



Research Article

A Christian-Based Counseling Model in Education: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

This article explores the integration of counselling within educational frameworks through the lens of Christian pedagogy and edification, focusing on its role in the holistic development of educators and students in Eastern Thessaloniki, Greece. The study aims to outline how Christian values can be effectively integrated into counselling practices to address personal, pedagogic, and social challenges such as bullying and interpersonal conflicts encountered in modern school reality. Utilizing a research methodology that synthesizes existing literature with Christian pedagogical strategies, the study proposes the "Christian-Based Counselling Model". Results indicate that incorporating values like kindness, compassion, and forgiveness fosters a supportive environment for effective decision-making. Key findings highlight the effectiveness of structured steps, including active listening, the use of biblical narratives for spiritual guidance, and the creation of "quiet spaces" for reflection. These practices, along with communal activities such as thematic clubs and educational visits, reinforce a sense of belonging and ethical growth. The implications suggest that this synergistic approach provides a robust framework for navigating spiritual crises and professional obstacles, ultimately empowering members of the school community to become ethically sensitive and resilient participants in contemporary society.

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INTRODUCTION

Counseling within educational settings plays an important role in supporting the holistic development of both educators and students. It helps individuals address personal, academic, and social challenges while strengthening their problem-solving and decision-making abilities (Chatzichristou, 2014). In modern educational discourse, counseling is increasingly recognized as a key component of a comprehensive educational system that supports not only academic success but also emotional well-being and personal growth. This perspective aligns with the growing emphasis on holistic education, which integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human development (Bettney, 2017).

Within Christian education, counseling is rooted in core Christian values such as compassion, empathy, kindness, and forgiveness (Schellenberg, 2008; Davis, 2016). These principles shape the role of educators, who often function not only as instructors but also as mentors and spiritual guides. In this capacity, teachers are encouraged to demonstrate genuine care for the emotional and spiritual well-being of students, particularly when addressing contemporary challenges such as bullying, interpersonal conflicts, and character formation.

The concept of mentorship further strengthens the counseling role in education. Derived from the Greek term *Mentor*, historically associated with the wise counselor guiding Telemachus in Homer's epic, mentorship

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represents a relational process through which knowledge, wisdom, and experience are shared (Kenworthy, 2015; Captari, 2018). In educational contexts, mentors collaborate with students and colleagues to identify areas for improvement and guide both professional and personal development (Glenn, 2006). This relational approach is essential in establishing supportive learning environments.

Christian counseling in education also emphasizes ethical and moral development. Its aim is to cultivate virtues such as honesty, integrity, and kindness in students, enabling them to make responsible ethical decisions and navigate complex moral situations (Hathaway, 2004). Achieving this goal requires the creation of a safe and supportive educational environment where trust, respect, and open communication are encouraged (Ream et al., 2014). Such an environment allows students and educators to express emotional concerns without fear of judgment, fostering a sense of belonging and psychological safety (Ricard, 2009).

An important aspect of this counseling approach is empathetic communication and attentive listening. Christian counselors are encouraged to practice engaged listening, acknowledging students' experiences with compassion and understanding (Ellison, 2011). In addition, Christian education recognizes the spiritual dimension of human life, encouraging students to deepen their faith and discover meaning and purpose in their lives (Johnson, 2019). Practices such as prayer can provide comfort, guidance, and spiritual healing for both educators and students (Koenig, 2012).

In many Christian educational contexts, teachers also perform roles similar to pastoral counselors by providing guidance grounded in scriptural principles and encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation as pathways toward emotional restoration (McMinn et al., 2007; Worthington et al., 2004). Experiences from Christian school communities further demonstrate that establishing a welcoming and value-based school culture—supported by shared Christian principles and collaborative activities—can strengthen relationships and foster a supportive environment for counseling practices (Littleton, 2008). Based on these perspectives, this study explores a conceptual framework for a Christian-based counseling model in education that supports the holistic development of students and educators.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design based on a systematic literature review and theoretical synthesis. Conceptual research is appropriate for studies that aim to develop theoretical models or frameworks by integrating existing scholarly knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the approach is used to examine the relationship between Christian educational values and counseling practices in order to construct a conceptual model for counseling in educational contexts.

The data sources consist of secondary materials, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly publications related to Christian education, counseling psychology, spiritual formation, and ethical development. These sources were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and their contribution to understanding the integration of faith-based values within counseling practices (Snyder, 2019).

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, literature identification, where relevant scholarly works on Christian counseling and educational psychology were collected. Second, thematic analysis involved identifying key concepts such as ethical development, spiritual guidance, empathetic communication, and active listening in educational counseling practices. Third, conceptual framework development, in which the findings from the thematic analysis were synthesized to formulate a model referred to as the Christian-Based Counseling Model, illustrating structured steps for integrating Christian values into educational counseling. Through this methodological approach, the study synthesizes theoretical insights from existing literature and proposes a conceptual framework that can guide counseling practices in Christian educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As practiced, once educators and students perceive themselves as welcomed and adequately supported within the school environment, they are significantly more inclined to cultivate a profound sense of belonging to the community. This intrinsic sense of belonging can be attentively cultivated from the teacher- counsellor and the school's community through a variety of paths, including constructive Christian counseling and instruction by the teacher- counsellor, active participation in communal events, shared objectives, and the consistent application of Christian educational principles in daily school practices. Religious instruction, as an

integral component of the school curriculum, affords students and teachers with the invaluable opportunity to acquire knowledge relating to the Bible, fundamental religious beliefs, and core values. Furthermore, religious instruction can empower both educators and students to deepen their personal faith and to cultivate specific competencies in communication, empathy, and collaborative engagement (Vieten et al, 2022).

Providing Equal Opportunities for Students to Learn About and Practice Their Faith

Beyond formal religious instruction, prayer, and worship, the school environment actively provided educators and students with equitable opportunities to engage with Christian edification and to integrate its principles into their daily lives. This was achieved through a diverse range of activities, such as thematic clubs, educational activity programs, various forms of experiential learning, and enriching pedagogic events. Thematic clubs, for instance, can provide students with avenues to delve more deeply into various aspects of Christian education. A Reading and Creative-Writing club, centered on the values of Christian edification, for example, in the area focused on the thorough study of the Bible and its practical application in students' daily lives through the examination of parables and teachings, as well as the analytical exploration and resolution of challenges encountered in their daily school experiences.

Educational activity projects represent a highly effective means for teachers, and subsequently students, to become acquainted with and actively participate in a vibrant community, thereby embodying the distinctive characteristics of Christian values. These programs, as successfully employed, significantly assisted the school community in comprehending the profound importance of service and, consequently, in experiencing the tangible manifestation of Christian virtues and values. Educational visits to significant Christian and historical monuments that are present in Thessaloniki, such as the thirteen UNESCO heritage-accredited, Byzantine churches, similarly empowered educators and students to augment their knowledge and refine their skills. Such visits offer a direct and immersive experience of Christian culture and history, thereby contributing to the formation and reinforcement of the Christian community through these engaging activities. In conclusion, the effort to construct a robust Christian community within education represents a significant mission. By meticulously cultivating a welcoming and supportive environment, attentively fostering a deep sense of belonging, and consistently providing members of the school community with ample opportunities to assimilate and practice the principles and values of Christian education. The specific schools managed to effectively empower educators and students to extend their faith and to cultivate a strong and enduring sense of Christian identity.

Combining Christian Education with Counseling - the Christian-Based Counseling Model in Education

The integration of Christian values into counseling practices holds significant potential for enhancing the professional development of educators and nurturing the character of students in the specific practice. This synergistic approach can be effectively realized through the implementation of the following strategic step-by-step initiatives based on the proposed, through the article, Christian-Based Counseling Model, illustrated on Image 1.

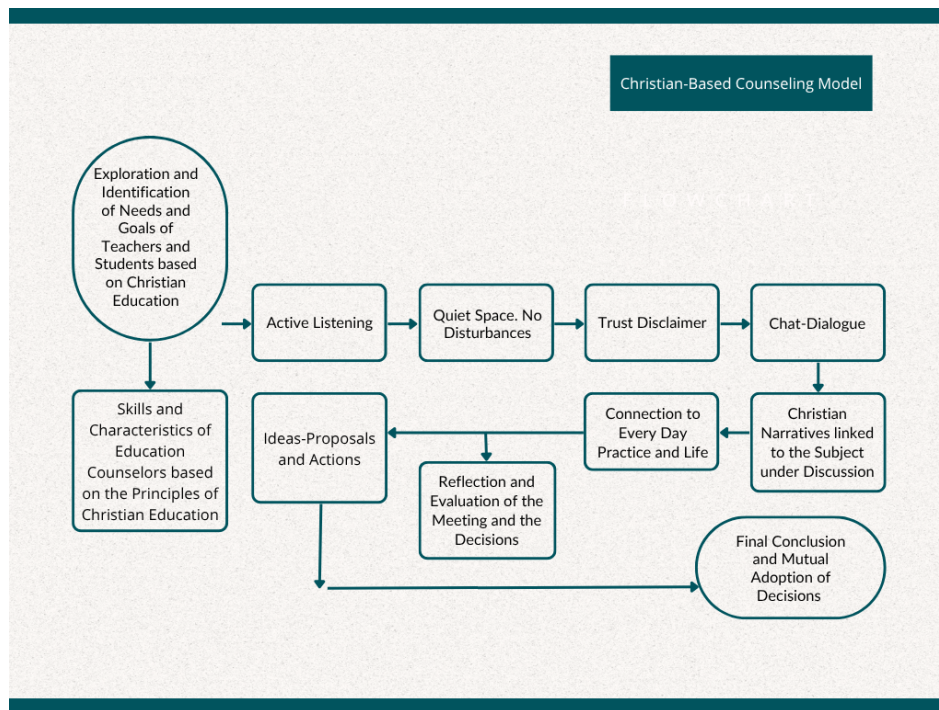


Image 1: The Christian-Based Counseling Model in Education

The model of Christian-based counseling in education begins with a process of exploration and identification of needs and goals. In this stage, the educator-counsellor seeks to understand the unique needs, challenges, and aspirations of both teachers and students within the framework of Christian education. This exploration not only addresses academic or personal concerns but also considers spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions of development. By grounding the counseling process in the worldview and values of Christian education, the guidance provided becomes contextual and meaningful for the school community (Mahoney et al., 2019). This step ensures that counseling practices are not generic but responsive to the spiritual and practical realities experienced by teachers and students.

Following the identification of needs, the model emphasizes the skills and characteristics required of teacher-counsellors. Educators who function as counsellors are expected to embody key values rooted in both contemporary pedagogical research and Christian teachings, such as compassion, empathy, integrity, and respect for individuals. These values guide their attitudes and interactions throughout the counseling process. The effectiveness of the model depends significantly on the moral and relational qualities of the teacher-counsellor, as these characteristics foster a supportive and ethically grounded counseling environment.

An essential interpersonal component of the model is active listening. Teacher-counsellors are encouraged to listen attentively and empathetically, providing full attention to the experiences and perspectives of the counselee. This practice reflects the Christian principle of valuing each individual's voice and dignity. Through active listening, counsellors demonstrate genuine care and understanding, which helps build rapport and encourages counsees to share their concerns openly. In addition, the model highlights the importance of providing appropriate training for members of the school community so that they can develop the necessary competencies for practicing counseling principles integrated with Christian values.

The counseling interaction should also take place in a quiet and safe environment. The model stresses the importance of conducting counseling sessions in a calm, private space free from distractions. Such an environment promotes reflection, openness, and emotional security. Within the Christian tradition, spaces of quietness and contemplation are often associated with prayer and personal reflection. Therefore, creating a peaceful setting helps participants feel respected and safe while discussing sensitive matters. Another crucial component of the model is the establishment of trust through confidentiality. At the beginning of the counseling session, the teacher-counsellor clearly explains the ethical principles guiding the interaction,

particularly regarding confidentiality and respect for personal information. This assurance helps participants feel secure in sharing personal experiences and challenges. Trust is fundamental in both counseling practice and Christian ethics, as it reflects the commitment to protect the dignity and well-being of others.

Once trust has been established, the counseling process continues through open dialogue and conversation. The model encourages respectful and interactive communication between the counsellor and counsee. Both parties are allowed to express their thoughts, ask questions, and reflect together on the issues being discussed. This dialogical process mirrors the Christian concept of fellowship, where mutual support and shared reflection contribute to personal and spiritual growth. A distinctive feature of the model is the integration of Christian narratives and biblical teachings during the counseling discussion. Teacher-counsellors may introduce relevant biblical stories, parables, or teachings that relate to the challenges faced by teachers or students. Themes such as forgiveness, perseverance, identity, and hope are often highlighted to provide spiritual insight and moral guidance. These narratives help counsees interpret their experiences within a faith-based framework, allowing them to understand their situations from a broader spiritual perspective.

The final stage of the model involves connecting Christian principles with everyday practice. In this phase, the counsellor and counsee collaboratively identify practical ways to apply Christian values in daily life, whether in classroom interactions, personal relationships, or decision-making processes. This step ensures that the counseling experience leads to concrete behavioral and attitudinal changes. By translating spiritual insights into real-life actions, the model supports holistic development encompassing spiritual, moral, emotional, and social dimensions. Furthermore, the implementation of this model encourages the development of communities of practice within educational institutions. Through continuous dialogue, shared learning experiences, and collaborative problem-solving among educators, the counseling approach can evolve and improve over time. These communities support professional growth and strengthen the integration of counseling practices with Christian educational values, ultimately fostering a supportive and spiritually grounded learning environment ([Rosmarin et al, 2010](#)).

CONCLUSION

Modern educational environments encounter a plethora of obstacles that affect the individual, professional, and spiritual development of both educators and students. A significant issue concerns the spiritual dilemmas faced by students in schools, where they encounter challenges such as disagreements and bullying. This situation requires teachers to employ innovative and compassionate pedagogical techniques to guide and motivate both students and their colleagues, ensuring their skillful navigation through spiritual crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these barriers by limiting opportunities for spiritual nurturing and online education, particularly in today's dynamic and demanding school institutions, where the integration of Christian values and the academic community is vital for the holistic development of students ([Nainggolan et al., 2022](#)).

Moreover, educators in contemporary school settings often cope with maintaining rigorous academic standards alongside religious beliefs, especially in scenarios where science and faith converge, resulting in potential conflicts and identity crises among students ([Robinson, 2020](#)). Professional obstacles also stem from inadequate infrastructure and a lack of support personnel, such as psychologists and social workers, as reported by participating educators in relevant research. Furthermore, escalating contemporary trends and liberal policies in education may sideline Christian principles, compelling teachers to navigate complex ethical dilemmas and, at times, to opt for the silent or discreet integration of their faith to avoid professional hypocrisy ([Bettney, 2017](#)).

The imperative for innovative teaching approaches is of utmost importance, as their absence can negatively impact on the moral development of students and academic achievement, underscoring the significance of continuous professional development for educators in cultivating an enriched learning and teaching experience. The life-approach strategy in the teaching of Christian and Religious Education (CRE) also faces limitations, despite the academic preparation and professional competencies of teachers, indicating the need for enhanced support and arrangements for the effective implementation of this approach.

Ultimately, the pursuit of holistic transformation in students' lives requires educators to create inclusive and respectful environments that allow for authentic engagement with the Christian faith without imposition—a task that may be discouraging or even provoke indifference in contemporary and multicultural educational settings. The synergistic combination of Christian Edification with Counseling controls the transformative potential to cultivate a profoundly supportive and flourishing environment for the entire school community (Thompson, 2021). This integrated approach can significantly contribute to the development of modern-time teachers and students who are not only valued but also ethically sensitive and deeply engaged members of current society.

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