



## SELF-COMPASSION: HOW DOES IT MODERATE THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ON PROSPECTIVE COUNSELORS' CULTURAL HUMILITY?

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### Abstract

The phenomenon of the teacher marketplace requires prospective counselors of Semarang State University (UNNES) to improve competence in the field of culture, one of which is cultural humility. The inconsistency between the results of the counselor candidate interview and the measurement of counselees who practice with UNNES counselor candidates is the urgency of this study to examine the influence of cultural knowledge on cultural humility. This influence can be strengthened or weakened by intrinsic encouragement through self-compassion. This study aims to determine the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility in terms of self-compassion in UNNES counselor candidates. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlation research design. The subjects of this study were 132 of the total population of 196 counseling students of the FIPP UNNES class of 2020 and 2021 who were selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The methods used are descriptive analysis, simple linear regression, and Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). Based on the results of descriptive analysis, the cultural knowledge variable is in the medium category ( $M = 35.90$   $SD = 4.49$ ), the cultural humility variable is in the high category ( $M = 53.04$   $SD = 4.80$ ), and the self-compassion variable is in the medium category ( $M = 38.60$   $SD = 5.18$ ). The results showed that cultural knowledge was proven to affect cultural humility by 34.7% and self-compassion had a moderating effect on the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates by 51.6%. Referring to this, the researcher recommends further research to explore the demographic role of respondents and conduct causality or mixed method research that does not only use psychological scale measurement tools.

**Keywords:** cultural knowledge, cultural humility, self-compassion.

### Introduction

Kemendikbudristek proposes a "Teacher Marketplace" policy as a solution to the equalization and distribution of the teaching workforce throughout Indonesia. (Ismatiah et al., 2023). The policy requires teachers to improve their competence and quality to compete (Isnanto, 2023). One of the important competencies to improve is culture-based competence because it relates to teachers' views on other people's cultural backgrounds. If teachers do not master these competencies, racism or discrimination can occur in the school environment.

According to detiknews.com, a teacher at SMAN 58 Jakarta was racist towards non-Muslim students for inviting students to vote for a Muslim candidate for the head of the Intra-School Student Organization (OSIS) (Ikhsanudin, 2020). Teacher discrimination against students also occurred some time ago. Sugianto (2023) revealed that hundreds of

students at SLTPN 1 Maniis Purwakarta were discriminated against by unscrupulous BK teachers and other teachers by having their hair shaved irregularly. Some of these cases show that teachers are not ready to deal with students with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the urgency for teachers and prospective teachers to master culture-based competencies is quite urgent, including prospective Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers or school counselors.

The attitude of respecting and accepting the background of students or counselees regardless of their condition is very crucial in BK services, especially responsive services such as counseling. Counselors are required to minimize the occurrence of cultural bias with counselees, especially counselees who have different cultural backgrounds. The attitude of respect and tolerance is closely related to cultural humility. Tervalon & Murray Garcia (1998) The attitude of respecting and accepting the background of students or counselees regardless of their condition is very crucial in BK services, especially responsive services such as counseling. Counselors are required to minimize the occurrence of cultural bias with counselees, especially counselees who have different cultural backgrounds. The attitude of respect and tolerance is closely related to cultural humility. In line with this definition, the research results from Zhu et al., (2021) and Zhang et al., (2022) revealed that cultural humility does not only focus on interpersonal relationships but also affects counselors' intrapersonal relationships. Foronda (2016) developed 5 attributes of cultural humility, among these are openness, self-awareness, ego-less, supportive interactions, self-reflection and critique.

The researcher conducted a preliminary study through two methods, namely surveys and interviews. The survey was aimed at 35 counselees from prospective counselors of Semarang State University (UNNES) class of 2020 and 2021. The results showed that there was 1 person in the low category, 5 people in the medium category, and 29 people in the high category. Although in general, the level of cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates is high, they tend to behave superior to counselees. 75% of the counselees considered the counselors who handled them already felt that they knew many things about the counselees. 57% of the counselor candidates considered that the counselor made assumptions or judgments about the counselee. Referring to the results of the assessment, UNNES counselor candidates who show a superior side in front of the counselees have not comprehensively applied cultural humility, especially in the ego-less attribute. This is because UNNES counselor candidates still view the counselee more dominantly from their point of view rather than the counselee's cultural point of view.

In addition to using surveys, researchers also conducted structured interviews with 6 UNNES counseling students (prospective counselors) class of 2020 and 2021. Based on the results of the interview, they consider that cultural differences between counselees and counselors are very important to consider. This shows that the level of cultural awareness of UNNES counselor candidates is quite good. Not only that, some UNNES counselor candidates admitted that they were afraid to ask for feedback from supervisors. They have not taken the initiative to contact the supervisor when facing problems in the counseling session. All UNNES counselor candidates interviewed agreed that self-reflection is very important after the counseling session. However, some of them lead to self-criticism. Based on these findings, there is still a discrepancy in the results of cultural humility between the assessment of counselees and the interviews of counselor candidates. The cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates that is not optimal needs to be studied further so that it can be improved.

Zhu et al., research (2021) conducted on educational/school counselors revealed several factors that can facilitate a person to increase cultural humility, one of which is cultural understanding related to the cognitive aspects of prospective counselors. This understanding can be obtained from the educational process of becoming a counselor or

counseling teacher. Typically, prospective counselors will be formed to master cultural competence in counseling or multicultural counseling competencies. Sue & Sue (2008) stated that cultural competence in counseling relates to the counselor's cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills in meeting the needs of diverse counsees. Nguyen et al., (2021) stated that counselors' cultural awareness of counsees is a common element in cultural competence and cultural humility. Furthermore, Dore in Masters et al., (2019) shows the results of research that cultural humility is a form of advanced practice or critical attitude from cultural knowledge. Therefore, researchers will examine the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility.

Sue & Zane (1987) defines cultural knowledge as the understanding and awareness one has of the values and views of different cultures. Sue et al., (1992) developed the cultural knowledge dimension in 3 characteristics of multicultural counseling competence. The characteristics are (a) the counselor's awareness of assumptions, values, and biases; (b) understanding of the life views of culturally different counsees; (c) the development of intervention strategies that are with the cultural conditions of the counsee. Cultural knowledge is relevant to study its influence on cultural humility in UNNES counselor candidates because it is related to the factor of deep cultural understanding and can build counseling relationships with counsees from various cultural backgrounds to be more effective (S. Sue & Zane, 1987). The relevance of this research is reinforced by Zhu et al., (2021) research which recommends that future studies examine the relationship of cultural humility with relevant cultural concepts such as elements of cultural competence or if in the field of counseling guidance is an element of multicultural counseling competence..

Apart from cultural knowledge, other predictor variables can affect cultural humility. Bodlovic & Jackson (2018) research result shows that the cultural humility approach is able to reduce students' obstacles to self-compassion. In line with the results of previous research, Zhu et al., (2021) stated that cultural humility involves a balanced position between self-orientation and other-orientation. This means that counselors with a high level of cultural humility are not only concerned with others, but also with themselves.

Self-compassion is a form of caring for oneself when facing various problems in life. (K. Neff, 2003). 3 elements mark self-compassion. They are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (K. . Neff, 2016). Gottlieb & Shibusawa (2020) stated that high self-compassion predicts higher cultural competence. about Chen et.al (2018) revealed that the 2 strongest predictors of cultural competence are cultural encounters and cultural knowledge. Based on these two research results, it can be assumed that high self-compassion can indirectly predict higher cultural knowledge. Contrary to previous research, Nobahar et.al (2022) showed no significant relationship between self-compassion and cultural competence.

The inconsistency of the research results above raises the self-compassion hypothesis as a moderating variable that can strengthen or weaken the influence of cultural knowledge on cultural humility. The rationale is that counselors who can focus their attention on counseling sessions will find it easier to understand the unique characteristics of their counsees. This understanding gives rise to an attitude of empathy and respect that is by the conditions of the counsee. This greatly allows the formation of a mutually supportive relationship between the counselor and the counsee, so that the potential for cultural bias and assumptions of the counselor towards the counsee can be avoided.

The description of the argumentation and research results that have been presented previously, raises the novelty of the research to be carried out. The novelty of the research lies in the number and combination of variables used. The use of cultural knowledge variables is a form of research focus that is more in-depth than cultural competence in multicultural counseling studies. Self-compassion as a moderating variable of cultural

humility and cultural knowledge has not been explored in previous research. This research has implications for the counseling profession and the field of guidance and counseling, especially in the context of the academic and professional competencies of counselors as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education (Permendiknas) No. 27 of 2008. This research is important to conduct on UNNES counselor candidates because multicultural competence is still underestimated. When practicing in the field, counselors will deal with counselees from various diverse and unique cultural backgrounds. Therefore, what is expected from this research is to be able to increase awareness as well as understanding of counselor candidates to develop cultural humility and multicultural competence which can be a high competitive value in the world of work.

## Method

This study uses a quantitative method with an explanatory correlation design. Creswell (2012) defined explanatory correlation as a correlational design that explains the relationship of two or more variables without establishing a causal relationship. The subjects of this study were 132 out of a total population of 196 prospective counselors or Bimbingan dan Konseling Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan dan Psikologi students (BK FIPP UNNES) class of 2020 and 2021. The sampling technique used proportionate stratified random sampling. According to Azwar (2016) proportionate stratified random sampling is a technique of taking samples by comparing the number of samples from each level and taking them randomly to represent the entire population.

The primary data source of this research comes from the results of psychological scales regarding the level of cultural knowledge, cultural humility, and self-compassion. The cultural knowledge scale is compiled based on the theory of Sue et al, (1992) a total of 13 statement items. The cultural humility scale refers to Foronda et al.'s theory (2016) a total of 17 statement items. While the self-compassion scale is based on Neff's theory (2003) a total of 13 statement items. The three statement items have been tested for validity and reliability. The results of the cultural knowledge scale validity test are in the range of 0.320-0.551, the cultural humility scale in the range of 0.351-0.627, and the self-compassion scale in the range of 0.333-0.794. Cronbach's alpha value of the cultural knowledge scale reliability test results is 0.782, the cultural humility scale is 0.789, and the self-compassion scale is 0.880. Referring to the results of the two tests, the scale was declared valid and reliable.

The data analysis method in this study uses descriptive analysis, simple linear regression, and Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) with the help of the IBM SPSS version 26 application. Before conducting hypothesis testing, researchers conducted a classic assumption test. Referring to Ghozali (2021), there are 4 types of classic assumption tests in this study which include: (1) normality test; (2) linearity test; (3) multicollinearity test; and (4) heteroscedasticity test.

## Result and Discussion

Descriptive analysis shows an overview of the variables of cultural knowledge, cultural humility, and self-compassion. Overall, the level of cultural knowledge of UNNES counselor candidates is in the medium category ( $M = 35.90$  and  $SD = 4.49$ ), cultural humility in the high category ( $M = 53.04$  and  $SD = 4.80$ ), and self-compassion in the medium category ( $M = 38.60$  and  $SD = 5.18$ ). More details can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive analysis result**

Variable	N	M	SD	Category
Cultural Knowledge	132	35.90	4.49	Medium
Cultural Humility	132	53.04	4.80	High
Self-Compassion	132	38.60	5.18	Medium

Based on the findings in table 1. the order of variables from the highest mean is cultural humility, self-compassion, and cultural knowledge. Foronda et al., (2016) stated that individuals who are able to apply cultural humility well will display attitudes and ways of thinking that are open, critical, always self-reflect, and support each other without putting themselves down. As for individuals who have a low level of cultural humility, they tend to easily make assumptions about others, act superior, and think they understand more than what happens (Subhi, 2018). The level of cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates in the high category indicates that counselor candidates are able to think and be open when carrying out counseling practices with counsees who have different cultural backgrounds. For example, showing a calm body condition, not panicking, and not being shy to ask questions if experiencing confusion. If there are differences of opinion or principles, prospective counselors will continue to listen and accept the counselee as they are. After the counseling practice, prospective counselors also take the initiative to ask the supervisor or dare to report the evaluation of counseling practice to the supervisor/lecturer.

The second variable is self-compassion. Tylka et al., (2015) explained that a person with self-compassion has the ability to go through difficult situations well because they choose to be caring and compassionate towards themselves. They do not choose to give negative criticism or bad judgment towards themselves. As for someone who is not compassionate towards themselves, they tend to reject and avoid the complicated things they are going through (Yokapina & Hariastuti, 2021).

Referring to the results of descriptive analysis, the level of self-compassion of UNNES counselor candidates is in the moderate category. The results of this study are in line with self-compassion research conducted on students in Iran by Nobahar et al., (2022) and Kotera et al., (2020) in England. The moderate category indicates that counselor candidates are able to interpret every event that occurs in their lives, including in counseling practice with full self-care. However, they tend to judge themselves if they make mistakes. In addition, they also try to stay focused even though they sometimes think of other things outside of practice. Self-compassion which is overall in the moderate category describes that UNNES counselor candidates are not yet optimal for compassion towards themselves. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve the self-compassion of UNNES counselor candidates.

Gilbert and Procter in Antika et al., (2022) stated that compassionate mind training can help one to overcome feelings of humiliation and self-criticism. This training will help prospective counselors to accept themselves with all their shortcomings and strengths, so that they can provide the same energy to counsees when they practice counseling. As for the institution or study program of Guidance and Counseling according to Karinda (2020), can contribute by teaching the proper handling of negative emotions to prospective counselors. It is hoped that this teaching can help prospective counselors to remain calm and compassionate when negative emotions arise in themselves.

The variable with the lowest mean in the results of descriptive analysis of this study is cultural knowledge. Hajjar et.al., (2014) stated that counseling teachers who can understand the perspective of the counselee in terms of knowledge can be identified as follows: (1) the counseling teacher has a specific understanding and sufficient information about the counselee; (2) the counseling teacher understands the differences in cultural background with the counselee; (3) the counseling teacher understands how culture, race,

and ethnicity affect the counselee's personality; (4) the counseling teacher knows the counselee's bad experiences that may be influential in counseling. The counselor's lack of knowledge of the counselee's cultural background will affect the counselee's trust during the counseling process. (Sodowsky, 1996).

Referring to the results of descriptive analysis that has been done in this study, the level of cultural knowledge of UNNES counselor candidates is in the moderate category. This result is in line with the findings of research conducted by Simon and Hidayat (2022) on prospective counselor 2 students of Indonesian LPTK. The study revealed that the level of cultural knowledge of counselor candidates in Indonesia was in the moderate category. This shows that prospective counselors in carrying out counseling practices with counsees who have different cultural backgrounds are aware of these differences. This awareness is quite easy to understand, but difficult to display, so that some time in counseling practice, prospective counselors show an attitude that does not respect differences. In addition, prospective counselors also understand the characteristics of the counselee but find it difficult to determine the appropriate intervention.

Based on the results of descriptive analysis, the level of cultural knowledge of UNNES counselor candidates is not optimal so it needs efforts to improve it. These efforts can be through multicultural counseling practice training with counsees who have many differences in cultural backgrounds. This provides an opportunity for UNNES counselor candidates to increase knowledge about other cultures by interacting more with different cultures in counseling practice. (Ho & Oh, 2022). In addition, some activities such as the habituation of reflective writing, the use of sociocultural case studies can also be done as a habit in undergraduate guidance and counseling education so that multicultural values in prospective UNNES counselor students can be internalized. (Simon & Hidayat, 2022).

Before conducting hypothesis testing, researchers first conducted a classic assumption test. The results show that the data obtained by researchers are normal, linear, no multicollinearity, and no heteroscedasticity. Therefore, researchers can conduct hypothesis testing. The details of the classical assumption test results can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Equation**

No	Classical Assumptions	Sig.	Decision
1	Normality test	0.200	Normal
2	Linierity Test	0.200	Linier
3	Multicollinearity	0.764	No multicollinearity
4	Heteroscedasticity testing on the cultural knowledge	0.929	No heteroscedasticity
5	Heteroscedasticity testing on the self-compassion	0.588	No heteroscedasticity

The first hypothesis test of this study used simple linear regression with the help of SPSS version 26. The results show that cultural knowledge has an effect on cultural humility. Further, it is detailed in table 3.

**Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Equation**

Variabel	B	Std. Error	T hitung	Sig.
(constant)	31.209	2.649	11.782	0.000
Cultural Knowledge	0.608	0.073	8.335	0.000

Based on table 2. the significance value of the cultural knowledge variable is 0.000 < 0.05. This means that the independent variable (cultural knowledge) has a significant effect on the dependent variable (cultural humility). The magnitude of this influence can be reviewed in table 4.

**Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Test Results**

R	R square	Adjust R Square
0.589	0.347	0.342

Looking at table 4.12, it is known that the R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.347. This means that the effect of the independent variable, namely cultural knowledge on the dependent variable, which in this study is cultural humility, is 34.7%. Although there has been no previous research that directly examines the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility, there are several studies that examine the correlation between cultural humility and cultural competence. Chen et al., (2018) stated that 1 of the 2 strongest aspects that influence high cultural competence is cultural knowledge. Therefore, this study makes the results of the correlation of cultural humility with cultural competence as the basis for previous research.

In line with the results of the analysis in this study, Hook et al., Owen et al., dalam McElroy-Heltzel et al., (2019) stated that the cultural humility scale is strongly correlated with cultural competence. These findings are reinforced by the results of qualitative research Walton et al., (2023) which reveals that cultural humility can be built on the basis of strong cultural competence. That is, a good understanding of the cultural background of the counselee can strengthen prospective counselors to be respectful, build mutually supportive interactions, and other cultural humility applications in counseling practice.

The results of this study reveal that the cultural knowledge of UNNES counselor candidates falls into the medium category and cultural humility in the high category. Although the findings show that the cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates is optimal, cultural knowledge still needs to be improved. Cultural knowledge as part of cultural competence is important to be equalized in order to create a more optimal multicultural counseling practice. This is in accordance with Walton et al., (2023) The second hypothesis test was conducted by MRA analysis, which explained that cultural competence and cultural humility would be more meaningful if applied together in a service practice.

The second hypothesis test was carried out by MRA analysis with the help of SPSS version 26. In more detail, the equation of the MRA test results can be seen in table 5.

**Table 5. MRA Equation**

Variabel	B	Std. Error	T hitung	Sig.
(constant)	4.317	13.946	0.310	0.757
<i>Cultural Knowledge*Self-Compassion</i>	0.019	0.010	2.014	0.046
<i>Self-Compassion</i>	1.097	0.345	3.181	0.002
<i>Cultural Knowledge</i>	1.174	0.400	2.938	0.004

Based on table 4, the significance value of cultural knowledge \* self-compassion is  $0.046 < 0.05$ . This means that self-compassion has a significant moderating effect on the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility. Referring to these results, it can be concluded that the second hypothesis of this study is accepted. In addition to the significance value of cultural knowledge \* self-compassion, the significance value of the cultural knowledge variable is  $0.004 < 0.05$  and self-compassion is  $0.002 < 0.05$ . This means that these two variables have a significant influence on cultural humility. The amount of influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable after being moderated by the moderator variable is presented in table 6.

**Table 6. MRA Test Results**

R	R square	Adjust R Square
0.718	0.516	0.505

Looking at the results of table 4.14, it is known that  $R^2$  is 0.516. This means that the contribution of the influence of cultural knowledge on cultural humility after the moderating effect of self-compassion is 51.6%. Although there is no research that directly correlates the variables of self-compassion, cultural knowledge, and cultural humility. However, there are several research results that can be used as a reference for this research. Gottlieb & Shibusawa (2020) stated that high self-compassion predicts high cultural competence. This means that self-compassion is able to influence cultural competence, one aspect of which is cultural knowledge. This is in line with the results of the research that has been done.

The results of the research that has been done can be used as a reference for future research that will examine cultural knowledge, cultural humility, and self-compassion. This is because the findings in this study are different from several other research results that have been studied first. Nobahar et al., (2022) stated that self-compassion and cultural competence do not have a significant relationship. While Rikard (2022) explained that no significant relationship was found between self-compassion and cultural humility.

The findings in this study indicate that self-compassion can moderate the influence of cultural knowledge on cultural humility. This means that when UNNES counselor candidates have a high level of self-compassion, the impact of cultural knowledge on cultural humility is stronger. These results highlight the importance of self-compassion in developing cultural humility. Although cultural knowledge in UNNES counselors is moderate, the moderating effect of self-compassion which is also in the moderate category can increase cultural humility by 51.6%. This shows that both variables are strong enough to influence cultural humility even though they are in the moderate category.

When viewed from the indicators of each variable, the rationalization is that prospective counselors who are able to be compassionate towards themselves will find it easier to be compassionate towards others and easily understand the unique characteristics of the counselee. This understanding gives rise to an attitude of empathy and respect that is in accordance with the condition of the counselee. This greatly allows the formation of a mutually supportive relationship from the counselor and the counselee, so that the potential for cultural bias and counselor assumptions about the counselee can be avoided. This statement is in accordance with the expression of Neff et al., (2008) that a person who is able to be compassionate to himself will find it easier to be kind to others.

Prospective counselors who are able to accept all situations well, without blaming or judging themselves, tend to find it easier to reflect on themselves during counseling practice. The results of the reflection will later be voluntarily communicated to the supervisor/lecturer in order to get feedback as material for evaluating the next practice. The attitude reflected in prospective counselors is in accordance with the characteristics of self-compassion, namely having the awareness to tell stories and reduce the burden of suffering. (Antika et al., 2022; Gilbert, 2010; K. Neff, 2003; Wibowo & Naini, 2021)

Self-compassion only provides a moderator effect on the effect of cultural knowledge on cultural humility of 51.6%. This means that there are still other moderator and predictor variables that influence outside of this study. Zhang et al., (2022) details several variables that are potential predictors, mediators, or moderators with cultural humility variables, including self-efficacy, supervision satisfaction, and openness. Kondili's et al., (2022) research suggests that counselors who more often attend multicultural training and have a high level of quiet ego tend to have a higher level of



cultural humility. Based on some of these studies, it can be concluded that there are other possible factors that can predict, strengthen, and weaken cultural humility besides self-compassion and cultural knowledge.

This study has several limitations that hopefully can be completed in the next study. This study uses a limited measuring instrument of psychological scales only, so it does not reveal the phenomenon more comprehensively. In addition, this study is limited to correlational research it does not include a discussion of the cause and effect between the variables of cultural knowledge, cultural humility, and self-compassion. Another limitation is that the respondents of this study only focused on prospective counselor students, so they did not explore the demographic roles of respondents, such as age, gender, and regional origin.

## Conclusion

Based on the research results mentioned above, the level of cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates is in the high category, with cultural knowledge and self-compassion in the medium category. Therefore, both variables need to be improved. Efforts to increase self-compassion in prospective counselors can be through compassionate mind training and to increase cultural knowledge can be done by habituating counseling practices with counselees who have many differences in cultural backgrounds. Although both independent variables are moderate, both are able to have a positive influence on the dependent variable. Self-compassion is proven to have a moderating effect on the influence of cultural knowledge on the cultural humility of UNNES counselor candidates. This study has several limitations. Therefore, the researcher provides recommendations so that future researchers can explore the demographic role of respondents. Future researchers can also develop causality or mixed method research methods that do not only use psychological scale measurement tools so that research findings are more comprehensive.

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