

## Enhancing Students' Moral Development through Counseling by Christian Religious Education Teachers

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**Article History**

Received: 03.08.2023

Accepted: 19.08.2023

Published: 30.08.2023

**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the impact of guidance/counseling by teachers on students' moral development in class VIII-1 of SMP Negeri 2 Sei Bamban. The population studied consists of 32 students from class VIII-1. Data collection methods utilize Likert model questionnaires, employed to measure individuals' or groups' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions towards social phenomena. Data analysis involves four stages: (a) planning, (b) action implementation, (c) evaluation, and (d) reflection. The analysis results indicate a significant improvement in the average scores of guidance/counseling questionnaires from cycle I to cycle III. The average scores increased from 3.20 in cycle I to 3.41 in cycle II and reached 3.56 in cycle III. Additionally, the correlation between teacher guidance/counseling and students' moral development also increased from cycle I to cycle III. The correlation increased from 73.9% in cycle I to 74.3% in cycle II and reached 86.5% in cycle III.

**Keywords:** Moral Development, Counseling, Teachers.

**Cite this article:**

Situmorang, N, Sinaga, B. Y., Simanjuntak, G. I., (2023). Enhancing Students' Moral Development through Counseling by Christian Religious Education Teachers. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 28-32.

### Introduction

Education is an institution responsible for supporting the development of individual learners, who come from diverse social, cultural, and psychological backgrounds, towards the achievement of the purposes and goals of education. Learners are often confronted with various challenges that can hinder the learning process and the attainment of educational goals. These challenges vary, encompassing personal, social, economic, religious, moral, as well as learning and career-related issues. The impacts of these issues often slow down the progress of learning and the development of learners' behavior (McLendon, 2017).

The expectation is that the information provided meets your needs well. If there are aspects that need further adjustment, please let me know. The education sector is currently facing various transformations triggered by the demands and requests of society (Sandy Ariawan, 2022). This complexity demands an appropriate response to rapidly changing local issues as well as global dynamics. Challenges faced include the influence of free markets, advances in science and technology, as well as developments in the fields of arts, culture, and ethics. In this context, education needs to evolve in line with the changes occurring, both in terms of the quality of education, teacher and student competencies, curriculum design, and quality education infrastructure. This is aimed at ensuring that education graduates can become excellent and high-quality human resources amidst dynamic changes in the times.

The importance of education in human life cannot be denied, and its benefits are not only felt by individuals at a certain age. The

quality of a country's education has a direct impact on the overall progress of that nation.

Education is a fundamental and structured effort to create a learning environment that allows learners to actively explore their potentials, including the development of spiritual aspects, adherence to rules, personality development, intelligence, good morality, as well as skills useful for themselves, society, and the nation (S. Ariawan, Situmeang, Zebua, Kristyana, & Baringbing, 2021).

The function and goals of education in Indonesia state that national education plays a crucial role in developing the potential and character and advancing the civilization of the nation with dignity, with the main goal of enriching the nation's life through intelligence improvement. This education aims to develop the talents of learners to become individuals who have beliefs and devotion to the One Almighty God, morally good, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and active in democratic participation as citizens.

From the above description, it can be concluded that the improvement of the quality of education is influenced by the perfection of all aspects of education, such as improving the quality and distribution of teachers, refining the curriculum, the availability of learning resources, educational facilities, and government policies. Among all these components, the role of teachers is considered the most vital, as teachers have a central role in shaping the moral development of learners. Teachers are expected to be role models for their students. Therefore, teachers

need to have four main competencies: pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies.

The government has taken various steps to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. Actions taken include the periodic revision of the curriculum, with the aim of keeping the curriculum relevant to advances in technology and science and meeting the needs of a rapidly evolving society. In addition, training for teachers is also conducted through various programs, including sending them abroad to attend various workshops, seminars, training, and advanced study programs (Wahyuni, Pieter, Purba, Sitepu, & Ariawan, 2021).

Guidance and counseling play a very vital role in the world of education. The guidance process has a significant impact on the direction of learners' development in school, both in terms of academic and non-academic achievements, as well as in social behavior and their independence.

Guidance and counseling programs have a very important role in the success of the overall education program. The presence of guidance services in the context of education is closely related to the essence, meaning, and role of education in all aspects of life. In addition, the need for guidance services is also closely related to an understanding of the essence and characteristics of individuals who are learning. The presence of guidance services in the context of education becomes important when we see that education aims to shape individuals comprehensively (Putra, Padmasari, & Ariawan, 2020).

Counseling services in the school environment are efforts to support learners in the development of personal, social, academic aspects, as well as career planning and development. Through counseling services, approaches tailored to the needs, potentials, talents, interests, development, conditions, and opportunities of learners, both individually, in groups, and in class, can be facilitated. The aim of this service is to help learners overcome challenges, obstacles, and problems they face in the learning and personal growth process.

Realizing the continuing progress in the world of education, the role of guidance and counseling becomes increasingly important in strengthening student learning programs, especially related to the development of personality, talents, interests, and learning motivation or achievements. The importance of understanding that the presence of counselors in schools should be considered a positive thing, as the presence of guidance counselors aims to prevent and provide assistance to individuals and groups in facing various challenges in their lives. This means that the role of guidance counselors is not only limited to helping students who are experiencing difficulties in school but also involved in identifying and providing support to students facing problems at home, in their community, and even more specifically, in the family or personal environment. Therefore, the role of a guidance counselor is crucial, both in ensuring the smoothness of the learning process and in providing guidance and handling various problems faced by students. With counselors in schools, the possibility of solving problems, including low student learning achievement, can be overcome. Furthermore, the presence of guidance and counseling is highly relevant to the goals of national education, which prioritize the development of students' personalities and potentials in the form of learning interests, talents, and competencies (Potgieter, 2015).

Researchers have found that there are many cases of violations of school regulations caused by various factors, both internal and external. This indicates that problems can arise both from within the school environment itself and from outside, such as the family, community, or surrounding environment. The process of individual development does not always proceed smoothly according to potential, expectations, and values held, due to many factors that can hinder it. External inhibiting factors, for example, can come from an uncondusive environment. This unhealthy environment can affect deviant behavior in adolescents or learners. The impact of this uncondusive environment can have a detrimental effect on learner development, allowing them to experience stress and depression that make their lives uncomfortable. In such situations, many adolescents or learners respond with deviant and even amoral behavior, such as involvement in communal activities, consuming alcoholic beverages, abusing drugs, engaging in brawls, and engaging in promiscuity (du Plessis, 2015).

In the course of development as individuals in development towards maturity or independence, learners need guidance because they are still building understanding and insight into themselves and their surroundings, and they are also collecting experiences to determine the direction of their lives. The process of optimizing students' abilities in creativity, independence, responsibility, and problem-solving is a significant responsibility of education. Therefore, understanding individual potential is very important for the development of students as holistic human beings, both physically and spiritually, so that they can live and develop normally and healthily. In addition, in the course of their development, students often face problems that are difficult to overcome on their own. To assist in personal development processes and overcome these problems, students often need professional assistance, and therefore, schools must be able to provide professional services such as guidance and counseling.

Researchers have found that various problems faced by students in the classroom are often unavoidable, even with good teaching. This is because the sources of student problems do not only come from the school environment. Given that the school's mission is to provide comprehensive services effectively to help learners achieve their development goals and overcome the problems they face, all efforts and facilities provided by the school need to focus on that. This drives the need for guidance and counseling services besides teaching. In the framework of comprehensive services, guidance and counseling in schools become services aimed at all learners, with a focus on the comprehensive development of students. This research aims to explain the potential development of student morals through teacher guidance counseling.

## Method

This research employs a quantitative method in the form of classroom action research aimed at the students of class VIII-1 at SMP Negeri 2 Sei Bamban. The population under study consists of 32 students in class VIII-1. Data collection method utilizes Likert scale questionnaires, which are employed to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals or groups towards social phenomena. Data analysis involves four stages: (a) planning, (b) action implementation, (c) evaluation, and (d) reflection. The results of the analysis demonstrate a significant improvement in the average scores of the guidance/counseling questionnaire from cycle I to cycle III. The average scores increased from 3.20 in

cycle I to 3.41 in cycle II, and reached 3.56 in cycle III. Additionally, the correlation between teacher guidance/counseling and student moral development also increased from cycle I to cycle III. The correlation increased from 73.9% in cycle I to 74.3% in cycle II, and reached 86.5% in cycle III.

## Result and Discussion

### Research Data Description

#### a) Moral Development of Students in Cycle I:

- Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 30 to 45; the mean was 39.03; the median was 38.03; the mode was 35, and the standard deviation was 4.020

#### - Teacher Guidance/Counseling in Cycle I:

Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 26 to 44; the mean was 37.66; the median was 37.50; the mode was 36, and the standard deviation was 3.891

#### b) Moral Development of Students in Cycle II:

- Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 34 to 45; the mean was 41.88; the median was 44.00; the mode was 44, and the standard deviation was 3.599

#### - Teacher Guidance/Counseling in Cycle II:

Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 33 to 44; the mean was 40.00; the median was 40.00; the mode was 43, and the standard deviation was 3.483

#### c) Moral Development of Students in Cycle III:

- Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 30 to 46; the mean was 42.22; the median was 43.00; the mode was 43, and the standard deviation was 3.949

#### Teacher Guidance/Counseling in Cycle III:

Based on data from 32 students, empirical scores ranged from 26 to 47; the mean was 43.16; the median was 45.00; the mode was 46, and the standard deviation was 5.004

From the calculation results, the average score of teacher guidance/counseling on students' moral development in Cycle I was 3.20, and the average score of teacher guidance/counseling on students' moral development in Cycle II was 3.41, while the average score of teacher guidance/counseling on students' moral development in Cycle III was 3.56.

#### Evaluation of Classroom Action Program

The evaluation results during the classroom action program are presented as follows:

- The results of Cycle I action show an average score of teacher guidance/counseling on student moral formation with a correlation of 73.9%

- The results of Cycle II action show an average score of teacher guidance/counseling on student moral formation with a correlation of 74.3%

- The results of Cycle III action show an average score of teacher guidance/counseling on student moral formation with a correlation of 86.5%

### a. Student Moral Development

The concept of morality originates from the Latin word "mores," which is the plural form of "mos" meaning custom or habit. According to the general Indonesian language dictionary, "moral" is defined as the assessment of the good and bad aspects of an action or behavior. The term "moral" is often used to set boundaries for actions, behaviors, traits, and deeds considered right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate (Bandura, 2021). Morality in this sense can also be understood as:

a. Principles of life related to concepts of right and wrong, good and bad.

b. The ability to understand the difference between right and wrong.

c. Teachings or portrayals of behavior considered good.

Morality is behavior determined by ethics. Generally, morality can be divided into two categories:

a. Behaviors recognized as good according to ethical standards.

b. Behaviors recognized as bad according to ethical standards.

Morality is also interpreted as guidance about good and bad, actions and behaviors, character, obligations, and so on. In morality, all actions considered good and important to do are regulated, as well as actions considered not good and need to be avoided. Morality relates to the ability to distinguish between good and bad actions. Thus, morality plays a role as a controller in human behavior. Morality can be measured both subjectively and objectively. Individual perception or conscience provides a subjective measurement, while norms provide an objective measurement. When the conscience desires truth, norms will help in finding moral goodness. Morality is related to norms applied in society and is beyond individual control. Dorothy Emmet states that "humans rely on social norms, traditions, customs, and religion to help evaluate a person's behavior." Morality is closely related to ethics. Morality refers to norms, ethics, or value systems that regulate individual or group behavior in society. Morality serves as a guide for individuals or groups to determine what is considered right and wrong based on the adopted moral standards. The source of morality can come from tradition, religion, ideology, or a combination of these sources. Moral standards are guidelines related to issues considered to have serious consequences, based on rational reasoning rather than authority (Molobi, 2014). These standards include principles such as prioritizing the common good over personal interests, impartiality, and their violation often causing feelings of guilt, shame, or regret. Morality has three main components:

a. The affective/emotional component involves various types of feelings such as guilt, shame, empathy towards the feelings of others, and others, which accompany moral actions. The affective component of morality includes various emotional reactions that influence an individual's moral thinking and behavior.

b. The cognitive component is the center where individuals think about what is right and wrong and make decisions about the actions to be taken. The cognitive component of morality involves the thinking process involved when someone makes moral decisions.

c. The behavioral component reflects how individuals actually behave when faced with temptations to violate moral principles or rules. The behavioral component of morality includes concrete actions consistent with an individual's moral values and principles, especially in situations where ignoring these principles is easier.

According to research, morality involves sensitivity in thought, feeling, and action, distinguishing it from actions based solely on impulses or desires.

## **b. Understanding Development**

Development is a dynamic process involving a change from one condition to another, and this is a phenomenon that occurs continuously throughout an individual's life. Development refers to the process in which there are organized structures and specific functions. When there is a change in structure, both in terms of organization and form, it also affects changes in these functions. Development can also be explained as a series of progressive changes in the organization of an organism, seen as a functional and adaptive system throughout its life. These progressive changes are influenced by two main factors, namely maturation and experience (Van Niekerk & Breed, 2018).

Development is a process of change that involves growth and an increase in individual abilities at a certain time, influenced by maturity and interaction with the environment. Development is closely related to physical growth and the potentials of the individual (such as innate abilities), as well as sensitive responses to stimuli from their surrounding environment. According to researchers, development involves an increase in the complexity of body structure and function. This involves the differentiation of cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems that develop to fulfill their functions. The developmental process usually occurs simultaneously with growth, so that each increase in size is also followed by changes in function. Development is influenced by the interaction between the maturation of the central nervous system and related organs. The early stages of development involve various aspects of functional abilities, including cognitive, motor, emotional, social, and language aspects. Development at this stage has a significant impact on subsequent development. Limitations or disruptions in one aspect of development can affect other aspects (Carson, Ovey, Hibbs, & Farrokh, 2016).

Moral development involves changes in an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions related to standards of morality. This includes an intrapersonal dimension, which affects how someone acts when alone, as well as an interpersonal dimension, which affects social interactions and how conflicts are resolved in social contexts. Thus, moral development is related to norms and regulations regarding expected behavior in interactions with others. To understand these norms, they posed four fundamental questions:

- a. How does one consider and think about moral decisions?
- b. How does one actually behave in moral situations?
- c. How does one emotionally respond to moral-related matters?
- d. What moral characteristics does an individual possess?

From this explanation, there are indicators of moral development, namely personality and social dimensions, which will be further elaborated.

## **1. Personality**

Personality development involves changes in how individuals interact with the world and express emotions uniquely. In adolescence, the search for identity becomes crucial. The search for identity refers to the process in which individuals strive to become unique individuals with significant roles in their lives. In adolescence, the environment has a strong influence on behavior determination. Although adolescents have reached a sufficient level of cognitive development to make their own decisions, peer influence has a significant impact on their behavior.

From the above explanation, it is concluded that the essence of personality is 1) mental, 2) character, and 3) disposition.

### ***Mental***

Adolescence is a critical period in individual mental development. During this period, individuals strive to understand themselves and their relationship with others. The mental aspect is closely related to the cognitive and emotional aspects. Cognitive development involves the ability to think logically, solve problems, and understand moral concepts. Emotional development involves understanding and controlling emotions.

### ***Character***

Character development involves the formation of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Adolescents are influenced by family, school, and peer groups in shaping their character. Character development also involves the ability to make moral decisions and take responsibility for one's actions.

### ***Disposition***

Disposition involves individual traits or tendencies that are relatively stable over time. Disposition includes temperament, which refers to innate characteristics such as activity level, adaptability, and mood. Disposition also includes personality traits, which are enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

## **2. Social Dimension**

The social dimension of moral development involves learning to interact with others in ways that are consistent with moral principles and values. Socialization refers to the process through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate effectively in social groups. Socialization occurs through interactions with family, peers, school, and other social institutions. Through socialization, individuals learn about social norms, expectations, and roles. They also learn how to regulate their behavior to conform to these norms and expectations.

Moral development occurs in stages, with each stage representing a different way of thinking about moral issues. This theory of moral development is based on the idea that moral reasoning develops in a series of stages. These stages are hierarchical, with each stage building on the previous ones. Kohlberg identified three levels of moral development, each consisting of two stages:

### ***Preconventional level***

- a. Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation
- b. Stage 2: Individualism and exchange

### ***Conventional level***

- a. Stage 3: Good interpersonal relationships
- b. Stage 4: Maintaining social order

### **Postconventional level**

a. Stage 5: Social contract and individual rights

b. Stage 6: Universal principles

Individuals progress through these stages in a fixed order, although not everyone reaches the highest level of moral development. Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for its emphasis on justice and its neglect of other moral values such as care and compassion. However, it remains one of the most influential theories of moral development.

In short, moral development involves changes in an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions related to standards of morality. Personality and social dimensions play important roles in moral development, with individuals progressing through stages of moral reasoning as they mature. Kohlberg's theory of moral development provides a framework for understanding how moral reasoning develops over time, although it has been criticized for its emphasis on justice at the expense of other moral values.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, several significant discoveries were made:

1. There was an increase in the average score of teacher guidance/counseling on students' moral development from Cycle I to Cycle III. In Cycle I, the average score was 3.20, which increased to 3.41 in Cycle II, and reached 3.56 in Cycle III.
2. The correlation between teacher guidance/counseling and students' moral development also increased from Cycle I to Cycle III. In Cycle I, the correlation was 73.9%, which increased to 74.3% in Cycle II, and reached 86.5% in Cycle III.

Based on these research findings, it can be concluded that teacher guidance/counseling has a significant impact on enhancing students' moral development in Class VIII-1 of SMP Negeri 2 Sei Bamban.

### **Recommendations**

Given the highly positive results obtained in this classroom action research, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. It is recommended for fellow teachers to conduct more guidance/counseling sessions with students to assist in their moral formation, thereby achieving more optimal outcomes.
2. Students should not hesitate or fear to seek guidance from teachers when facing challenges or obstacles in their learning process.
3. Parents should continue to play a crucial role as mentors for their children at home, especially for those entering adolescence who require guidance towards their desired goals.
4. To enhance the quality and learning outcomes through classroom action, it is suggested that block grant funding for classroom action research be considered to assist teachers in carrying out their activities more effectively.

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