



## Impact on Growing Diversity & Multi-Cultural Counseling at Work Place in Singapore: A Review

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### ABSTRACT

Globalization has contributed to the growth of a culturally diverse workforce in the world, including Singapore. The prevailing influx of foreign talents and immigrants in the last decade has led to growing diversity and multi-cultural trends in the workplace. There is a growing need to develop tools that could help in the operationalization of multicultural competencies so as to help counselors develop the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to build culturally sensitive working alliance and adopt culturally appropriate interventions in counselling. The beginnings of the concept of multi-culturalism could be traced to Horace Kallen who advocated for cultural pluralism in America and arguing against assimilation and melting-pot theories of his times. However, it was sociologist, Stuart Hall who became known as the godfather of multi-culturalism because of his influential contributions in the fields of sociology and cultural studies, especially in the area of race, ethnicity and gender. He defined multi-culturalism as “strategies and policies adopted to govern and manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multicultural societies throw up.” Also, according to him, the term, ‘ multi-cultural ’, when used adjectivally then “ describes the social characteristics and problems of governance posed by any society in which different cultural communities live together and attempt to build a common life while retaining some of their ‘original’ identity. Cheung emphasizes the important relationship

between culture and psychopathology. She suggests that “culture defines what constitutes problems and explains the nature and cause of these problems ” [13,14]. A multi-cultural psychology would be concerned with “the psychological reactions of individuals and groups caught up in culturally heterogeneous settings” including the “behaviors, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes” that result from living in such conditions [15]. When applied specifically to the context of the counseling relationship between the counselor and the client, it is interested in how the interaction of different cultural identities in the context of counseling affects the outcomes of the counseling process. Defining and understanding multi-cultureless in the context of the field of counseling is a key foundational concept of this research paper. It is therefore, pertinent to discuss the literature review related to multi-cultural counseling and consider its implication to this study. Multi-cultural counseling originated in the 1950s in the US in response to a growing diversity in race, culture and language. Counseling in the context of multi-cultureless therefore needs to consider not just ethnic and cultural factors but diversity issues such as age, gender, ability, religion, language, social-economic status and issues, political factors, sexual orientation and the global environment. Since both the client and counselor bring their unique cultural identities into the counseling, the interaction that happens between

them is a process of multicultural interaction [12,18]. If therapeutic alliance is so key to effective therapeutic outcomes, then counselors need to work at building culturally-sensitive working relationship with their clients. A major criticism of counseling and psychotherapy that have been conceptualized in Western is that these Western theories are based on individualistic western values that do not consider the cultural values, beliefs, norms of other ethnic groups, hindering the effectiveness of counseling ” . Counseling professionals who use theory and training based on the monocultural perspective often make the assumption that such a theory base can be applicable to all populations”.Changes in the demographics of society has indeed brought with it new challenges to the workplace, as well as to the counseling profession in Singapore. One such challenge is the need for counselors to be better equipped in multi-cultural counseling competencies in their professional training, so they can be more effective in building a culturally sensitive working alliance with the culturally diverse.

**Keywords:** Diversity; Multi-culturalism; Globalization; Counseling