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Research Article

Pathways To Values Formation: Mapping the Interrelationships Among Character Traits, Moral Awareness and Ethical Influences

Merilyn S. Cruz*

Norzagaray West District, Norzagaray, Bulacan, Philippines

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*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

merilyn.cruz@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the factors shaping learners' character traits and moral awareness as the basis for a Values Formation Program. As education increasingly emphasizes holistic development, schools are expected to develop learners who are morally responsible, socially conscious, and ethically grounded. Perez (2024) reported increasing incidents of dishonesty, disrespect, irresponsibility, and apathy among Filipino students, underscoring the need to strengthen values education. The study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. Teachers served as the respondents by assessing the character traits, moral awareness, and ethical influences of elementary learners using a validated researcher-made questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Descriptive statistics determined the levels of the variables, while Pearson's correlation determined the relationships among them. The findings revealed significant positive relationships among learners' character traits, moral awareness, and ethical influences. Learners with stronger character traits demonstrated higher levels of moral awareness, while both variables were significantly associated with teacher modeling, values education, family ethical orientation, peer influence, and community support. These results indicate that learners' moral development is influenced by the interaction of personal characteristics and environmental factors. Based on the findings, a Values Formation Program was developed to strengthen character development and moral awareness through values education activities, character-building workshops, ethical dialogue, family-school partnerships, and reflective practices. The study highlighted the shared responsibility of schools, families, and communities in fostering ethical and socially responsible learners and provides evidence-based guidance for educators and policymakers in designing sustainable values education initiatives.

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Keywords: *Character traits, Community support, Elementary learners, Ethical influences, Family ethical orientation, Moral awareness, Peer influence, Teacher modeling, Values education, Values formation program*

Introduction

The study emphasizes that 21st-century education should go beyond academic achievement and give equal importance to the development of learners' character, moral awareness, and ethical behavior. In today's changing society, learners are exposed to various challenges and influences that can affect their attitudes, decisions, and behavior. Concerns such as dishonesty, disrespect, irresponsibility, and apathy highlight the growing need to strengthen Values Education and character formation in schools.

Although Values Education is already integrated into the Philippine curriculum, several challenges remain. These include limited teacher preparation, inconsistent role modeling, weak family involvement, inadequate values-based discipline, and limited opportunities for learners to apply values in real-life situations. The influence of social media and other environmental factors may also expose learners to conflicting values, making it more difficult for them to develop sound moral judgment and responsible behavior.

The study therefore stresses the importance of a holistic approach to values formation. Effective character development requires meaningful classroom activities, experiential learning, moral discussions, reflection, positive teacher modeling, family participation, and support from the wider community. Teachers play an important role not only in teaching values but also in demonstrating them through their daily actions and interactions with learners.

Furthermore, the study recognizes that character formation is a shared responsibility. Schools, families, communities, and other stakeholders must work together to create an environment where positive values are consistently taught, practiced, and reinforced. Through strong collaboration and appropriate interventions, learners can develop important qualities such as respect, honesty,

responsibility, empathy, integrity, self-discipline, and social responsibility.

Ultimately, the study aims to provide a strong basis for the development of a Values Formation Program that responds to the identified needs and challenges of learners. The program is intended to strengthen moral awareness and character development through practical and engaging activities. By integrating values into everyday learning and experiences, schools can help produce learners who are not only academically competent but also ethical, responsible, compassionate, and prepared to become responsible citizens of society.

Research Questions

The general problem of the study was: "How may the interrelationships among the learners' character traits, moral awareness, and their influential factors be described to be used as a basis for a values formation program in the elementary schools in Norzagaray West District during the School Year 2026-2027?"

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent can the learners' character traits be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 responsibility;
 - 1.2 respect for others;
 - 1.3 honesty;
 - 1.4 integrity;
 - 1.5 self-discipline;
 - 1.6 empathy and compassion;
 - 1.7 cooperation and teamwork; and
 - 1.8 civic-mindedness?
2. How may the level of moral awareness components in shaping learners' character be described in terms of:
 - 2.1 recognition of moral values;
 - 2.2 moral reasoning ability;
 - 2.3 integrity and consistency; and
 - 2.4 sensitivity to ethical consequences?
3. To what extent the ethical influences shaped the learners' character traits and moral awareness can be described in terms of:

- 3.1 family ethical orientation;
- 3.2 media and technology exposure;
- 3.3 religious or cultural teachings;
- 3.4 teacher modeling of ethical behavior; and
- 3.5 values education instruction?
4. Is there a significant relationship between learners' character traits and the moral awareness components in shaping learners' character?
5. Is there a significant relationship between learners' character traits and the ethical influences in shaping the learners' character traits and ethical awareness?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the learners' moral awareness and the ethical influences in shaping the learners' character traits?
7. What policy development program may be developed to reinforce ethical awareness among elementary learners?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 significance level:

- H1: There is no significant relationship between learners' character traits and the moral awareness components in shaping learners' character.
- H2: There is no significant relationship between learners' character traits and the ethical influences in shaping the learners' character traits and moral awareness.
- H3: There is no significant relationship between the learners' moral awareness components and ethical influences in shaping the learners' character traits.
- H4: Is there a significant relationship between the learners' character traits and their moral awareness components?
- H5: Is there a significant relationship between the learners' character traits and the identified ethical influences?
- H6: Is there a significant relationship between the learners' moral awareness components and the identified ethical influences?
- H7: Based on the findings of the study, what Values Formation Program may be developed to reinforce ethical awareness among elementary learners?

Results and Discussion

Based on the data gathered from the pupils' observations, the major findings regarding the learners' character traits are outlined below:

1. The findings from the learners' character traits based on pupils' Observation, Cooperation, and Teamwork got the highest mean of 3.67, which is verbally interpreted as Always. Respect for Others, Integrity, and Civic-mindedness are stated as Always with a mean of 3.65. The character trait Responsibility has a mean of 3.59 and is always done by students. Empathy and Compassion got a mean of 3.57, Honesty got a mean of 3.56, and lastly, Self-Discipline has a mean of 3.53, which is interpreted as Always.
2. The outcome of the ethical awareness components in shaping learners' character traits, as described by the pupils' observations, revealed that Integrity and Consistency and Sensitivity to Ethical Consequences both ranked first and got a mean of 3.67, interpreted as Always. Moral Reasoning Ability ranked second with a mean of 3.66 and was rated as Always. Finally, Recognition of Ethical Values has a mean of 3.57 and is given as Always.
3. The result of the factors influencing learners' character traits and ethical awareness showed that both the Teacher Modeling of Ethical Behavior and Values Education Instruction have a mean of 3.65 and are verbally interpreted as Always. Religious and Cultural Teachings placed second with a mean of 3.64 and were observed as Always. Followed by Media and Technology Exposure with a mean of 3.63, and the lowest mean of 3.60, the factor Family Ethical Orientation was interpreted as Always.
4. The significant relationships between learners' character traits and the components of ethical awareness in shaping learners' character. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient, $r = 0.366$, indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the observed relationship is statistically significant.

5. The significant relationship between learners' character traits and the factors that shape them and influence ethical awareness. The computed correlation coefficient of $r = 0.419$ indicates a moderate positive relationship between the variables. Moreover, the p-value of 0.000 is below the established 0.05 significance level, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant.
6. The significant relationships between learners' ethical awareness components and the factors that shape learners' character and ethical awareness. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.485$ indicates a moderate positive relationship, nearing a strong correlation, between the two variables. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 significance level.

Table 1. Summary Table of Learners' Character Traits

Indicators	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Responsibility	3.59	Very Evident
2. Respect for Others	3.65	Very Evident
3. Honesty	3.56	Very Evident
4. Integrity	3.65	Very Evident
5. Self- Discipline	3.53	Very Evident
6. Empathy and Compassion	3.57	Very Evident
7. Cooperation and Teamwork	3.67	Very Evident
8. Civic Mindedness	3.65	Very Evident
GRAND MEAN	3.61	Very Evident

Table 1 shows the summary table of Learners' Character Traits. Cooperation and Teamwork received the highest mean among the character traits, with 3.67, and was verbally interpreted as Very Evident. A reliable recent source on cooperation and teamwork is Jaiswal et al. (2021), who studied cooperative project-based learning environments. The authors found that balanced teamwork orientations, where members contribute fairly and

collaborate effectively, lead to stronger academic performance.

The learner character traits that obtained the lowest mean are Self-discipline, with a mean of 3.53, though the explanation was Very Evident. Recent research of Michaelides et al. (2021) has shown that self-discipline is sometimes considered a weaker or less predictive character trait than other non-cognitive skills like self regulation.

Table 2. Summary Table of Moral Awareness

Indicators	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Recognition of Ethical Values	3.57	Very Much Aware
2. Moral Reasoning Ability	3.66	Very Much Aware
3. Integrity and Consistency	3.67	Very Much Aware
4. Sensitivity to Moral Consequences	3.67	Very Much Aware
GRAND MEAN	3.61	Very Much Aware

Table 2 indicates the summary table of moral awareness, both Integrity and Consistency, and Sensitivity to Moral Consequences, which gained the highest mean of 3.67 and translated verbally as Very Much Aware, which means that pupils were knowledgeable about moral awareness in school. Arvanitis and

Kalliris (2021), argued that moral integrity is achieved when individuals act consistently with moral principles and remain sensitive to the moral consequences of their actions.

The lowest moral awareness with a mean of 3.57, and translated verbally as Very Much Aware, is the Recognition of Ethical.

Table 3. Summary Table of Ethical Influences of the Learners' Character Traits and Moral Awareness

Indicators	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Family Ethical Orientation	3.60	Very Much Aware
2. Media and Technology Exposure	3.63	Very Much Aware
3. Religious or Cultural Teachings	3.64	Very Much Aware
4. Teachers Modeling of Ethical Behavior	3.65	Very Much Aware
5. Values Education Instruction	3.65	Very Much Aware
GRAND MEAN	3.61	Very Much Aware

Table 3 shows the summary of ethical influences on learners' character traits and moral awareness. Both Teacher Modeling of Ethical Behavior and Values Instruction obtained the highest mean of 3.65, and were interpreted as Very Much Aware. The study of Şahin and Yüksel (2021) highlighted that teachers serve as role models of ethics in the classroom, shaping students' moral development through consistent demonstration of professional values.

Family Ethical Orientation got the lowest mean, 3.60, which was verbally interpreted as Very Much Aware. García and López (2022) emphasized that the family plays a central role in shaping children's ethical values, moral orientation, and decision-making. Focus on how professional values are modeled and demonstrated within a classroom setting.

Table 4. Significant Relationship between Learners' Character Traits and the Ethical Awareness Components in Shaping Learners' Character

Variables	r	p-value	Level of Significance	Remarks
Learners' Character Traits	0.366	0.000	0.05	Highly Significant
Ethical Awareness Components in Shaping learners' Character				

Table 4 presents the significant relationships between learners' character traits and the components of ethical awareness in shaping learners' character. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient, $r = 0.366$, indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as learners demonstrate stronger character traits, their level of ethical awareness likewise tends to increase. The positive correlation implies that components of ethical awareness contribute meaningfully to the development and reinforcement of desirable character traits among learners. Although the relationship is not exceedingly strong, it is substantial enough to indicate that these variables are associated. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the observed relationship is statistically highly significant. This means that the probability of obtaining

such a correlation by chance is extremely low. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between learners' character traits and the components of ethical awareness in shaping learners' character is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, signifying that ethical awareness plays a significant role in influencing and enhancing learners' character traits. These findings underscore the importance of integrating ethical awareness activities and values formation programs in educational settings to foster positive character development among learners.

A highly significant relationship exists between learners' character traits and the components of ethical awareness in shaping their overall character. Susilowati et al. (2021) demonstrated that ethics education and learning styles directly influence.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between Learners' Character Traits and the Factors That Influence the Shaping of Learners' Character Traits and Ethical Awareness

Variables	r	p-value	Level of Significance	Remarks
Learners' Character Traits Factors That Influence The Shaping of Learners' Character Traits and Ethical Awareness	0.419	0.000	0.05	Highly Significant

Table 5 shows the significant relationship between learners' character traits and the factors that shape them and influence ethical awareness. The computed correlation coefficient of $r = 0.419$ indicates a moderate positive relationship between the variables. This finding suggests that the factors influencing character development and ethical awareness are positively associated with learners' character traits. In other words, as the presence and effectiveness of these factors increase, learners are more likely to exhibit stronger, more desirable character traits. The correlation value further suggests that these factors play a meaningful role in shaping and enhancing learners' moral and personal development. Moreover, the p-value of 0.000 is below the established 0.05 highly significant level, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that the observed association between the variables is unlikely to have occurred by

chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between learners' character traits, the factors that shape them, and ethical awareness is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The result highlights the importance of various developmental influences, such as family, school environment, peers, and values education, in fostering positive character traits and ethical awareness among learners.

Gabatbat and Santander (2021) emphasized that values education is integral to the holistic formation of learners, serving as a foundation for both character traits and ethical awareness. Emphasized that values education plays an important role in developing learners' character, attitudes, responsibility and moral values. They highlighted that integrating values in education helps shape learners into responsible and ethical individuals.

Table 6. Significant Relationship between the Learners' Ethical Awareness Components in Shaping Learners' Character and the Factors that Influence the Shaping of Learners' Character Traits and Ethical Awareness

Variables	r	p-value	Level of Significance	Remarks
Learners' Ethical Awareness Components in Shaping Learn- ers' Character Factors That Influence the Shap- ing of Learners' Character Traits and Ethical Awareness	0.485	0.000	0.05	Highly Significant

Table 6 presents the significant relationships between learners' ethical awareness components and the factors that shape their character and ethical awareness. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.485$ indicates a moderate positive relationship, nearing a strong correlation, between the two variables. This finding suggests that as the presence and effectiveness of factors influencing character traits and ethical awareness

increase, learners tend to exhibit higher levels of ethical awareness. The result implies that environmental, social, educational, and personal influences contribute substantially to the development of ethical awareness, which in turn plays a crucial role in shaping learners' character. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the relationship is statistically highly significant. This means that the observed correlation is

unlikely to have occurred by chance and reflects a genuine association between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between learners' ethical awareness components and the factors shaping their character traits and ethical awareness is rejected. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening positive influences, such as family guidance, school values-formation programs, peer interactions, and community involvement, to enhance learners' ethical awareness and promote holistic character development.

Similarly, **Silva and Javier (2022)** argued that a comprehensive and proactive approach to character education directly influences learners' character development. Together, these studies affirm that ethical awareness components and external factors, such as curriculum design, teacher guidance, and experiential learning, are interdependent in shaping learners' character development. Rather than treating moral instruction as a reactive, disciplinary measure or a fragmented add-on to the curriculum a proactive framework deliberately integrates values cultivation into daily school routines and systemic educational designs. This perspective emphasizes that internal ethical awareness components do not develop in isolation; instead, they are highly interdependent with external environment factors, including structured curriculum design, intentional teacher guidance, and hands-on experiential learning. This findings suggest that ethical awareness and positive character development are most effectively fostered through a comprehensive apprao.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn regarding the learners' character traits and the role of collaborative values in the classroom:

1. The findings revealed that the majority of pupils identified Cooperation and Teamwork as the most prominent character traits applied in the classroom. This demonstrates that collaborative values are deeply embedded in learners' daily interactions, shaping both their ethical awareness and social responsibility. The emphasis on cooperation and teamwork underscores that character

formation in educational settings is not only about individual growth but also about fostering collective harmony.

2. The results of the pupils' observations revealed that integrity, consistency, and sensitivity to ethical consequences were the most frequently demonstrated components of ethical awareness in shaping learners' character traits within the school setting. This finding underscores that learners not only value honesty and reliability but also actively consider the moral implications of their actions.
3. The results regarding the factors influencing learners' character traits and ethical awareness revealed that teacher modeling of ethical behavior and values education instruction are the most commonly demonstrated practices in the classroom. This finding underscores that teachers serve as vital role models whose actions embody fairness, integrity, and responsibility, thereby guiding students toward ethical conduct.
4. The significant relationships between learners' character traits and the components of ethical awareness in shaping learners' character indicate a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as learners demonstrate stronger character traits, their level of ethical awareness likewise tends to increase. The positive correlation implies that components of ethical awareness contribute meaningfully to the development and reinforcement of desirable character traits among learners. The significant relationships between learners' ethical awareness components and the factors that shape learners' character and ethical awareness indicate a moderate positive relationship, nearing a strong correlation, between the two variables.

Recommendations

Based on the validated findings of the study, particularly the significant relationships between pupils' character traits and moral/ethical awareness, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen self-discipline through structured classroom interventions. Since self-discipline is an important character trait associated with learners' responsible behavior and ethical awareness, teachers should

implement structured activities that promote self-control, perseverance, accountability, and responsible decision-making. Daily routines, goal-setting, reflection journals, and positive behavior support strategies may be integrated to help pupils manage distractions.

2. Develop ethical awareness through values-based learning experiences. In view of the relationship between pupils' character traits and their moral/ethical awareness, teachers should provide opportunities for learners to recognize and apply ethical values in real-life situations. Case studies, role-playing, ethical dilemma discussions, and dialogue circles may be used to develop pupils' understanding of fairness, honesty, respect, integrity, and the consequences of their actions.
3. Strengthen the connection between family ethical orientation and pupils' character development.
Since family ethical orientation is identified as an influencing factor in the development of learners' character and ethical awareness, schools should strengthen family-school partnerships through a Family Values Partnership Program. Parent orientations, parent-child activities.
4. Integrate character development and ethical awareness across classroom activities. Teachers should intentionally integrate character formation with daily teaching and learning activities rather than treating values education as a separate component. Cooperative learning, peer-support activities, reflection exercises, classroom responsibilities, and problem-solving tasks may be used to strengthen cooperation.
5. Implement a comprehensive Values Formation Program based on the validated findings.
The school may develop and implement a Values Formation Program that directly addresses the identified character traits, ethical awareness components, and influencing factors revealed by the study.
6. Conduct further research to validate and strengthen the findings. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal and mixed-methods studies to further examine the relationships among pupils'

character traits, moral/ethical awareness, and the factors influencing their development. Studies involving different grade levels, schools, and contexts may also be conducted to determine whether the validated relationships remain consistent across populations.

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