives of communities and individuals (Sinaga, 2020). A significant factor in social acceptance has been observed among persons with disabilities when they have family members or friends who are also person with disabilities or share certain similarity (Kazanowski & Zyta, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a literature review, it was found that persons with disabilities in Indonesia still face various physical, psychological, and social barriers that affect their well-being and participation in society. Existing guidance and counseling services are often not fully responsive, particularly in integrating local wisdom values, thus being less optimal in building client trust and engagement. The *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* principle from Sundanese local wisdom has been proven relevant to be integrated into counseling approaches, as it contains values of mutual enlightenment, mutual affection, and mutual guidance, which sign with the principles of social inclusion and empowerment. Integrating these *Silih Asah Silih Asih Silih Asuh* values into counseling allows for the creation of services that are more humanistic, contextual, and sustainable, as well as strengthening support from families and communities. Thus the application of a local wisdom based counseling framework is expected to improve the effectiveness of service for persons with disabilities, reduce stigma, and encourage the creation of a more inclusive society.

Suggestions for future research on the same topic include enriching references from journals, previous studies supporting the research topic, and other literature sources. Researchers may also develop research methods to complement scientific knowledge.

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