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Values Education Practices and Moral Development Experiences Among Grade 7 Learners: Perspectives from Cabagan Riverside National High School

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Abstract

Values Education plays a significant role in shaping learners' moral development, character formation, social responsibility, and ethical decision-making within the educational environment. This study explored the Values Education practices and moral development experiences among Grade 7 learners at Cabagan Riverside National High School. Anchored on Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, the study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine classroom practices, learner experiences, instructional interactions, and moral development in Values Education instruction. Participants included Grade 7 learners and Values Education teachers of Cabagan Riverside National High School. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was utilized in analyzing the gathered data. Findings revealed that reflective discussions, value-laden activities, collaborative learning experiences, role modeling, and contextualized classroom situations significantly contribute to learners' moral awareness and behavioral engagement. Learners demonstrated increased empathy, self-awareness, social responsibility, and ethical reflection when Values Education lessons were connected to real-life experiences and community realities. The findings further revealed that supportive teacher-learner relationships and learner-centered pedagogical approaches positively influence moral development and classroom participation. However, challenges such as peer influence, inconsistent home support, limited learner participation, and difficulties in applying values in real-life situations affected values formation and classroom engagement. The study concludes that contextualized and reflective Values Education practices significantly contribute to learners' moral development and social awareness. Strengthening experiential values formation activities, reflective classroom discussions, and collaborative school-community partnerships is recommended to improve Values Education implementation in secondary schools.

Keywords: Values Education, moral development, learner engagement, character

formation, ethical learning,
qualitative research,
secondary education

Introduction

Values Education serves as an essential component of holistic education because it promotes learners' moral development, ethical awareness, character formation, and social responsibility. Beyond academic achievement, education aims to develop individuals who possess integrity, empathy, discipline, respect, and responsible citizenship necessary for personal and societal development. In the Philippine educational system, Values Education provides learners with opportunities to reflect on moral principles, interpersonal relationships, cultural values, and ethical decision-making within various social contexts.

During adolescence, learners experience significant emotional, social, cognitive, and moral development. Grade 7 learners, in particular, begin developing deeper awareness of personal identity, social relationships, peer influence, and ethical responsibilities. Consequently, Values Education becomes highly important in guiding learners toward responsible behavior, positive relationships, and sound moral judgment during this developmental stage.

Values Education practices refer to instructional approaches, classroom interactions, and learning experiences designed to promote moral reflection, ethical understanding, social awareness, and values formation among learners. Effective Values Education instruction often includes reflective discussions, collaborative activities, role-playing, community-based learning, moral reasoning exercises, and contextualized learning experiences that connect values to learners' real-life situations.

Moral development, on the other hand, refers to the gradual formation of ethical reasoning, social responsibility, empathy, discipline, and moral decision-making among learners. Moral development is influenced by classroom experiences, teacher guidance, peer interaction, family support, and community values. Learners develop stronger moral understanding when educational experiences encourage reflection, empathy, critical thinking, and meaningful social interaction.

Within the Philippine educational context, the Department of Education emphasizes values formation and character education as integral components of the K-12 curriculum. Schools are encouraged to implement learner-centered and contextualized Values Education practices that promote positive behavior, responsible citizenship, and moral development among learners.

At Cabagan Riverside National High School, Values Education teachers continuously implement classroom activities and reflective learning experiences designed to strengthen learners' moral awareness, ethical understanding, and social responsibility. Teachers integrate reflective discussions, contextualized examples, collaborative learning activities, and real-life situations to make values formation meaningful and relevant to learners' experiences. However, despite these efforts, learners continue to encounter challenges related to peer influence, behavioral concerns, classroom participation, and the practical application of moral values in daily life.

Several studies emphasized that reflective and contextualized Values Education practices positively influence learners' moral reasoning and social behavior. Kohlberg (2018) explained that moral development progresses through reflective reasoning, ethical dialogue, and meaningful social experiences. Similarly, Nucci and Narvaez (2020) argued that moral education becomes more effective when learners actively engage in reflective discussions and socially meaningful learning activities.

Although Values Education has been widely discussed in educational literature, there remains limited qualitative research exploring learners' moral development experiences and Values Education practices within Philippine secondary school contexts. Thus, this study aimed to explore Values Education practices and moral development experiences among Grade 7 learners at Cabagan Riverside National High School.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory (2018) and Constructivist Learning Theory by Vygotsky (1978).

Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory posits that moral reasoning develops progressively through reflection, ethical decision-making, social interaction, and exposure to moral dilemmas. Learners gradually develop higher levels of moral understanding when educational experiences encourage ethical reflection and perspective-taking. Constructivist Learning Theory explains that learners actively construct understanding through interaction, collaboration, reflection, and meaningful experiences. Moral learning becomes more effective when instructional

activities are participatory, contextualized, and connected to learners' social realities and personal experiences. These theories provided the framework for understanding how Values Education practices influence learners' moral development and classroom engagement.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore the Values Education practices and moral development experiences among Grade 7 learners at Cabagan Riverside National High School. Specifically, it sought to examine learners' classroom experiences and participation in Values Education activities and identify instructional practices that contribute to learners' moral development and engagement. The study further aimed to explore how learners demonstrate behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement during Values Education instruction. Additionally, it intended to identify the challenges encountered by teachers and learners in Values Education implementation and moral development activities. Finally, the study aimed to derive insights from the participants' experiences that may serve as basis for strengthening Values Education practices and moral development among secondary learners.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore Values Education practices and moral development experiences among Grade 7 learners at Cabagan Riverside National High School. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather rich and contextualized descriptions regarding instructional interactions, classroom participation, learner engagement, and moral development experiences within Values Education instruction. Through qualitative inquiry, the study captured the lived experiences of learners and teachers and examined how Values Education practices influence moral understanding and classroom engagement. The study was conducted at Cabagan Riverside National High School located in Cabagan, Isabela, Philippines. The school operates under the supervision of the Department of Education and serves learners from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The participants of the study included selected Grade 7 learners and Values Education teachers. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants who possessed direct experiences and active involvement in Values Education instruction and classroom learning activities. The selected learners represented varying classroom participation levels, social experiences, and engagement patterns.

The study utilized semi-structured interview guides, focus group discussion guides, classroom observation notes, and document analysis checklists as qualitative research instruments. Interview questions focused on classroom experiences, learner participation, instructional practices, moral development experiences, values formation activities, and challenges encountered during Values Education instruction.

Prior to data gathering, permission was secured from school administrators and ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study. Data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. Significant statements and recurring patterns were identified, coded, categorized, and organized into themes representing Values Education practices and moral development experiences. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and thick description to ensure credibility and dependability of the findings.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Reflective and Contextualized Values Education Strengthens Moral Awareness

The findings revealed that reflective and contextualized Values Education practices significantly contribute to learners' moral awareness, ethical understanding, and personal reflection. Participants emphasized that classroom discussions, reflective sharing, situational analysis, and real-life examples help them better understand moral values and their application in everyday life.

One learner participant stated:

"Mas naiintindihan ko ang values kapag may examples na nangyayari talaga sa totoong buhay."

Another learner shared:

“Kapag may sharing at reflection activities, mas naisip ko kung tama ba ang ginagawa ko.”

Similarly, another participant explained:

“Mas natututo ako kapag kinokonekta ni teacher ang lesson sa experiences namin.”

These responses indicate that contextualized and reflective instruction positively influences learners’ cognitive and emotional engagement during Values Education activities. Learners become more reflective and self-aware when instructional discussions are connected to real-life situations, interpersonal relationships, and community experiences.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of reflective dialogue and contextualized instruction in promoting moral understanding among learners.

One teacher participant stated:

“Mas nagiging meaningful ang Values Education kapag relatable sa buhay ng learners ang discussions.”

Another participant explained:

“Kapag contextualized ang examples, mas madaling maintindihan ng learners ang importance ng values.”

The findings suggest that reflective and contextualized instructional practices strengthen learners’ moral reasoning and ethical awareness. Learners become more capable of analyzing their actions, decisions, and relationships when instructional activities encourage reflection and perspective-taking.

The findings support Kohlberg (2018), who emphasized that moral development progresses through reflective reasoning, ethical discussions, and exposure to meaningful moral situations. Similarly, Nucci and Narvaez (2020) argued that reflective and socially meaningful Values Education practices strengthen learners’ moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.

The findings further align with Vygotsky’s (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners construct understanding more effectively through reflection, interaction, and meaningful experiences connected to their social realities.

Classroom observations further revealed that learners demonstrated greater attentiveness and participation during discussions involving real-life moral situations, peer relationships, family concerns, and social issues.

One learner participant shared:

“Mas gusto ko ang Values Education kapag nakakapag-share kami ng experiences.”

This finding highlights the importance of reflective and contextualized Values Education practices in strengthening learners’ moral awareness and classroom engagement.

Theme 2: Positive Teacher Role Modeling and Supportive Relationships Foster Moral Development

The study further revealed that positive teacher role modeling and supportive teacher-learner relationships significantly influence learners’ moral development and classroom participation. Participants consistently described effective Values Education teachers as respectful, understanding, patient, approachable, and capable of demonstrating positive moral behavior inside and outside the classroom.

One learner participant stated:

“Mas natututo kami kapag nakikita naming ginagawa rin ni teacher ang tinuturo niyang values.”

Another learner explained:

“Kapag mabait at understanding si teacher, mas gusto naming sumunod at makinig.”

Similarly, another participant shared:

“Nakaka-inspire kapag magandang example si teacher sa amin.”

These responses indicate that positive teacher role modeling positively influences learners’ emotional engagement and values formation. Learners become more motivated to practice positive behavior when teachers consistently demonstrate respect, empathy, discipline, and responsibility within classroom interactions.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of creating emotionally supportive learning environments during Values Education instruction.

One teacher participant stated:

“Importante na maramdaman ng learners na safe at accepted sila sa classroom.”

Another participant explained:

“Hindi lang pagtuturo ng concepts ang Values Education kundi pagiging magandang halimbawa rin.”

The findings suggest that supportive instructional relationships contribute significantly to learners' confidence, self-discipline, and moral development. Positive teacher-learner interactions help learners develop respect, empathy, and social responsibility through observation and guided reflection.

The findings support Bandura's Social Learning Theory (2019), which explains that learners develop behavior and attitudes through observation, imitation, and interaction with role models. Similarly, Pianta et al. (2021) emphasized that supportive teacher-learner relationships significantly influence learners' emotional engagement, classroom participation, and social development.

The findings further revealed that learners become more open and participative when teachers encourage respectful communication and non-judgmental discussions.

One learner participant stated:

“Mas comfortable kaming mag-share kapag understanding si teacher.”

This finding highlights the importance of positive teacher role modeling and supportive classroom relationships in promoting moral development and learner engagement in Values Education instruction.

Theme 3: Collaborative and Experiential Learning Activities Promote Social Responsibility and Empathy

The findings revealed that collaborative and experiential Values Education activities significantly strengthen learners' social awareness, empathy, cooperation, and moral engagement. Participants emphasized that group discussions, role-playing, community-based activities, storytelling, and collaborative projects help them understand the importance of respect, teamwork, and social responsibility.

One learner participant stated:

“Mas natututo ako kapag may group activities kasi natututo kaming makinig at makisama.”

Another learner shared:

“Kapag role-playing ang activity, mas naiintindihan namin ang feelings ng ibang tao.”

Similarly, another participant explained:

“Mas nagiging aware kami sa tamang pakikitungo sa kapwa.”

These responses indicate that collaborative and experiential activities positively influence learners' behavioral and emotional engagement during Values Education instruction. Learners develop stronger empathy and interpersonal awareness when instructional activities encourage interaction, cooperation, and perspective-taking.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of experiential learning in promoting meaningful values formation.

One teacher participant stated:

“Mas nagiging effective ang Values Education kapag experiential at participatory ang activities.”

Another participant explained:

“Kapag actual nilang nae-experience ang situations, mas tumatatak ang lesson.”

The findings suggest that experiential and collaborative instructional practices strengthen learners' social responsibility, communication skills, and moral understanding. Learners become more reflective and socially aware when classroom activities involve real-life social interaction and collaborative participation.

The findings support Dewey (2019), who emphasized that meaningful learning occurs through experience, interaction, and reflective participation. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2020) argued that collaborative learning strengthens interpersonal relationships, empathy, and social responsibility among learners.

The findings further revealed that collaborative Values Education activities improve learners' confidence and willingness to participate in classroom discussions.

One learner participant shared:

“Mas masaya at meaningful ang lesson kapag interactive ang activities.”

This finding highlights the importance of experiential and collaborative learning approaches in strengthening moral development and classroom engagement among secondary learners.

Theme 4: Peer Influence, Behavioral Challenges, and Inconsistent Home Support Affect Values Formation

Despite positive classroom experiences, the findings revealed that learners and teachers encounter several challenges affecting Values Education implementation and moral development. Participants identified peer

influence, inconsistent home support, behavioral concerns, low classroom participation, and difficulties in applying values in real-life situations as major barriers to effective values formation.

One learner participant stated:

“Minsan nahihirapan kaming gawin ang tamang values dahil sa influence ng friends.”

Another learner explained:

“May mga pagkakataon na alam namin ang tama pero nahihirapan kaming gawin.”

Similarly, another participant shared:

“Hindi lahat ng natututunan sa school ay nasusuportahan sa bahay.”

These responses indicate that external social influences significantly affect learners' moral behavior and values formation. Learners often experience conflicts between classroom teachings and the realities of peer pressure, family situations, and social environments.

Teachers also highlighted that behavioral concerns and inconsistent parental guidance affect classroom implementation of Values Education.

One teacher participant stated:

“Challenge minsan ang paghubog ng values kapag kulang ang support sa bahay.”

Another participant explained:

“May learners na nahihirapang i-apply ang values outside the classroom.”

The findings suggest that moral development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by home environments, peer relationships, and broader social experiences. Effective values formation therefore requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

The findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2020), which explains that learners' development is influenced by multiple social environments including family, peers, school, and community. Similarly, OECD (2019) emphasized that learner behavior, engagement, and social development are affected by both educational and socio-environmental factors.

Participants further revealed that some learners become hesitant to participate in reflective discussions because of fear of judgment from peers.

One learner participant stated:

“Minsan nahihiya kaming mag-share ng feelings at experiences.”

This finding implies the importance of creating emotionally safe and inclusive classroom environments that encourage openness, reflection, and respectful communication.

Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that Values Education continues to help learners become more reflective, responsible, and socially aware.

One learner participant shared:

“Malaking tulong ang Values Education kasi natututo kaming maging mabuting tao.”

This finding highlights the significant role of Values Education in promoting moral awareness, character formation, and positive social behavior among secondary learners.

Conclusion

The study revealed that reflective, contextualized, and learner-centered Values Education practices significantly contribute to the moral development and classroom engagement of Grade 7 learners at Cabagan Riverside National High School. Reflective discussions, contextualized examples, collaborative activities, and experiential learning approaches help learners develop greater moral awareness, empathy, ethical understanding, and social responsibility.

The findings further revealed that positive teacher role modeling and supportive teacher-learner relationships significantly influence learners' emotional engagement, confidence, and values formation. Learners become more motivated to practice positive behavior when teachers demonstrate empathy, discipline, respect, and moral integrity within classroom interactions.

The study also found that collaborative and experiential Values Education activities strengthen learners' interpersonal skills, empathy, cooperation, and social awareness. Learners become more engaged and reflective when instructional activities encourage participation, sharing, role-playing, and meaningful social interaction.

However, the findings revealed that peer influence, inconsistent home support, behavioral concerns, low participation, and difficulties in applying moral values in real-life situations continue to affect values formation and Values Education implementation among learners.

Overall, the study concludes that Values Education plays a significant role in promoting moral development, ethical awareness, and social responsibility among secondary learners. Strengthening reflective learning experiences, collaborative classroom activities, supportive learning environments, and school-home-community partnerships is essential in improving Values Education implementation and learner moral development.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study provide important implications for Values Education, character formation, moral development, learner engagement, educational leadership, curriculum implementation, and future research. The study emphasizes the importance of reflective, contextualized, and experiential learning approaches in strengthening moral awareness and social responsibility among learners.

Educational Implications

The findings imply that Values Education instruction should become more reflective, learner-centered, contextualized, and experiential to strengthen moral understanding and learner engagement. Teachers may integrate reflective discussions, real-life situations, collaborative activities, role-playing, and experiential learning experiences to make values formation more meaningful and relatable to learners.

The study further implies that moral development is strengthened when learners are encouraged to reflect critically on personal experiences, interpersonal relationships, and ethical dilemmas within supportive classroom environments.

Additionally, the findings suggest that Values Education should focus not only on theoretical understanding of moral concepts but also on the practical application of values in daily life and social interaction.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings imply that teachers play a critical role in shaping learners' moral development and social behavior. Teachers should demonstrate positive role modeling, empathy, fairness, respect, and emotional support in facilitating Values Education instruction and classroom interaction.

The study also highlights the importance of experiential and collaborative pedagogical approaches in promoting meaningful values formation. Teachers may utilize storytelling, reflective journaling, group discussions, role-playing, and community-based learning activities to strengthen learners' empathy, ethical reflection, and interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, the findings imply that emotionally safe and inclusive classroom environments contribute significantly to learners' willingness to participate in reflective discussions and moral learning activities.

Institutional and Policy Implications

The findings provide important implications for educational leaders and policymakers within the Department of Education regarding the strengthening of Values Education implementation and character formation programs in secondary schools. Educational institutions may strengthen Values Education by providing teacher training programs, contextualized instructional materials, reflective learning resources, and school-wide values formation initiatives.

The study further implies the importance of strengthening school-home-community partnerships to support learners' moral development and behavioral growth beyond classroom instruction.

Moreover, the findings suggest the need for schools to establish supportive and inclusive learning environments that encourage respect, empathy, social responsibility, and ethical behavior among learners.

Social Implications

The findings imply that Values Education contributes significantly to learners' social awareness, ethical decision-making, and responsible citizenship. Through reflective and collaborative learning experiences, learners develop stronger empathy, interpersonal understanding, and awareness of their responsibilities within society.

The study also highlights the importance of family and community support in strengthening values formation and moral development among adolescents.

Implications for Future Research

The findings highlight the need for future studies exploring Values Education practices and moral development across different educational contexts and learner populations. Future researchers may conduct comparative studies involving public and private schools to examine variations in values formation experiences and instructional practices.

Longitudinal and mixed-methods studies may also be conducted to explore the long-term influence of Values Education on learner behavior, ethical decision-making, and social development.

Future studies may likewise investigate the role of digital technology, social media, peer culture, and family dynamics in shaping moral development and Values Education experiences among adolescents.

Overall, the study emphasizes that strengthening moral development among learners requires collaborative efforts among teachers, school leaders, families, communities, and educational institutions. Reflective instruction, positive role modeling, experiential learning, and supportive learning environments are essential in promoting meaningful values formation and ethical development among secondary learners.

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