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Beyond Academic Achievement: A Whole-School Counseling Framework for Well-Being, Global Citizenship, and Sustainability in Primary Education

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Articles Information	Abstract
Received : 11-07-2026 Revised R1 : 21-08-2026 Revised R2 : 23-08-2026 Accepted : 23-08-2026 Published : 30-08-2026	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have expanded primary education beyond academic achievement toward student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability. However, primary school counseling remains largely remedial and insufficiently aligned with these priorities. This study developed and validated a Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) using Design and Development Research with an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. The study involved a needs assessment with 35 stakeholders, validation by four experts, and an eight-week pilot involving 12 teachers and 96 Grade V students. Four major counseling needs informed the framework, which integrates Social-Emotional Learning, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and the Whole-School Approach. Expert validation demonstrated excellent content validity (S-CVI/Ave = 0.95), while teachers reported very high practicality (M = 4.61/5). Uniquely, the WSCF reframes counseling as a proactive, school-wide system integrating well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability rather than treating them as separate initiatives. Keywords: Primary School Counseling; Student Well-Being; Global Citizenship; Sustainability; Whole-School Approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid social change, environmental degradation, technological transformation, and escalating concerns regarding children's mental health have fundamentally altered the expectations placed upon educational institutions. Contemporary education is no longer confined to academic achievement; rather, it increasingly seeks to develop learners who are emotionally resilient, socially responsible, and capable of contributing to sustainable societies (OECD, 2018). Global phenomena such as eco-anxiety, defined as chronic fear of environmental doom, and the post-pandemic mental health crisis have deeply affected young learners, highlighting the urgent need for systemic educational reform (Hickman et al., 2021). Consequently, international educational agendas have prioritized student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability as non-negotiable outcomes of 21st-century schooling. UNESCO's (2020) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) roadmap explicitly highlights the importance of equipping learners with the knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes required to address interconnected global challenges. Similarly, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) emphasizes fostering respect for diversity, civic engagement, and social justice across borders (UNESCO, 2015).

Within this paradigm, primary schools serve as a critical arena for shaping children's early social-emotional development, value formation, and civic identity. Psychological literature underscores that middle childhood is a formative window wherein foundational attitudes toward self, society, and the environment are established (Eccles, 1999). However, traditional primary school counseling services remain predominantly localized, reactive, and remedial that focusing heavily on individual academic difficulties, behavioral misconduct, and crisis intervention (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). While these curative functions remain indispensable, they are structurally insufficient to cultivate the broader, proactive developmental competencies necessitated by ESD and GCED frameworks (Sink, 2016). If primary education aims to prepare children for a volatile and sustainable future, counseling must transcend individual deficit-correcting models and embrace a holistic role in student development.

Recent scholarship suggests that sustainable educational transformation cannot rely on isolated classroom interventions or sporadic counseling sessions; instead, it demands a whole-school approach that seamlessly aligns school leadership, curriculum, institutional culture, student participation, and community partnerships (Mogren et al., 2019). Whole-school frameworks have gained international recognition as highly effective mechanisms for embedding sustainability and well-being deeply into the institutional fabric of school systems (Langford et al., 2014). For school counseling to be transformative, it must operate within this systemic architecture, positioning counselors not merely as isolated therapists, but as systemic change agents who orchestrate school-wide well-being (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Despite the growing global emphasis on ESD and GCED, limited empirical research has investigated how these international priorities can be structurally integrated into primary school counseling programs. Existing literature remains siloed: scholars tend to evaluate social-emotional learning, mental health counseling, environmental education, or global citizenship as distinct, fragmented domains (Chawla, 2020; Durlak et al., 2011). Consequently, a profound theoretical and practical gap exists regarding the

conceptualization of an integrated counseling framework that bridges these dimensions within a coherent, operational whole-school model. To address this critical gap, the present study develops and validates a Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) designed to systematically cultivate student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability competencies among primary school students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Student Well-Being in Primary Education

Student well-being has become one of the central goals of contemporary education, extending beyond academic achievement to encompass students' emotional, psychological, social, and educational functioning (Seligman & Adler, 2018). Rather than being viewed merely as the absence of mental health problems, well-being is increasingly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting children's ability to experience positive emotions, develop meaningful relationships, demonstrate resilience, and actively participate in learning (Durlak et al., 2011). Research consistently indicates that students with higher levels of well-being are more likely to exhibit stronger academic engagement, greater motivation, improved self-regulation, and more positive interpersonal relationships (Noble & McGrath, 2015). Furthermore, well-being has been identified as a protective factor against anxiety, behavioral problems, and school disengagement (Swerdlow et al., 2021).

Within primary education, the promotion of well-being is particularly important because childhood represents a critical developmental period during which cognitive, emotional, and social competencies rapidly evolve (Eccles, 1999). Primary school students begin to develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills that influence their future learning experiences and psychological adjustment (Shoshani & Slone, 2013). Consequently, schools are increasingly expected to create learning environments that support not only academic development but also students' emotional security, sense of belonging, and positive identity formation (OECD, 2018).

School counseling services play a strategic role in fostering student well-being by providing preventive and developmental interventions rather than solely addressing behavioral or academic difficulties. Contemporary counseling practices increasingly emphasize strengths-based approaches that nurture resilience, emotional competence, and positive relationships (Sink, 2016). However, many primary school counseling programs continue to focus primarily on individual problem-solving, leaving broader developmental dimensions of well-being insufficiently addressed (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). This limitation suggests the need for counseling frameworks that systematically integrate well-being into school-wide educational practices.

2.2. Global Citizenship Education

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has emerged as an important educational response to globalization, cultural diversity, and increasingly complex social challenges (Torres, 2017). Rather than focusing exclusively on civic knowledge, GCED aims to develop learners who understand global

interdependence, appreciate cultural diversity, uphold human rights, and participate responsibly in both local and global communities (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO (2015) conceptualizes GCED as encompassing three interrelated dimensions: cognitive competencies, socio-emotional competencies, and behavioral competencies. Together, these dimensions enable learners to critically analyze global issues, respect different perspectives, and translate their understanding into responsible actions.

For primary school students, global citizenship should be introduced through age-appropriate experiences that encourage empathy, cooperation, intercultural understanding, environmental awareness, and community participation (Oxley & Morris, 2013). Classroom discussions, collaborative projects, service-learning activities, and culturally responsive teaching provide meaningful opportunities for children to develop global awareness while strengthening their social-emotional competencies (Bourn, 2018).

Despite the growing integration of GCED within school curricula, its implementation has largely been concentrated in classroom instruction. Comparatively little attention has been given to the role of school counseling in facilitating global citizenship development. Counseling programs have considerable potential to promote empathy, conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and respect for diversity, all of which represent essential competencies of responsible global citizens (Gerstein et al., 2019). Integrating GCED into counseling services therefore offers an opportunity to broaden the developmental role of school counseling beyond traditional academic and behavioral support.

2.3. Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) represents an educational paradigm that equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to contribute to sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2020). Moving beyond environmental education alone, ESD addresses the interconnected environmental, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of sustainability (Wals, 2014). UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that sustainability should not be taught as an isolated subject but embedded throughout the educational system, influencing curriculum, pedagogy, school governance, and community engagement.

The competencies promoted through ESD include systems thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, responsibility, anticipatory thinking, and active participation in solving sustainability challenges (Rieckmann, 2017). These competencies enable learners to recognize the complexity of global issues and make informed decisions that contribute to long-term social and environmental well-being.

In primary education, sustainability competencies are cultivated through authentic learning experiences that encourage children to care for their environment, appreciate diversity, practice responsible consumption, and participate in community-based activities (Chawla, 2020). Such experiences not only enhance environmental literacy but also strengthen children's social responsibility and ethical awareness (Sterling, 2016). Nevertheless, ESD initiatives in primary schools often remain curriculum-centered and are rarely integrated into student support services such as school counseling. Considering that counseling aims to foster students' holistic development, integrating ESD principles into counseling programs may strengthen children's personal responsibility, resilience, and commitment to sustainable living.

2.4. Whole-School Approach

The whole-school approach has gained increasing recognition as an effective strategy for implementing comprehensive educational reform (Mogren et al., 2019). Rather than relying solely on classroom instruction, this approach views schools as interconnected systems in which leadership, curriculum, teaching practices, school culture, student support services, family engagement, and community partnerships collectively influence student development (Langford et al., 2014). Educational goals are therefore achieved through coordinated efforts across all components of the school ecosystem.

Research has demonstrated that whole-school approaches improve the implementation of social-emotional learning, inclusive education, mental health promotion, global citizenship education, and Education for Sustainable Development by creating coherent and supportive learning environments (Goldberg et al., 2019; Weare, 2015). Students benefit when educational values are consistently reinforced across classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, counseling services, school policies, and family engagement (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Such consistency strengthens students' opportunities to internalize positive attitudes and behaviors through authentic daily experiences.

Although the whole-school approach has been widely adopted in areas such as health promotion, inclusion, and sustainability education, its application within primary school counseling remains relatively underexplored. Existing counseling programs often operate independently from curriculum planning, leadership initiatives, and broader school development strategies. This fragmentation limits the potential contribution of counseling to students' holistic development (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for an integrated counseling framework that positions counseling as a central component of the whole-school ecosystem, enabling the systematic promotion of student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability competencies.

2.5. Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature demonstrates that student well-being, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and whole-school approaches have each been widely investigated within educational research. However, these areas have generally evolved as separate fields of inquiry. Studies on student well-being primarily emphasize mental health and social-emotional development (Durlak et al., 2011), while GCED focuses on civic participation and intercultural competence (UNESCO, 2015). Similarly, ESD research has predominantly examined curriculum integration and environmental literacy (Wals, 2014), whereas whole-school approaches have largely been implemented in relation to health promotion and school improvement (Langford et al., 2014).

Limited attention has been given to the integration of these four perspectives within school counseling, particularly in primary education. Existing counseling models continue to emphasize individual intervention and behavioral problem-solving, with relatively little consideration of counseling as a strategic mechanism for developing globally responsible, emotionally resilient, and sustainability-oriented learners (Sink, 2016). Consequently, a theoretical and practical gap remains regarding how counseling services can

contribute to broader educational goals beyond academic achievement.

To address this gap, the present study proposes the development of a Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) that integrates student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability within a unified school-wide counseling model. The framework positions counseling not merely as a remedial service but as a proactive developmental system that supports children's holistic growth through collaboration among school leaders, teachers, counselors, families, and the wider community.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a Design and Development Research (DDR) approach integrated with an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design to develop and validate a Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) that promotes student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability in primary education. The qualitative phase was conducted to identify stakeholders' needs and inform the conceptual development of the framework, whereas the quantitative phase evaluated the framework's validity and practicality prior to wider implementation. The research procedure consisted of four sequential phases: (1) needs assessment, (2) framework development, (3) expert validation and revision, and (4) pilot implementation. The overall research design is presented in Figure 1.

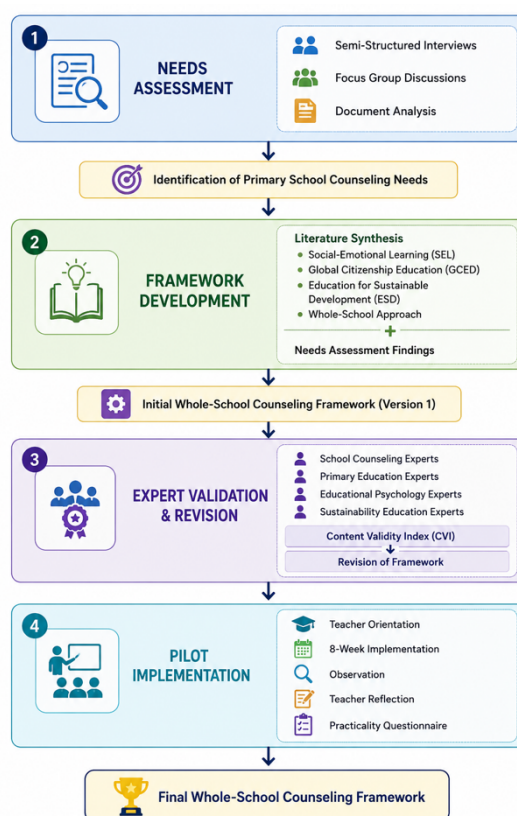


Figure 1. Research Procedure for Developing the Whole-School Counseling Framework

3.2. Participants

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants who possessed direct experience in primary school counseling and student development. During the needs assessment phase, 35 participants from three public primary schools participated in the study, consisting of five school principals, fifteen classroom teachers, five school counselors, and ten parents. These participants were selected because they represented the primary stakeholders involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating counseling services within the school environment. The expert validation stage involved four experts representing the fields of school counseling, primary education, educational psychology, and Education for Sustainable Development. Their role was to evaluate the conceptual accuracy, practicality, and feasibility of the proposed framework. The pilot implementation involved twelve classroom teachers and ninety-six Grade V students from three primary schools. Teachers implemented the framework over an eight-week period while researchers observed the implementation process and collected feedback regarding its practicality.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in four consecutive phases.

3.3.1. Phase 1: Needs Assessment

The first phase aimed to identify the current conditions, challenges, and expectations regarding counseling services in primary schools. Three qualitative techniques were employed:

- semi-structured interviews;
- focus group discussions (FGDs);
- document analysis of existing school counseling programs.

Interview questions explored participants' perceptions regarding student well-being, social-emotional challenges, global citizenship, environmental awareness, and the role of school counseling in addressing these issues. Focus group discussions encouraged collaborative reflection among teachers and parents concerning priorities for future counseling services.

3.3.2. Phase 2: Framework Development

The preliminary framework was constructed through an integrative synthesis of qualitative findings and relevant theoretical perspectives. Four theoretical foundations informed the development process:

- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL);
- Global Citizenship Education (GCED);
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD);
- Whole-School Approach.

The integration of empirical findings and theoretical concepts resulted in the first version of the Whole-School Counseling Framework, including its conceptual domains, implementation principles, stakeholder responsibilities, and expected student outcomes.

3.3.3. Phase 3: Expert Validation

The preliminary framework was evaluated by four experts using an expert judgment instrument developed by the researchers. Experts assessed five aspects of the framework:

- conceptual clarity;
- theoretical consistency;
- relevance to primary education;
- implementation feasibility;
- language clarity.

Each indicator was rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("very poor") to 5 ("excellent"). Qualitative comments and recommendations provided by the experts were incorporated into subsequent revisions.

3.3.4. Phase 4: Pilot Implementation

Following expert revision, the framework was implemented in three public primary schools over eight weeks. Before implementation, participating teachers attended a professional development workshop introducing the framework, implementation procedures, and instructional activities. Teachers subsequently integrated counseling activities into classroom learning and school programs. Researchers conducted classroom observations, collected teacher reflection journals, and administered practicality questionnaires following the implementation period.

3.4. Research Instruments

Five instruments were employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data throughout the study. First, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore stakeholders' perceptions regarding the current implementation of school counseling services, students' well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability-related issues in primary education. Second, a focus group discussion (FGD) protocol was used to facilitate collaborative discussions among teachers and parents in identifying priorities and expectations for future counseling practices.

To evaluate the proposed framework, an expert validation rubric was developed based on five evaluation criteria: conceptual clarity, theoretical consistency, relevance to primary education, implementation feasibility, and language clarity. Each criterion was rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), allowing the calculation of the Content Validity Index (CVI).

During the pilot implementation, a classroom observation checklist was employed to assess the fidelity of framework implementation, including teachers' adherence to the proposed counseling activities, student engagement, and classroom interactions. In addition, a teacher practicality questionnaire was administered at the end of the implementation period to evaluate the framework's usability, clarity, feasibility, and overall applicability in primary school settings.

3.5. Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using the six-step thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), including familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and report production. The framework's content validity was evaluated using the Content Validity Index (CVI). Item-level CVI (I-CVI) and Scale-level CVI (S-CVI) were calculated to determine the degree of expert agreement regarding the relevance of each framework component. The practicality of the framework was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and percentage agreement. Qualitative feedback obtained from teachers and experts was integrated with quantitative findings to refine the final version of the framework.

3.6. Research Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by integrating interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, classroom observations, and teacher reflections. Member checking was conducted by returning qualitative summaries to selected participants for confirmation. Expert validation strengthened the conceptual accuracy of the framework, while pilot implementation provided evidence of its practical applicability in authentic primary school settings.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Needs Assessment

The needs assessment was conducted to identify current challenges, expectations, and priorities regarding counseling services in primary schools. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis involving school principals, classroom teachers, school counselors, and parents. Thematic analysis identified four major themes that informed the development of the Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF): (1) students' emotional well-being challenges, (2) limited preventive counseling practices, (3) insufficient integration of global citizenship education into counseling services, and (4) limited incorporation of sustainability values into school culture.

4.1.1. Theme 1. Increasing Challenges in Students' Emotional Well-Being

Participants consistently reported that emotional and social challenges among primary school students had become increasingly apparent. Teachers observed that students frequently experienced difficulties in regulating emotions, resolving interpersonal conflicts, and adapting to changing social environments. School principals also highlighted increasing concerns regarding anxiety, reduced learning motivation, and declining resilience among students following rapid technological and social changes.

One classroom teacher stated:

"Many students are academically capable, but they struggle to manage frustration and communicate their feelings appropriately. Small conflicts often escalate because they lack emotional regulation skills." (Teacher 7)

Similarly, a school counselor explained:

"Our counseling services mainly respond to existing problems. We rarely have sufficient time to implement preventive programs that strengthen students' emotional well-being before problems emerge." (School Counselor 2)

These findings suggest that promoting emotional well-being should become a fundamental objective of counseling services rather than merely addressing behavioral problems after they occur.

4.1.2. Theme 2. Limited Preventive Counseling Practices

Across all participating schools, counseling services were predominantly reactive. Existing programs focused primarily on managing disciplinary issues, resolving interpersonal conflicts, and supporting students experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties. Preventive and developmental counseling activities were implemented inconsistently and depended largely on individual teacher initiatives. Document analysis further revealed that annual counseling plans primarily emphasized case management rather than systematic developmental programs promoting resilience, social-emotional learning, or positive school climate.

As one principal noted:

"Most counseling activities begin only after students experience difficulties. We need programs that help students develop positive attitudes before problems arise." (Principal 3)

Teachers also emphasized that counseling responsibilities were often perceived as belonging solely to school counselors, resulting in limited collaboration among school personnel.

4.1.3. Theme 3. Limited Integration of Global Citizenship Education

Participants acknowledged that values related to respect for diversity, empathy, intercultural understanding, and responsible citizenship were introduced through classroom learning; however, these values had not been systematically incorporated into counseling services. Parents expressed expectations that schools should prepare children to become socially responsible citizens capable of interacting respectfully with people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

One parent commented:

"Children today interact with people from many different backgrounds through digital media. Schools should help them learn respect, empathy, and responsibility beyond academic knowledge." (Parent 5)

Teachers similarly indicated that global citizenship competencies were generally addressed within Civic Education lessons but were rarely reinforced through counseling programs that supported students' personal and social development.

4.1.4. Theme 4. Limited Integration of Sustainability into School Culture

Participants agreed that environmental education was primarily implemented through occasional school campaigns, such as tree planting or school clean-up activities. However, sustainability values had not yet become an integral part of students' daily behavior or counseling programs. Several teachers emphasized that environmental responsibility should be viewed as a component of character development rather than merely participation in environmental events.

One teacher explained:

"Students enjoy environmental activities, but these are usually conducted only on special occasions. We need continuous programs that build sustainable habits in everyday school life." (Teacher 11)

School principals further emphasized that sustainability initiatives would become more effective if they involved collaboration among teachers, parents, and the wider school community.

4.2. Development of the Whole-School Counseling Framework

The findings from the needs assessment indicated that existing counseling practices in primary schools remained predominantly remedial and reactive, focusing mainly on students experiencing academic, behavioral, or social difficulties. Participants consistently emphasized the need for counseling services that proactively foster students' holistic development, including emotional well-being, social responsibility, global awareness, and sustainable behaviors. Furthermore, the interviews and focus group discussions highlighted that counseling activities were often implemented independently by teachers or counselors, with limited collaboration among school leaders, families, and the wider community.

These findings informed the development of the Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF), which positions counseling as a collaborative and school-wide developmental system rather than an isolated support service. The framework was constructed by integrating empirical findings from the needs assessment with four complementary theoretical perspectives: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Whole-School Approach. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive foundation for promoting students' cognitive, emotional, social, and civic development within everyday school practices. The proposed framework consists of five interconnected implementation components and one expected outcome component. Rather than functioning independently, each component contributes to a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, collaboration, and evaluation that supports students' holistic development.

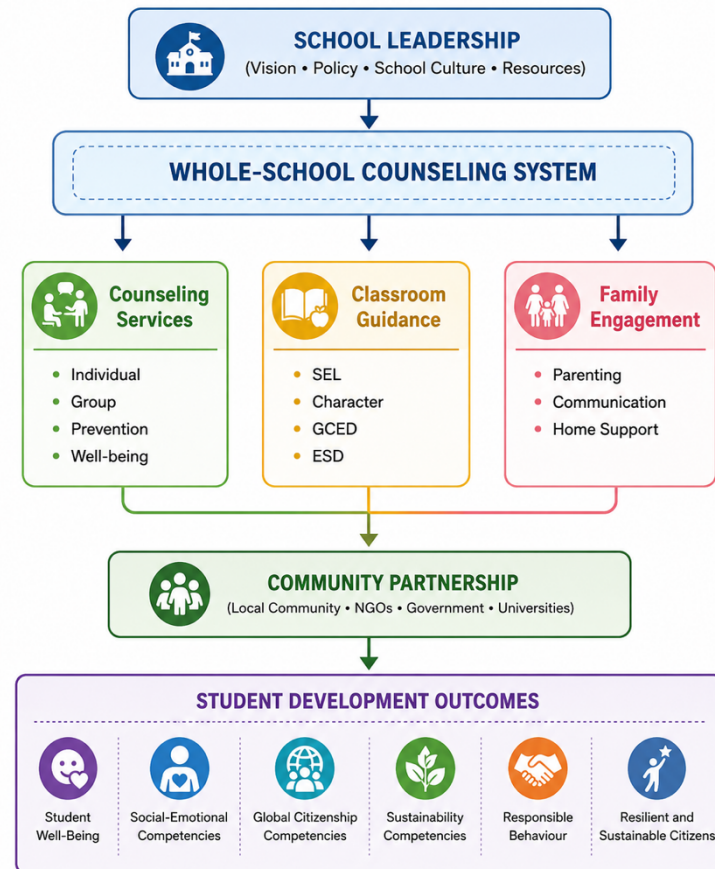


Figure 2. Whole-School Counseling Framework

At the strategic level, school leadership serves as the driving force behind the implementation of the framework. School leaders establish the institutional vision, formulate supportive policies, allocate resources, and cultivate a school culture that prioritizes student well-being and holistic development. Leadership commitment ensures that counseling initiatives are integrated into broader school improvement efforts rather than operating as stand-alone programs.

The second component, counseling services, represents the professional core of the framework. These services include preventive, developmental, and responsive counseling activities delivered through individual counseling, group guidance, classroom counseling sessions, and school-wide well-being programs. Unlike conventional counseling models that primarily address existing problems, the proposed framework emphasizes preventive interventions designed to strengthen resilience, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and positive behavioral development.

The third component, classroom guidance, embeds counseling objectives within everyday teaching and learning activities. Classroom teachers play an active role in promoting social-emotional learning, global citizenship values, and sustainability competencies through collaborative learning, reflective discussions, project-based activities, and experiential learning. This integration ensures that counseling objectives become part of students' daily educational experiences rather than isolated interventions.

Recognizing the critical influence of the home environment, family engagement forms the fourth

component of the framework. Parents are encouraged to participate actively in supporting children's emotional development, reinforcing positive behaviors, maintaining effective communication with schools, and participating in counseling-related activities. Strong partnerships between schools and families enhance the consistency of developmental support across home and school contexts.

The fifth component, community partnership, extends counseling beyond the school setting by involving external stakeholders such as local communities, governmental agencies, universities, health professionals, and non-governmental organizations. Community collaboration provides authentic learning experiences that strengthen students' civic engagement, environmental responsibility, and social participation while expanding opportunities for implementing sustainability-oriented activities.

The interaction among these five implementation components contributes directly to the framework's expected outcomes. Rather than measuring success solely through academic achievement, the framework emphasizes six developmental outcomes: student well-being, social-emotional competencies, global citizenship competencies, sustainability competencies, responsible behavior, and the development of resilient and sustainability-oriented citizens. These outcomes reflect the multidimensional goals of contemporary primary education and align with international priorities in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED).

4.3. Expert Validation

The preliminary version of the Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) was evaluated by four experts representing the fields of school counseling, primary education, educational psychology, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The purpose of the expert validation was to examine the content validity, conceptual relevance, implementation feasibility, and language clarity of the proposed framework before pilot implementation. Experts assessed each framework component using a four-point relevance scale (1 = not relevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = relevant, and 4 = highly relevant). Ratings of 3 or 4 were considered relevant for calculating the Item-level Content Validity Index (I-CVI), while the Scale-level Content Validity Index based on the averaging method (S-CVI/Ave) was used to determine the overall content validity of the framework. In addition to the quantitative evaluation, qualitative comments and recommendations were collected to improve the framework before implementation.

The expert validation demonstrated excellent content validity across all framework components. The I-CVI values ranged from 0.75 to 1.00, while the overall S-CVI/Ave reached 0.95, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.90 for excellent content validity. The descriptive statistics further indicated that all components received high ratings, with mean scores ranging from 3.75 to 4.00 on the four-point relevance scale. Table 1 summarizes the results of the expert validation.

Table 1. Expert Validation Results of the Whole-School Counseling Framework

Component	Mean $\pm$ SD	I-CVI	Interpretation
Conceptual clarity	3.92 $\pm$ 0.17	01.00	Excellent
Theoretical consistency	3.88 $\pm$ 0.25	01.00	Excellent
Relevance to primary education	4.00 $\pm$ 0.00	01.00	Excellent

Practical feasibility	3.75 ± 0.50	0,05208333	Good
Language clarity	3.92 ± 0.17	01.00	Excellent
Overall	3.89 ± 0.22	S-CVI/Ave = 0.95	Excellent

Among the evaluated components, relevance to primary education received the highest rating ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.00$), indicating unanimous agreement among the experts regarding its suitability for the developmental characteristics and educational needs of primary school students. Conceptual clarity and language clarity also achieved high mean scores ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.17$) with perfect agreement ($I-CVI = 1.00$), reflecting the coherence and comprehensibility of the proposed framework. Theoretical consistency likewise demonstrated excellent content validity ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.25$; $I-CVI = 1.00$), confirming that the integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Whole-School Approach was conceptually sound. Practical feasibility obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.50$) and an $I-CVI$ of 0.75, indicating that one expert suggested further refinement regarding implementation procedures. Nevertheless, this value remains acceptable for content validation involving four experts.

In addition to the quantitative evaluation, the experts provided several constructive recommendations to strengthen the framework. The school counseling expert suggested differentiating counseling activities according to the developmental stages of primary school students. The primary education expert recommended integrating classroom guidance activities more closely with the existing curriculum to facilitate implementation by classroom teachers. The educational psychology expert emphasized the inclusion of measurable indicators of emotional resilience and self-regulation. Meanwhile, the Education for Sustainable Development expert recommended expanding authentic environmental and community-based learning activities to strengthen students' sustainability competencies.

Based on these recommendations, several revisions were incorporated into the framework. Developmental indicators were reorganized into lower-grade and upper-grade competencies to better reflect students' cognitive and socio-emotional development. Classroom guidance examples were aligned with regular learning activities to improve implementation feasibility. Additional indicators related to emotional resilience, empathy, and responsible decision-making were incorporated into the expected student outcomes. Furthermore, sustainability-oriented activities were expanded to include collaborative projects involving families and local communities, thereby reinforcing the whole-school approach embedded within the framework.

4.4. Pilot Implementation

Following expert validation and framework revision, the Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) was implemented in three public primary schools over an eight-week period. Prior to implementation, participating teachers attended a one-day professional development workshop to familiarize themselves with the framework's objectives, implementation procedures, and counseling activities. Throughout the implementation period, researchers conducted weekly observations, collected teacher reflection journals, and administered practicality questionnaires at the end of the program.

4.4.1. Teacher Activities During Implementation

The implementation emphasized integrating counseling activities into regular classroom learning and school culture rather than treating counseling as a separate service. During the eight weeks, teachers conducted classroom guidance sessions focusing on emotional awareness, empathy, environmental responsibility, collaborative problem-solving, and community participation. These activities were embedded into thematic learning, project-based activities, classroom discussions, and school campaigns related to sustainability. Teachers gradually became more confident in facilitating reflective discussions and collaborative learning activities. Classroom observations indicated that the framework encouraged teachers to shift from directive counseling practices toward student-centered facilitation, allowing students to actively express their ideas, emotions, and social experiences.

4.4.2. Student Responses

Students demonstrated positive responses toward the implemented framework. Most students actively participated in collaborative discussions, environmental action projects, and classroom reflection sessions. Teachers reported improvements in students' willingness to communicate with peers, demonstrate empathy, and participate in collective decision-making. Students also showed increased awareness of environmental issues through simple sustainability practices such as waste sorting, energy conservation, and classroom cleanliness initiatives. Observation data further suggested that integrating counseling activities into everyday classroom learning created a more supportive classroom climate and strengthened relationships between teachers and students.

4.4.3. Practicality of Framework Implementation

At the end of the implementation period, teachers completed a practicality questionnaire consisting of five dimensions: clarity, feasibility, ease of implementation, student engagement, and overall usefulness.

Table 2. Teacher Practicality Evaluation of the Whole-School Counseling Framework

Dimension	Mean	Category
Clarity of framework	4.63	Very High
Ease of implementation	4.45	Very High
Compatibility with classroom learning	4.58	Very High
Student engagement	4.71	Very High
Overall usefulness	4.67	Very High
Overall Mean	4.61	Very High

The overall practicality score indicated that teachers perceived the framework as highly applicable within primary school settings. The highest-rated dimension was student engagement ($M = 4.71$), suggesting that the counseling activities successfully promoted active participation and collaborative interaction among students. The lowest mean score was obtained for ease of implementation ($M = 4.45$), indicating that although teachers generally considered the framework practical, some activities required

additional preparation time and instructional support.

4.4.4. Challenges Encountered During Implementation

Despite the positive evaluation, several implementation challenges were identified through teacher reflection journals and classroom observations. First, teachers initially experienced difficulty integrating counseling activities into an already demanding curriculum schedule. Additional planning time was required to align counseling objectives with thematic classroom learning. Second, some teachers reported limited confidence in facilitating reflective discussions, particularly when addressing students' emotional experiences or sensitive interpersonal issues. This finding suggests that continuous professional development remains necessary to strengthen teachers' counseling competencies. Third, several sustainability-oriented activities required stronger collaboration with parents and the local community. Teachers noted that students' sustainable behaviors were more consistently maintained when school initiatives were supported by family involvement.

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. Reframing School Counseling Beyond Academic Support

The findings of this study indicate the need to reconceptualize school counseling in primary education from a predominantly remedial and problem-oriented service toward a comprehensive developmental system that promotes students' holistic growth. The needs assessment revealed that existing counseling programs primarily address academic difficulties, behavioral problems, and individual interventions, while comparatively little attention is given to fostering students' emotional well-being, social responsibility, and sustainability awareness. This imbalance suggests that conventional counseling practices are no longer sufficient to respond to the increasingly complex developmental challenges faced by children in contemporary society (Sink, 2016).

The Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) developed in this study positions counseling as a proactive educational process rather than a reactive intervention. Within this perspective, counseling becomes an integral component of the school's educational ecosystem that supports students' cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical development. This shift reflects the transition from deficit-based counseling models toward strength-based and preventive approaches that emphasize resilience, positive relationships, and lifelong development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Shoshani & Slone, 2013).

The findings are consistent with the principles of the Whole-School Approach, which argues that students' development cannot be achieved through isolated classroom instruction or counseling sessions alone but requires collaboration among school leaders, teachers, families, and the wider community (Mogren et al., 2019). Integrating counseling into everyday school practices enables social-emotional learning and character development to become embedded within the school's culture rather than functioning as supplementary programs (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Consequently, counseling expands beyond addressing immediate student problems to becoming a strategic mechanism for promoting healthy school climates and sustainable educational environments (Goldberg et al., 2019; Weare, 2015).

Furthermore, this reconceptualization aligns with contemporary perspectives in developmental school counseling, which emphasize prevention, early intervention, and holistic student development (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019). Rather than waiting for behavioral or emotional problems to emerge, counseling services are designed to cultivate competencies that enable students to thrive academically, socially, and personally throughout their educational journey (Swerdlow et al., 2021).

4.5.2. Integrating Well-Being, Global Citizenship, and Sustainability

One of the primary contributions of this study is the integration of three educational priorities—student well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability—within a unified counseling framework. Although these concepts have frequently been investigated independently, the present findings demonstrate their strong conceptual interdependence in primary education.

Student well-being constitutes the foundation for effective learning and healthy development (Seligman & Adler, 2018). Children who experience emotional security, positive relationships, and a sense of belonging are more likely to participate actively in learning, regulate their emotions, and demonstrate resilience when encountering challenges (Noble & McGrath, 2015). These competencies correspond closely with the principles of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which emphasize self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2011).

Building upon these social-emotional competencies, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) broadens students' perspectives beyond their immediate surroundings by encouraging empathy, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, and civic responsibility (UNESCO, 2015). Students who possess strong emotional regulation and empathy are better prepared to appreciate cultural differences, collaborate with others, and engage constructively within increasingly interconnected societies (Bourn, 2018; Torres, 2017).

The framework further extends these competencies toward Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which emphasizes responsible environmental behavior, ethical decision-making, and long-term societal well-being (UNESCO, 2020). Sustainability competencies require learners not only to understand environmental issues but also to translate this understanding into meaningful action within their schools and communities (Rieckmann, 2017). Consequently, sustainability education is viewed not merely as environmental literacy but as a behavioral outcome emerging from well-developed emotional competencies and social responsibility (Sterling, 2016).

The sequential relationship identified in this study suggests that student well-being provides the psychological foundation upon which global citizenship competencies develop, while global citizenship serves as a bridge toward sustainability-oriented behaviors (Chawla, 2020). This conceptual progression offers a more comprehensive understanding of how counseling services can contribute simultaneously to students' personal development and broader societal transformation (Hickman et al., 2021).

4.5.3. Practical Implications for Primary Schools

The proposed framework has important implications for educational practice at multiple levels of the primary school system. For classroom teachers, the framework provides practical guidance for integrating counseling principles into daily instructional activities. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate classroom discussions, collaborative projects, reflective learning activities, and problem-solving experiences that simultaneously promote academic learning and students' social-emotional development (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

For school counselors, the framework expands professional responsibilities beyond individual counseling sessions toward coordinating school-wide preventive programs that strengthen well-being, citizenship, and sustainability competencies. Counseling activities become collaborative rather than isolated, involving teachers, school leaders, and families in supporting children's development (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Gerstein et al., 2019).

School leaders play a critical role in establishing organizational policies, allocating resources, and cultivating school cultures that support integrated counseling practices. Leadership commitment is essential for ensuring that counseling initiatives become embedded within school improvement strategies rather than functioning as temporary programs (Mogren et al., 2019). The framework also highlights the importance of family and community engagement. Parents and community organizations contribute valuable opportunities for reinforcing sustainability practices, civic participation, and positive social behaviors beyond the school environment (Langford et al., 2014). Such partnerships strengthen the continuity between students' experiences at school and at home.

At the policy level, the findings suggest that educational authorities should reconsider the role of counseling within primary education. Rather than emphasizing remedial interventions alone, future counseling policies should explicitly support preventive, developmental, and sustainability-oriented approaches aligned with national education goals and global educational agendas (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2020).

4.5.4. Contribution of the Proposed Framework

This study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it proposes a novel conceptual integration of four complementary perspectives: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Whole-School Approach. While previous studies have typically examined these perspectives independently (Chawla, 2020; Durlak et al., 2011; Wals, 2014), the present framework demonstrates how they can function synergistically within primary school counseling. Second, the study provides an empirically informed framework developed through systematic needs assessment, expert validation, and pilot implementation. The integration of stakeholder perspectives throughout the development process enhances the contextual relevance and practical applicability of the framework for primary education.

Third, the framework expands the traditional scope of school counseling by positioning counselors

and teachers as facilitators of sustainable human development rather than solely providers of remedial services (Sink, 2016). This broader orientation aligns counseling with current international priorities emphasizing children's well-being, global competence, and sustainability literacy (OECD, 2018). Finally, the framework offers a theoretical foundation for future research investigating the relationship between counseling services and broader educational outcomes, including social-emotional competence, civic engagement, environmental responsibility, and school climate.

4.5.5. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the pilot implementation was conducted within a limited number of primary schools, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to different educational contexts. Future studies involving larger and more diverse samples are necessary to examine the applicability of the framework across various regions and school characteristics. Second, the present study primarily focused on framework development and validation rather than evaluating its long-term effectiveness. Consequently, the impact of the framework on students' academic achievement, psychological well-being, global citizenship competencies, and sustainability behaviors remains to be empirically established. Third, the implementation period was relatively short. Longitudinal research is required to investigate whether sustained implementation produces enduring improvements in students' developmental outcomes and school culture (Goldberg et al., 2019).

Future research should employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs to compare the effectiveness of the Whole-School Counseling Framework with conventional counseling approaches. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining developmental trajectories over multiple academic years would provide stronger evidence regarding the framework's long-term educational impact. Cross-cultural validation across different educational systems would also contribute to establishing the international applicability of the proposed framework.

5. Conclusion

This study developed and validated a Whole-School Counseling Framework (WSCF) that integrates student well-being, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Whole-School Approach to strengthen counseling practices in primary education. The needs assessment revealed that existing counseling services remain largely remedial and reactive, focusing primarily on addressing students' academic and behavioral problems while providing limited opportunities to foster emotional well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability competencies. These findings highlight the necessity of repositioning school counseling as a comprehensive developmental system that supports children's holistic growth.

The developed framework responds to these needs by embedding counseling within the broader educational ecosystem through collaborative engagement among school leaders, classroom teachers, school counselors, families, and community partners. Rather than functioning as an isolated intervention,

counseling becomes an integral component of school culture that promotes preventive and developmental practices. Expert validation demonstrated that the framework possesses high conceptual clarity, relevance, and practical feasibility, while the pilot implementation indicated that teachers perceived it as highly practical and effective in promoting student engagement, collaborative learning, and sustainability-oriented behaviors.

This study makes several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it proposes an integrated framework that connects four complementary perspectives—Social-Emotional Learning, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and the Whole-School Approach—within a unified counseling model for primary education. This integration extends existing school counseling literature by positioning counseling as a strategic mechanism for fostering students' social-emotional competence, global responsibility, and sustainability awareness. Practically, the framework provides educators, school counselors, school leaders, and policymakers with a systematic guide for implementing counseling services that are embedded within everyday teaching, school culture, and community collaboration.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The framework was validated and piloted in a limited number of primary schools, and its long-term effectiveness has not yet been examined. Future studies should evaluate the framework through large-scale quasi-experimental or experimental designs involving more diverse educational settings. Longitudinal investigations are also needed to examine whether sustained implementation contributes to lasting improvements in students' well-being, social-emotional competence, global citizenship, sustainability behaviors, school climate, and academic development. Furthermore, cross-cultural validation in different national and educational contexts would strengthen the generalizability and international applicability of the proposed framework.

The Whole-School Counseling Framework offers a promising direction for transforming counseling in primary education from a predominantly remedial service into a proactive, collaborative, and future-oriented developmental system. By integrating well-being, global citizenship, and sustainability within a coherent whole-school approach, the framework has the potential to support the development of resilient, socially responsible, and sustainability-oriented children who are prepared to contribute positively to an increasingly interconnected and sustainable world.

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