

Family Counseling as a Mechanism for Integration Between Families and Educational Institutions: Social, Institutional, and Policy Dimensions

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Abstract

The relationship between families and educational institutions has gained increasing importance in contemporary discussions concerning the development of children and adolescents, particularly as the responsibilities of schools have expanded beyond academic instruction to include responses to learners' social, emotional, behavioral, and relational needs. In this context, family counseling can be viewed as more than a therapeutic service directed toward the family, as it can perform a relational and institutional function that contributes to connecting families, schools, counseling professionals, and broader social services. This theoretical study aims to analyze the potential of family counseling to support integration between families and educational institutions and to develop an institutional framework linking counseling practice with educational collaboration, social support, and educational policy formulation. Drawing on recent literature on family-school partnerships, parental involvement, school counseling, interprofessional collaboration, educational policies, and ecological approaches to child and adolescent development, the study argues that family counseling can occupy an intermediary position between the private family sphere and the institutional sphere of education. The study identifies three interrelated dimensions of this function. The first is the social dimension, which encompasses communication, trust, parental involvement, learner well-being, and the reduction of relational barriers. The second is the institutional dimension, which concerns the coordination of the roles of counselors, teachers, school administrators, social workers, families, and community services within an integrated support system. The third is the policy dimension, which concerns the development of institutional procedures and practices that regard the family as a partner in the educational process rather than merely a recipient of school interventions. Recent literature indicates that successful family-school collaboration requires continuous and reciprocal communication, trust-based relationships, professional coordination, and sensitivity to social, economic, cultural, and institutional differences. Accordingly, the study proposes an integrated framework for family counseling in which counseling serves as a connecting function between relational support, educational participation, institutional coordination, and policy implementation. This framework does not assume that family counseling can independently address structural educational and social problems; rather, it identifies the conditions under which counseling can contribute to

building a more coherent and sustainable system of cooperation between families and educational institutions. The study concludes by identifying implications for educational institutions, counselor preparation, collaborative professional practice, and educational policies, while emphasizing the need for future empirical research to test the proposed framework across different educational and cultural contexts.

Keywords: family counseling; family-school partnership; parental involvement; educational institutions; school counseling; social integration; educational policy; institutional collaboration; learner well-being; family participation.

1. Introduction

The relationship between the family and the educational institution occupies a central position in contemporary discussions concerning the upbringing and development of children and adolescents. Although the school has traditionally been understood as an institution organized primarily around teaching, learning, assessment, and academic achievement, educational development does not occur independently of family relationships and the social circumstances surrounding the learner. Learners enter educational institutions carrying experiences, expectations, identities, relationships, and resources that are shaped, in part, within the family and community. At the same time, schools influence family practices by establishing expectations concerning attendance, achievement, behavior, communication, participation, and educational decision-making. Thus, the relationship between the two is not unidirectional; rather, it is reciprocal, with families being influenced by educational institutions just as educational institutions are influenced by families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hidajat et al., 2026).

Recent literature has reinforced this relational perspective. Martinez-Yarza et al. (2024) demonstrated that family involvement is associated with learners' social-emotional development and that school engagement plays an important mediating role in this relationship. Recent studies have also examined family-school-community collaboration and its relationship to learners' educational development and academic achievement (Lv et al., 2025). These studies indicate that educational institutions cannot be understood independently of the families and social environments in which learners live (Al Qaisi, et al, 2026).

At the same time, the expanding responsibilities of educational institutions have increased demand for counseling and support services. Contemporary schools encounter problems that cannot be adequately addressed through classroom instruction alone, including difficulties in family-school communication, attendance problems, behavioral difficulties, social and emotional disturbances, family conflicts, unclear parental expectations regarding education, and problems associated with social and economic deprivation. A recent systematic review of the roles of school support professionals has shown that social workers, special education professionals, and school counselors can play important roles in facilitating family-school collaboration, while also emphasizing the need for greater interprofessional coordination and stronger empirical evidence concerning the effects of such collaboration (Csók et al., 2026).

Within this context, family counseling acquires significance that extends beyond its traditional therapeutic function. The potential value of counseling lies not only in addressing difficulties within the family but also in its capacity to address the relationships connecting the family with other institutions. This function becomes particularly important in the educational field because many problems that appear in the form of individual difficulties experienced by learners may also be associated with family relationships, school expectations, institutional procedures, patterns of family-school communication, or the interaction of these factors (Deb & Deb, 2025).

From this perspective, a family-oriented approach can contribute to broadening the understanding of educational problems by analyzing the relational systems within which they occur. This does not mean reducing educational problems to the family or assigning parents responsibility for school-related difficulties. Rather, it means placing the problem within its relational, institutional, and social context.

This orientation has begun to emerge more clearly in recent literature on family counseling in school settings. Deb and Deb (2025) examined school-based family counseling in relation to the distress and difficulties experienced by school students and situated family counseling within a broader framework concerned with learner well-being. A recent special issue of *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools* also focused on school-based family counseling, addressing counselor preparation, trauma-informed practice, family therapy, parent-teacher relationships, and support for parents of children with autism spectrum disorder.

Nevertheless, an important conceptual issue remains: the literature on family counseling and the literature on family-school partnerships have often developed in relative isolation from one another. Family counseling generally focuses on relational functions, communication, family structure, conflict, and therapeutic intervention, whereas educational research focuses on parental involvement, family-school partnerships, engagement, school leadership, institutional structures, and educational policies. Despite the clear overlap between these fields, the institutional role of family counseling as a mechanism connecting them requires further theoretical specification.

Accordingly, this study poses the following research question:

How can family counseling function as a mechanism for integration between families and educational institutions at the social, institutional, and policy levels?

The study proceeds from the proposition that family counseling can function as a connecting mechanism between families and educational institutions when it is embedded within an institutional framework based on reciprocal communication, professional coordination, family participation, sensitivity to the social and cultural context, and the presence of supportive structures and policies. This proposition does not mean that family counseling should replace teaching, school counseling, social work, or educational administration. Rather, it assumes that counseling can complement these functions by addressing the relational processes that influence the capacity of families and educational institutions to work together.

The present study is theoretical and conceptual rather than empirical. It therefore does not provide quantitative data, interviews, or original empirical findings. Instead, it synthesizes recent literature and develops an analytical framework that brings together fields that are often studied separately, namely family counseling, family-school partnerships, school counseling, parental involvement, interprofessional collaboration, and educational policies.

2. From Family Counseling to Family-School Integration

Family counseling is generally associated with interventions aimed at understanding and improving relationships among family members. Different theoretical approaches in this field have focused on interaction patterns, communication, relational structure, boundaries, roles, and reciprocal influences among members of the family system. Systemic approaches are particularly important in this context because they reject explanations of difficulties as being exclusively caused by a particular individual and instead call for an analysis of interaction patterns within the relational system (Deb & Deb, 2025).

This systemic orientation is consistent with ecological approaches to development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) presented the family and the school as two primary environments within

systems that influence individual development. Although ecological theory subsequently evolved, its central idea remains relevant to educational research: development cannot be adequately understood without examining interactions among immediate environments, institutions, and the broader social conditions in which these environments exist.

Accordingly, the family and the school can be viewed as interconnected developmental environments. The family represents an important context for socialization, whereas the school represents an organized institutional environment in which learners encounter teachers, peers, rules, curricula, assessment procedures, and institutional expectations. The nature of the relationship between these two environments can influence how learners and their families understand educational requirements and how support for those requirements is provided (Hidajat et al., 2026; Shen, 2025).

Recent literature underscores the importance of this relationship. A recent systematic study of the family-school relationship and classroom engagement indicated that positive family-school relationships can contribute to enhancing children's engagement through parental support, trust between parents and teachers, the reduction of information gaps, and the promotion of learners' psychological security (Shen, 2025). A recent study of family-school collaboration in early childhood education likewise highlighted the importance of shared purpose, communication, and relational boundaries in organizing collaboration between families and educators (Kiprianos & Stavropoulou, 2025).

These findings are particularly significant for family counseling because counseling can address the relational processes that determine whether communication between the family and the school becomes a source of cooperation or a source of conflict. Communication, trust, interpretation of behavior, understanding of family circumstances, and negotiation of expectations are not peripheral elements of the family-school relationship; rather, they are central components of it.

Family counseling can therefore be conceptualized at three interconnected levels. At the first level, it can support the family in understanding relational or educational difficulties. At the second level, it can facilitate communication between families and educational professionals. At the third level, it can contribute to the development of institutional practices by identifying recurring relational barriers that cannot be resolved through an individual counseling session alone.

Accordingly, the transition from counseling to integration should not be understood as an expansion of the counselor's authority into the educational domain, but rather as a shift in the unit of analysis. Instead of asking only, "How does the counselor help a particular family?" the question becomes: "How can counseling knowledge contribute to improving the relationships that connect the family with the educational institution?"

3. Family Participation, Partnership, and the Limits of School-Centered Models

It is necessary to distinguish among the concepts of parental participation, parental engagement, and family-school partnership. Although these concepts overlap, they do not refer to the same phenomenon (Badiuzzaman et al., 2025; Jones et al., 2025).

Parental participation may refer to specific activities in which parents participate in their children's education, whereas engagement encompasses broader dimensions related to motivation, relationships, and participation. The concept of partnership refers more strongly to a reciprocal relationship in which the family and the educational institution recognize shared responsibilities and communicate about agreed-upon goals.

Recent literature has begun to move beyond narrow conceptions of family participation. A recent systematic review has shown that parental involvement in school is multidimensional and that studies differ in how it is defined and measured. Jones et al. (2025) likewise demonstrated that parental engagement has become an important issue in educational policy, with a need to examine how the family is positioned within policy and institutional discourse.

This issue is particularly important for counseling. If parents are viewed merely as recipients of school instructions, counseling may become a corrective service that is called upon only when the learner or family is perceived as the source of a problem. Such a model may reproduce an unequal institutional relationship.

A partnership perspective, by contrast, recognizes the family as a participating party that possesses particular knowledge about the learner and the circumstances of the family, and this knowledge can contribute to educational decision-making.

This issue is also closely related to social justice. Families do not participate in education under equal conditions. Time, income, transportation, language, previous experiences with institutions, digital access, and cultural expectations concerning educational authority can all influence a family's capacity to participate (Lorence et al., 2024; Badiuzzaman et al., 2025).

Recent research has shown that narrow definitions of family-school participation may exclude families whose patterns of participation do not correspond to institutional expectations. A systemic counseling approach can therefore contribute to addressing this problem by posing a different question: not only why does the family not participate, but also how does the institution itself define participation?

For example, a parent's absence from a school meeting may be related to work circumstances, transportation, language, previous negative experiences, or difficulties with digital access, rather than necessarily indicating a lack of concern for the child's education (Lorence et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the function of counseling is not to persuade families to comply automatically with institutional expectations. Rather, it can involve identifying relational and contextual barriers and facilitating forms of communication that recognize both institutional responsibilities and family circumstances.

A recent systematic review of family-school partnership initiatives aimed at improving learner attendance supports this perspective. It concluded that coordinated initiatives can expand opportunities to access support and that effective partnership requires two-way communication, coordination, and attention to contextual and systemic factors (Hidajat et al., 2026).

This finding is directly relevant to family counseling because attendance difficulties, limited educational participation, or behavioral problems may require multilevel interventions rather than intervention with the learner alone. Family counseling can contribute by helping different parties identify interaction patterns and develop shared mechanisms for distributing responsibilities.

4. The Social Dimension: Counseling, Trust, Communication, and Learner Well-Being

The social dimension of family counseling within educational institutions is associated with the quality of relationships among families, learners, teachers, counselors, and other social actors. Its central concepts are communication, trust, participation, belonging, and mutual recognition.

Communication between the family and the school is not merely an administrative exchange of information; rather, it can influence how the family understands school expectations and how teachers understand the learner's circumstances. Weak communication can lead to an

amplification of misunderstandings, whereas reciprocal communication provides greater opportunities for joint problem-solving (Kiprianos & Stavropoulou, 2025).

Recent studies have demonstrated this relational function. Kiprianos and Stavropoulou (2025) showed that family-school collaboration is shaped around purpose, communication, and relational boundaries, meaning that collaboration cannot be reduced to the frequency of contact alone. Rather, attention must also be given to the quality, direction, and organization of interaction.

Martinez-Yarza et al. (2024) likewise linked family involvement to learners' social-emotional development and demonstrated the importance of school engagement as a mechanism connecting the variables. This finding is particularly important because it broadens the discussion beyond academic achievement to encompass the learner's overall developmental experience.

Family counseling can contribute to this dimension through multiple functions. First, it can provide a structured space for discussing tensions between the family and the school. Second, it can help participants distinguish between behavior and interpretations of behavior. Third, it can support the parties in identifying shared goals. Fourth, it can facilitate communication when direct interaction between the family and the institution becomes difficult.

These functions should not be understood as implying that counselors are capable of resolving all family and school conflicts. Counseling operates within institutional and social constraints, and its effectiveness depends, in part, on whether the institution provides adequate time, resources, professional roles, referral mechanisms, confidentiality procedures, and opportunities for collaborative decision-making.

Accordingly, the social function of counseling is relational rather than exclusively therapeutic. Its importance increases when counseling helps create conditions that enable families and educational professionals to understand one another and participate in problem-solving.

This is also related to learner well-being. Literature on school-based family counseling indicates that some difficulties experienced by learners may be associated with family distress, parental stress, conflict, neglect, trauma, or other contextual circumstances. Deb and Deb (2025) discussed the role of school-based family counseling in addressing some forms of distress experienced by learners.

This does not mean that every educational problem should be transformed into a therapeutic case or understood as a family problem. Rather, educational institutions need mechanisms that enable them to distinguish between academic difficulties and problems requiring relational or psychosocial support and then coordinate an appropriate response.

5. The Institutional Dimension: From Individual Counseling to Coordinated Support

The institutional dimension represents the essential bridge between family counseling and broader concepts of educational administration, governance, and educational policy.

A school may include teachers, counselors, social workers, and school administrators, yet still lack an effective system for supporting families if professional responsibilities are fragmented. A teacher may identify a problem but lack the time or expertise required to address family dynamics. A counselor may provide individual support without regular communication with teachers. A social worker may possess knowledge of community services but work in isolation from the school staff. A family may receive multiple messages from different professionals without a clear mechanism for coordination.

A recent systematic review has confirmed this problem, showing that family-school collaboration depends on coordinated efforts among a range of professionals, including social workers,

counselors, and special education professionals. It also indicated that evidence concerning the broader and generalizable effects of such collaboration remains limited.

This finding suggests that the institutionalization of family counseling should not be limited to establishing a counseling office within the school. Rather, it should involve building an organizational structure that defines the relationship of counseling to teaching, learner support, school leadership, the family, and external services.

This organization can be conceptualized through five basic functions:

1. **Identification:** recognizing relational, educational, or family problems that may affect the learner.
2. **Assessment:** understanding the problem in relation to the learner, family, school, and social context, rather than automatically attributing it to a single party.
3. **Coordination:** connecting relevant professionals and family members while respecting professional boundaries and confidentiality.
4. **Intervention:** providing counseling, educational support, referral, or collaborative problem-solving.
5. **Feedback and institutional learning:** identifying recurring problems and using accumulated professional knowledge to improve procedures and services.

The fifth function is particularly important. If the same conflict repeatedly occurs between families and the school, the solution may not lie in holding another counseling session with each family. Instead, the institution may need to review its communication procedures, parent-meeting schedules, referral systems, or staff training.

Research on the institutionalization of parental involvement provides a useful example. A recent study of urban primary schools in China showed that family-school collaboration has become institutionalized through structures such as parent committees, school practices, and digital platforms, while contextual differences and tensions related to the distribution of roles continue to exist.

This finding from the Chinese context should not be directly generalized to all educational systems. However, it illustrates an important institutional principle: institutionalization can provide continuity and legitimacy, but it can also reproduce unequal relationships if participation is organized according to expectations determined solely by the school.

Family counseling can therefore contribute by helping the institution recognize this tension and incorporate the family perspective into the design of institutional procedures.

6. Family Counseling and Interprofessional Collaboration

The increasing complexity of learners' needs has reinforced the need for collaboration among different professional fields. Contemporary schools may include teachers, psychological counselors, social workers, special education professionals, school administrators, health professionals, and community organizations. The family also represents a key actor within this network (Csók et al., 2026; Griffiths et al., 2021).

The role of the family counselor within this system should be defined precisely. Counseling should not become a mechanism for transferring responsibility for educational problems from the institution to the family, nor should counselors be expected to compensate for shortages in human resources, inadequate social services, or deficiencies in educational policies.

Instead, the family counselor can provide specialized knowledge concerning family relationships, communication, conflict, parenting, and interaction patterns, thereby complementing teachers' educational knowledge and administrators' organizational knowledge.

Recent literature on school counseling supports this integrative orientation. Recent reviews have examined the development of school counseling in terms of professional preparation, professional identity, roles, cultural and policy contexts, and intervention models. Other reviews have shown that counselors' professional identity is influenced by the diversity of their roles, professional training, advocacy, and leadership (Harrison & Hong, 2025; Liu et al., 2026).

These findings are particularly important because institutional integration requires clarity of roles. Family counseling cannot function effectively if professionals are uncertain about who is responsible for communication, referral, confidentiality, intervention, or follow-up.

Accordingly, an integrated professional model should include:

- clear identification of professional responsibilities;
- defined referral pathways;
- clear communication procedures;
- rules concerning confidentiality and information sharing;
- mechanisms for family participation;
- regular interdisciplinary consultation meetings;
- continuing professional training and development;
- clear support from institutional leadership.

Technology can also support such coordination, but it should not be regarded as a substitute for human relationships. Recent studies on technology-supported family-school partnerships have shown that digital means create new opportunities for communication, but they can also reproduce inequalities because of differences in access to technology and digital skills (Badiuzzaman et al., 2025; Su et al., 2025).

Accordingly, digital platforms can expand opportunities for communication, but institutions should not assume that all families have equal access. The counseling framework should therefore maintain multiple communication channels that take differences in family circumstances into account.

7. The Policy Dimension: From Service Provision to Educational Governance

The policy dimension is essential if family counseling is to be understood as an institutional mechanism rather than merely as a separate professional service.

Educational policy directly or indirectly determines how institutions view families, how parental involvement is defined, how professional responsibilities are distributed, how learner support is organized, and how accountability mechanisms operate. When policies recognize family participation, they can transform it from an optional activity into an institutional responsibility (Jones et al., 2025; Downey & Lyons, 2026).

Jones et al. (2025) highlights the importance of this issue through an analysis of the position of parental engagement in contemporary educational policy in England. The issue concerns not only the presence of the family within policy discourse, but also how the family is positioned within that discourse and within the institutional practices that emerge from it.

Accordingly, the policy question should not be limited to whether educational institutions should provide family counseling services. It should also be expanded to the following question:

What institutional and policy conditions enable family counseling to contribute effectively to building an integrated partnership between the family and the educational institution?

Several dimensions follow from this question.

7.1 Recognizing the Family as an Educational Partner

Educational policies can view the family as a partner possessing knowledge and responsibilities rather than merely as a recipient of institutional decisions. This does not mean that the family determines educational policy or assumes professional functions. Rather, it means establishing mechanisms that allow its perspectives and circumstances to be taken into consideration.

7.2 Institutionalizing Referral and Support

Counseling becomes more sustainable when schools have clear procedures for identifying problems, referring cases, coordinating professionals, and following up on interventions.

7.3 Professional Preparation

Expanding family-school collaboration requires appropriate preparation for counselors, teachers, and administrators. Such preparation should include skills related to family-school collaboration, cultural competence, interprofessional communication, and institutional advocacy.

7.4 Equity and Accessibility

Policies should recognize that families possess unequal resources and face different barriers to participation. Requiring parental involvement without addressing these barriers may increase inequality rather than reduce it.

7.5 Accountability and Evaluation

Institutional family counseling should not be evaluated solely according to the number of counseling sessions conducted. Evaluation should also include access to the service, family participation, interprofessional coordination, continuity of referral, quality of communication, and appropriate indicators related to learners and the institution.

Recent policy research supports this orientation by positioning family engagement as an issue relevant to a range of educational challenges and by discussing ways in which education agencies and educational institutions can develop more integrated policies for family engagement.

Accordingly, the policy dimension shifts the discussion from the question, “Do we need family counseling in schools?” to the broader question, “How should the educational system organize and govern family counseling as part of an integrated support system?”

8. Toward an Integrated Framework for Family Counseling

The preceding discussion makes it possible to construct a conceptual framework consisting of four interconnected levels: the relational level, the educational level, the institutional level, and the policy level.

8.1 The Relational Level

At the relational level, counseling addresses communication, trust, family functioning, conflict, parental concerns, and relationships between the family and the learner. The aim is not merely to eliminate conflict, but to provide conditions for interaction that are more capable of generating shared solutions.

8.2 The Educational Level

At the educational level, counseling connects family circumstances with educational participation. This includes attendance, school engagement, behavioral adjustment, social-emotional development, parental support, and communication with teachers.

8.3 The Institutional Level

At the institutional level, counseling becomes part of learner-support structures within the school. Counselors, teachers, administrators, social workers, and others coordinate their roles and develop appropriate referral and communication procedures.

8.4 The Policy Level

At the policy level, family counseling is incorporated into educational planning, professional standards, institutional procedures, resource allocation, and evaluation mechanisms.

These levels should not be viewed as a linear hierarchy but as an interconnected dynamic system:

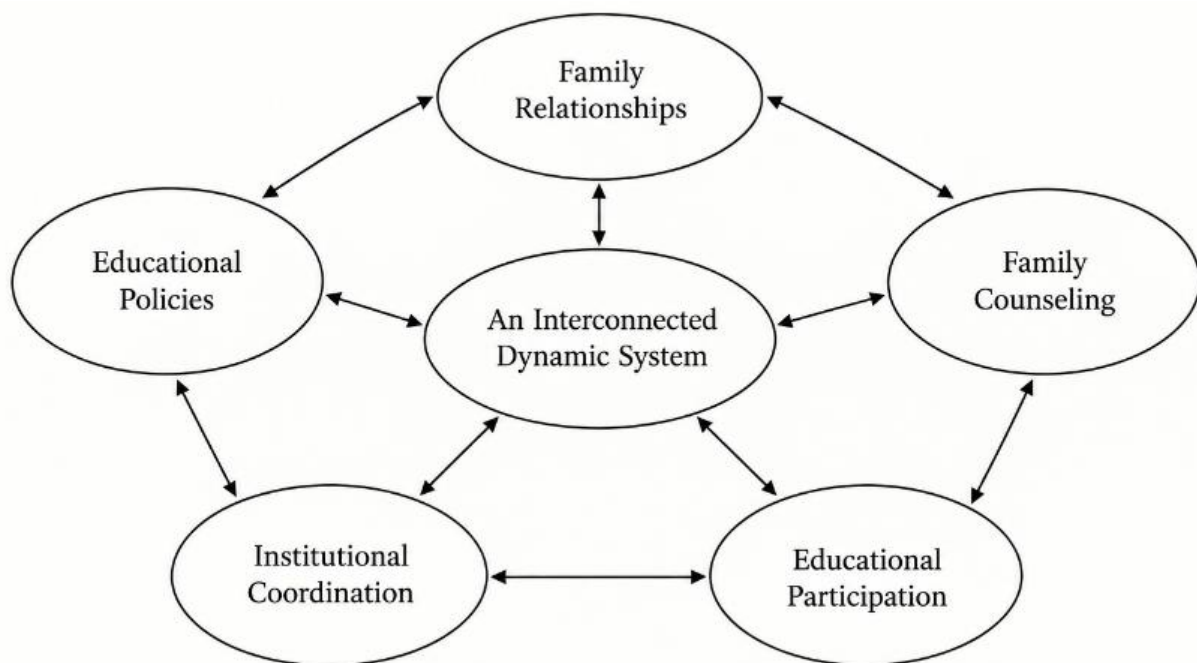


Figure 1. An Interconnected Dynamic Framework Linking Family Relationships, Family Counseling, Educational Participation, Institutional Coordination, and Educational Policies

Note. Developed by the authors based on the literature reviewed in this study.

The two-way arrows in the proposed framework are understood as indicating that institutional structures influence counseling practice, while repeated counseling experiences can reveal institutional needs that necessitate change. For example, if repeated counseling cases reveal communication problems between families and schools, this may indicate a need to modify institutional communication procedures. Similarly, if attendance difficulties recur, this may reveal a need for a collaborative response involving families, schools, and the community, rather than solely relying on punitive measures.

This perspective aligns with recent evidence emphasizing the need to interpret family-school relationships within a systemic and environmental framework. Recent studies have linked family-school partnership practices to broader factors, including policies, community resources, and socioeconomic and cultural conditions. It also aligns with studies examining the relationship

between family-school-community collaboration and academic achievement, which have placed this relationship within environmental models of learner development.

Therefore, the theoretical value of the proposed framework does not lie in assuming that family counseling directly leads to improved academic achievement or attendance, but rather in identifying the mechanism by which counseling can contribute to building an integrated support system that links family relationships, educational participation, institutional coordination, and educational policies.

9. Social and Institutional Barriers to Integration

Integrating family counseling into educational institutions is not an automatic process, as several factors may limit its effectiveness.

The first is **role ambiguity**. The responsibilities of teachers, counselors, social workers, and administrators may overlap without clearly defined boundaries.

The second is **institutional imbalance**. The school possesses formal authority over matters of attendance, assessment, discipline, and academic progress. Consequently, the family may enter the counseling relationship from a position of institutional inequality.

The third is **cultural and communicative differences**, which can influence how families understand counseling and school expectations.

The fourth is **social and economic constraints**, which may affect family participation, including working hours, transportation, childcare, digital access, and financial resources.

The fifth is **insufficient professional preparation**, as family counseling requires competencies that differ, in part, from those required for teaching or school administration.

The sixth is the **issue of confidentiality and information sharing**. Interprofessional coordination may, in some cases, require the sharing of information necessary to support the learner, while counseling also depends on protecting sensitive information. Institutions therefore need clear policies specifying what may be shared and what should remain confidential.

A systematic review of barriers to family-school collaboration categorized barriers into family-level, school-level, learner-related, shared-responsibility, and social and policy factors. This finding is important because it demonstrates that the failure of collaboration cannot automatically be attributed to the family or the school alone (Lorence et al., 2024).

Family counseling should therefore not be based on a deficit model that assumes that the family is the source of the educational problem. A systemic approach requires attention to reciprocal relationships and to the institutional conditions within which interaction occurs.

10. Educational and Social Implications

The proposed framework has several implications for educational institutions.

First, educational institutions can approach family counseling as part of an integrated system of learner support rather than as a service separate from other educational practices. This requires organizational coordination and clear definition of professional roles.

Second, institutions can develop structured mechanisms for family-school communication, such as counseling referral pathways, family consultation sessions, interdisciplinary meetings, and appropriate digital communication channels.

Third, counselor preparation should include skills related to family-school collaboration, responsiveness to cultural differences, interprofessional communication, and institutional advocacy.

Fourth, family counseling can perform a preventive function alongside its therapeutic function. Rather than waiting for conflict to escalate, institutions can establish accessible counseling services before problems develop into crises.

Fifth, institutions should recognize that family participation can take different forms. A family may contribute substantially to its child's education without attending traditional school meetings. Institutions should therefore avoid reducing participation to formal attendance at meetings.

Recent studies have supported this broader conception by presenting partnership models based on collaboration and co-production among families, educators, school leaders, and community actors (Markovich Morris & Cheng, 2025).

Studies concerning leadership and family-school-community partnerships also indicate that school leadership strategies can influence the conditions that permit such partnerships to develop and continue (Cummins & Patel, 2025).

Accordingly, family counseling cannot be separated from institutional leadership. Counseling may help facilitate relationships, but leadership determines whether the institution provides the time, legitimacy, resources, and coordination necessary for these relationships to continue.

11. Implications for Educational Policies

At the policy level, the proposed framework points to several areas that merit attention.

First, educational systems can make family participation part of institutional responsibility rather than an optional activity dependent on the initiatives of individual teachers.

Second, policy frameworks can provide clearer guidance concerning the relationship among family counselors, school counselors, teachers, administrators, social and psychological professionals, and community services.

Third, professional standards can include specific competencies related to family-school-community collaboration.

Fourth, institutions can develop referral pathways connecting schools with external family and social services when family needs exceed the capacities of the school.

Fifth, policies should assess the equity and accessibility of family engagement services. A policy may provide formal opportunities for participation while remaining difficult to access for families facing economic, linguistic, geographical, or digital barriers.

Sixth, it should be recognized that family-school collaboration is context-dependent. Studies have demonstrated important differences in counseling and family engagement practices across countries, cultures, and institutions (Liu et al., 2026; Jones et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the proposed framework should not be understood as a universal institutional model ready to be applied in the same way in every context. Rather, it should be viewed as a set of analytical principles that can be adapted to the characteristics of each educational system.

12. Discussion

The central thesis of this study is that family counseling can occupy an intermediary position between family relationships and educational institutions, and that this position becomes

particularly important when counseling is understood as part of a broader institutional system rather than as a separate therapeutic intervention.

The literature analyzed reveals three major developments that support this thesis (Hidajat et al., 2026; Csók et al., 2026; Jones et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

First, research on the family-school relationship has increasingly viewed educational participation as a relational phenomenon. Studies addressing family-school partnership, attendance, engagement, and social and emotional development indicate that educational outcomes are influenced by relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

Second, school counseling has increasingly been understood within broader systems of learner support. Recent reviews emphasize the importance of professional identity, training, institutional context, and collaboration, while studies of multidisciplinary support highlight the need for coordination among professionals.

Third, family participation has increasingly been understood as an issue related to educational policy and institutional design. Studies addressing parental involvement, educational policies, and the institutionalization of family-school collaboration show that the relationship between families and schools is shaped by organizational structures and policy environments.

These developments point to a conceptual convergence that can be used to construct an integrated framework. Family counseling provides a relational perspective, educational partnership research provides an institutional perspective, while policy studies provide a governance perspective. Bringing these perspectives together makes it possible to understand family counseling as a mechanism that connects different levels of the educational system (Griffiths et al., 2021; Csók et al., 2026).

The proposed framework also expands the traditional understanding of counseling. If counseling is confined to the individual level, the counselor's task is primarily to respond to a problem presented by an individual or a family. When counseling is integrated into a systemic institutional framework, however, the counselor can also contribute to identifying relational patterns, facilitating communication, supporting collaborative problem-solving, and generating knowledge that can contribute to institutional learning.

This does not mean that counselors should become policymakers or administrators, nor does it mean that every educational problem should be transformed into a counseling case. Maintaining boundaries between educational, therapeutic, social, and administrative functions therefore remains essential.

The value of the framework lies precisely in maintaining these distinctions while improving coordination among them.

One of the most important conceptual implications concerns the notion of family participation. Participation should not be understood merely as compliance with institutional expectations. Recent literature has shown that institutional definitions of participation may exclude some families and that family-school partnerships need to take social and contextual inequalities into account (Lorence et al., 2024).

Family counseling can contribute to building a more reciprocal model by providing families with a space to express their experiences and concerns. This process may reveal barriers that are not easily visible from within the educational institution.

Nevertheless, a number of limitations should be acknowledged. First, the present study is theoretical and does not empirically test the proposed framework; therefore, its claims concerning

institutional integration require examination through quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Second, a significant proportion of the recent literature comes from specific national contexts, whereas institutional structures and educational policies vary considerably across countries. Third, evidence concerning the effectiveness of multidisciplinary family and school support remains mixed, as indicated by recent systematic reviews.

Accordingly, future research should examine the proposed framework across different educational systems. Comparative studies could investigate how family counseling is organized across different stages of education. Qualitative studies could explore the perspectives of families, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Quantitative research could examine the relationships between institutional counseling structures and indicators such as attendance, school engagement, family participation, and learner well-being. Implementation research could also investigate the organizational conditions that facilitate or constrain integration.

13. Conclusion

Family counseling has traditionally been associated with improving relationships within the family and addressing relational difficulties. However, transformations taking place within contemporary educational institutions open a broader field in which the family intersects with the school, learner well-being, educational participation, institutional structures, and public policies.

This study has argued that family counseling can be understood as a mechanism for integration between families and educational institutions when it is incorporated into a coordinated institutional framework. Such a framework requires attention to three interrelated dimensions.

The social dimension involves communication, trust, participation, family relationships, and learner well-being. The institutional dimension concerns coordination among professionals, referral systems, leadership, role clarity, and organizational structures. The policy dimension concerns recognition of the family as an educational partner, professional standards, accessibility, resource allocation, and mechanisms of accountability and evaluation.

The study does not claim that family counseling can, by itself, resolve educational and social problems. Its function is more specifically to provide a relational mechanism through which families, learners, educational professionals, and social services can communicate, coordinate, and respond to complex problems.

Recent literature increasingly supports the need for this systemic orientation, as research on family-school partnerships, school counseling, parental involvement, institutionalization, and multidisciplinary support indicates that educational development is shaped by relationships extending across families, schools, communities, and policies (Badiuzzaman et al., 2025; Csók et al., 2026; Hidajat et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the primary significance of the proposed framework is institutional rather than therapeutic. Educational systems that recognize family counseling as part of an integrated support system can develop more coherent relationships between families and educational institutions. Achieving this requires appropriate professional preparation, clear roles, reciprocal communication, accessible services, institutional leadership, and policy frameworks that take into account the diversity of families and differences in their circumstances.

Ultimately, the proposed framework should be treated as a basis for empirical research rather than as an established causal model. Its value lies in bringing family counseling, educational partnership, institutional coordination, and policy analysis together within a single conceptual structure. Such integration can open a productive research pathway for understanding how educational institutions can work with families in ways that are attentive to human relationships,

characterized by institutional coherence, responsive to social needs, and sensitive to the policy contexts within which educational systems operate.

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