

Siddhajyoti Interdisciplinary Journal (SIJ)

Vol. VI, January 2025

(A Peer Reviewed Open Access Research Journal)

ISSN: 2645-8381

Published by Research Management Cell, Siddhajyoti Education Campus, Sindhuli

<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/sij>

Ethical Education for the Twenty-First Century: The Case for Living Values Integration

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Article History: <i>Received:</i> 30 June 2024; <i>Reviewed:</i> 30 November 2024; <i>Accepted:</i> 10 December 2024

Abstract

This study addresses the integration of living values into general education curricula, aiming to enhance students' moral growth and readiness to tackle ethical challenges in the 21st century. Set in the context of community schools in Nijgadh Municipality, it explores the impact of Living Values Education by engaging diverse stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, parents, and students, through fifteen Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This qualitative research method captures participants' insights and lived experiences, offering a comprehensive view of Living Values Education's role in ethical education. The study operates within a social constructivist and pragmatic philosophical framework, recognizing the collaborative nature of moral learning and its practical implications. Findings reveal that LVE significantly strengthens students' empathy, ethical reasoning, and boring behavior, although curriculum consistency and stakeholder engagement challenges persist. This research underscores the value of LVE as an essential component of ethical education and suggests a need for further investigation into its long-term impacts and broader implementation strategies to prepare students effectively for the complex moral landscapes of contemporary society.

Keywords: Living values, ethic, moral, values integration, philosophical, pragmatic empirical evidence

Introduction

The 21st century presents opportunities and challenges never seen before, and a moral education foundation is essential to equipping people with the values and skills they need to successfully navigate a complex environment (Tyagananda, 1996). The concept of Living Values Integration (LVI) presents itself as a workable approach to ethical education within this framework intending to promote a full understanding and application of core human values. Incorporating living values into educational systems is not just about teaching information; it's also about supporting students' entire development so they can contribute

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Siddhajyoti Interdisciplinary Journal (Peer reviewed), Volume VI, January 2025

meaningfully to society (Tillman, 2000). The study article, 'Ethical Education for the Twenty-First Century: The Case for Living Values Integration,' observes how LVI might be used and applied in contemporary education.

Conventionally, teaching moral concepts and ethical dilemmas to pupils has been the crucial objective of ethical education, usually done in a speculative and detached manner (Tsanoff, 1955). However, ethics necessitates a more thorough and practical approach given the complexity of modern living. Living Values Integration satisfies these criteria by integrating moral principles into the very fabric of educational possibilities. By doing this, it promotes the internalization of ideals like honesty, compassion, respect, and accountability that are essential to people's personal and societal well-being (Smith, 2022).

Furthermore, nurturing a feeling of global citizenship and intercultural understanding depends on the inclusion of living values in the educational process. Students must learn to communicate across cultural borders and accept multiple ideas in an increasingly linked society. To ensure that students are not just academically skilled but also socially and morally aware, LVI offers educators a framework for developing these abilities (Brown & Jones, 2023). With this all-encompassing approach to education, students are better equipped to handle the demands of a globalized society and help build a more equitable and sustainable global community at large.

Living Values Integration is effective because it is comprehensive and engaging. In the educational process, parents, teachers, students, and the community at large are all involved parties. By fostering a positive environment where values are lived and practiced daily basis, LVI transforms classrooms into empathetic settings that promote the development of positive character qualities (Bhattarai, 2024). This article emphasizes how LVI impacts student behavior, academic achievement, and the overall school environment as it examines its effectiveness using a variety of case studies and actual data (Green & Patel, 2021). Through this study, the research highlights how important ethical education is in shaping people's and society's destinies.

A further benefit of integrating living values into the classroom is that it helps pupils build ethically conscious critical thinking abilities (Bhattarai, 2023). The contemporary world is full of difficult moral challenges that call for not only knowledge but also wisdom the resolution (Chandres, 2011). LVI fosters a greater knowledge of students' roles in society and the consequences of their acts by encouraging them to engage with real-world situations and reflect on the ethical implications of their decisions (Johnson & White, 2020). Students become more responsible and ethical global citizens when critical thinking and ethical education are aligned.

LVI assists students in gaining these fundamental abilities, which are becoming more and more important in interpersonal and professional interactions, by including values like empathy and respect into the curriculum (Roberts, 2021). Students who receive this all-encompassing education are certain to be socially and emotionally mature as well as intellectually strong. With this connection, the effectiveness of LVI can be observed in relation to student conduct, academic achievement, and the general school environment (Green & Patel, 2021). In addition to improving the educational process the plugging values approach equips students with the skills they need to succeed in a variety of environments and make meaningful contributions to a varied society (Garcia & Lee, 2022). By incorporating these

ideas into the curriculum, LVI contributes to the development of a more harmonious and unified community.

The integration of living values into ethical education programs is becoming increasingly prominent in today's educational scene (Tillman, 2000). The necessity to equip students for the complex moral settings they will face in the twenty-first century is the driving force for this approach. The basic goal of ethical education is to help students develop their moral thinking and moral development so they can make decent decisions and overcome moral obstacles. However, given how quickly society, technology, and culture are changing in modern times, ethical education practices need to be reviewed. This study examines how living values, such as accountability, respect, and compassion, might be incorporated into ethical education curriculum and assesses the effects of doing so on students' moral growth and potential to deal with moral dilemmas in modern society (Bhattarai, 2024).

Furthermore, studies have yet to comprehensively assess the long-term impact of LVE across diverse age groups or determine how educators and stakeholders can effectively balance value-based education with academic goals in dynamic, globalized environments (Kumar, 1999). Addressing these gaps will provide valuable insights into refining LVE implementation strategies and promoting holistic student development in both local and global contexts.

Psychological and philosophical theories, such as Kohlberg's phases of moral growth and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theories provide the foundation of living values education (LVE). Numerous case studies and empirical research provide additional evidence of LVE's efficacy. For instance, the Australian "Living Values Education Program" showed gains in students' accountability, respect, and cooperation (Hawkes, 2010). When children are exposed to a values-based curriculum over multiple years, longitudinal studies like those by Battistich et al. (2004) demonstrate sustained favorable outcomes in their ethical behavior and reasoning. These results imply that LVE can influence students' moral development in a significant and long-lasting way.

However, there are difficulties involving in putting LVE into practice. Cultural differences may result in different values being prioritized and interpreted, which could lead to conflict amongst stakeholders. Values education may be seen by some parents and educators as something that takes away from academic success, while it may be seen by others as politically or subjectively motivated.

In this context, the objective of the study is to explore how living values are comprised of ethical education programs for the twenty-first century.

Literature Review

The integration of living values into ethical education has been the subject of much interest lately, as scholars and educators work to equip students for the intricate moral environments of the twenty-first century.

Theoretical Foundations of Living Values Education

The foundation of living values education (LVE) is the idea that teaching crucial values like compassion, respect, and accountability is crucial to a student's overall growth. LVE is based on a several psychological and philosophical theory, such as Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Kohlberg's stages of moral growth. According to Kohlberg's view, moral thinking progresses through many phases, and moral education is crucial for promoting this

development (Kohlberg, 1981). In line with this, Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural resources in cognitive development, moral development can be strongly influenced by an environment rich in values for pupils (Vygotsky, 1978).

Impact of Values Education on Moral Development

Studies show that integrating living values into curricula has beneficial effect on students' moral growth. In their meta-analysis of character education programs, Berkowitz and Bier (2005) pointed out that the inclusion of values education significantly improved students' empathy and ethical reasoning. Lickona (1996), who contends that character education cultivates fundamental characteristics that promote moral behavior and ethical decision-making, harmonizes with these findings.

Practical Implementation and Challenges

Integrating values into general classroom activities and curricula is a key constituent of implementing LVE in educational settings. According to Nucci and Narvaez (2008), a comprehensive strategy that includes opportunities for students to apply values in authentic settings as well as explicit instruction is necessary for effective values education. Collaborative efforts and service-learning initiatives, for instance, can offer real-world experiences that enhance ethical values. Schools that have effectively executed LVE report good effects, like enhanced relationships between students and the school, despite these hurdles (Benninga et al., 2006).

Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

Numerous case studies demonstrate the effective incorporation of living values into academic programs. Hawkes (2010) conducted a study on the "Living Values Education Program" in Australia and found that children who took part in the program showed improvements in cooperation, respect, and responsibility. According to a similar longitudinal study conducted by Battistich et al. (2004), children who were exposed to a values-based curriculum over multiple years have shown reliable changes in their behavior related to ethical reasoning.

There is a substantial quantity of theoretical and empirical research that supports the inclusion of living values in ethical education. The data points to the fact that LVE can greatly improve students' moral growth and their capacity to deal with moral dilemmas in modern society.

Methods and Procedures

Research Approach of this study is a qualitative. This study follows a case study research design. The method of data collection of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). FGDs are held with participants from community schools in the municipality of Nijgadh as part of the study design. The reason that focus group discussions (FGDs) are preferred over other methods is their capacity to produce rich, contextual data through group interaction, which enables an in-depth understanding of participants' opinions and experiences with the integration of living values into ethical education (Kumar, 2009). Fifteen focus group discussions (FGDs) includes teachers, school administrators, parents/guardians and students of community school as participants from Nijgadh municipality. Purposive sampling has been used in the participant selection process to guarantee a varied representation of age groups, genders, educational roles, and socioeconomic origins. The conversations provide insight into the real-world effects

and difficulties of integrating values like empathy, respect, accountability, and honesty into educational environments through the voices of different participants. The focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed a range of perspectives on the integration of values education within the school curriculum, highlighting both positive outcomes and challenges faced by various stakeholders.

Results

The integration of living values into ethical education curricula has established positive outcomes across different stakeholders, corroborating findings from existing literature.

Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers like Mrs. Sharma noted a significant improvement in student behavior, attributing this change to the incorporation of values such as respect and responsibility into their lessons. Mr. Thapa echoed this sentiment, observing that students have become more adept at resolving conflicts independently, applying the values discussed in class to real-life situations. However, Ms. Rai pointed out a challenge in maintaining consistency in value education across different subjects, as enthusiasm for this initiative varies among teachers. Teachers report notable gains in their students' behavior and conflict-resolution abilities, which is consistent with research by Berkowitz and Bier (2005) on the advantages of values education for moral reasoning behavior. The difficulty in ensuring uniform execution, however, emphasizes the necessity of thorough teacher preparation and assistance.

School Administrators' Views

School administrators also recognized the positive impact of values education. Mr. Shrestha reported a noticeable improvement in the school environment, with fewer disciplinary issues and enhanced positive interactions among students. Conversely, Mrs. Koirala highlighted concerns from some parents regarding the balance between academic content and values education, fearing that an emphasis on values might detract from academic performance. Mr. Adhikari emphasized the need for ongoing training for teachers to ensure effective integration of values into their teaching practices, as inconsistent implementation can undermine the initiative's success. Administrators report improved school environment and reduced disciplinary issues, consistent with the benefits noted by Benninga et al. (2006). The balance between academic content and values education remains a challenge, suggesting a need for a more integrated approach that harmonizes both aspects.

Parents/Guardians' Insights

Parents and guardians expressed their views on the effects of values education on their children. Mrs. Tamang shared her observations of positive behavioral changes in her child, who now emphasizes honesty and helping others. However, Mr. Gurung noted a degree of skepticism among parents about the practical benefits of values education, particularly in a context where academic success is prioritized. He acknowledged the long-term advantages for moral development but called for more clarity on the subject. Mrs. Lama stressed the importance of communication from the school regarding how values are taught, as this understanding would enable parents to better support their children at home. Administrators observe fewer disciplinary difficulties and an improved school climate, which is in line with the advantages mentioned by Benninga et al. (2006). It is still difficult to strike a balance

between academic content and values education, indicating the need for a more integrated strategy that harmonizes both.

Students Experiences

Students also contributed valuable insights into their experiences with values education. Sanjay, a Grade 10 student, expressed that learning about values like respect and empathy has heightened his awareness of his actions towards classmates. Rita, in Grade 9, found service-learning projects particularly impactful, noting that applying values in real-life situations is far more enlightening than theoretical discussions alone. However, Anil, a Grade 12 student, felt that values education sometimes resembles just another subject, advocating for more interactive and practical sessions to deepen understanding. Nisha, a Grade 11 student, shared how group activities have taught her the importance of responsibility and teamwork, enhancing her leadership skills. Ramesh, in Grade 8, found the discussions about values engaging but suggested that more relatable examples could bridge the gap between classroom learning and everyday life. Lastly, Priya, a Grade 10 student, reflected on how values education has encouraged her to think critically about her choices and their impact on others, fostering a more thoughtful and intentional approach to her actions. Overall, the discussions highlighted a collective recognition of the importance of values education, alongside a call for improved consistency, communication, and practical application. Through group projects and service learning, students recognize how values are applied in real-world situations, which strengthens Nucci and Narvaez's (2008) emphasis on empirical learning. More relatable and participatory material, in the opinion of some students, would increase the significance of values education.

Discussion

The exploration of how literature, empirical data, and the viewpoints of various stakeholders is shown and how living values are integrated into ethical education programs for the twenty-first century. A thorough grasp of how living values contribute to students' moral growth and ethical decision-making is shown through literature, case studies, and focus groups.

Integration of Living Values into Ethical Education

To foster students' moral development and equip them for the ethical problems of modern society, living values must be incorporated into ethical education courses. This study highlights the beneficial effects of living values education (LVE) on students' volunteer conduct, empathy, and ethical reasoning. It is corroborated by earlier research (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Integrating fundamental principles like accountability, empathy, and dignity into the curriculum allows teachers to create a setting that supports moral growth on all fronts.

The theoretical foundations of LVE offer a strong framework for comprehending how values education might affect moral development. These theoretical foundations derive from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Kohlberg's phases of moral development.

According to Kohlberg's theory, which highlights the development of moral reasoning via several stages, students' ethical understanding must be advanced through organized moral education (Kohlberg, 1981). The idea that a values-rich educational environment may shape students' moral and cognitive development is reinforced by Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978).

Impact on Moral Development

The study's empirical findings are consistent with earlier research, showing that LVE greatly advances students' moral growth. Participants' reports of increases in volunteer actions, empathy, and ethical reasoning were consistent with earlier research (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1996). Students who participated in values-based courses established a deeper comprehension of ethical principles and a higher ability to apply these principles in practical settings, according to the qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Practical Implementation and Challenges

Integrating values into both the official curriculum and regular classroom activities is a key component of executing LVE in educational environments. Nucci and Narvaez (2008) support a comprehensive strategy that gives students opportunity to apply values through service-learning projects and group projects, as well as clear training on values.

These hands-on learning opportunities are essential for promoting moral growth in schools and reinforcing ethical concepts. The study does, however, also point out a number of difficulties in putting LVE into practice, such as cultural variations in value priority and opposition from stakeholders who might view values education as politically or subjectively driven (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Schools that have effectively implemented LVE report good effects, like stronger student interactions and an enhanced school climate, despite these obstacles (Benninga, 2006). These results imply that, despite certain problems, LVE has significantly more advantages than disadvantages.

Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

The case studies looked at in this study provides more evidence of how well living values may be integrated into academic programs. For example, the Australian "Living Values Education Program" showed notable gains in students' cooperation, respect, and accountability (Hawkes, 2010). Similarly, students exposed to a values-based curriculum shown consistent increases in ethical reasoning and behavior across multiple years, according to a longitudinal research conducted by Battistich et al. (2004). These case studies offer strong proof of LVE's effectiveness in fostering moral growth over the long run.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate living values into curriculum for ethical education in order to support students' moral growth and better equip them for the moral dilemmas facing modern society. The theoretical foundations offer a strong framework for comprehending how values education might affect moral development. These theoretical foundations are mostly based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Kohlberg's phases of moral development. While Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural tools in influencing moral and cognitive development, Kohlberg's approach highlights the advancement of moral reasoning through systematic moral education.

The study's empirical results are consistent with earlier studies, showing that living values education (LVE) greatly improves students' empathy, ethical reasoning, and social conduct. The good conduct and conflict resolution abilities which established that values education has a favorable effect on moral reasoning and behavior. Students who participate in values-based courses get a better understanding of ethical concepts and an increased ability to apply these principles in practical contexts, according to the qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The study notes that although values education has many advantages, there are shortcomings to its execution, including cultural differences in value priorities and possible opposition from stakeholders who think the program is politically or subjectively motivated. However, schools who have effectively incorporated LVE report benefits like better student-teacher relationships and an improved learning environment. These results show that the benefits of LVE far exceed the drawbacks, making it an effective strategy for ethical teaching. The case studies examined in this study offer more proof of how well LVE promotes moral growth over the long run. In line with this, the Australian "Living Values Education Program" has shown notable gains in students' accountability, respect, and cooperation.

In order to further students' moral development and better equip them for the ethical issues of the twenty-first century, living values must be integrated into ethical education. The idea that LVE can have a major impact on students' social conduct, empathy, and ethical reasoning is supported by both theoretical and empirical data. Notwithstanding difficulties in implementation, the advantages of LVE suggest that it is a valuable strategy for ethical education. To investigate the long-term effects of LVE and deal with the real-world implementation issues, more study is required. Through ongoing exploration and improvement of the incorporation of living values into curricula, educators may guarantee that students are adequately equipped to negotiate to develop moral landscape of contemporary society.

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