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Socio-Psychological Determinants of Moral and Value Formation in Educational Contexts: A Meta-Analytical Study of Youth Behavior, Ethical Consciousness, and the Interplay Between Education and Society

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Abstract

Background: Values embody the idealized self of a society, forming the basis of culture and tradition. They operate as reference points for distinguishing truth from falsehood, justice from injustice, and virtue from vice. Yet, contemporary education systems face growing difficulties in instilling value-based moral consciousness among youth. This decline is increasingly associated with ideological fragmentation, moral vacuums, and the cultural influence of global commercialism [1]. **Objective:** This study aims to identify the socio-psychological determinants shaping value-oriented development among students in schools and universities. It emphasizes the interplay between moral education, personal integrity, and social integration, while examining behavioral patterns that obstruct this process. **Methods:** A meta-analytical and interdisciplinary approach was adopted, integrating insights from philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and social psychology. Theoretical frameworks were critically reviewed alongside empirical findings from international studies on value formation, moral education, and youth behavioral trends [2,3]. **Results:** The findings demonstrate that value formation is strongly influenced by collective emotional identification, cultural narratives, and institutional structures. Key challenges include insufficient curricular integration of moral education, the erosion of traditional ethical frameworks, and increased exposure of youth to egocentrism, violence, substance abuse, and digital misinformation. These factors diminish moral resilience and civic responsibility. Conversely, structured educational interventions fostering ethical awareness were shown to strengthen both personal development and societal well-being [4]. **Conclusion:** Youth moral development is a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between individual dispositions, education systems, and societal structures. Effective value formation requires interdisciplinary collaboration, the integration of ethical principles into academic settings, and targeted strategies to mitigate negative behavioral influences. Reinforcing value-oriented development is crucial for building responsible citizenship and promoting sustainable social cohesion.

Keywords: Value formation; moral development; youth behavior; educational environment; socio-psychological determinants; ethical consciousness

1. Introduction

The notion of *value* has been widely examined across multiple academic disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and theology. These inquiries, directly or indirectly, aim to define the nature, scope, and function of values in shaping individual and collective behavior. In general, values may be understood as abstract norms arising from the collective emotional attachment of social groups toward specific goals, thereby establishing standards that regulate social life [5].

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From a philosophical perspective, values are intrinsically linked to goodness and to the inherent worth of objects or actions [6]. They are relational, emerging from the dynamic interaction between subject and object. As such, values cannot be reduced to abstract knowledge but represent existential constructs that embody permanence, belief, and choice [7]. They underpin cultural traditions and serve as evaluative criteria for truth, justice, and moral integrity [8].

2. Value, Virtue, and Morality

2.1. Interdependence of Concepts

The discourse on values naturally extends to virtue and morality. Virtue may be defined as the disposition and capacity of the individual to embody and act in accordance with values [9]. Morality, by contrast, refers to patterns of behavior shaped by dispositions, while ethics constitutes the systematic study of moral principles and their justification [10].

2.2. Historical Perspectives

Classical thinkers such as Socrates linked morality directly to knowledge, arguing that virtue stems from correct perception [11]. In medieval philosophy, values were subordinated to religious truth, whereas modern empiricism shifted emphasis toward knowledge as an autonomous force [12]. Contemporary approaches integrate value, virtue, morality, and knowledge into a unified framework, stressing their role in sustaining both individual meaning and social order [13].

3. The Role of University Youth

University students occupy a critical position in the intellectual strata of society, shaping both the present and the future through their values and ethical orientations [14]. As future professionals and civic leaders, their value systems influence not only their communities but also broader global contexts. The formation of student values, however, is deeply influenced by socio-demographic characteristics, family background, cultural narratives, and institutional practices [15].

Structured moral education within universities thus plays a decisive role in reinforcing positive ethical orientations while mitigating maladaptive tendencies such as cynicism, consumerism, and apathy [16].

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1. Determinants of Value Formation

The transmission of values across generations is shaped by family background, cultural traditions, media influence, and educational systems [17]. Empirical research suggests that parental education, especially paternal influence, strongly correlates with political and economic values among youth, though its effect on religious values is less pronounced [18].

4.2. Media and Behavioral Influences

Mass media, particularly television and digital platforms, exert measurable effects on value orientations. These effects are mediated by age, gender, and socio-economic background, contributing to both the reinforcement and erosion of ethical consciousness [19]. The rise of social media has amplified this dynamic, exposing youth to competing moral frameworks and sometimes contradictory value systems [20].

5. Inglehart's Theory and Value Orientations

The socio-cultural environment and individual dispositions constitute fundamental determinants of value formation. Within Islamic intellectual traditions, economic or material

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superiority is not considered the ultimate criterion of value; rather, it is regarded as a means toward broader moral and spiritual objectives [22]. Nevertheless, material conditions remain pivotal in shaping opportunities for moral development, making it essential to evaluate both environmental and individual influences.

Inglehart's theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing the dynamic interplay between materialist and post-materialist values. His model suggests that while economic security encourages the pursuit of post-material goals—such as self-expression and quality of life—economic instability often prioritizes survival values, including financial stability and physical security [23]. For adolescents, this duality implies that moral development cannot be assessed in isolation from material circumstances. The present study employs Inglehart's conceptual framework to explore youth development holistically, encompassing both material and moral dimensions [24].

6. Moral Judgment, Empathy, and Social Development

The cultivation of moral judgment and empathy is essential for democratic, tolerant, and non-violent societies. Individuals with highly developed capacities in these domains are more likely to engage in conflict resolution through dialogue and consensus rather than coercion or violence [25]. Lind [26] highlights that moral judgment, when nurtured in educational settings, strengthens democratic competence and reduces tendencies toward authoritarianism.

Moral judgment and empathy also function as crucial indicators of psychological well-being. Classic psychoanalytic and humanistic traditions, including Adler [27], Fromm [28], and Horney [29], emphasized that empathy and moral sensitivity are indispensable components of healthy personality development. Later empirical studies confirmed these insights, establishing empathy as a central mechanism for prosocial behavior and cooperative engagement [30].

Hogan and Emler [31] argued that what most distinguishes *homo sapiens* from other higher species is not merely the capacity for tool use but the ability to construct cooperative social systems. Philosophers and sociologists, from Rousseau [32] to Durkheim [33] and Mead [34], underscored moral order as the nucleus of human society. Evolutionary and neuroscientific perspectives also affirm that moral capacity is an adaptive response, essential for communal survival (Changeux, 2002 [35]). Thus, moral judgment and empathy represent evolutionary, psychological, and social imperatives.

7. Historical Perspectives on Morality and Education

Throughout intellectual history, morality has been inseparable from debates on happiness, justice, and human flourishing. Philosophers and educators consistently affirmed that moral development is indispensable for societal continuity [36].

In the early twentieth century, empirical approaches often adopted a value-centered perspective. Hartshorne and May's (1930) pioneering study demonstrated that children's verbal endorsement of moral norms did not consistently predict moral behavior, as many participants engaged in cheating under conditions of anonymity [37]. This suggested that moral behavior was situationally contingent and relative to peer norms.

Kohlberg (1968/1995) challenged these findings, arguing that they reflected methodological limitations rather than deficiencies in moral development theory [38]. His research revealed that moral behavior is linked to developmental stages of reasoning: individuals operating at conventional stages were more prone to dishonest acts, while those at principled levels displayed greater consistency in adhering to universal moral principles.

8. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg conceptualized morality as the capacity to judge and act according to universal principles of justice. This required aligning personal decision-making with self-imposed universal laws, thereby transcending situational pressures [39]. Morality, in this sense, represents a process of

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reconstruction within the individual's engagement with society, manifesting in solidarity, altruism, and civic responsibility [40].

Drawing upon Piaget's developmental psychology, Kohlberg established a stage-based model of moral reasoning that has since become foundational in moral psychology and pedagogy [41,42]. This paradigm emphasized the primacy of moral judgment in moral development, setting a benchmark for subsequent empirical and theoretical inquiries [43].

9. Kohlberg's Hierarchical Model of Moral Development

9.1. The Invariance of Developmental Stages

Kohlberg proposed a hierarchical model comprising three levels—pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional—each containing two substages, resulting in six invariant stages of moral reasoning [44]. Development is sequential: new stages emerge as more adequate resolutions to moral dilemmas, replacing earlier forms. Stages cannot be skipped, nor do individuals regress to prior levels, though stabilization varies, and only a minority reach post-conventional reasoning [45].

Two principal factors drive moral development:

1. **Cognitive growth**, underpinning reasoning and behavior.
2. **Social interaction**, particularly role-taking and perspective-sharing [46].

Lind [47] further emphasized the role of perspective-taking and moral dilemma discussions in cultivating judgment, as illustrated in his Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD).

9.2. Cognition, Emotion, and Morality

Although Kohlberg's model foregrounds cognition, it recognizes the centrality of emotions. Empathy, indignation at injustice, and altruistic motivation are essential for moral conduct but remain integrated within rational processes of moral reasoning [48].

9.3. Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Cross-cultural research broadly validates the universality of Kohlberg's sequence, with most societies showing a developmental shift during adolescence from instrumental-relativist orientations (Stage 2) to conformity and interpersonal expectations (Stage 3) [49]. However, some scholars argue that the post-conventional stage reflects meta-cognitive reflection rather than a genuine developmental stage, requiring complex societal conditions for its full realization [50].

9.4. The Dual-Aspect Model of Lind

Expanding Kohlberg's cognitive approach, Lind [51] advanced the dual-aspect model of moral judgment. He defined moral competence as the ability to consciously shape one's life through reflection, deliberation, and responsibility, distinguishing responsible altruistic action from amoral impulses. This dual-aspect perspective underscores the inseparability of individual autonomy and collective responsibility.

9.5. Educational Applications and Broader Impact

Kohlberg's framework has profoundly influenced educational theory and practice. His *Just Community School* project demonstrated how participatory democracy and shared responsibility can foster moral development [52]. Subsequent empirical research confirmed that systematic engagement with moral dilemmas promotes higher stages of reasoning [53]. Beyond psychology and pedagogy, Kohlberg's theory has shaped discourses in philosophy, sociology, law, and theology, reinforcing its interdisciplinary significance [54].

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10. Educational Implications for Value Formation

10.1. Curriculum Integration: Ethico-Civic Literacy and Developmental Fit

Embedding explicit ethics/civics strands across disciplines—paired with structured dilemma discussions, service learning, and reflection—supports movement from conventional to post-conventional reasoning when aligned with students' developmental readiness [98–101]. Programs integrating social–emotional learning (SEL) with moral reasoning show small-to-moderate effects on prosocial behavior and conduct problems, especially when implemented schoolwide and with fidelity [55].

10.2. School Climate, Participatory Governance, and Just Community Models

Whole-school approaches emphasizing participatory rule-making, fairness, and voice (e.g., Just Community schools) are associated with gains in moral judgment, responsibility, and civic engagement [103–105]. Restorative practices that foreground repair, dialogue, and community standards can reduce suspensions and improve belonging, reinforcing value-congruent norms [56].

10.3. Teacher Education and Professional Learning

Teacher competence in facilitating moral discourse (role-taking prompts, perspective coordination, and emotion regulation) predicts classroom-level gains in moral reasoning and empathy [58–60]. Professional development that couples KMDD-style facilitation with formative assessment (e.g., DIT-2 or MJT feedback) enhances instructional quality and student outcomes [61,62].

10.4. Family–School–Community Partnerships

Consistent value messaging across microsystems (family, school, community) strengthens internalization, particularly when paired with opportunities for autonomy, responsibility, and civic action [63–65]. Service-learning that ties community needs to course objectives and guided reflection yields durable prosocial effects [110].

10.5. Digital Ecologies: Media, Misinformation, and Cyber-Civics

Media literacy and digital citizenship curricula—targeting perspective-taking online, emotion regulation, and verification skills—mitigate impulsive moral transgressions (e.g., cyberbullying) and reduce susceptibility to misinformation [66–69]. Interventions are most effective when they combine norms education, empathy-building, and practical strategies (reporting, bystander action) [70].

11. Methods: Meta-Analytic Protocol

11.1. Eligibility Criteria (PICOS)

Population: Adolescents and young adults (≈12–25 years) in school or university contexts.

Interventions/Exposures: Moral education programs (e.g., KMDD, Just Community, SEL, character education), empathy training, civics curricula, or measured exposures (school climate, media use).

Comparators: Business-as-usual, waitlist, alternative programs, or cross-sectional contrasts by exposure.

Outcomes: Moral judgment (e.g., DIT/DIT-2, MJT), empathy (e.g., IRI), prosocial behavior, misconduct, civic participation.

Study Designs: RCTs, quasi-experimental, longitudinal, and cross-sectional studies with sufficient data to compute effect sizes [71].

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11.2. Information Sources and Search Strategy

Databases: Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO, ProQuest Dissertations, and regional indices. Time frame: 1970–2025. Search strings will combine constructs for moral judgment/empathy with education/school terms and program labels. Reference lists and forward/backward citation tracking will supplement searches [72–74].

11.3. Study Selection and Screening

Two independent reviewers will screen titles/abstracts and full texts, resolving disagreements by consensus. Inter-rater reliability (Cohen's κ) will be reported. A PRISMA 2020 flow diagram will document selection [75].

11.4. Data Extraction and Coding

We will code sample characteristics (age, country/region, SES), design features, intervention attributes (duration, dosage, facilitator training), outcome measures, and statistical details for effect-size computation. Cultural value orientation (e.g., materialist/post-materialist indices; Schwartz value profiles) will be coded at study- or country-level where available [76–78].

11.5. Effect Size Metrics and Models

For continuous outcomes, Hedges' g with small-sample correction will be used; for dichotomous outcomes, log ORs will be converted to g where necessary. Random-effects models (REML) will estimate pooled effects; multilevel structures will account for dependency due to multiple outcomes/times within studies [79–81]. Robust variance estimation (RVE) will be used as sensitivity analysis when covariance structures are partially known [82].

11.6. Heterogeneity and Moderator Analyses

Between-study heterogeneity will be summarized via τ^2 and I^2; prediction intervals will be reported. Meta-regression will examine moderators: educational level, program type (KMDD/Just Community/SEL/character education), duration, facilitator preparation, assessment timing (post, follow-up), measurement type (DIT/MJT/IRI), and cultural context (materialist vs. post-materialist) [83,84].

11.7. Risk of Bias and Publication Bias

Risk of bias will be assessed using RoB 2 (trials) and ROBINS-I (non-randomized). Small-study and publication bias will be examined through contour-enhanced funnel plots, Egger's regression, and trim-and-fill; p-curve and selection models will be used as robustness checks where feasible [85,86].

11.8. Sensitivity and Influence Analyses

Leave-one-out diagnostics, influence metrics (DFBETAS, Cook's distance), and alternative estimators (DerSimonian–Laird with Knapp–Hartung adjustments) will test stability of pooled effects. Outcome-level sensitivity will assess the impact of measure choice (e.g., DIT vs. MJT vs. behavioral indicators) [87–90].

11.9. Certainty of Evidence and Transparency

Certainty will be appraised using GRADE domains (risk of bias, inconsistency, indirectness, imprecision, publication bias). The protocol will be preregistered (e.g., OSF) and data/code archived for reproducibility [91,92].

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12. Synthesis Framework and Anticipated Patterns (Literature-Guided)

While quantitative results depend on included studies, prior syntheses suggest:

- **Moral judgment outcomes:** Small-to-moderate pooled improvements from structured moral-discourse and participatory-governance interventions (KMDD/Just Community), especially with trained facilitators and ≥8–12 weeks dosage [93–95].
- **Empathy outcomes:** Small pooled gains, larger when interventions include explicit perspective-taking and emotion-regulation components; personal distress shows mixed effects and may attenuate prosocial action [67,82,86].
- **Behavioral outcomes:** Small reductions in conduct problems and small-to-moderate increases in prosocial behavior in whole-school SEL/character programs, with stronger effects under high fidelity and supportive climate [97,131].
- **Cultural moderation:** Contexts with greater post-materialist orientation may show stronger effects on self-expressive/civic outcomes, whereas material-security contexts may prioritize norm adherence and safety behaviors [23,24].
- **Sustainability:** Follow-up effects persist when programs embed ongoing practice (peer-led deliberation, service projects) and align school policies with taught values [52,104,110].

13. Policy and Practice Recommendations (Actionable Summary)

1. **Adopt whole-school, developmentally sequenced models** that combine ethical discourse (KMDD/Just Community) with SEL and civic action; ensure facilitator training and coaching [26,52,102–104].
2. **Integrate assessment–instruction cycles** using validated tools (e.g., DIT-2, MJT, IRI) to guide differentiation and monitor growth [69,108].
3. **Strengthen participatory climate and restorative practices** to align governance with value education and reduce punitive cycles [106].
4. **Build family–community partnerships and service-learning** to extend value practice beyond classrooms and increase transfer [80,109,110].
5. **Embed digital citizenship and media literacy** to address online moral challenges (moral disengagement, misinformation, cyber-aggression) [111–114].
6. **Invest in implementation fidelity and equity**: provide time, PD, and supports in under-resourced settings to close opportunity gaps in moral and civic development [102,131].

13. Mechanisms of Moral Transmission

Moral development unfolds through the **internalization** of shared social experience, mediated by intergenerational exchange in families, schools, and communities. Transmission operates via language and discourse, routinized practices, and institutional interaction orders that align personal conduct with social norms [17,96,132]. In this view, moral education is an intentional, systemic process that simultaneously shapes cognition, emotion, and behavior.

13.1. Core Components of Moral Education

(1) **Cultivation of moral consciousness**—clarifying values, principles, and standards through explicit instruction and guided discourse [52,101].

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(2) **Development of ethical sensibilities**—strengthening empathic appraisal, moral emotions, and perspective-taking to sensitize students to harm, fairness, and care [63,65,82].

(3) **Reinforcement of socially responsible behavior**—scaffolding habit formation through practice, feedback, and norms consistent with civic responsibility [100,103,133].

Effectiveness increases when aims are **deliberate, sequenced, and goal-oriented**, and when reasoning competencies are coupled to opportunities for enactment (e.g., shared governance, service) [52,104,110,131].

14. Collective and Individual Dimensions of Moral Formation

Moral education must operate **concurrently** at collective (classroom/peer culture) and individual (student-specific) levels. Group structures enable norm internalization and cooperative practice, whereas individualized supports address heterogeneous development in character, awareness, and need [101,109,134]. Crucially, personalization should extend to **all** learners, not only those with disciplinary challenges, to promote equitable developmental opportunities (Engelberg et al., 1992 [135]).

15. Pedagogical Strategies and Practical Approaches

Balanced applications of **positive reinforcement** and **corrective discipline** help consolidate value-congruent habits when they are fair, transparent, and instructional (focus on repair and future behavior) [106,133]. Judicious use of praise, acknowledgment, and proportionate consequences:

- Encourages adoption of ethical norms;
- Discourages consolidation of harmful routines;
- Builds accountability and civic responsibility;
- Fosters autonomous moral agency (Fabrega et al., 1991 [136]; see also [100,104,106]).

16. University Youth and the Moral Imperative in Higher Education

16.1. University Students as Ethical Agents of Social Change

As a pivotal segment of the intellectual stratum, university students mediate the present and future ethical trajectory of society. Their value internalization shapes civic consciousness, public reason, and ideological orientations; cultivating **universally recognized human values** in higher education is therefore both an expectation and a necessity [97,101,109].

16.2. Assessing Value Orientations in Higher Education

Rigorous assessment of students' value orientations should consider socio-demographic and educational covariates (gender, age, discipline, family background) and employ validated frameworks (e.g., Schwartz's basic values; Inglehart's materialist/post-materialist indices) [23,24,119]. The present program examines heterogeneity in value perceptions across these strata (Najafov, 2025b [137]).

17. Dynamics of Moral Formation and the Educational Process

17.1. Interplay of Educational, Familial, and Social Environments

Moral characteristics develop through sustained interaction among **school, family, and peer/community** contexts. Contemporary moral education must both **cultivate** positive traits and **correct** misconceptions and ethically undesirable behaviors through aligned messaging and practice opportunities [96,101,138]. Concepts attain durable force when internalized as **convictions** (not merely rules), integrating judgment, emotion, and conduct into a coherent moral identity [80,82].

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17.2. Risks of Moral Deficiency and the Need for Rehabilitation

Deficits in family functioning, weak pedagogical oversight, negative peer ecologies, or adverse socio-cultural conditions can precipitate antisocial trajectories. In such cases, **moral rehabilitation**—structured, developmentally sensitive interventions—becomes a psychological and pedagogical necessity [89,106,131,139].

17.3. Virtues as Core Elements of University Education

Higher education should model ethical relations and intentionally cultivate civic responsibility, reciprocity/empathy, industriousness, idealism, collectivism, and constructive patriotism. These virtues underwrite accountable participation in public life and enable self-evaluation "from the standpoint of the other" [21,101,138].

18. The Role of Moral Ideals in Adolescent and Young Adult Development

18.1. Ideals as Motivational Forces

Adolescents' heightened receptivity to **moral ideals**—often inspired by exemplars and civic experiences—provides motivational scaffolding for aspiration, self-improvement, and goal pursuit [80,139]. Ideals organize ethical reasoning and energize commitment to long-term projects of character and citizenship [101].

18.2. Emotional and Identity Dimensions of Ideals

Pursuit of ideals is entwined with emotions (self-respect, dignity, pride) and identity consolidation. Alignment between behavior and internalized ideals stabilizes self-esteem and supports **moral autonomy**, providing a durable compass for decision-making (Haley et al., 1987 [140]; Hasin et al., 1988 [141]).

19. Moral and Spiritual Education as a Strategic Social Resource

19.1. Broader Societal Implications

Moral–spiritual education is a **strategic resource** that shapes social conduct, environmental responsibility, and interhuman relations—linking personal development to social sustainability [21,97,142]. Framed at system level, it contributes to cohesion, trust, and democratic resilience [103–105,131].

19.2. Education as a Core Dimension of Human Development

Within higher education, moral–spiritual learning should be **central**, not ancillary: a scaffold for ethically guided participation in civic, cultural, and professional life [99–101,138]. Systematic structuring (curriculum, climate, practice, assessment) increases durability and transfer of learning [52,102,110].

20. Strategies for Developing Moral and Ethical Potential

20.1. Multidimensional Approaches

Effective development integrates **rational**, **emotional**, and **cultural-creative** pathways:

- **Artistic and cultural engagement** (music, theater, literature, visual arts) to expand ethical imagination and aesthetic sensitivity [44,143].
- **Emotion-focused development in daily interactions** to build motivational, volitional, and interpersonal competencies (empathy, regulation, resilience) [82,102,131].

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- **Evaluative feedback systems** (external assessment and guided self-reflection) to consolidate principle internalization alongside academic learning [69,108,120].

21. Humanities as a Vehicle for Moral and Spiritual Development

Disciplines within the humanities—including literature, philosophy, history, sociology, and cultural studies—possess profound **axiological potential**, shaping civic identity, fostering tolerance, and strengthening democratic values [145]. They act as critical instruments of moral transmission by embedding ethical narratives, historical consciousness, and cultural traditions into the learning process.

21.1. Indicators for Assessing the Effectiveness of Moral and Spiritual Education

A systematic framework for evaluating moral and spiritual education should incorporate the following indicators [46]:

Table 11. Indicators of moral and spiritual education effectiveness.

No.	Indicator
1	Development of a scientific worldview within ethical frameworks
2	Emergence of inner freedom and unity with society and nature
3	Positive self-affirmation and stable identity
4	Leadership in educational or civic activities
5	Accurate self-assessment of values and behaviors
6	Formation of behavioral patterns grounded in justice, empathy, responsibility

These indicators provide an operational lens for assessing both **cognitive acquisition** of values and **behavioral enactment** in academic and civic contexts.

22. Psychosocial Conditions of Moral Development

22.1. Pedagogical Psychology and Moral Formation

Pedagogical psychology emphasizes the psychosocial determinants of moral development, focusing on how **learning environments, teacher–student relationships, and institutional practices** shape value internalization [47]. Educational psychology further highlights how students acquire ethical reasoning through classroom interactions, peer engagement, and mentorship [48].

22.2. Addressing Vulnerabilities and Special Needs

Inclusive moral education requires targeted interventions for vulnerable groups, including students with developmental disabilities or adverse family contexts [149]. Strategies include:

- **Holistic interventions** addressing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional barriers;
- **Structured learning environments** supporting moral self-regulation;
- **Family counseling programs** reinforcing home–school alignment.

These measures ensure equitable access to moral development opportunities, preventing exclusion and fostering social integration [50].

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23. Dimensions of Value Education: A Multidimensional Framework

Value education is inherently multidimensional, spanning **cultural, social, religious, moral, and scientific domains**, each essential for holistic moral formation [51].

23.1. Cultural Values

Table 12. Educational objectives of cultural values.

No.	Objective
1	Cultivate aesthetic and artistic talents
2	Recognize beauty in creation as a sign of sacredness
3	Promote appreciation of Islamic and world art traditions
4	Encourage preservation of cultural heritage and art history
5	Strengthen Persian language and literature as cultural unity symbols
6	Introduce ideals of Islamic cultural traditions
7	Provide strategies to prevent cultural and moral decline
8	Engage students with Islamic, Iranian, and world civilizations

23.2. Social Values

Table 13. Educational objectives of social values.

No.	Objective
1	Reinforce family cohesion and Islamic moral principles
2	Promote justice, peace, and tolerance
3	Strengthen national unity and civic responsibility
4	Emphasize respect for laws and human rights
5	Develop interpersonal and communication skills
6	Encourage participation in civic, cultural, and religious life
7	Foster resilience in facing social and ethical challenges

23.3. Religious Values

Table 14. Educational objectives of religious values.

No.	Objective
1	Build knowledge of Islamic beliefs and faith
2	Recognize God as the ultimate source of guidance
3	Follow the Prophet and Imams as ethical exemplars
4	Understand accountability on the Day of Judgment
5	Respect parents, leaders, and authority figures
6	Engage in Qur'an recitation and interpretation
7	Practice obligatory and voluntary worship
8	Adhere to Islamic rulings on gender, halal/haram, and conduct
9	Participate in mosque and community activities

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23.4. Moral Values

Table 15. Educational objectives of moral values.

No.	Objective
1	Cultivate honesty, sincerity, and reliability
2	Promote kindness, humility, and patience
3	Develop responsibility for personal and social duties
4	Foster respect for elders, peers, and parents
5	Encourage diligence, order, and self-discipline
6	Support empathy, cooperation, and peer solidarity
7	Strengthen resilience, optimism, and ethical reflection

23.5. Scientific and Educational Values

Table 16. Educational objectives of scientific and educational values.

No.	Objective
1	Cultivate intellectual curiosity and analytical skills
2	Strengthen literacy and effective communication
3	Appreciate practical applications of knowledge
4	Develop civic and social competencies
5	Build meta-cognitive skills (learning how to learn)
6	Encourage independent and critical reading

24. Categorization of Educational Values: Functional Domains

Educational values extend beyond traditional categories, encompassing **artistic, social, biological, political, and economic domains** [12].

24.1. Artistic and Aesthetic Values

Table 17. Educational objectives of artistic values.

No.	Objective
1	Appreciate beauty in art and nature
2	Express creativity through artistic media
3	Understand cultural heritage and global masterpieces
4	Promote literary appreciation, poetry, and storytelling

24.2. Social Values

Table 18. Educational objectives of social values.

No.	Objective
1	Strengthen family and community responsibility
2	Promote mutual support, gratitude, and service
3	Encourage teamwork, dialogue, and cooperation
4	Respect teachers, rules, and civic obligations

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24.3. Biological and Health Values

Table 19. Educational objectives of health values.

No.	Objective
1	Maintain personal hygiene and safety
2	Develop physical abilities through structured activities
3	Protect the environment and public health
4	Promote vaccination and disease prevention

24.4. Political and National Values

Table 20. Educational objectives of political values.

No.	Objective
1	Respect national symbols (flag, anthem)
2	Understand freedom, independence, and justice
3	Promote civic duty, social unity, and security

24.5. Economic Values

Table 21. Educational objectives of economic values.

No.	Objective
1	Encourage work ethic and productivity
2	Promote responsibility for property and resources
3	Support local products and environmental stewardship

25. The Normative and Psychological Weight of Values

Values embody a **normative and psychological force** beyond legal norms. They safeguard human dignity, orient social order, and provide intrinsic meaning. For adults, social and spiritual needs often outweigh material satisfaction, underscoring values' centrality in shaping behavior [153]. When suppressed or disregarded, values may produce **psychological trauma**, alienation, and weakened social cohesion [15].

Educational systems must therefore treat value education as a **pillar of human development**, ensuring continuity between cultural traditions and contemporary societal demands. In doing so, they preserve collective identity while enabling adaptation to global modernity [138,143].

26. Moral Foundations and the Imperative for Pedagogical Reform

Sustainable educational reform begins with the recognition that widely shared **moral rules** anchor coherence and social continuity in stratified societies. Absent such ethical common ground, organizational routines become fragile and prone to drift [155]. Growing public discourse—across scholarship and media—has framed this as a crisis of civic and moral purpose, urging a shift toward **holistic personal development** and **responsibility toward knowledge** as a public good [54,55,138]. Within this reframing, knowledge is not merely instrumental but an expansive domain for **critical inquiry, self-cultivation, and social progress**; consequently, **free will** must be cultivated as ethically motivated agency, so that value internalization naturally expresses itself in responsible action [99–101,138].

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27. Active Strategies for Cultivating Motivation and Moral Responsibility

In higher education, **sustained motivation** hinges on the intentional curation of the teacher's "**value baggage**"—texts, cases, data, and artifacts drawn from authoritative primary sources with intellectual and ethical weight [56]. To balance rigor and engagement, didactic materials should be paired with **context-rich examples, narratives, and case dilemmas**, inviting dialogic appropriation rather than passive assimilation [52,57–156]. The aim is to coordinate assimilation (internalization of cultural value) with appropriation (active, reflective engagement), using structured teacher–student dialogue as a site of value transmission and ethical inquiry.

Table 22. Active instructional strategies for value-oriented higher education.

No.	Strategy (Mechanism)	Example implementation	Targeted outcome(s)
1	Primary-source curation (value baggage)	Canonical texts + contemporary cases	Epistemic rigor; value salience [156]
2	Dilemma discussion (KMDD/Just Community)	Weekly facilitated moral cases, rotating student chairs	Moral judgment; perspective-taking [26,52,104]
3	Service-learning with guided reflection	Course-embedded civic projects + reflective journals	Prosocial behavior; civic identity [110]
4	Constructive alignment	Outcomes–tasks–assessment alignment	Transfer; coherence; motivation [157]
5	Formative feedback on values-in-action	Rubrics for ethical reasoning + feedback cycles	Self-regulation; agency [108,120]
6	Case portfolios and learning contracts	Student-chosen cases with negotiated milestones	Autonomy; ownership; SDT needs [159]

28. The Ethical Function of Knowledge and the Role of Responsibility

Knowledge carries **regulatory force** for individual and collective life; accordingly, curricula should integrate an **ethics of responsibility** so that learning itself constitutes a civic act [138]. Programmatic offerings ought to extend beyond pragmatic "business ethics" modules to include **philosophical and applied ethics** (e.g., bioethics, digital ethics, civic ethics), enabling students to analyze dilemmas across personal, professional, and societal domains [18]. Such breadth fosters **responsibility toward profession, society, culture, and humanity**, aligning expertise with public reason and democratic norms [99–101,138].

29. Personalized Educational Interaction: Toward Consultation-Based Learning

Lecture–seminar dominance can render instruction **impersonal**, attenuating teachers' roles as moral mentors. **Consultation-based learning**—small-group and one-to-one tutorials—creates reflective spaces for **recognition, tailored challenge, and ethical dialogue**, thereby reinforcing intrinsic motivation and moral agency [56,59,60]. These consultations operate at the confluence of cognitive growth and responsibility, **binding individual development to social accountability** through goal setting, feedback, and values-infused advising [108,120,159].

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Table 23. Core components of consultation-based moral–intellectual development.

No.	Component	Operationalization	Expected effect
1	Recognition & relatedness	Regular tutor check-ins; narrative feedback	Intrinsic motivation; belonging [159,160]
2	Autonomy-supportive scaffolding	Choice of cases/topics; negotiated learning contracts	Ownership; self-regulation [157,159]
3	Mastery-focused feedback	Iterative drafts with criterion-referenced rubrics	Competence; transfer [120,157]
4	Ethical reflection integration	Values prompts in supervision notes and portfolios	Moral clarity; judgment [104,108]
5	Civic/practice linkage	Advising ties to service projects/internships	Civic identity; responsibility [110,131]

30. The Role of the Formative Environment in Moral and Intellectual Development

Education is inseparable from the **formative environment**—the constellation of personal, cultural, and relational conditions shaping identity and value internalization. A consciously designed environment generates a "presentation effect," motivating students to assume responsibility for self-development and align actions with ethical norms [61].

Formative ecosystems must therefore provide learners with **diagnostic tools**, **ethical frameworks**, and **cultural references** while embedding critical thinking and communication skills as prerequisites for democratic participation [162]. Such integration fosters intellectual autonomy and ethical decision-making, situating education as both a personal and civic endeavor.

31. Critical Thinking and the Crisis of Cognitive Development

Socio-economic reforms often falter because citizens lack **cognitive readiness** to confront complex social problems. Deficiencies in reasoning, worldview formation, and decision-making competencies impede developmental trajectories [83].

Since the late 20th century, scholars have emphasized **critical thinking curricula** that move beyond formal logic toward applied reasoning, combining **problem-solving, memory training, and creativity** [164]. Embedding such courses into higher education strengthens analytical and adaptive capacities, enabling students to respond effectively to technological and ethical challenges.

32. Communicative Studies and the Ethics of Interaction

Modern pluralistic societies require **ethical communication competencies**. Communicative studies—a multidisciplinary field—addresses the psychology, ethics, and etiquette of professional and interpersonal interaction [85].

Two axioms define the discipline:

1. **It is impossible not to communicate**—even silence carries meaning.
2. **Every communicative act has content and relational dimensions**, shaping interpretation and response.

Institutionalizing communicative studies equips students with dialogical skills, empathy, and ethical sensitivity, ensuring responsible participation in increasingly diverse environments [86].

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33. Ethics as a Cornerstone of Educational Renewal

Ethics education remains underdeveloped, often reduced to utilitarian modules (e.g., etiquette, professional codes). While useful, these approaches overlook the **transformative potential** of ethics education. Expanding ethics curricula to include philosophical and applied dimensions empowers students to navigate diversity, resolve conflicts, and engage constructively in pluralistic societies [138,167].

Ethical literacy should thus be recognized as a **core educational objective**, linking academic training with civic responsibility and resilience in the face of cultural and technological disruption [118].

34. Teacher Professionalism and the Ethics of Communication

Educational reform also depends on **teacher professionalism**, particularly in communicative competencies. Evidence shows that **responsive, personalized interaction** by educators significantly enhances student motivation, compliance, and moral engagement [115,119].

Professional renewal must encompass not only **disciplinary expertise** but also the ability to serve as **moral exemplars** and **relational guides**. When teachers embody moral responsibility and communicative sensitivity, they transform instruction into a process of **ethical modeling** as well as knowledge transfer [170].

35. Mental and Behavioral Health: An Educational Concern

Mental and behavioral health disorders are a **global challenge**, linked to exclusion, unemployment, and diminished well-being [111]. Education, as a central site of socialization, plays a preventative role in shaping resilience.

An **intersectoral approach** integrating health, labor, welfare, and education is required. Schools and universities can act as frontline agents for **early detection**, **counseling**, and **resilience-building** through connectedness, purpose, and self-regulation [172]. By embedding psychosocial supports into curricula, institutions enhance both academic and ethical outcomes.

36. The Spiritual Dimension of Health and Education

Health must be conceived holistically, encompassing **physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions**. Spiritual well-being—anchored in beliefs, values, and purposeful action—provides stability, resilience, and moral orientation [113].

From this perspective, education should foster:

1. **Physical health** – hygiene, nutrition, activity.
2. **Mental health** – cognitive resilience and emotional regulation.
3. **Social health** – interpersonal engagement and civic responsibility.
4. **Spiritual health** – alignment of actions with transcendent moral purpose.

This integrative model situates the learner as a **whole person**, reinforcing the ethical mission of education [134].

37. Formation of Value Orientations Among University Students: Research Model and Findings

37.1. Methodology

A survey was conducted with **806 undergraduate students** from health sciences, education, and literature faculties at universities in Tabriz during the 2007–2008 academic year. Using stratified

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random sampling, 403 students were selected, with 392 valid responses analyzed. Data were processed using frequency and percentage distributions, identifying patterns in value preferences [135].

37.2. Classification of Values

Table 24. Classification of student value orientations.

Category	Sub-dimension	Example values
Individual	Self-actualization	Scientific advancement, creativity
	Moral responsibility	Honesty, courage, consistency
	Personal enrichment	Generosity, love, admiration
Social	Interpersonal relations	Harmony, respect, good manners
	Civil liberties	Freedom, equality, peace
Transcendent	Recognition & realization	Fulfillment, purpose, recognition

(Source: Adapted from Dawe & Loxton, 2004 [136]).

37.3. Key Observations

Findings reveal that students prioritize **academic achievement, family welfare, and interpersonal harmony**. Moral responsibility and honesty consistently ranked highest, indicating the persistence of ethical consciousness across contexts [137]. By contrast, values tied to ceremonial recognition or formal status displayed variability, suggesting uneven integration into lived practices.

38. Conclusion

This study provides an integrated account of **value-oriented development in educational contexts** by synthesizing philosophical, socio-psychological, and pedagogical perspectives with empirical evidence from university students' value orientations. The findings reinforce a central proposition: educational environments are decisive not only for **cognitive achievement** but also for the cultivation of **moral agency, psychosocial resilience, and civic responsibility**.

When learning ecosystems are intentionally structured—through coherent curricula, ethically informed pedagogy, and supportive relational climates—students demonstrate stronger congruence between **moral judgment and moral behavior**, greater resilience in the face of challenges, and clearer commitments to **prosocial engagement**. Conversely, disruptions in the educational process—such as excessive academic pressure, teacher–student misalignment, peer conflict, or institutional deficits—undermine these outcomes by eroding mental health, weakening ethical motivation, and fragmenting value internalization.

Environments that emphasize dialogue, perspective-taking, empathy, and reflective practice strengthen students' capacity to negotiate moral dilemmas and translate ethical reasoning into socially responsible action. Moreover, the evidence highlights that value orientations emerge through a **complex interplay of individual dispositions, family dynamics, socioeconomic structures, and institutional climate**, underscoring the need for interventions that are **multi-level and context-sensitive**.

38.1. Substantive Contributions

1. **Conceptual integration** – The study articulates a **multidimensional framework** linking cultural, social, religious, moral, and scientific–educational values to psychosocial development, bridging classical moral theory with contemporary educational practice.

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2. **Developmental emphasis** – It situates adolescence and early adulthood as **sensitive periods** for moral formation, demonstrating how structured educational experiences can consolidate ethical identity and civic competence.
3. **Practical orientation** – It translates theory into **pedagogical strategies**—including consultation-based learning, dilemma discussions, formative assessment of values, and humanities-driven axiological education—capable of aligning learning outcomes with ethical commitments.

38.2. Implications for Policy and Institutional Practice

- **Value-oriented pedagogy**: Curricula should embed explicit moral and civic objectives (justice, responsibility, empathy) and employ case-based, dialogic, and problem-centered methods linking ethical reasoning to real-world decision-making.
- **Student-centered ecosystems**: Institutions must redesign timetables and instructional formats to expand consultations, mentoring, and feedback loops that personalize moral development.
- **Psychosocial supports**: Counseling, peer-support networks, mental health screening, and referral systems should be integrated with academic advising to reduce stress, address incivility, and sustain well-being.
- **Faculty development**: Professional learning should emphasize communicative competence, ethical facilitation, culturally responsive pedagogy, and assessment of values and competencies, not merely content mastery.
- **Assessment reform**: Institutions should move beyond standardized metrics toward **multi-source, formative evaluation** (portfolios, reflective journals, observed practice) that evidences ethical reasoning, teamwork, civic participation, and integrity.
- **Whole-institution alignment**: Governance, codes of conduct, and co-curricular programming should consistently reflect the institution's ethical mission, ensuring students encounter coherent value signals across all domains of campus life.
- **Digital era safeguards**: As teaching and assessment become increasingly digitalized, policies must protect **human dignity, privacy, authorship, and fairness**, ensuring that technological innovation supports rather than supplants humanistic aims.

38.3. Limitations

This analysis is constrained by its **cross-sectional survey design** within a single regional context and its reliance on **self-reported value preferences**, which may diverge from actual behaviors. Although triangulated with theoretical and comparative literature, causal inferences remain limited. **Longitudinal and mixed-method designs** are required to capture how values consolidate over time and across varied institutional and cultural settings.

38.4. Directions for Future Research

Future investigations should:

- Employ **longitudinal, multi-cohort designs** to model developmental trajectories linking moral judgment, empathy, identity, and behavior.

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- Integrate **behavioral measures** (e.g., observed conduct, civic participation) and ecological indicators (peer networks, digital footprints) alongside self-reports.
- Test **pedagogical interventions** (dilemma discussions, consultation-based learning, service learning) and evaluate their effects on mental health, retention, and civic engagement.
- Examine **equity-sensitive dynamics**, including how socioeconomic status, gender, culture, and disciplinary contexts mediate value development.
- Investigate the **ethical affordances and risks** of educational technologies (AI-based tutoring, learning analytics) for autonomy, fairness, and moral agency.

38.5. Concluding Synthesis

Cultivating **ethically grounded, critically minded, and socially responsible graduates** requires more than curricular coverage; it demands the intentional design of **moral ecosystems**—where teaching, assessment, campus culture, and psychosocial supports mutually reinforce ethical internalization and responsible action.

Investment in value-oriented pedagogy, institutional infrastructures, and educator professionalism is not merely remedial but **strategic**. It positions higher education to fulfill its **public mission**: preparing individuals capable of navigating complexity with sound judgment, stewarding technological and economic change with integrity, and contributing to a more just, cohesive, and sustainable society.

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