

Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl: A Comparative Analysis Across Gender and School Management

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Abstract

Middle school marks a critical phase in a student's life, during which they begin to shape their values, beliefs, and behavior. During this developmental stage, students are highly impressionable and are influenced by peers, environment, and societal norms. This study examines the moral values of middle school students in Aizawl City, focusing on differences based on gender and type of school management. The findings reveal that a majority of students possess high moral values. Female students exhibited higher moral values than male students. This difference may be associated with gender-role socialization and family influences, although these factors were not directly examined in the present study. Similarly, students from private schools showed significantly higher moral values than those from government schools, possibly due to better moral education programs, more supportive family backgrounds, and greater school resources. Previous research has suggested that socioeconomic status and parental factors may influence moral development; however, these factors were not examined in the present study. These findings underscore the importance of targeted efforts by teachers, parents, and policymakers to reinforce moral education, especially among boys and government school students. Strengthening moral values during middle school is essential for promoting responsible, empathetic, and ethical individuals who can contribute positively to society.

Key words: Moral values, Middle school students, gender difference, school management

Introduction

Moral values are key principles that guide people toward appropriate action and away from wrongfulness. From the Latin term *moralis*, which also speaks of proper behaviour, character, and conduct (Gert & Gert, 2020), morality guides people to differentiate between right and wrong, which in turn helps in their actions and decisions (Haidt, 2012). Such values, which are formed by customs, religion, education, and belief (Turiel, 2002), are most critical in personality formation and moral decision-making.

Despite their significance, current education does not sufficiently incorporate moral instruction. While there are researchers accepting that moral values are innate, most research believes that moral development transpires most importantly through socialization and learning by experience (Kohlberg, 1981; Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Ethics, being a continuation of morality, involves purposeful application

of such values, most importantly in situations of dilemmas (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). Upholding moral integrity elevates respect for other human beings and social cohesion (Rawls, 1971).

NEP 2020 emphasizes including moral values and ethics in the education process to develop students holistically. It promotes value education that inculcates empathy, respect, responsibility, and integrity in young minds. By including character development with academic education, NEP 2020 aims to develop responsible and morally inclined citizens who will strive for improvement in society (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Middle school is a critical phase in moral development, where students establish attitudes that will shape their academic and social behavior. According to research, students who have high moral values have better academic performances, exhibiting hard work, persistence, and responsibility (Lickona, 1991). It has also been realized that moral education enhances empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity, reducing undesirable conduct like dishonesty and aggression (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Given the importance of moral values in children's life, this study explores middle school students' moral values in Aizawl City, noting gender and school administration-driven changes. This will help teachers, administrators, and decision-makers to learn about ways to improve students' moral development.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the moral values of middle school students in Aizawl City.
2. To compare the moral values of middle school students in Aizawl with reference to gender.
3. To compare the moral values of middle school students in Aizawl with reference to the type of management.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant difference between the Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to their Gender.
2. There is no significant difference between the Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to School Management.

Method of the study:

Descriptive survey research was used in the study to assess moral values among middle school students. Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta and Prof. Arun Kumar Singh's Moral Values Scale (MVS, Sen Gupta & Singh, 1985) was used as a scale to measure moral values.

The population of this study includes all middle school students in Aizawl City. A total of 200 middle school students, comprising 100 males and 100 females, were selected from two government and two private schools in Aizawl City using stratified random sampling. Percentage analysis, Mean, Standard Deviation, and t'-test were also employed when comparison of moral values were carried out based on gender and school management.

Findings and Discussion of the study

Table 1
Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City

Description	Response	Percentage
Very High Moral Values	28	14%
High Moral values	97	48%
Medium Moral Values	70	35%
Low Moral Values	5	3%
Very Low Moral values	0	0%

From the above table, it can be found that 14% of Middle School Students in Aizawl City have very high moral values. The table also shows that the largest proportion (48%) of middle school students had high moral values, followed by 35% with medium moral values. The table also shows that 3% of the Middle School Students in Aizawl City have low moral values. Overall, 62% of students were classified as having high or very high moral values. The results indicate that a large proportion of middle school students have high moral values.

Discussion

The findings shows that 62% of students in middle schools in Aizawl City have high to very high moral values, and only 3% fall in the low category. The dominance of high moral values among students in Aizawl could be because of proper family rearing, strong school culture, and social enforcement of moral values, which have also been emphasized in Kanzal, V. R., Subikshalakshmi, G., & Goswami, L, 2016

It has also been found that students who fall in the middle socioeconomic status have high moral values (Naseri, 2018; Chinchkhede, 2021). The absence of very low moral values (0%) is a positive indicator that family, school, and social influences in Aizawl are reinforcing good ethics. It strengthens NEP 2020's emphasis on value education, which encourages incorporating moral reasoning and ethics in class (NEP, 2020, Section 4.27).

Table 2
Comparison of Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	100	25.01	3.72	2.10	0.05
Female	100	26.07	3.36		

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value relating to the comparison of Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to their Gender is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between the Moral Values of

Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to their Gender” is rejected. It implies that there is a significant difference between Moral Values of Male and Female School Students in Aizawl City. However, the mean score of female school students is higher than the male students, therefore it can be concluded that female students have higher moral values than the male students.

Discussions:

Naseri (2018) and Parua (2018) also concluded that girls had more moral values than boys, verifying that gender also had a notable contribution to moral development. Kaur (2016) and Rana and Kumari (2019) similarly reported higher moral-value scores among female students than male students. These findings are consistent with the present study, in which female students obtained a higher mean score than male students. It, however, contrasts with some like Bisht and Sharma (2012) and Bhalla (2019), who concluded that there were no significant gender divergences, but their findings were, nevertheless, subtly oriented towards girls showing high moral values. Muthaiyan (2022) even found that male students had more moral values than girls in some situations, showing regional and cultural variability. It could be due to contextual issues such as family structure, socio-cultural standards, or rural or urban location, which often influence value development. Alazab (2013) concluded that moral values were more aligned to social conduct in girls than boys, verifying that girls perhaps absorb moral standards more effectively.

Factors for the disparity in moral values between male and female school students:

Socialization Practices: Gilligan’s (1982) theory of care-based morality suggests that girls are often socialized to prioritize empathy, responsibility, and interpersonal harmony, which align with traditional moral assessments.

Parenting and Family Influence: Parents may put more emphasis on moral behavior for girls than for boys, intentionally or unintentionally, due to cultural beliefs (Parua, 2018). Parental involvement and family type are also associated factors; there are findings that girls who are middle class or have stable family structures are more likely to possess high moral standards (Chinchkhede, 2021; Naseri, 2018).

School and Teacher Influence: Teachers usually seek girls to act more responsibly in school; they are more encouraging and patient towards them. Such positive interest makes girls feel valuable when they are honest, cooperative, or helpful toward other people—more prone to absorb those values and lead their lives based on them. Teachers usually seek more responsible behavior and moral conduct in girls, which strengthens their value orientation (Kanzal, V. R., 2016)

Measurement Bias: Moral value scales may emphasize traits (e.g., honesty, kindness) that align with stereotypically feminine virtues, leading to higher female scores (Chinchkhede, 2021).

Table 3
Comparison of Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to School Management

Type of school	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Govt. school	100	23.93	4.00	6.42	0.01
Private school	100	27.14	3.03		

From the table, it can be seen that the t-value relating to the comparison of Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl city with reference to school Management is significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, “There is no significant difference between the Moral Values of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with reference to School Management” is rejected. It implies that there is a significant difference between Moral Values of Government and Private Middle School Students in Aizawl City. However, the mean score of private school students is higher than government school students, so it can be concluded that private school students have higher moral values than government school students.

Discussion of results:

The findings of the present study are consistent with some previous research but differ from others. Taneja (2017) reported significantly higher moral-value scores among government-school students than private-school students. In contrast, Parua (2018), in a study of senior secondary school students in Odisha, reported comparatively higher moral values among private-school students. Thankachan and Raizada (2020) also reported comparatively higher levels of moral values among students from missionary schools. Javed (2018) reported higher levels of forgiveness and morality among private-school students in Pakistan. Conversely, Rafique et al. (2020) found relatively better moral development among students in public-sector colleges than among their private-sector counterparts. Lalmuanpuii (2021), in Mizoram, reported no significant difference in moral development according to school type. These mixed findings indicate that differences in students' moral values across school-management types may vary according to educational, social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Factors for the disparity in moral values between government and private middle school student

Pedagogical Differences: Participatory approaches to moral education may provide opportunities for children to actively engage with and apply moral values, as discussed by Johansson et al. (2011). Al-Ghaduri (2020) found that interactive curricula in Kuwaiti kindergartens had more moral value internalization. Government schools may have passive moral instruction, which is in line with Kanzal et al. (2016) who found a theoretical-practical application gap in Indian schools.

Parental Involvement and Home Support: Students at private schools are likely to have more involved families that are also supportive of moral education at home. Socioeconomic background plays a role, with middle-class families emphasizing value education (Naseri, 2018; Chinchkhede, 2021).

Commitment of Teacher and School Environment: Private school teachers tend to be more committed and effective in inculcating moral values due to better school monitoring, and accountability (Kanzal et al., 2016). Private schools may be more dedicated to their work. Thankachan and Raizada (2020) found that students from missionary schools demonstrated comparatively higher levels of self-concept and moral values, and that self-concept and moral values were positively associated with academic achievement.

Conclusion

This study finds significant differences in moral values between government and private middle school students in Aizawl City, with government-school students showing significantly lower moral-value scores than private-school students. Although most students have moderate to high moral values, the observed difference may be associated with differences in school environment, pedagogical practices, family support, and other contextual factors; however, these factors were not

directly examined in the present study. The finding that female students obtained significantly higher moral-value scores than male students highlight the potential value of gender-sensitive approaches to moral education. Since NEP 2020 aims to develop responsible and morally inclined citizens who will strive for improvement in society, policymakers may consider strengthening teacher training in interactive moral pedagogy, integrating ethical learning across the curriculum, and promoting community-school collaboration. Government schools, in particular, would benefit from increased funding for co-curricular activities and experiential learning programs. Future research should explore longitudinal trends and culturally tailored interventions to ensure moral education resonates with Mizoram's unique social context. With such reforms, teachers and policymakers can prepare not only academically competent but also values-sensitive students, better equipped to bring about a more thoughtful and caring society. Finally, moral education should move beyond theoretical learning to practical action, preparing students to apply such values to practice in everyday living.

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