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Counseling as an Effort to Empower the Sasak Community in Understanding Religion and Cultural Differences

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Abstract. *Counseling here is an effort to bring about people's understanding of the differences they face, be it religious or cultural differences. The Sasak people have various forms of religion and culture, so this is their characteristic from other communities, especially in Lombok. With these differences in religion and culture, counseling here has a very significant empowering role in providing understanding to the community so as to foster an attitude of respect for differences. The research method used, apart from using observation methods, also includes library research by reviewing previous research literature and analyzing contemporary phenomena. Data collection also uses searching for writings that examine people's understanding of religious and cultural differences, whether from journals, books or other media. The research results show that the Sasak people who use this counseling have a significant role in providing understanding to the community about differences. Therefore, the Sasak community emphasizes counseling actions by referring to religious and cultural figures. These figures certainly have extensive knowledge and strong power or influence as figures in society, so they play an important role in providing understanding to the Sasak people about religious and cultural differences in everyday life. These figures act because they are in line with their agenda in providing awareness to society in understanding differences and maintaining society so that they live in harmony as a characteristic of Indonesian society which always wants to live united in harmony and harmony even though they are different and diverse itself.*

Keywords: Counseling, Understanding, Differences, Religion and Culture

INTRODUCTION

Humans are intelligent creatures who have different views and characters, and each have their own characteristics of actions. These differences bring diversity to social life. However, these differences can also trigger conflict and tension between communities in daily activities. Sasak society is a multicultural society in all aspects; religion, culture and customs also feel the pluses and minuses of these differences in their social life. In social relations where there are various differences (Nurhayati & Agustina, 2020, p. 19), society is sometimes unable to control existing differences, so that conflict and tension arise. The Sasak tribe is one of the tribes in Indonesia that has a multicultural cultural and religious style, even though the majority of them are

Muslim. The Sasak tribe is an indigenous tribe on the island of Lombok (Azhari & Sukardiman, 2021, p. 112).

However, as a tribal society, the Sasak people have various forms of differences in daily life, both in religious, cultural, social and other matters. So that people learn how to understand these differences, and to live side by side in social communities, like it or not, Sasak people cannot escape from social interaction activities and togetherness as social creatures (Uktolseja, et. al, 2020, p. 46). To understand the forms of differences among the Sasak community, it encourages community efforts to understand counseling itsel f in the context of coaching and guidance. By understanding counseling in terms of these differences, people will themselves form an attitude or view in viewing other people's culture or religion, and will bring an attitude of tolerance to the community it self. Regarding religious and cultural differences in society, which are felt in their daily lives, according to the background of the thoughts above, it seems to encourage many academics and researchers to study and examine these problems. And this is a benchmark in formulating problems in this empowerment research as well as to seek academic answers to what extent the differences between the Sasak people present mutually respectful understanding, both in terms of religious and cultural differences.

In assessing how far this type of research has been explored by academics and researchers, through a literature review study it can apparently be traced from previous research conducted, namely. The first is research by Toto Suryana entitled the concept and a ctualization of inter - religious harmony, with the result of the emergence of a tolerant attitude, which means being able to accept differences with an open-hearted attitude, and respecting the personal and social rights of different parties (the other) in living their lives together (Suryana, 2011, p. 127-136). The second research by Khoirul Faizin entitled Capitalistic Theology: Notes on Modern Society's Perspective on Religion, with the result that religion as a sovereign authority regulates individual piety personally and socially. However, religious sovereignty must provide broad freedom for individuals to carry out religious functions in accordance with the current context (Faizin, 2011, p. 314–343).

The third research by Laode Monto Bauto entitled perspectives of religion and culture in the li fe of Indonesian society (a review of the sociology of religion), with the results of the relationship between religion, culture and society and functions as a controlling tool and at the same time cultivating it in the sense of expressing what he believes in the form of cultural forms, namely in the form of ethical values, aesthetics of building art, community structure, customs and so on (Bauto, 2016, p. 11–24). The fourth research by Susi Fitri entitled Identity Construction of Prospective School Counselors in a Multicultural Society, with the results of school counselors assuming the role as agents of social change. This awareness in turn has consequences for changing the role of the counselor towards a transformative counselor. And school counselors are taking the first steps to get involved in the process of social transformation which is Indonesia's current challenge (Fitri, 2011, p. 119–134).

The previous research above is the benchmark for writing the empowerment articles that have been researched. However, the tendency in this article that differentiates it from previous empowerments lies and focuses on the attitude of the Sasak people themselves in understanding religious and cultural differences amidst the strengthening existence of a multicultural society on the island of Lombok. Multiculturalism also assumes an awareness of each community with a particular cultural identity and its position as part of harmonious social life (Saihu, 2020, p. 321). In simple or primitive societies, humans have characteristics that are completely homogeneous in terms of culture, religion and social structure. The religion that people understand like this is a religion that is close to symbols (Casram, 2016, p. 189). So this is what causes people to lack understanding of other people's religions and cultures because of the problem of being trapped in an attitude of homogeneity.

METHODS

According to Schertzer and Stone, counseling is an effort to help individuals through a personal interaction process between the counselor and the counselee so that the counselee is able to understand themselves and their environment, is able to make decisions and determine goals based on the values they believe in so that the counselee feels happy and their behavior is effective (Fatimah, 2022). Foucault explains in the genealogical concept of power how people regulate themselves and others through the production of knowledge, seeing knowledge as producing power by elevating people to become subjects and then ruling the subjects with knowledge (Ritzer, 2022).

Based on this view, if it is related to the condition of the Sasak Lombok community, in understanding the differences made in both religion and culture, then the above view will become a theoretical framework in understanding the condition of the community. Based on the explanation above, to see to what extent this counseling is used by the community in understanding the differences around them, and to focus research more on several problems that occur among the community, efforts are being made, among others. First, look for information on how far the counseling steps have been taken for the community to understand the differences. Second, look for data on the form of counseling for the Sasak community in understanding differences. To get an academic answer to this question will be enriching so that knowledge about social counseling becomes wider in studying Lombok society, especially when they see differences amidst the current of multiculturalism.

Thus, the various differences that appear, especially in the Sasak community, both in attitudes and daily behavior, apparently require the presence of counseling as a way for people to understand the differences that occur in their lives. Therefore, counseling can also have a positive influence on society, both in providing understanding about religion and culture, especially in seeing other people. On the other hand, people's beliefs in religion and culture have a big influence on people's understanding of differences and tolerance.

In line with that, William James's view of the relationship between religion and neurology tries to explain that religious life tends to make humans unique and eccentric individuals if taken seriously (Ubudiyah, 2020, p. 64). Various forms of social life seen from religious and cultural aspects which are related to each other, are sometimes misunderstood by some people who do not understand intellectually how to place the position of religion and cultural position in a society's life. In the understanding of the Sasak people, religion and culture have a very close relationship and are even intertwined. This is an opportunity for the growth of counseling in providing understanding and awareness to the community, to see other people's religions and cultures differently.

Apart from using the field observation method, namely observation and experience of being directly involved in the daily life of the Sasak people, this research article also uses the library study method (Pambayun, 2013, p. 137). This means that researchers, apart from going into the field directly to find data from empirical experiences, also carry out research on literature study objects available from various existing library studies, especially journals and books related to research problems, thereby extracting research data. by using literature studies, books and journals, both digital and manual, it becomes significant (Moleong, 2013, p. 40).

Based on this perspective, when it is linked to the condition of Sasak society in Lombok, particularly in their understanding of religious and cultural differences, the foregoing view serves as a theoretical framework for understanding the social realities of the community.

Drawing on the above exposition, in order to see the extent to which this form of counseling is employed by the community in understanding the differences that surround them, and to further focus the research on several issues that arise within society, a number of efforts were undertaken. First, to obtain information on the extent to which counseling initiatives have been carried out to help the community understand differences. Second, to collect data on the forms of counseling practiced by the Sasak community in dealing with diversity. Obtaining academic answers to these questions will enrich and expand the body of knowledge on social counseling in the study of Lombok society, especially when they perceive difference in the midst of the currents of multiculturalism.

Accordingly, the various differences that appear, especially among the Sasak community, both in attitudes and in everyday behavior, clearly require the presence of counseling as one of the means by which people can understand the differences that arise in their lives. Therefore, counseling can also generate positive effects within society, both in providing understanding of religion and culture, particularly in how people view others. At the same time, communal beliefs concerning religion and culture exert a strong influence on how people understand difference and practice tolerance.

In line with this, William James's view of the relationship between religion and neurology seeks to explain that religious life, when pursued in earnest, tends to form human beings into unique and even eccentric individuals. The various forms of social

life, when viewed from religious and cultural aspects that are interrelated, are often misunderstood by those who have not intellectually grasped how to position religion and culture within communal life. In the understanding of the Sasak people, religion and culture are very closely related and even intertwined. This condition creates an opportunity for the development of counseling in providing understanding and awareness to the community, so that they may view the religions and cultures of others from a more differentiated and reflective standpoint.

In addition to using field observation methods, namely direct observation and active participation in the everyday life of the Sasak community, this research article also employs a library research method. This means that, besides going directly into the field to obtain data from empirical experience, the researcher also conducts an examination of relevant literature available in various library sources, especially journals and books related to the research problem. Consequently, the collection of research data through the study of printed and digital books and journals becomes highly significant for strengthening and corroborating the data obtained from field observations.

Based on this view, if it is connected to the situation of the Sasak Lombok community, in understanding the differences made both in religious and cultural differences, the above view will be a theoretical framework in understanding the condition of society. Therefore, counselors such as BK teachers (Counseling Guidance) in schools or counselors in the field are required to know more about the ins and outs of counseling so that it is easy to read psychosocial stitutions in the field (www.indonesiastudents.com, 2022). By understanding the essence of counseling itself, a person or individual can implement himself or herself as a counselor in the community. Thus, counseling can be interpreted as a service or guidance provided by a counselor to a counselor who in his or her handling of how to find soluti ons to all problems experienced by the client. Usually the process of this counseling is carried out through social interaction between individuals and other individuals in the community, and this is an important social action for the community in understanding the meaning of counseling itself. While the forms of counselors can be seen in the life of the community itself, where counselors face the community.

In examining the forms of the counselor itself, it can be seen from the counselor's behavior in understanding social problems that occur in society, which results in the emergence of a solution to the problem to be resolved by the community itself. For this reason, in seeing how far the role of counseling is in providing understandin to the public regarding differences, the following explanation can be seen. As with the nature given by God to humans, humans were created by God as individual creatures as well as social creatures. As individuals, humans are created with traits and characteristics that are different from one another. Thus, humans or individuals can be recognized by other people by recognizing certain traits or characteristics they have (Suwarni, n.d). This means, humans were created to need each other which cannot be separated because they are interdependent. Because humans are also social creatures who do not

escape interacting with other people, they cannot be separated from the lives of other individuals. With t he psychological and sociological conditions of humans being inseparable from the lives of other people, this has become a normative social standard for every individual, because humans themselves are also created in pairs and need each other.

Meanwhile, the people who live on Lombok Island apparently have a wide variety of cultures, traditions and religions, including practicing religious and cultural rituals and others. These differences clearly influence and shape the social portrait in their daily lives . Therefore, in human life, religion and culture cannot actually stand alone or independently, but rather the two have a very close and intertwined relationship. This means that people are also required to be able to understand other people's religions and cultures rather than their own, so that they can live side by side in a social community. In order to live side by side sociologically, the Sasak people inevitably have to have a comprehensive understanding of the differences in the lives they live.

Indeed, discourse regarding differences in society in religion and culture seems to be commonplace, both on the island of Lombok and on all islands in Indonesia because of the political doctrine of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in Indonesia's Pancasila state. With these conditions of differences in social diversity, it will encourage the position of counseling to have a significant role in providing understanding to the community regarding the importance of understanding the differences they experience. A multicultural counseling approach, for example as an incentive for community groups to respect and accept each other, shows that the majority can respect the culture of the minorities. On the other hand, minorities can respect the existence of the majority culture (Wadi, 2019, p. 174).

In Islam's own view, there are clear differences in things that are usually taught, especially obligatory laws and sunnah as things that are recommended, and so on. Therefore, counseling guidance can raise public awareness in understanding religious and c ultural differences, especially in Islamic communities. Because of this, the phenomenon of social differences in people's lives today can indeed arise due to several factors that encourage the nature of differences to shape human perspectives and thought patterns, both in looking at religious, social, economic, political and cultural differences. This is an inevitable reality of society in the life of the Indonesian nation and state, moreover, religious and cultural differences have become a real and necess ary social relevance in the life of the human world society itself (Sinaga and Gulo, 2020, p. 100).

Due to this, several reasons for the emergence of natural differences in society, especially in the Sasak community, in turn foster the need for counseling in an effort to empower the co mmunity to understand the differences they face. The need for counseling also has an impact on social changes in society in viewing other people's religion and culture, which creates an attitude of not feeling self righteous,

and makes people open - minded in responding to the religious and cultural differences of the Sasak community.

Thus, to see the extent to which the Sasak people understand differences in religion and culture, it can be seen from several attitudes taken by the community, both the communit y's attitude in understanding religion and culture and the community's attitude in carrying out their daily lives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Counseling as a Social Empowerment Effort

Differences in people's lives have become sunnatullah or are commonplace, as humans are social creatures who have different views and different beliefs, even in their daily customs. The most prominent differences that emerge can be seen in the religion and culture of the Sasak people, so that the actions carried out by counselors in the Sasak Community are carried out by paying attention to the psychological conditions experienced by the counselor, through an attitude of acceptance of other people's conditi ons in the form of respecting and respecting other people, in accordance with the cultural elements in society that occur around it (Sinaga and Gulo, 2020, p. 101).

Various differences, especially in the Sasak community, both in attitudes and daily behavior, encourage the presence of counseling as a way for people to learn and understand the differences that exist in the midst of their social life. Counseling also has a positive influence on society, both in providing understanding about other people's religions and cultures. On the other hand, people's beliefs in terms of religious and cultural beliefs have a big influence on people's own understanding of differences.

Because it is in line with William James' view, that religious life tends to make humans have unique and genuine personalities. Various forms of social life, especially in the aspects of religion and culture, are closely related, although sometimes they are misunderstood by some people who do not yet understand how to balance the position of religion and culture in social life. In the understanding of the Sasak people, religion and culture have a close relationship, they are even integrated. This is what encourages the presence of counseling in providing understanding to the community regarding the differences in other people's religions and cultures.

This means that counseling is positioned as a social media for empowering the Sasak community in seeking understanding regarding their religious and cultural differences. The differences that emerge in Sasak society can be seen in religious ritual practices, traditions, social and other things. In this difference, counseling is present in reconstructing the s ocial knowledge of society on how to properly understand these differences, starting from the most detailed things to the biggest differences. The social construction strategy of counseling can be seen when the Sasak community carries out religious ritual practices during the celebration of religious holidays, for example the Sasak community also invites their neighbors, both Muslim and non - Muslim. And this is also done in celebrations and celebrations of the preservation of the cultural traditions of the Sasak people which foster an attitude of

mu tual respect and mutual help (gotong royong) for each other, without discriminating between their religions and groups.

Therefore, it is a living custom in the Sasak community that all religious groups can carry out social cooperation, for example in the construction of places of worship or in the construction of a public facility building. Of course, these customs encourage the Sasak people to increasingly understand their differences, as well as foster an attitude of tolerance towards other people's religions and cultures because it is in line with their view of social harmonization as part of the tribes living in the archipelago.

The customs as outlined above also seem to have taught the Sasak people social norms that must be maintained, for example rules for carrying out worship rituals, or social ethics in social interactions, as well as other social procedures from the easiest to the most difficult (Liliweri, 2022, pp. 18–19). For this reason, the Sasak community actually has many differences, and the presence of community counseling has a significant influence in providing an understanding of these differences, thereby giving birth to an attitude of tolerance between religions and cultu res that is maintained, including in achieving a harmonious social order in the Sasak community.

Model of Counseling for Religious and Cultural Figures Counseling as a social media for the Sasak community in understanding community differences in terms of religion, culture and others emerged because. there is tension and social conflict due to clashes between different views, religious, social and politic al. This tension arises when there is a social vacuum where there is no social media that can provide understanding to the public. It is from these situations and conditions that counseling then comes and is involved in resolving the differences that give rise to these conflicts, so that it plays a role in fostering an understanding among the Sasak people of how to respect their differences.

The social counseling guidance model which has a resolving nature is carried out by religious leaders and cultural fi gures of the Sasak community. Under the guidance of these figures, they play a role in providing understanding to the Sasak people on how to manage their own religious and cultural differences. Guidance counseling is carried out based on the spirit of Bhin neka Tunggal Ika which is the main motto of the Indonesian state in understanding differences, and how to find common ground amidst diversity. Therefore, in guidance counseling you must master and understand the social life of a multicultural society in depth and comprehensively (Deliani, p. 19).

In developing a counseling personality, the counselor's expertise is required to take a role that is in accordance with the characteristics of the counseling personality itself. With a model like this, it brings social change to society, especially in giving the Sasak people an understanding of how to understand religious and cultural differences. This was initiated by religious and cultural figures who were trusted by their own community. With the counseling role of these figures , who are also called communicators who have ethos and credibility (Pambayun, 2012, p. 43), it makes it

easier for them to become counselors who can provide understanding or practical guidance on the importance of fostering mutual respect between one another.

This means that the presence of religious and cultural figures strengthens social status and shapes the construction of social knowledge in Sasak society, so that they provide counseling in understanding the various differences that exist in Sasak society. The counseling role of these figures then becomes role models and role models for society, so that like it or not the figures must have knowledge and social power in their social world. Likewise, Foucault's theoretical view is that power is no longer just oppressive or limiting but power functions more productively rather than repressively and negatively (Siregar, 2021, p. 5).

Therefore, the forms of authoritative power possessed by religious and cultural figures present a pattern of social change in Sasak society, especially in seeing the differences they have with other people. This awareness cannot be separated from the wealth of knowledge possessed by these community leaders. With this counseling model, the figures indirectly become counselors in society. For this reason, th e Sasak people seek advice and advice from figures, especially in dealing with various problems that arise in the religious and cultural life of the community itself.

This means that in the end the Sasak people have become a type of society that can unders tand their differences. In terms of forming people's understanding of religious and cultural differences, this will in turn foster an attitude of social tolerance in the Sasak community itself. The social tolerance practiced by the Sasak people can be seen , for example, in their daily life activities which appear to live in religious harmony and social harmony.

The act of counseling in this case brings about a very significant social change in providing an understanding of the respect for differences in the Sasak community, which can be seen from the steps taken by these figures, especially those who have extensive power and knowledge in responding to the differences faced by the Sasak community. In understanding these differences, social figures or elites provide practical solutions and targeted guidance that are in line with the needs of the Sasak people themselves. Providing guidance and direction for solutions when the public asks these elites or figures, either directly or indirectly. These community figures or social elites then provide understanding to the community through the medium of preaching the Koran or during celebrations of traditions and customs.

The media of preaching and celebrating traditions and customs which are carried out continuously b y presenting the role of the social elite then foster an understanding in society about the importance of differences. The Sasak people can understand the naturalistic differences they face, and they then understand the importance of living in social harmo ny with one another as members of the Sasak community. With an understanding of respect for these differences, society can live in harmony and avoid the emergence of social tensions and conflicts, whether due to differences in religion, culture or other differences.

CONCLUSIONS

Counseling as an effort to socially empower the Sasak community in providing understanding to the community about religious and cultural differences has an important and significant social position and role. The emergence of religious and cultural differen ces encourages the emergence of counseling roles in society, so that they are required to have sufficient knowledge and social power in Sasak society. This is done because social roles and status can produce social change regarding how to give rise to people's understanding in responding to differences in their daily lives, especially in the fields of religious and cultural life.

The role of social counseling here is carried out by religious and cultural leaders. These social figures or elites have suffici ent knowledge and social power so that they have the authoritative ability to shape their role as social counselors in society. The role of counseling in turn is to bring about changes in people's views in seeing differences in other people's religions and cultures through awareness, knowledge and understanding of these differences. As a figure or social elite in the Sasak community, presenting an understanding that is easily accepted by the community itself has relevance to their local knowledge about Sas ak society. Therefore, the social elites who provide counseling to the community in an effort to understand the differences that give rise to an attitude of tolerance are carried out through the media of religious preaching and the media of social traditions and celebrations of the local culture of the community itself, so that the presence of counseling is truly needed by the Sasak community.

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