

Development of A Counseling Guidance Model Based on The Bodhisattva Spirit: A Research and Development Study Based on The Amitartha Sutra

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop a guidance counseling model that integrates the Bodhisattva spirit and teachings of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings (Amitartha Sutra) with modern cognitive psychotherapy principles. Using a qualitative-dominant research and development (R&D) approach based on the ADDIE model, the study included validation by a Buddhist scholar and a clinical psychologist, as well as limited trials with two professional therapists and six adolescent and young adult clients experiencing mild to moderate psychological concerns. The validation results produced scores of 3.5/5.0 from the Buddhist expert and 4.8/5.0 from the clinical psychologist, confirming the model's theoretical and clinical validity. Effectiveness testing showed that 100% of clients experienced a shift in perspective, 67% showed improved emotional regulation and prosocial intentions, and 100% of therapists reported that the model was easy to implement without intensive training. The conclusion affirms that this model is valid, practical, and effective as a holistic approach that expands therapeutic goals from symptom reduction to the cultivation of noble character (*mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā*) and social contribution, making it relevant for educational and mental health service contexts in Indonesia.

Keywords: Guidance Counseling Model, Bodhisattva Spirit, Sutra of Infinite Meanings, Socratic Dialogue, R&D ADDIE

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought humanity to a striking paradox: people are more digitally connected than ever, yet more emotionally isolated. A World Health Organization Commission report (WHO, 2025) notes that one in six people worldwide experiences significant loneliness, with an estimated 871,000 deaths per year attributed to social isolation during the 2014–2019 period. This figure is not merely an epidemiological statistic, but a reflection that the mental health crisis has moved beyond clinical boundaries and into the existential realm, where the question “What am I living for?” becomes more piercing than the symptoms of depression itself. In Indonesia, the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (WHO, 2023) shows a sharp rise in suicide attempts among adolescents from 3.9% (2015) to 10.7% (2023), an almost threefold increase in eight years that signals the systemic failure of conventional psychotherapeutic approaches to address contemporary psychological suffering.

This paradox reveals a fundamental gap in modern mental health practice. Evidence-based psychotherapy approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), while proven effective in reducing the symptoms of emotional disorders, often stop at the level of symptom reduction without addressing the dimensions of meaning, connection, and social contribution that lie at the heart of modern human suffering (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Beck (1976) himself, in his cognitive model, acknowledged that cognitive distortions are not the root of suffering but rather manifestations of core schemas formed in childhood, yet therapies developed from this model focus more on correcting automatic thoughts than on deep existential exploration.

Over the past decade, a growing body of empirical research has revealed the potential of spirituality and religiosity to strengthen resilience, coping ability, psychological well-being, and overall mental health. Both are positively associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, greater life satisfaction, stronger coping skills, and higher levels of personal resilience (Jena & Sethi, 2025). The relationship between spirituality or religiosity and mental health is bidirectional, and religious beliefs could also influence mental health outcomes (Lucchetti et al., 2021). More broadly, Osborne & Bhugra (2003) assert that Buddhism is not merely a belief system but a "comprehensive psychological medicine" grounded in compassion, yet the systematic integration of Buddhist teachings and Western psychotherapy remains limited to the conceptual level, without operational products that can be implemented.

In this context, Mahayana Buddhist teachings offer a unique philosophical foundation. The concept of the Bodhisattva—a being who postpones complete enlightenment to free all beings from suffering—reflects an altruistic spirit that is inherently therapeutic (Hanh, 2021). More specifically, the Sutra of Infinite Meanings (Amitartha Sutra or 無量義經), as the opening of the Lotus Sutra Trilogy, teaches that "one Dharma can give rise to limitless meanings" (Cheng Yen, 2021). This principle is not only philosophical but also practical: every psychological problem, depending on a person's inner depth and readiness, can be transformed into a source of learning and growth. However, as of the author's research timeframe, no counseling guidance model has been found that systematically integrates the Sutra of Infinite Meanings with evidence-based psychotherapy principles, creating a significant practical gap in Buddhist mental health services in Indonesia.

Prior research by Cheng and Tse (2014) proposed a counseling framework grounded in the Bodhisattva spirit and based on the Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra, but its contribution remained exploratory and theoretical, without yielding an operational product. Lazorko (2025) applied the Four Noble Truths to psychological resilience in the context of the war in Ukraine, yet the emphasis was on collective trauma rather than individual clinical intervention.

Weiss et al. (2025) implemented Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in a Vietnamese pagoda, but the adaptation was limited to mindfulness practice and did not incorporate a therapeutic dialogue methodology. Similarly, Shonin et al. (2017) demonstrated that mettā and karuṇā practice increased insula and anterior cingulate cortex activity, but the study focused on neural mechanisms of compassion rather than on developing a structured intervention protocol. Across these studies, the common gap is the lack of a counseling product that is systematically designed, validated, piloted, and evaluated—a methodological need that remains urgent.

Given this background, this study is both timely and significant. Theoretically, no prior work has yet synthesized the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, Beck's Cognitive Theory, and Socratic Dialogue (Padesky & Kennerley, 2023) into a single integrated conceptual framework. Methodologically, previous studies have been mainly conceptual or qualitatively exploratory, without completing a full product development cycle. Practically, guidance and counseling teachers in Buddhist schools, vihara counselors, and social volunteers still lack a structured operational guide for applying Bodhisattva values in counseling services. As a result,

Buddhist counseling practice remains individualistic, unstandardized, and difficult to replicate, which is contrary to the spirit of *upaya-kausalya* (skillful means) taught by the Buddha.

Based on the urgency described above, this study aims to develop, validate, and test a Counseling Guidance Model grounded in the Bodhisattva Spirit and the Sutra of Infinite Meanings (the *Amitartha Sutra*). The objectives are to: (1) develop a model that integrates the Sutra of Infinite Meanings as a framework for value transformation, Beck's Cognitive Theory to identify the roots of suffering, and Padesky's Socratic Dialogue as the intervention method, resulting in a professional guidebook with ready-to-use dialogue tables for eight common psychological problems; (2) assess validity through expert review by Buddhist scholars and clinical psychologists using a 6-point competency scale, with a target average score of at least 3.5/5.0 from both groups; (3) assess practicality through a limited trial with two professional therapists, with 100% reporting that the model is easy to implement without intensive training; and (4) assess effectiveness through intervention with six adolescents and young adults aged 18 to over 25 with mild to moderate psychological problems, with at least 67% demonstrating a shift in perspective, better emotional regulation, and emerging prosocial intentions.

The development process follows the ADDIE cycle—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—from November 2025 to June 2026, ensuring the objectives are achieved within a realistic and measurable timeframe.

The expected contribution of this study is multidimensional. Theoretically, it enriches psychology and Buddhist education by proposing the first integrative framework that maps the Sutra of Infinite Meanings into a psychotherapeutic intervention protocol, fostering dialogue between classical Buddhist philosophy and evidence-based psychotherapy. Methodologically, it offers separate expert-validation instruments for Buddhist scholars and clinical psychologists, together with a 6-level competency scale for assessing textual accuracy and applied competence.

Practically, the model can guide teachers, monastery counselors, social volunteers, and psychologists in delivering counseling services that are contextual, reflective, and grounded in altruistic values, without requiring deep theological expertise. More broadly, it affirms the Sutra of Infinite Meanings as a source of inspiration for humanitarian service and a living expression of the Dharma in everyday life.

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, a bodhisattva is understood as someone who awakens bodhicitta the aspiration to attain enlightenment in order to liberate all beings from suffering. This concept stresses the balance between wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) as the foundation for social and humanitarian action (Cheng & Tse, 2014). Therefore, the Bodhisattva Spirit is not only a spiritual ideal but also a service-oriented commitment to reducing suffering and improving the well-being of others.

In counseling, the Bodhisattva Spirit can be understood as a professional attitude grounded in full presence, empathy, nonjudgmental acceptance, and a commitment to supporting clients without attachment to outcomes. It can also serve as an ethical foundation for counseling models oriented toward self-transformation and social well-being.

The Sutra of Infinite Meanings (*Amitartha Sutra*) teaches that a single Dharma can give rise to unlimited meanings, shaped by each individual's conditions, abilities, and needs (The Sutra of Infinite Meanings, 2017). This principle suggests that inner transformation is dynamic and context-dependent, and thus calls for an approach that respects each person's subjective experience.

From a counseling perspective, this principle is especially relevant to a client-centered approach, because psychological change cannot be achieved through a single interpretation. Instead, the counselor helps the client discover meanings that fit the context of their own life.

In addition, the teachings on cultivating loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) offer guidance for developing character and supporting lasting psychological well-being (Hanh, 2021).

Cognitive Therapy, developed by Beck (1976), posits that individuals' emotional responses are shaped by how they interpret life experiences, rather than by events alone. Psychological disorders are often linked to negative automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, and dysfunctional core beliefs, which influence how people perceive themselves, their environment, and their future (Beck, 1976).

This approach presents the individual as an active agent who can evaluate and change maladaptive thought patterns through a structured process of reflection. Thus, Cognitive Therapy offers a strong psychological foundation for developing a counseling model grounded in cognitive transformation.

Socratic dialogue is an exploratory method that helps individuals gain new insights through reflection and self-discovery, or guided discovery. According to Padesky and Kennerley (2023), its main goal is not to directly change a client's beliefs, but to facilitate a thinking process through which the client can discover new perspectives based on their own experiences and the evidence they have.

The modern Socratic Dialogue model consists of four main stages: informational questioning, empathic listening, summary formulation, and analytical or synthesis questioning (Padesky & Kennerley, 2023). Through this process, clients are encouraged to examine assumptions, develop new insights, and build more adaptive interpretations of the situations they face.

The model developed in this study integrates three core components. First, the Bodhisattva spirit provides the ethical foundation, shaping the attitudes and goals of counseling (Cheng & Tse, 2014). Second, the Sutra of Infinite Meanings serves as the philosophical basis for inner transformation (The Sutra of Infinite Meanings, 2017). Third, Cognitive Theory and Socratic Dialogue offer psychological methods that support exploration, reflection, and cognitive restructuring (Beck, 1976; Padesky & Kennerley, 2023).

The integration of these three components produces a counseling model oriented not only toward reducing psychological symptoms, but also toward fostering noble character, increasing self-awareness, and encouraging broader social contribution. In this way, the model offers a counseling approach that unifies the psychological, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions.

Based on the theoretical framework and prior researches, the conceptual framework of this model is structured deductively as follows:

The philosophical basis of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

Chapter 1: Every being has Buddha-nature. We can emulate and practice the noble qualities of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Chapter 2: Skillful means are tailored to different people; Buddha used different methods to teach the Dharma. When someone can accept teachings of virtue, they can then influence countless others.

Chapter 3: In the heart of every person lies a patch of farmland. Each person is the master of their own inner field. Each person has limitless potential for transformation, as long as they are willing to cultivate their inner field.

The psychological basis of Beck's Cognitive Model theory

Psychological suffering arises from negative thought patterns (Beck, 1967).

The methodological basis of Socratic Dialogue

Lasting change occurs not through advice, but through self-discovery guided by collaborative dialogue (C. Padesky & Kennerley, 2023).

Deductive synthesis

The potential for transformation exists within every person (Premise 1); Suffering arises from negative thought patterns (Premise 2); Change occurs through self-discovery (Premise 3).

Bodhisattva Spirit Based Counseling Guidance and Counseling Model

Research and Development Study

Based on the Amitartha Sutra can be developed by integrating

The Sutra of Immeasurable Meaning as a map for value transformation; Beck's Cognitive Model as an analysis of the roots of suffering; Padesky's Socratic Dialogue as an intervention method; to guide clients from suffering toward happiness through loving-kindness and selfless contribution.

This model was developed using the ADDIE development method (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), which allows for continuous revision based on feedback, resulting in a product that is valid, practical, and effective (Figure 1 Conceptual Framework for Model Development).

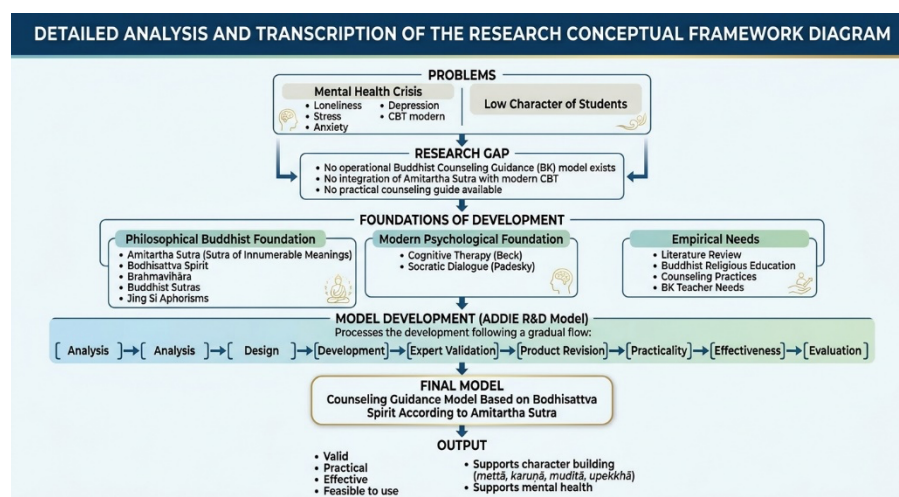


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Model Development

METHOD

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the ADDIE development model, which consists of Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The R&D approach was selected because the study aims not only to test hypotheses but also to produce counseling materials that are valid, practical, and effective. The ADDIE model was chosen for its systematic, iterative process and its suitability for developing both educational products and counseling services, enabling continuous revision based on feedback at each stage.

This approach integrates qualitative and quantitative methods: qualitative data were analyzed thematically from interviews and observations, while quantitative data were obtained through expert validity assessments using a numerical competency scale.

The Analysis phase, conducted from November 1 to 30, 2025, involved an in-depth literature review of Beck's theory (1976), Padesky's Socratic Dialogue (1993, 2023), the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, the Jing Si Aphorisms, and other relevant Buddhist sutras. It also included identifying needs through initial consultations with Buddhist counseling practitioners and examining gaps in prior research. The Design phase, from December 1 to 31, 2025, focused on structuring the model, mapping the integration of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings with psychological issues, developing the Socratic Dialogue protocol, and preparing the validation instruments.

The Development phase, from January 1 to February 28, 2026, involved drafting the full model, including implementation guidelines and evaluation instruments, as well as conducting expert validation and making initial revisions based on feedback. The Implementation phase, from March 1 to May 26, 2026, was carried out through a limited trial with research subjects at a university in Jakarta and a general counseling clinic. The Evaluation phase, from May 27 to June 1, 2026, included data analysis, effectiveness testing, and final product refinement based on feedback.

Data were collected through three main methods. First, documentation was gathered through a literature review of primary sources, including sutras, scholarly journals, and textbooks, as well as secondary sources. Second, questionnaires were used, including expert validation instruments for Buddhist experts and clinical psychologists, along with an effectiveness questionnaire for therapists. The expert validation questionnaire employed a 6-level competency scale (0–5): Needs Significant Improvement, Needs Improvement, Competent, Competent with Developing Consistency, Demonstrated Ability, and Exceptional Ability. Separate versions were developed for Buddhist experts (15 items) and clinical psychologists (17 items) to allow a more nuanced assessment of textual accuracy and applied competence.

Third, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences using the model, with attention to therapist-client interaction, emotional responses, and technique application. All instruments underwent content validity testing by independent validators, and the interviews were recorded with ethical consent to ensure accurate transcription.

The target population of this study comprises adolescents and young adults aged 18 years and older who experience mild to moderate psychological difficulties, such as academic anxiety, existential loneliness, identity conflict, stress, anger, or depression. The trial participants included two professional therapists—Agustina, M.Psi., Psychologist, and Amelia Devina, Therapist—and six clients selected through purposive sampling based on availability, adequate communication skills, and alignment with the intervention focus.

The sample size was determined in accordance with the characteristics of R&D research, which emphasizes formative evaluation of a product's feasibility and practicality rather than statistical generalization. In the initial stage, six respondents were considered sufficient to provide in-depth feedback on model implementation, as recommended in educational product development research (Borg & Gall, 2003). In addition, the two therapists represented the model's primary prospective users from different backgrounds—a licensed clinical therapist and a general therapist—thereby capturing variation in user competence.

Data analysis was conducted using a multimodal approach. Product validity was assessed with the Content Validity Index (CVI) based on expert evaluation, where I-CVI scores of ≥ 0.78 per item and S-CVI/Ave scores of ≥ 0.90 were considered valid. However, because only one expert represented each field, the study relied on qualitative validation through professional judgment, including written comments, identification of inaccuracies, and recommendations for improvement.

Practicality was examined through thematic analysis of therapists' open-ended responses, focusing on ease of use, contextual relevance, and the need for adaptation. Effectiveness was analyzed descriptively from interview and observation data, with attention to clients' self-discovery, increased value awareness, and

prosocial intentions. Thematic analysis identified patterns related to perspective change, emotion regulation, subjective well-being, prosocial intentions, and satisfaction with the model, while thematic percentages were calculated from code frequency to indicate formative transformation patterns rather than to support statistical generalization.

The researcher's positionality is explicitly acknowledged. The author presents themselves as a practitioner-researcher with an emic, or insider, perspective on the Bodhisattva spirit, grounded in 10 years of service as a Tzu Chi volunteer, while maintaining an etic, or outsider, stance toward the therapeutic practices under evaluation. Objectivity is supported through transparent reflection on positionality, independent expert validation, and systematic documentation.

Therapists play a more active role in implementation and evaluation because, as professional experts, they are better positioned to apply the model objectively. The study also follows core ethical principles, including informed consent, data confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any time, and referral of severe clinical cases to specialist medical personnel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study successfully developed a Bodhisattva Spirit–Based Counseling Guidance and Counseling Model that integrates the Amitartha Sutra, or Sutra of Infinite Meanings, with Beck's cognitive therapy and Padesky's Socratic Dialogue into an operational Buddhist counseling framework. The main findings indicate that the model has strong content validity, as evaluated by Buddhist experts and clinical psychologists. Buddhist experts gave it an average score of 3.5 out of 5, while clinical psychologists gave it a score of 4.8 out of 5, suggesting that the model meets both Buddhist philosophical standards and the professional standards of modern psychology. Description of the Counseling Guidance Model Based on the Bodhisattva Spirit:

Philosophical Foundation of the Model

- a. Sutra Chapter 1: The essence of the Buddha's nature in every being.
- b. Sutra Chapter 2: One Dharma gives rise to infinite meanings.
- c. Sutra Chapter 3: Some of the Ten Merits as a map for inner transformation.

Basic Principles of Bodhisattva Counseling

- a. Nonjudgmental: Do not judge the client's suffering.
- b. Active compassion: Guide without forcing.
- c. Transformative altruism: Lead toward social contribution.

The Counselor's Role as a Lay Bodhisattva. The counselor practices as

- a. A guide: Opening the way, not giving answers.
- b. A mirror: Reflecting the client's wisdom.
- c. Spiritual companion: Present with compassion without attachment.

Structure and Components of the Model. The model consists of 3 parts

- a. Summary
- b. Ready-to-Use Socratic Dialogue Table
- c. Implementation and Evaluation Guide

Counseling Process Flow

- a. Problem exploration.
- b. Identification of cognitive distortions.
- c. Socratic dialogue inspired by some of the Ten Merits.
- d. Values-based action plan.
- e. Prosocial reflection.

Integration of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings in Counseling

Example integrations

- a. Depression: For those who have not yet made up their minds, it can help cultivate determination.
- b. Sadness: In the heart of every person there is a small field. Everyone is the master of their own inner field.
- c. Stress: Even when facing many problems, inner defilements do not increase.
- d. Anxiety: It awakens concentration in those whose minds are in disarray.
- e. Impulsive or Compulsive Behavior: It awakens self-awareness and observance of the precepts in those who are arrogant.
- f. Grief: It awakens loving-kindness in those who lack loving-kindness.
- g. Anger: It awakens patience in those who are filled with hatred.
- h. Addiction: It awakens the intention to give in those who are attached and greedy.

Integration of Socratic Dialogue in Buddhist Counseling

Four stages of dialogue

- a. Informational question: "What comes up when you feel lonely?"
- b. Empathetic listening: Validate without giving advice.
- c. Summary formulation: "So, loneliness is like...".
- d. Analytical or synthetic question: "How could you use this experience to help others?"

Development of the Counseling Model Product

- a. Preparation of the Counseling Model Book: Format: A 180-page book, written in scholarly-popular Indonesian, with case examples.
- b. Ready-to-Use Socratic Dialogue Table Compilation (Table 1 Psychological Problems Table with Socratic Dialogue Based on Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, other Sutra Examples, and Jing Si Aphorisms).

Table 1. Psychological Problems Table with Socratic Dialogue Based on Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, other Sutra Examples, and Jing Si Aphorisms

No		Psychological Problems	Socratic Dialogue Based on Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, other Sutra Examples, and Jing Si Aphorisms
1	Depression		Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings Those who have not yet made a resolve can still cultivate one. Depression often makes us feel, "There's nothing left I can do." But what if resolve did not have to be grand? For example: "Today, I choose to drink a glass of water mindfully." What small resolve feels possible for you today — not to "get better," but to honor the fact that you are still alive? *Note*

The phrase “building determination” in the context of depression can easily become toxic positivity. Here, “determination” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) in Buddhism should be understood not as Western-style willpower, but as commitment supported by *silā*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

Chiggala Sutta

Imagine a planet entirely covered in water, with no land at all. Floating on its surface is a metal ring the size of a lifebuoy. A blind turtle rises to the surface only once every hundred thousand years, and if its head happens to pass through the ring, that is the birth of a human being — an exceedingly rare event. How do you feel when you picture such a chance moment? Has there ever been any experience in your life, however small, that felt like “finding the ring”? (Pause and wait for a response before following up.)

Therapist: “If human life is truly this rare, how does that change the way you see today?”

Note

Chiggala Sutta is not meant to frighten clients, but to cultivate *saṃvega* (spiritual urgency) balanced with *pasāda* (calm confidence). Risk: clients with trauma may experience anxiety if the aspect of “scarcity” is emphasized.

“Don’t underestimate yourself, for human beings have unlimited potential.” -

Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

“I’m not sure if this lands for you, but I’d like to ask: What comes to mind when you hear ‘unlimited potential’? Is there even a small part of you that has ever shown a kind of potential that surprised you?”

“If you’re still unsure, imagine a close friend going through what you’re going through. What would you say to them? Could you say that to yourself today, just once?”

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

In the heart of every person lies a small field. Each person is the master of their own inner field.

If not tended well, the inner field can become barren, overgrown with weeds, and unable to bear fruit. Sadness and boredom often arise when it has gone uncultivated. But tending it does not have to be grand: watering a plant, clearing off a desk, or singing a single line of a song. What small seed could you plant today—not for the result, but to remind yourself that your will is still alive?

Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta

In emotional awareness, we are taught to notice three kinds of feeling: pleasant, painful, and neutral. Boredom or emptiness is often a neutral feeling that we label as “bad.” What if you treated it like a gray sky—neither bright nor dark, just part of the inner weather? What changes when you observe boredom as you would clouds passing by?

“Being needed by other and having the ability to serve is what makes our life truly blessed.” - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

“This is not about being a hero; it is about meaningful presence, however small. With appreciation, I’d like to ask: if being needed and contributing do not have to be grand, what is one small way you were needed or helped someone this week? Maybe you listened without giving advice, took out the trash without being asked, or simply nodded while someone spoke. If you can name one, how does it feel to realize you have already brought happiness, even in a moment like this?”

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

Even when facing many problems, inner defilements do not increase.

		This approach does not deny stress; it distinguishes between external pressure and our internal response. If the workload cannot change, what small adjustment can you make in your body's reaction? For example, take one deep breath before opening an email, or stand for a minute each hour. What small space can you create for yourself today? Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta In mindfulness, body awareness, breathing, feelings, and thoughts help bring attention back to the present moment. Ask yourself: where do I feel stress right now—in my feet, chest, or jaw? Rather than trying to eliminate it, simply observe it. What happens when you notice the sensation without judgment or the urge to push it away? "Note" "Inner peace" (samatha) is often misunderstood as suppressing emotions. It is important to distinguish calm acceptance from emotional suppression, and to assess the client's emotional awareness first. "Practice mindfulness in our daily life. A mind free of wandering thoughts develops inner strength. When we make concentration a habit, our minds will be focused and unwavering." - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen "This is not about being undistracted; it is about training the mind like a muscle. The more it is practiced in small moments of calm, the stronger it becomes when challenges arise. If you only had 30 seconds today, when could you set that time aside—and what would change in how you approach your next activity?" Try to stay aware of your breath: Inhale, counting 1, 2, 3, 4. Hold the breath, counting 1, 2, 3, 4. Exhale, counting 1, 2, 3, 4. Hold again, counting 1, 2, 3, 4. Repeat as needed. Counting from 1 to 4 can help the mind shift into a simple, steady rhythm.
4	Anxiety	Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings Awakens concentration in those whose minds are in disarray. This does not mean total silence, but full presence in the moment. When anxiety arises, where in your body do you first feel tension? If you bring your attention there and simply observe, without trying to change it, what happens to the intensity of the anxiety? Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta Body awareness, breathing, feelings, and thoughts can help bring attention back to the present moment, serving as an anchor against future worries. This is not about stopping anxiety, but about finding steadiness amid turbulent thoughts. Have you ever focused on your breath during anxious moments? If not, how do you feel about observing anxiety instead of pushing it away as a way to manage it? "Be mindful; don't worry or fret." - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen "This is not a call to ignore reality, but to separate what you can do today from what your mind fears about the future. If you let go of worrying about outcomes for just 10 minutes today, what is one small action you can take wholeheartedly? For example: brewing tea while noticing the steam, listening to music without multitasking, or writing one sentence of gratitude—not because you have to, but because you choose to be present."
5	Impulsive or Compulsive Behavior	Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings Awakens self-awareness and observance of the precepts in those who are arrogant.

In the context of impulsivity, sila (moral discipline) is not about restraint, but about protection. When impulses arise, what subconscious need is trying to be met—security, validation, or something else? If that need can be answered in a way that protects you better, what small alternative could you choose?

Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta

Before meditation, it can help to establish a moral foundation through sila: refraining from actions that harm oneself or others. Discipline is not oppression, but a safeguard for inner freedom. What actions am I taking today that may endanger myself or others? This is not about self-blame, but about awareness. When an impulse arises, what happens in your body and mind, and what need might it be trying to fulfill?

"Adhering to the precepts means being able to humble oneself, respecting others, and being responsible for oneself. Adhering to the principles means maintaining a good inner state, not keeping score with one another, and accepting the presence of others." - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

"This is not about suppressing impulses, but about choosing a response that protects your dignity and that of others. If "humbling oneself" does not mean belittling yourself, but making space for understanding, when was the last time you made that kind of space for yourself or someone else? And if you could create one small space like that today—for example, taking a breath before responding or saying, "I need time" instead of reacting—what might feel different in your body or heart?"

6 Grief

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

Awakens loving-kindness in those who lack loving-kindness.

In grief, love can sometimes feel dead. But what if you first turned that love toward yourself? For example: "I care for myself as I would care for someone I love." Or toward memory: "I keep this love alive through acts of kindness."

What is one small way you can plant love today—as a tribute, not an escape?

Kisa Gotami Sutta

"There is a story of a mother who brought her deceased child to a teacher, begging for a remedy. The teacher asked her to find mustard seeds from a house that had never known death. After searching the village, she returned empty-handed—but with a new understanding. I don't know if this resonates with you, but I'd like to ask: Have you ever felt that grief makes you feel alone? If so, is it possible that others around you are carrying a similar silent burden?"

"Everyone who has completed their role on the stage of life must leave the stage without exception. The difference is that some leave a lasting impression of goodness, while others leave a negative impression for all time." - Jing Si

Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

"If the person you love is "closing the curtain" — not with words, but through the life they have lived — what beautiful impression have they left in your life? For example, the way they listen without judgment, their perseverance in caring for the family, or their smile that still appears in difficult times. And if that impression still lives within you, how can you nurture it not as a burden, but as a seed that continues to grow?"

7 Anger

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

Awakens patience in those who are filled with hatred.

Patience is not about suppressing anger, but about looking more deeply: what pain is this anger protecting—feeling ignored, unappreciated, or something else? If we can acknowledge that pain without judgment, does anger still need to speak so loudly?

Akkosāsutta

A teacher once sat quietly while someone hurled insults, accusations, and curses. When the person finished, the teacher asked, "If someone offers a gift and it is refused, to whom does it return?" The person replied, "To the giver." The teacher said, "Then it is the same here. I do not accept your insults; they remain yours." I am not suggesting that you suppress anger, but asking: when anger arises, what happens in your body, your energy, and your relationships? Does "accepting the gift" help protect you, or does it keep you trapped in the past?

"If we have a bad temper and a sharp tongue, we cannot be considered a good person even if we have a good heart." - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen
 "I'm not saying this to blame you. I see a good heart—you care, you came here, and you want to change. But there may be a gap between your intentions and how they come across. What small bridge could help connect your good heart with your words and actions this week? For example: replacing "I'm stupid" with "I'm learning," pausing for three seconds before responding when emotional, or writing down what you want to say and choosing gentler words. What small bridge could you try this week—not for perfection, but to bring your heart and words together?"

Chapter 3 of the Sutra of Infinite Meanings

Awakens the intention to give in those who are attached and greedy.
 In addition, attachment to something often hides a longing for connection. What is one small thing you can give today—time, attention, presence—without expecting anything in return? Not to atone, but to remind yourself: I can still give, even while I need help. Helping can also happen through mutual support, such as contributing to the Tzu Chi Foundation, where even a small sincere contribution can join with others to create a vast ocean of kindness and real benefit. This kind of giving requires not only love, but wisdom.

Aṅgulimāla Sutta

"There is a story of a killer who, after meeting a teacher, completely transformed and became a healer. This is not a fairy tale; it points to the possibility of radical transformation. I am not comparing you to them, but I want to ask: if such total change is possible, even for someone deeply lost, what part of you still believes that you too can change—slowly, but surely?"

Note

The story of Aṅgulimāla is often used to suggest "*instant transformation*," but that can obscure the fact that his change was preceded by bad karma that had to be worked through, as well as years of practice after meeting the Buddha. It is best used with clients who are already stable, emphasizing the *process* rather than the *miracle*.

"Don't fear being late; what you should truly fear is remaining stagnant." - Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

"This is not about speed; it is about the courage to begin. If standing still is one option and taking a small step is another, how does your body respond to each? When you imagine standing still, does your chest feel heavy? And when you imagine a small step—even opening a window or sending a message—do you feel a little more space to breathe? What is one small step you can take today, not to reach a destination, but to remind yourself that you have not given up?"

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1. In cases with severe symptoms, such as major depression, anxiety disorders that disrupt daily functioning, or other psychological conditions beyond the scope of counseling, therapists must refer clients to psychiatrists or mental health specialists.

2. If there are indications of suicide risk, therapists should promptly obtain emergency contact information from the client, including family members, housemates, or close friends living nearby, and reach out to them to ensure the client's safety.
3. This model does not incorporate the concept of karma. Therapists focus on the client's issues and provide support without blaming karma. For example, while discussing grief due to a family member's death, it can be acknowledged that others experience similar suffering.

Discussion

The effectiveness test results showed that all therapists found the model easy to use without intensive training. In addition, the qualitative data indicated significant changes in clients, including increased self-awareness, improved emotion regulation, a shift in how they perceived their problems, and a growing intention to help others. Clients not only experienced reductions in psychological symptoms such as stress, anxiety, anger, and sadness, but also underwent deeper inner transformation. They became better able to view situations more objectively, develop more adaptive thought patterns, and integrate Buddhist values such as *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* into their daily lives.

These findings support Beck's cognitive theory, which posits that emotional disturbances arise not only from the events individuals experience, but also from the way they interpret those events. The clients' progress suggests that Socratic Dialogue can help them identify and reconstruct cognitive distortions into more realistic and constructive patterns of thought. Accordingly, this model effectively addresses the research question on the benefits of integrating Buddhist approaches with modern psychology to help individuals overcome psychological problems.

These research findings also align with the study by Cheng and Tse, who developed a Bodhisattva-spirit-oriented counseling framework based on the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. Cheng and Tse emphasized the importance of cultivating *bodhicitta* and the four *brahmavihāras* in the counseling process. The study similarly treats compassion as the foundation of the therapeutic relationship. However, this study extends their work by offering an operational model with counseling procedures, a Socratic Dialogue guide, and scenarios for addressing various psychological problems, making it more readily applicable in practice.

These findings also reinforce Lazorko's research, which used the Four Noble Truths as a framework for developing psychological resilience. Lazorko demonstrated that Buddhist teachings can help individuals transform suffering into a source of psychological growth. In this study, the *Sutra of Infinite Meanings* serves as a guide for inner transformation and provides direction for that process of change. Unlike Lazorko's work, however, this study does not simply use Buddhist principles as a conceptual framework; it integrates them directly into counseling techniques through reflective questions grounded in Socratic Dialogue.

From a Buddhist theoretical perspective, this study confirms that the Bodhisattva spirit can be applied in modern mental health contexts. Counseling is understood not merely as a means of reducing psychological symptoms, but also as a way to cultivate noble character. The finding that clients showed a greater tendency toward prosocial behavior after counseling suggests that the transformative ideal taught in the *Sutra of Infinite Meanings* can be realized in contemporary practice. In this sense, counseling extends beyond individual recovery to the formation of more compassionate people who contribute to society.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to develop, validate, assess the practicality of, and evaluate the effectiveness of a Bodhisattva Spirit-Based Counseling Guidance Model derived from the *Sutra of Infinite Meanings*, and integrated with Beck's Cognitive Therapy and Padesky's Socratic Dialogue. The results indicated that the

model successfully met all study objectives and was judged valid by Buddhist scholars and clinical psychologists, practical for therapists to use in counseling, and effective in helping clients develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, perspective shifts, and prosocial behavior.

The study's main findings indicate that integrating Buddhist values—especially the Bodhisattva ideal and the Sutra of Infinite Meanings—with a modern psychological approach can produce a counseling model focused not only on reducing psychological symptoms but also on cultivating noble qualities such as mettā, karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā. The client also developed a more positive and objective view of their problems, along with a stronger motivation to benefit others.

Thus, this study successfully addressed all research questions related to model development, validity, practicality, and effectiveness. Its main contribution is the development of a systematic, applicable, and evidence-based Buddhist counseling guidance model that integrates Buddhist wisdom with contemporary counseling practice.

This model offers a relevant alternative approach to supporting mental health, character education, and counseling services in educational settings and within Indonesia's increasingly complex social context.

Future research should conduct field trials with larger samples and use experimental or quasi-experimental designs to evaluate the model's effectiveness more rigorously. Future studies could also develop specialized instruments to assess change of character based on Bodhisattva values, including growth in mettā, karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā.

In addition, cross-religious and cross-cultural research is needed to determine how broadly the model can be applied in pluralistic mental health care settings. Longitudinal studies are also needed to assess the durability of the psychological and spiritual changes produced by this model.

Overall, this study shows that the Bodhisattva Spirit-Based Counseling Guidance Model is a valid, practical, and effective innovation. It integrates Buddhist wisdom with modern psychotherapy into a counseling approach that not only reduces psychological symptoms but also promotes noble character and social contribution, making a meaningful contribution to the development of Buddhist counseling and mental health in Indonesia.

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