

The Effectiveness of Experiential-Learning–Based Group Counseling Embedded with *Ca’oca’an* to Enhance Madurese Students’ Emotional Intelligence

M. Ismail Makki¹, Aflahah², Khairul Bariyah³, Hasrul⁴

Islamic Education Guidance and Counseling Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah,
Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Indonesia¹

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah,
Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Indonesia²

Guidance and Counseling Study Program, Faculty of Education,
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia³

Institut Sains dan Kependidikan (ISDIK) Kie Raha Maluku Utara, Indonesia⁴

Email: ismailmakki@iainmadura.ac.id¹, aflahah@iainmadura.ac.id²,
khairul.bariyyah.fip@um.ac.id³, hasrul.tte87@gmail.com⁴

Corresponding Author: M Ismail Makki, ismailmakki@iainmadura.ac.id

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of experiential learning–based group counselling, embedded with *Ca’oca’an*, in enhancing Madurese students’ emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence follows Goleman’s five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. An experimental equivalent time-series design was used with 12 students at Madrasah Aliyah Mabdaul Falah Pamekasan. The intervention comprised two cycles of group counseling that integrated *Ca’oca’an* proverbs into the four stages of experiential learning. Emotional intelligence was measured with a Likert-type scale at pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and normalized gain scores showed significant improvements at each measurement point, with an overall N-gain of 0.87 (high). The largest gains were in self-awareness and self-regulation, supported by qualitative reflections showing better emotional awareness, self-control, empathy, and interpersonal behavior. These findings indicate that experiential-learning–based group counseling grounded in local wisdom is effective and culturally responsive for strengthening students’ emotional intelligence.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, experiential learning, group counselling, *Ca’oca’an*, local wisdom

Abstract

Penelitian ini menguji efektivitas konseling kelompok berbasis experiential learning yang diintegrasikan dengan Ca’oca’an untuk meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional siswa etnis Madura. Kecerdasan emosional dikonseptualisasikan berdasarkan lima dimensi Goleman: kesadaran diri, pengelolaan diri, motivasi diri, empati, dan keterampilan sosial. Penelitian menggunakan metode eksperimen dengan desain equivalent time-series pada 12 siswa Madrasah Aliyah Mabdaul Falah Pamekasan. Intervensi berupa dua siklus konseling kelompok yang mengikuti empat tahap experiential learning dengan integrasi peribahasa Ca’oca’an. Kecerdasan emosional diukur dengan skala Likert pada pretest, posttest 1, dan posttest 2. Uji Wilcoxon signed-rank dan skor N-gain menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada setiap pengukuran, dengan N-gain keseluruhan 0,87 (kategori tinggi). Peningkatan terbesar terjadi pada kesadaran diri dan pengelolaan diri, didukung temuan kualitatif yang menunjukkan perubahan kesadaran emosi, pengendalian diri, empati, dan hubungan interpersonal. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa konseling kelompok berbasis experiential learning berlandaskan kearifan lokal efektif dan peka budaya untuk memperkuat kecerdasan emosional siswa.

Kata kunci: kecerdasan emosional, experiential learning, konseling kelompok, *Ca’oca’an*, kearifan lokal

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as a central construct in contemporary psychology, particularly in understanding how individuals adapt to complex social environments. Goleman (1995; 1998) conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of non-cognitive abilities that enables individuals to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as to respond appropriately to others' emotions. He outlines five core dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize one's own emotional states; self-regulation involves managing and controlling these emotions constructively; self-motivation relates to using emotions to drive and sustain goal-directed behavior; empathy denotes the capacity to understand and resonate with the feelings of others; and social skills encompass the ability to build, maintain, and manage interpersonal relationships effectively. These dimensions form an integrated framework that underlies individuals' emotional functioning in daily life.

In the increasingly complex modern social landscape, these five dimensions are not only associated with personal well-being but also linked to broader outcomes, including academic achievement, social adaptation, and leadership development. Studies in educational psychology show that emotional intelligence contributes to students' academic resilience, interpersonal effectiveness, and overall adjustment in learning environments (Durlak et al., 2011; Sugiri & Kusumawardana, 2025). In educational settings, emotional intelligence helps students manage academic pressure, resolve conflicts, collaborate with peers, and maintain motivation in the learning process. Consequently, emotional intelligence is no longer viewed merely as a complementary skill but as a foundational psychological competence that significantly contributes to success in social, educational, and professional contexts.

The urgency of developing emotional intelligence is particularly pronounced in multicultural societies such as Indonesia. As a nation characterized by ethnic, cultural, and religious plurality, Indonesia requires emotionally intelligent individuals to sustain social harmony, tolerance, and intercultural cohesion. The dimensions of empathy and social skills play a critical role in helping students understand differences and engage in constructive interactions, while self-awareness and self-regulation help them manage emotional reactions that may arise in the face of diversity-related tensions. Formal education thus holds a strategic position in cultivating emotional intelligence. Empirical work on multicultural education in Indonesia indicates that learning that explicitly addresses diversity and social responsibility contributes to the development of students' social and emotional competencies (Agustina et al., 2025; Nugraha, 2020). At the international level, meta-analytic evidence on social and emotional learning (SEL) programs also shows consistent positive effects on empathy, emotion regulation, adaptive behavior, and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

In recent years, various studies in Indonesia have increasingly focused on systematic efforts to foster emotional and social competencies across different levels of education. Findings from Nugraha (2020) and Soejanto et al. (2024) show that learning grounded in multicultural and cultural intelligence perspectives can enhance students' social awareness, empathy, and collaborative abilities, which are closely related to the empathy and social skills dimensions of emotional intelligence. Within this perspective, emotional intelligence is positioned not only as an individual psychological attribute but also as a cultural competence that supports communal life amid diversity. Strengthening



self-motivation and self-regulation, in particular, becomes crucial in helping students persist in the face of academic and social challenges.

Methodologically, the development of emotional intelligence has been shown to be effective when implemented through experiential learning approaches. A recent systematic review highlights that experiential and blended learning models can significantly enhance students' emotional intelligence and related socio-emotional outcomes (Abdulhameed et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, experiential learning interventions have also been found effective in improving students' emotional and behavioral regulation, such as anger management and social problem-solving skills (Nurvita, 2019). Experiential learning provides structured opportunities for individuals to engage in concrete experiences, reflect on these experiences, conceptualize underlying principles, and test new behaviors in real situations. When integrated into group guidance or group counseling formats, this approach enables students to practice self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills in a safe and supportive environment. Empirical evidence further suggests that combining experiential learning with emotionally focused activities can foster leadership development and socio-emotional growth among students (Wibowo et al., 2024).

Despite the growing adoption of modern learning models and counseling interventions, a substantial gap remains in integrating local wisdom into programs that enhance emotional intelligence. Many existing studies still emphasize adapting formal educational models without fully exploring the potential of indigenous cultural values as a substantive foundation for emotional and social development. This contrasts with the demonstrated effectiveness of culture-based approaches in other contexts, such as the use of Arab proverbs in counseling with Bedouin clients (Al-Krenawi, 2000) and Spanish-language *dichos* in culturally adapted group psychotherapy with Latino patients (Aviera, 1996). Such approaches illustrate how culturally embedded narratives can serve as powerful tools for shaping emotional understanding and behavior.

One form of local wisdom that is rich in emotional and social values yet remains empirically underexplored in interventional contexts is the *ca'oca'an* tradition in Madurese society. *Ca'oca'an* consists of proverbs and life philosophies that encapsulate values such as perseverance, mutual respect, emotional restraint, and communality (Makki et al., 2023). These values are strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence, particularly self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Although research on *ca'oca'an* in guidance and counseling remains limited, other studies indicate a growing trend toward integrating Madurese local values into educational practice. For example, recent work on local-character-based education within the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the role of Madurese cultural values in shaping students' attitudes and social responsibility, while studies on the Koloman tradition highlight its function as a cultural basis for social cohesion and communal solidarity (Hannan & Umam, 2023; Wachidah et al., 2024). These findings indicate that Madurese local wisdom is a relevant yet underutilized source of values, yet empirical studies that synthesize *ca'oca'an* with experiential-learning-based group counseling to foster emotional intelligence remain scarce.

Responding to this urgency and the identified research gap, the present study aims to develop and test a group counseling model using an experiential learning strategy embedded with *ca'oca'an* to enhance the emotional intelligence of Madurese ethnic students. The model is designed to integrate psychological (group counseling), educational (experiential learning), and cultural (*ca'oca'an*) elements into a single,



contextual intervention framework. Through structured group activities, students are expected to develop greater self-awareness, improve their ability to regulate emotions, strengthen self-motivation, deepen empathy, and refine social skills in ways that are congruent with their cultural background. Beyond reinforcing students' cultural identity, this research is expected to enrich the literature on educational and counseling interventions grounded in local wisdom in the Indonesian context, while providing an empirically tested model for enhancing emotional intelligence in multicultural settings.

METHOD

This study employs an experimental method with an equivalent time-series design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to test the effectiveness of experiential-learning-based group counseling embedded with *Ca'oca'an* in enhancing students' emotional intelligence. The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Mabdaul Falah Pamekasan, with a population of 205 students from grades X, XI, and XII. A purposive sampling technique was used based on the criteria for Madurese ethnic students identified as having low emotional intelligence. During the screening and interview process, the researcher collaborated with two teachers with a background in Islamic Guidance and Counseling (Bimbingan dan Penyuluhan Islam/BPI). After the screening, 12 students were selected as research participants.

Emotional intelligence was measured using a Likert-type self-report scale developed based on Goleman's (1995; 1998) emotional intelligence framework, which consists of five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. The scale was constructed by operationalizing each dimension into several behavioral indicators and corresponding items. Content validity was assessed through expert judgment by two counseling experts and a psychometrics lecturer, who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and cultural appropriateness of each item. Construct validity was further assessed through exploratory factor analysis to confirm the scale's dimensional structure. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), which yielded a coefficient of 0.906, indicating high internal consistency.

Data collection was carried out in three stages: a pretest, posttest 1 (after the first intervention cycle), and posttest 2 (after the second intervention cycle). The intervention was delivered in two consecutive cycles of group counseling using an experiential learning approach. Each cycle consisted of several structured sessions that followed the four stages of experiential learning: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). At each stage, Madurese *Ca'oca'an* proverbs were integrated as thematic material and reflective stimuli to strengthen students' emotional awareness, regulation, empathy, and social interaction.

The equivalent time-series design in this study can be described as follows:

$$O - X_1 - X_5 - O_1 - X_6 - X_{10} - O_2$$

O : pretest (baseline measurement of emotional intelligence)

X₁-X₅ : first cycle of group counseling sessions incorporating *Ca'oca'an*

O₁ : posttest 1 (after the first intervention cycle)

X₆-X₁₀ : second cycle of group counseling sessions incorporating *Ca'oca'an*

O₂ : posttest 2 (after the second intervention cycle)

Data analysis used the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to examine differences between pretest and posttest scores (O vs. O₁ and O vs. O₂). In addition, normalized gain scores were calculated to measure improvement in emotional intelligence, with the following



categories: high (≥ 0.7), medium (0.3–0.7), and low (< 0.3), following Hake's (1998) classification. The quantitative findings were complemented by visual analysis using trend graphs to illustrate changes in participants' emotional intelligence across measurement points. Furthermore, qualitative data from participants' reflection notes and group discussions were used as supporting evidence to deepen the interpretation of the intervention's effectiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test ($N = 12$) confirmed a statistically significant increase in students' emotional intelligence scores at each measurement stage (Table 1). Comparisons between the pretest and posttest 1 ($Z = -3.066$, $p = 0.002$), posttest 1 and posttest 2 ($Z = -3.062$, $p = 0.002$), and pretest and posttest 2 ($Z = -3.074$, $p = 0.002$) indicate that the intervention produced a progressively positive and sustained impact across cycles.

Table 1
 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Comparison	Z score	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest vs. Posttest 1	-3.066	0.002
Posttest 1 vs. Posttest 2	-3.062	0.002
Pretest vs. Posttest 2	-3.074	0.002

The magnitude of improvement was classified as high, with an overall N-gain of 0.87, indicating a substantial increase in students' emotional intelligence. As depicted in Figure 2, participants' scores improved consistently over time, shifting from the low category ($M = 30.7$) to the moderate category ($M = 49.3$) and ultimately to the high category ($M = 63.3$). Ten out of twelve participants reached the high category by the final posttest, reflecting the broad effectiveness of the intervention.

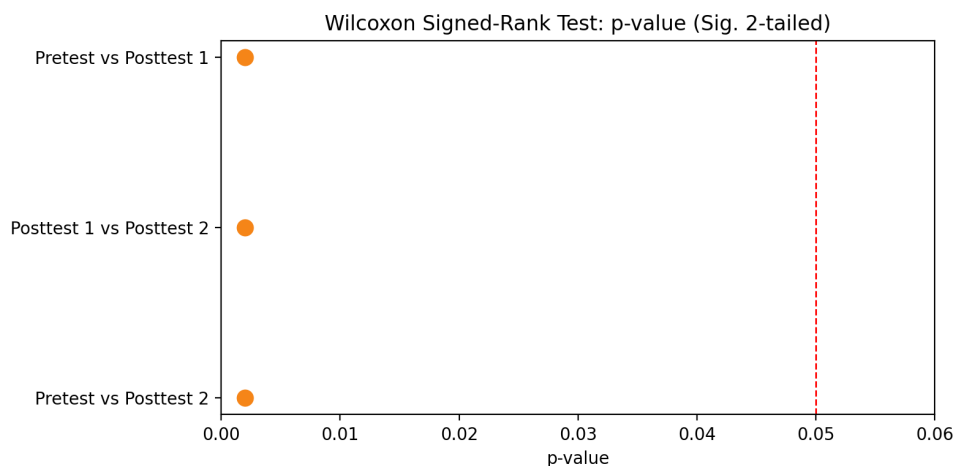


Figure 1. Results of Paired Comparison Test (Post-Hoc) between Measurement Time

To explore which aspects of emotional intelligence were most responsive to the intervention, N-gain values were analyzed for each dimension based on Goleman's (1995, 2002) framework.



Table 2.
 Descriptive Statistics and N-Gain by Dimension of Emotional Intelligence

Dimension	Pretest Mean	Posttest 1 Mean	Posttest 2 Mean	N-Gain	Category
Self-Awareness	28.2	47.5	63.8	0.92	High
Self-Motivation	29.5	46.1	58.7	0.78	High
Self-Regulation	30.0	48.6	62.9	0.90	High
Social Skills	31.1	49.0	60.8	0.85	High
Empathy	30.6	50.3	61.5	0.86	High

The data show that all five dimensions increased markedly, with N-gain values ranging from 0.78 to 0.92, all within the high category. The highest gains were observed in self-awareness (0.92) and self-regulation (0.90), followed by empathy (0.86), social skills (0.85), and self-motivation (0.78). These findings suggest that the intervention was particularly effective in strengthening students' capacity to recognize and regulate their emotions and in producing substantial improvements in the relational and motivational aspects of emotional intelligence.

To visually support these findings, a bar chart was included (Figure 2). The visualization clearly highlights the superior gains in self-awareness and self-regulation, reinforcing the conclusion that experiential activities emphasizing emotional reflection, self-control, and culturally grounded moral evaluation were highly impactful.

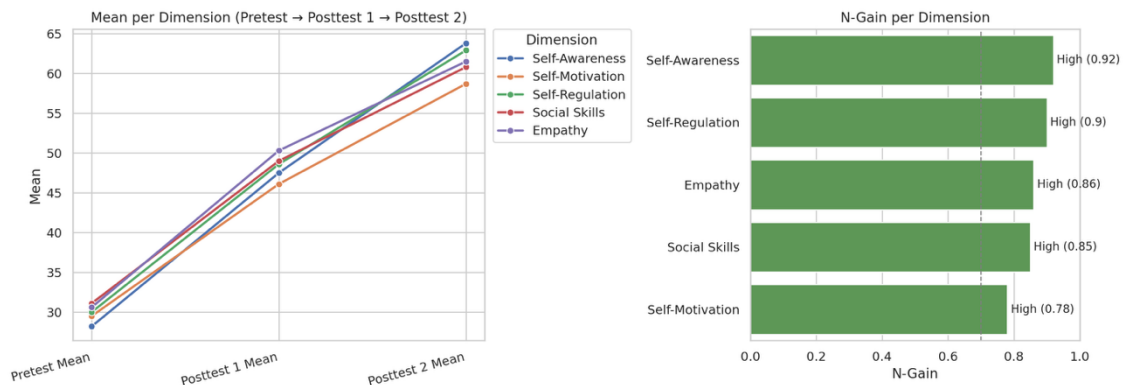


Figure 2. N-gain by Dimension of Emotional Intelligence

Qualitative reflections further corroborated the quantitative findings. Participants' journals revealed meaningful transformations linked to the internalization of *Ca'oca'an* values across the five dimensions of emotional intelligence.



Table 3.
 Summary of Participants' Reflections by Dimension

Dimension	Representative Reflection (Verbatim)	Emerging Theme
Self-awareness	"I realized I was impolite when speaking to a <i>kyai</i> and not greeting elders." (MAR)	Awareness of one's emotional reactions and social conduct
Self-regulation	"I used to lie (<i>co'ngocoh</i>) to my friends, but I now understand it destroys trust." (MK)	Emotional control, honesty, and restraint
Empathy	"I learned to feel what my friends feel and not focus only on myself." (MRF)	Understanding others' feelings
Social skills	"I am now more confident expressing ideas without fear of mistakes." (AF)	Improved communication and self-expression
Self-motivation	"I can now engage actively in group discussions and maintain eye contact." (RA)	Increased initiative and confidence in interaction

These reflections indicate that participants did not merely acquire cognitive knowledge about emotional competencies; they also internalized the moral and cultural meanings embedded in *Ca'oca'an*. Changes were evident in the way students interpreted their emotional experiences, regulated their responses, and engaged with others in more respectful and constructive ways.

A box plot comparing pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2 scores revealed a progressive upward shift in median emotional intelligence scores and a narrowing interquartile range over time. This pattern indicates not only overall improvement but also greater consistency in participants' scores. The reduced variability suggests that students experienced relatively uniform benefits from the intervention, thereby strengthening confidence in the model's effectiveness.

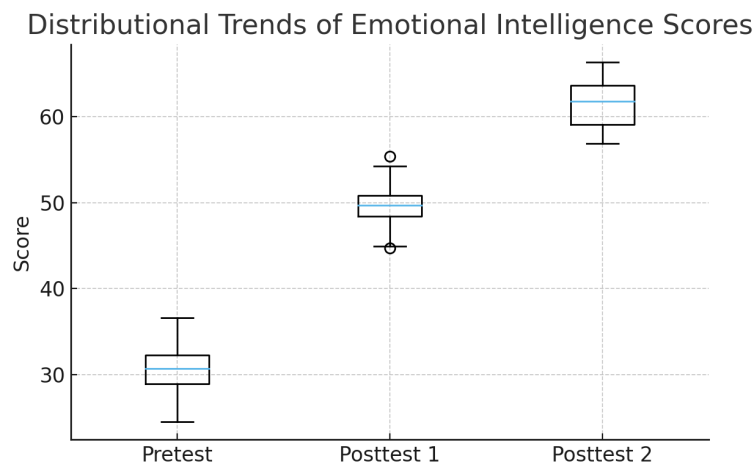


Figure 3. Distributional Trends of Students' Emotional Intelligence Scores Across Measurement Points (Pretest, Posttest 1, Posttest 2)



Analysis across dimensions based on Goleman's emotional intelligence framework indicated that all five components experienced substantial improvement. N-gain values ranged from 0.78 to 0.92, all within the high category. The highest gains were found in self-awareness (0.92) and self-regulation (0.90), followed by empathy (0.86), social skills (0.85), and self-motivation (0.78). This pattern suggests that the intervention was particularly effective in strengthening students' capacity to recognize and regulate their emotions, while also producing notable improvements in their ability to understand others, interact socially, and maintain goal-directed motivation. The bar chart in Figure 4 clearly illustrates this trend, showing self-awareness and self-regulation as the most responsive dimensions, supported by consistently high gains in the remaining three components

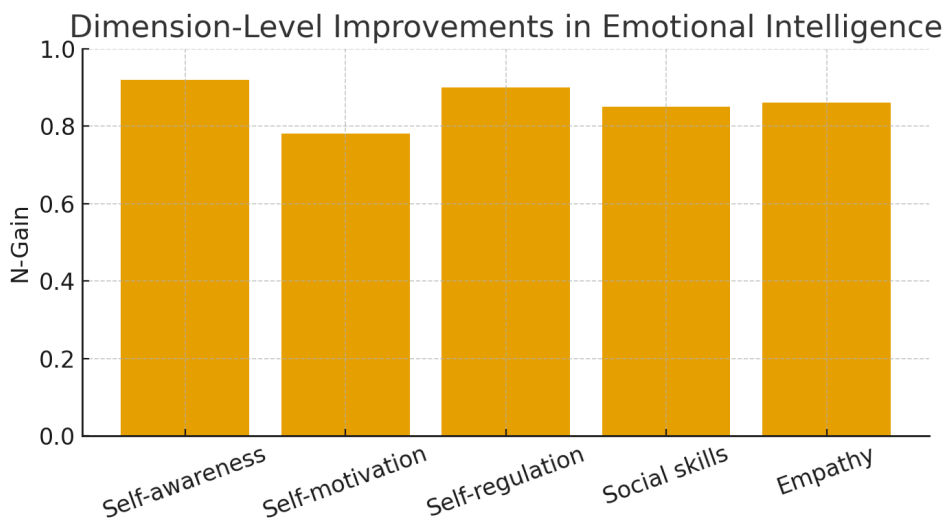


Figure 4. Dimension-Level Improvements in Emotional Intelligence Scores

Discussion

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings provide robust evidence for the effectiveness of experiential-learning-based group counseling embedded with *Ca'oca'an* in enhancing students' emotional intelligence. Statistically significant improvements across all measurement points, high N-gain scores, consistent upward shifts in the distribution of scores, and rich qualitative reflections collectively demonstrate that the model fosters both emotional skill acquisition and value internalization. The strong gains in self-awareness and self-regulation, supported by notable improvements in empathy, social skills, and self-motivation, indicate that the intervention targeted core components of emotional functioning as conceptualized by Goleman (1995; 1998).

Two mutually reinforcing mechanisms appear to underlie the intervention's effectiveness. First Experiential learning processes Guided by Kolb's experiential learning cycle, participants engaged in repeated sequences of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within group counseling sessions, students were encouraged to observe their emotional reactions, reflect on interpersonal events, construct new understandings of appropriate emotional responses, and test these in subsequent interactions. These processes cultivated self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal adaptability, consistent with recent studies highlighting the contributions of experiential and experiential-type



interventions to emotional intelligence and socio-emotional development (Abdulhameed et al., 2024; Maharesti et al., 2025; Siswanto et al., 2018; Nurvita, 2019).

Second, Cultural internalization through *Ca'oca'an*. The integration of *Ca'oca'an*, a set of Madurese proverbs emphasizing honesty, humility, responsibility, and cooperation, provided a culturally grounded moral framework that deepened emotional reflection and behavioral commitment. *Ca'oca'an* functioned as a symbolic and narrative medium through which students interpreted their emotional experiences and interpersonal behavior. This corresponds with culture-centered and indigenous counseling frameworks that argue interventions rooted in local cultural meaning systems generate stronger emotional resonance and more enduring behavioral change (Lestari et al., 2020; Yurika & Nugroho, 2022; Afriyati et al., 2024).

The combination of these two mechanisms helps explain the notable gains in self-awareness and self-regulation. Students not only learn “what to do” in social situations but also understand “why” such behaviors matter within a culturally meaningful moral narrative. This integration of experiential learning and local wisdom appears to amplify both reflective and affective components of emotional learning.

The findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the benefits of experiential learning for developing social and emotional competencies and emotional intelligence (Abdulhameed et al., 2024; Maharesti et al., 2025; Siswanto et al., 2018; Nurvita, 2019). However, the present study extends the literature by showing that embedding local wisdom into experiential-learning-based group counseling further enhances students' engagement, trust, and moral reasoning. This responds to calls for culturally grounded interventions in guidance and counseling that integrate indigenous values and cultural narratives into service delivery (Lestari et al., 2020; Yurika & Nugroho, 2022; Afriyati et al., 2024).

Moreover, the use of *Ca'oca'an* as a counseling medium aligns with studies showing that employing native cultural frameworks and local wisdom in counseling increases client openness, perceived relevance, and ethical grounding of the intervention (Yurika & Nugroho, 2022; Lestari et al., 2020). In this study, *Ca'oca'an* proverbs were not merely used as decorative elements but were actively employed as prompts for emotional reflection, group discussion, and behavioral planning.

Theoretically, this research provides empirical support for the contextual application of Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework within a culturally specific setting. The significant gains across all five dimensions, particularly in self-awareness and self-regulation, suggest that cultural resonance can enhance both reflective and regulatory aspects of emotional intelligence. The findings also demonstrate how indigenous cultural symbols, such as *Ca'oca'an*, can be integrated into structured group interventions without sacrificing theoretical rigor.

Practically, the model offers a culturally sensitive and replicable approach for school counselors and educators seeking to strengthen students' emotional intelligence and character development. Embedding local wisdom into group counseling reinforces ethical conduct, supports emotional regulation, and improves interpersonal adaptability. The approach is compatible with national movements promoting context-sensitive counseling practices, such as the development of “*Konseling Khas Nusantara*,” by showing how local cultural resources can be systematically incorporated into evidence-based intervention designs.

This study contributes to the scholarly field in three key ways, 1) Empirical integration, it demonstrates the measurable benefits of combining experiential learning



with indigenous cultural wisdom in enhancing emotional intelligence among students, 2) Cultural innovation, it repositions *Ca'oca'an* from being merely a traditional set of sayings to functioning as a psycho-pedagogical tool within structured group counselling, and 3) Contextual relevance, it strengthens theoretical and practical discourse on localized counseling models within Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape, illustrating how emotional intelligence theory can be operationalized in ways that are congruent with local values and lived realities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of experiential learning-based group counselling, embedded with *Ca'oca'an*, in enhancing the emotional intelligence of Madurese students at Madrasah Aliyah Mabdaul Falah Pamekasan. Using an equivalent time-series experimental design with 12 participants, the intervention produced statistically significant improvements in emotional intelligence across all measurement points, as indicated by Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. The overall N-gain score of 0.87 and the upward shift of median scores from pretest to posttest 2 show that the model yields a high and sustained level of improvement. Analysis by dimension revealed that self-awareness and self-regulation experienced the greatest gains, followed by empathy, social skills, and self-motivation, demonstrating that the program effectively targets core components of Goleman's emotional intelligence framework. Qualitative reflections from participants supported the quantitative results, showing changes in emotional awareness, self-control, empathy, and interpersonal behavior that were closely linked to the internalization of *Ca'oca'an* values. These findings suggest that integrating local wisdom into experiential group counseling provides a culturally responsive and pedagogically powerful approach to strengthening students' emotional competencies in multicultural school settings. Future research with larger and more diverse samples, control groups, and longer follow-up periods is recommended to further validate the model and explore its applicability in other educational and cultural contexts.

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