



## The Integration of the Huma Betang Philosophy into Indigenous Counseling Services in Central Kalimantan: an Ethnographic Study

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### ABSTRACT

The dominance of Western counseling models often limits the cultural relevance of psychological services for indigenous communities in Indonesia. This study explores how the Huma Betang philosophy can be integrated into indigenous counseling services for the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan. A qualitative focused ethnographic design was employed in Tumbang Malahoi Village, Gunung Mas Regency. Four key informants, consisting of two customary leaders (Mantir) and two guidance and counseling practitioners, were purposively selected because of their extensive knowledge and practical experience with Huma Betang values and indigenous helping practices. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using Creswell's qualitative procedures integrated with Spradley's ethnographic analysis, including domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analyses. The findings reveal that Huma Betang functions as the collective worldview of the Dayak people by emphasizing togetherness, equality, tolerance, mutual cooperation, deliberation, and restorative conflict resolution. These values are manifested in helping communication through kinship-based dialogue, customary mediation, and communal support systems. The study concludes that integrating Huma Betang philosophy provides a culturally responsive framework for indigenous counseling that strengthens psychological support while preserving local wisdom within the Dayak community.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country characterized by a diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, and value systems that have evolved over generations within its communities. Cultural values are not only present in the form of traditions and rituals but also shape how individuals understand life, social relationships, and problem-solving. One form of local wisdom that has developed in Central Kalimantan is the Huma Betang philosophy among the Dayak people (Loi et al., 2023). This philosophy not only represents the traditional longhouse of the Dayak people but also serves as a worldview that emphasizes the values of togetherness, tolerance, mutual aid, equality, and harmonious living. According to Rico et al., (2022), the Huma Betang philosophy has become a cultural norm of communication for the Dayak people in building a harmonious social life. These values have evolved into a social system that influences how the community views conflict and resolves issues through a consultative and kinship-based approach. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's social constructivism, cultural values such as Huma Betang are the result of social construction passed down through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization until they become the collective worldview of the community (Tripathi, 2024).

However, in the practice of guidance and counseling in Indonesia, approaches based on local culture remain relatively limited. Most counseling services are still dominated by a Western paradigm that tends to be individualistic, and thus do not yet fully align with the collective nature of Indonesian society (Sari, 2026). This situation

creates a cultural gap in the practice of psychological support services, particularly among the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan. Keklik, (2023) has explained the importance of bridging this cultural gap, noting that it is necessary to make adjustments or adapt counseling approaches to suit the local context, thereby eliminating reliance on practices or theories that are unsuitable for use within the local culture. Indigenous counseling emerges as an approach that seeks to integrate local cultural values, beliefs, and practices into the psychological assistance process. Tassell-Matamua, (2025) explains that “indigenous” refers to how a community possesses a unique perspective on the cultural traditions inherited from a particular culture. Furthermore, Sue et al., (2019) explain that indigenous counseling is a practice of assistance rooted in the knowledge systems and cultural values of the local community. Thus, counseling services do not focus solely on intervention techniques but also consider the client’s worldview as a crucial component of the assistance process.

Research on the integration of local cultural values into counseling has increasingly highlighted the importance of culturally responsive and indigenous approaches in Indonesia. Recent studies have examined the integration of local wisdom through Kejatmikaan Counseling (Mubarok et al., 2025) Balinese indigenous values in multicultural counseling (Budiasa et al., 2024), and the Nazar ke Puyang tradition in indigenous counseling (Karlin et al., 2024) These studies demonstrate that local cultural values can provide contextual resources for understanding individuals and strengthening helping practices. However, research specifically examining how the Huma Betang philosophy is interpreted as a worldview of the Dayak people and manifested in helping communication practices, particularly as a basis for culturally sensitive indigenous counseling services in Central Kalimantan, remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the Huma Betang philosophy is interpreted as a worldview of the Dayak people, how its values are manifested in helping communication practices, and how these values are relevant to the development of culturally sensitive indigenous counseling services.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a focused ethnographic design to explore the integration of the Huma Betang philosophy into indigenous counseling services in Central Kalimantan. The qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of social and cultural phenomena within their natural context (Ramli et al., 2022). An ethnographic design was chosen because the study focuses on the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the Dayak people related to helping communication and problem-solving (Creswell, 2015).

The research was conducted in Tumbang Malahoi Village, Gunung Mas Regency, Central Kalimantan. The researcher served as the primary instrument (human instrument) through direct field involvement, conducting participant observation and in-depth interviews. The study involved four key informants because the research adopted a focused ethnographic design that prioritizes information-rich participants rather than statistical representation. Each participant possessed extensive cultural authority or professional experience relevant to the Huma Betang philosophy and indigenous helping practices. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, whereby no substantially new cultural meanings or categories emerged during subsequent interviews and observations. Therefore, the selected participants

were considered sufficient to address the research objectives. Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection. The analysis began with open coding, in which meaningful statements and recurring concepts were identified from interview transcripts, observation records, field notes, and documents. The initial codes were then organized into broader cultural categories through domain analysis. Taxonomic analysis was subsequently conducted to examine the internal structure and relationships among categories within each domain, followed by componential analysis to identify similarities and differences among cultural elements. The identified relationships and meanings were then synthesized through cultural theme analysis to formulate broader cultural patterns related to the Huma Betang philosophy and helping communication. Negative case analysis was also used to examine findings that differed from or did not conform to the emerging cultural patterns. This analytical process followed the ethnographic framework of Spradley, (2016), while the qualitative coding and categorization procedures were informed by Creswell's qualitative data analysis approach (Creswell, 2015).

To ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings, triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from different sources and through different data collection methods. Source triangulation involved comparing information provided by the research informants, while method triangulation involved comparing findings from in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. When discrepancies were identified, the relevant field data were re-examined and compared to determine whether the differences reflected variations in participants' perspectives or required further interpretation. Member checking was also conducted by confirming preliminary interpretations with the relevant research informants. Through these procedures, the interpretations were continuously checked against the field data to ensure that the findings remained grounded in the experiences, meanings, and cultural practices of the Dayak community.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Research findings indicate that Huma Betang is understood not only as a dwelling or physical structure but also as a collective worldview that organizes harmonious social relationships. The data show that the physical space of Huma Betang is closely connected with collective life, while values such as togetherness, mutual cooperation, tolerance, equality, deliberation, kinship, and harmony are expressed in everyday interaction and problem solving. This interpretation is consistent with Nofandi et al., (2022) who identify Huma Betang as a foundation of social harmony among Dayak communities in Central Kalimantan. The interview data below illustrate this meaning.

*"Fondasi itu? memang kalau sejarahnya dulu itu, fondasi itu memang apaya sebutnya. Fondasi Rumah Betang itu kan banyak tokoh-tokoh yang berkumpul di situ."*

Identifying it as a place of gathering and interaction.  
The village head of Jekan Raya himself stated that

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*"Yang lain-lain, mereka satu tempat. Berarti, disitu merupakan lambang persatuan. Jadi, tidak ada yang artinya yang saling memisah. Antara satu dengan lain. Hidup damai."*

Conflict resolution is carried out through a persuasive and family-oriented approach, with the primary goal of restoring social relationships, not merely determining who is right or wrong. As the Jekan Raya village head noted,

*"Ada juga hal mediasi. Mempertemukan kedua-dua pihak, dirujuk untuk berdamai."*

This finding indicates that Dayak communities possess a natural helping system rooted in local culture. To assist when problems arise and to facilitate reconciliation. This aligns with the research Rico et al., (2022), which explains that the Dayak people's cultural communication is built on the principles of living in harmony and resolving conflicts peacefully. This finding aligns with the research Riswanto, (2019) explains that the Huma Betang philosophy places tolerance and mutual respect at the foundation of Dayak social life. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the research by Karlin et al., (2024) indicates that indigenous counseling seeks to draw upon local cultural values as a source for resolving problems within the community. The practices of supportive communication identified in this study demonstrate a dialogical and humanistic approach in the conflict resolution process. Deliberation, traditional advice, and familial communication play a vital role in maintaining social harmony within Dayak communities. These findings align with the research by Sampe et al., (2025) which explains that locally-based counseling services can be delivered through cultural communication approaches, storytelling, and the social values of the local community.

There are many issues, ranging from challenges such as the erosion of cultural values due to modernization, rising individualism, and the declining use of traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution. This can be seen in the remarks of a guidance counselor in the village of Tumbang Malahoi regarding problems that frequently occur at school:

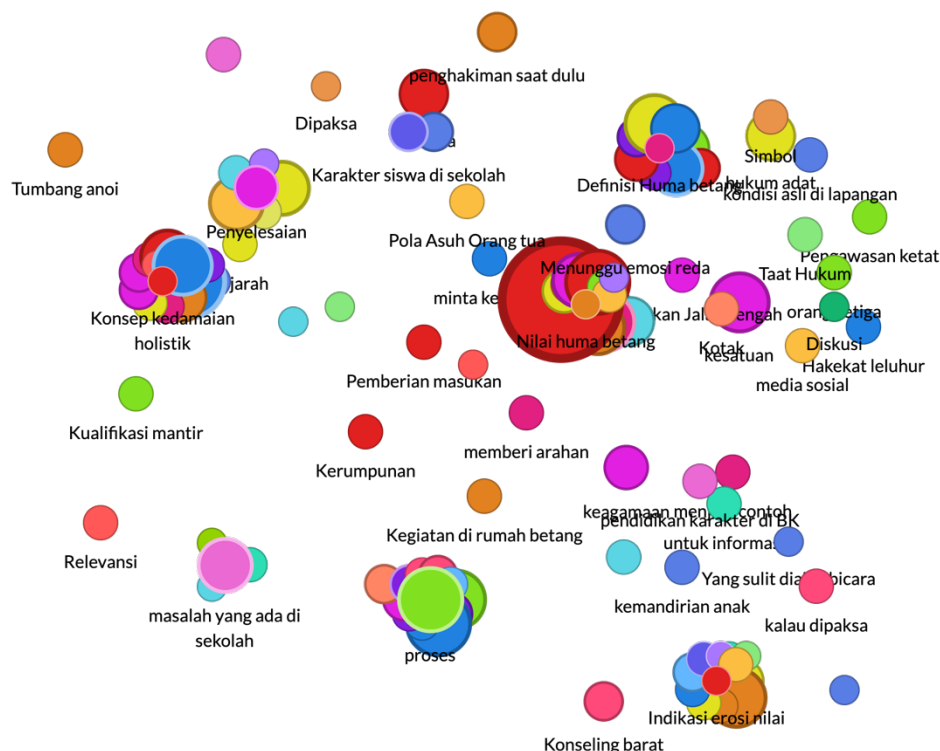
*"Biasanya masalah antar teman, saling mengejek, atau kadang karena bercanda berlebihan. Ada juga yang masalahnya dibawa dari lingkungan rumah atau pergaulan di kampung."*

Another statement from the guidance counselor was:

*"Kalau dibanding dulu, anak-anak sekarang lebih berani membantah. Jadi guru kadang harus sering mengingatkan soal sopan santun dan cara menghargai orang yang lebih tua."*

This relates to the erosion of values or the decline in existing values.

Based on the statements made during the interviews, open coding was performed using the Quirkos application with a canvas, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Open Coding Process Generated Using Quirkos Software

Thus, some of the codes obtained are as shown in Table 1

**Table 1.** Major Codes Identified During Open Coding

| Code               | Meaning                                     |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Togetherness       | Collective living and shared responsibility |
| Tolerance          | Respect for differences                     |
| Mutual Cooperation | Helping one another                         |
| Deliberation       | Discussion before decision making           |
| Mediation          | Conflict resolution through dialogue        |
| Family Orientation | Viewing others as extended family           |
| Equality           | Equal treatment regardless of status        |
| Harmony            | Maintaining peaceful relationships          |

Through this open coding process, the domain analysis identified six main cultural domains that illustrate the role of the Huma Betang philosophy in Dayak society, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Domains Identified from the Data

| Domain                              | Description                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Huma Betang as Shared Living Space  | Collective life and social cohesion |
| Philosophical Values of Huma Betang | Core cultural values                |
| Holistic Peace                      | Desired social condition            |
| Family-Based Helping Communication  | Indigenous helping practices        |
| Restorative Conflict Resolution     | Reconciliation-oriented mediation   |
| Challenges of Cultural Preservation | Threats posed by modernization      |

Taxonomic analysis was then used to organize the cultural domains into their internal elements and relationships. The resulting structure follows the six domains identified in the study and distinguishes the functions, values, helping practices, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and preservation challenges found in the field data.

**Table 3. Taxonomy of Huma Betang Values**

| Domain                              | Subdomain                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Huma Betang as Shared Living Space  | Physical, social, and cultural functions; communal life; shared space                                          |
| Philosophical Values of Huma Betang | Unity, respect, tolerance, harmony, mutual help, sharing, mutual cooperation, Handep Hapakat, solidarity       |
| Holistic Peace                      | Relationships with others, nature, and God; acceptance; advice; life experience; religious/spiritual life      |
| Family-Based Helping Communication  | Receiving reports, deliberation, mediation, advice, middle-ground solutions, dialogical communication          |
| Restorative Conflict Resolution     | Mediation, restorative justice, customary law, peace agreement, restoration of social relationships            |
| Challenges of Cultural Preservation | Social media, external influences, divorce, inheritance conflicts, misunderstanding, weakening internalization |

The cultural theme synthesized from the domain, taxonomic, and componential analyses is that Huma Betang functions as a cultural system that maintains harmony and social relationships. The values and practices identified across the domains are interrelated rather than isolated, linking shared living, cultural values, helping communication, conflict resolution, and the preservation of social harmony.

This theme is supported by the relationships among the six cultural domains. Togetherness, tolerance, mutual cooperation, deliberation, kinship, mediation, and restoration of relationships describe how Huma Betang values are enacted in social life rather than functioning only as abstract cultural concepts.

The findings also show relevance for indigenous counseling because the cultural values identified in the field provide a basis for culturally sensitive helping relationships. The implications summarized in the table are therefore understood as forms of relevance and implementation rather than as a standardized counseling model.

**Table 2. Integration of Huma Betang Values into Indigenous Counseling**

| Huma Betang Value  | Counseling Implication                |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Togetherness       | Collaborative counseling relationship |
| Tolerance          | Multicultural sensitivity             |
| Deliberation       | Shared decision-making                |
| Mediation          | Conflict resolution intervention      |
| Harmony            | Counseling goal                       |
| Mutual Cooperation | Community support involvement         |

## Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Huma Betang extends beyond its physical representation as a traditional longhouse and functions as a collective worldview shaping social relationships within Dayak communities. The values of togetherness, equality, mutual cooperation, and tolerance are reflected in everyday interaction and collective responsibility. This finding supports Berger and Luckmann's social construction perspective, in which social reality is produced through interaction, institutionalized in cultural practices, and internalized as shared values and beliefs (Pramono et al., 2024).

The concept of Huma Betang identified in this study reflects a cultural system that guides how individuals perceive social relationships and collective responsibilities. The statements provided by traditional leaders and village authorities indicate that Huma Betang symbolizes unity and coexistence despite differences in social background, religion, and personal characteristics. Such findings reinforce the argument of (Nofandi

et al., 2022), who identified Huma Betang as a foundation of social harmony in Central Kalimantan. Likewise, (Rico et al., 2022) emphasized that Huma Betang functions as a communication framework that promotes harmonious interaction among Dayak communities. The persistence of these values suggests that Huma Betang is not merely cultural heritage but also a living philosophy that continues to influence contemporary social behavior. Consequently, the philosophy serves as a cultural resource that can contribute to psychological wellbeing and social cohesion within indigenous communities.

The enduring nature of these values demonstrates that Huma Betang is not merely a cultural heritage but also a philosophy of life that continues to influence contemporary social behavior. Consequently, this philosophy serves as a cultural resource that can contribute to psychological well-being and social cohesion within indigenous communities. Indigenous Assistance Practices and Restorative Conflict Resolution.

This study found that assistance practices within Dayak communities are strongly influenced by family-oriented communication and restorative approaches to conflict resolution. Rather than emphasizing punishment or determining who is right or wrong, community members strive to restore social relationships through mediation, deliberation, and dialogue. Traditional leaders, village elders, and respected community figures play a crucial role in facilitating the reconciliation process.

These findings align with the perspective of indigenous counseling, which recognizes local cultural practices as valuable sources of psychological support and problem-solving. Karlin et al., (2024) argue that indigenous counseling should utilize local wisdom and cultural values as mechanisms for addressing community issues. Similarly, the support practices identified in this study indicate the existence of a natural support system rooted in Dayak cultural traditions.

The emphasis on mediation and collective decision-making also reflects restorative principles commonly associated with indigenous justice systems. Unlike individualistic approaches that focus on personal responsibility alone, Dayak conflict resolution prioritizes restoring balance within the broader social network. This orientation illustrates how indigenous communities conceptualize wellbeing as a collective rather than purely individual condition.

Furthermore, the dialogical and humanistic communication practices identified in this study support the argument of Sampe et al., (2025), who suggested that culturally responsive counseling services should incorporate local communication patterns, storytelling traditions, and community values. Therefore, the helping system found within Dayak society may be understood as a culturally embedded counseling process that already exists outside formal professional settings.

Another interesting finding in this study is the potential for integrating the Huma Betang philosophy into traditional counseling practices in Central Kalimantan. The cultural themes identified through ethnographic analysis indicate that togetherness, tolerance, mediation, harmony, and mutual cooperation are not separate values, but rather interrelated principles that guide social interaction and problem-solving.

These findings support the concept of indigenization from within, as described by Teo, (2025). which refers to "Indigenization from Within" or an endogenous approach that is outward-oriented or bottom-up. From this perspective, counseling theory and practice are built purely from concepts, values, and practices that already exist within

the community itself, using an emic lens. This approach advocates for the development of counseling approaches based on local cultural knowledge, rather than merely adapting Western theories.

Huma Betang philosophy provides a culturally relevant framework for building counseling relationships that emphasize collaboration, mutual respect, and shared well-being. In practice, the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation can strengthen the collaborative relationship between counselor and client, while tolerance and equality can enhance multicultural sensitivity in counseling practice. This assertion is supported by various studies showing that relationships grounded in cultural values can support and foster a counseling process that is adaptive to the client and fosters strong trust (Dermer & Abdullah, 2023; Harza & Yusliani, 2024; Zakia & Netri, 2025). Likewise, mediation and deliberation may serve as culturally congruent intervention strategies for addressing interpersonal conflicts. Most importantly, the concept of harmony emerges as the ultimate goal of counseling, extending beyond symptom reduction toward the restoration of balance within individuals, families, and communities.

However, the study also revealed challenges related to cultural preservation. Increasing individualism, modernization, and declining adherence to traditional values may weaken the transmission of Huma Betang philosophy to younger generations. Reports from guidance counselors regarding behavioral issues among students indicate that traditional values of respect, communal responsibility, and social harmony may be gradually eroding. This finding suggests an urgent need to integrate cultural values into educational and counseling programs to ensure their continued relevance in contemporary society.

Overall, the findings indicate that Huma Betang philosophy offers a culturally grounded foundation for indigenous counseling in Central Kalimantan. By integrating traditional values into professional helping practices, counseling services may become more culturally responsive, socially meaningful, and acceptable to indigenous communities.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding:** The findings show that Huma Betang is understood by the Dayak community as a worldview and cultural value system that regulates relationships among people, families, communities, nature, and God. The identified values include togetherness, equality, tolerance, mutual cooperation, deliberation, kinship, Handep Hapakat, and peace. These values are manifested through advice, storytelling, dialogue, deliberation, mediation, middle-ground solutions, and restoration of social relationships. The findings therefore indicate continuity between Huma Betang as a worldview, indigenous helping practices, and the development of culturally sensitive indigenous counseling. **Implications:** The findings suggest that Huma Betang can provide a conceptual basis for culturally sensitive indigenous counseling through an indigenization from within approach. Values such as equality, deliberation, tolerance, mutual cooperation, kinship, and peace can inform egalitarian, dialogical, family-oriented, collaborative, and community-sensitive helping relationships. These implications concern the contextual relevance and possible forms of implementation identified in the study, not a standardized counseling model. **Limitation:** The study is situated in the specific cultural context of the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan and therefore the findings should not be generalized

to all Dayak subgroups or other indigenous communities. In addition, the study provides a conceptual understanding of the relationship among Huma Betang values, indigenous helping practices, and counseling development; it does not establish a standardized counseling model or demonstrate its effectiveness through empirical intervention testing. **Future research:** Future research may involve a broader range of participants across different Dayak subgroups and other indigenous communities to examine the transferability of the findings. Further studies may also develop the identified forms of implementation into a more operational Huma Betang-based indigenous counseling model and evaluate its application through quantitative or mixed-methods research.

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