

Developing Virtue-Based Education in School: identifying prominent affecting factors

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we try to examine virtue-based education with regard to effective factors. Virtue-based moral education lays the groundwork for a responsible and fulfilling existence in society by helping students develop moral habits and traits. With a focus on virtue-based education, the goal of this study was to determine the variables influencing how students develop moral virtues in the classroom. In terms of goal and methodology, the current study is a qualitative, applied, and foundational meta-synthesis. The meta-synthesis approach suggested by Sandelowski & Barroso (2006) was applied in this investigation. The content analysis approach served as the foundation for this study's information analysis methodology. In this study, 32 documents from the sources that were searched were put through a systematic analysis process using the PRISMA technique. Patterns were then found, and the results were categorized using the content analysis method. Several categories can be used to classify the elements that impact students' moral virtue development in the classroom, especially when it comes to virtue-based education: Intra-school factors: educational objectives, curriculum material, Formal and Hidden curricula, teacher and trainer roles, administrative procedures, school management techniques, relationships with peers and classmates, and the general school climate and culture. Micro-Environment Factors; This includes the cultural background of the school's location, the family climate, and the educational policies established by the Education Department. The macro-educational policies, the dominant religious philosophy and beliefs, teachers and trainers recruiting system, global changes and developments, and cultural tensions or gaps are examples of environmental factors that take place outside of schools. Lastly, there are the intrinsic and personal factors of students, such as psychological aspects, motivating factors, and their experiences and abilities. Macro-educational policies should be formulated in a way that makes moral instruction the focal point of a virtue-based educational system, rather than merely a subsidiary objective, so students with strong moral qualities can develop in this system.

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Intruduction

Virtue is a personal attribute that is ethically desirable and facilitates the ability of individuals to make independent choices; this attribute depends on the will of the individual (Hassani, 2014). Throughout history, philosophers have stressed the importance of virtues such as fairness, integrity, and courage, and the role they play in human existence.

The term 'virtue' comes from the word 'vir', meaning 'man' or 'human qualities` (Balmaceda, 2017, 37) Unlike Greek philosophy, which treated the virtues as a collection of intellectual and theoretical aims, the Latin tradition took this a step further and incorporated elements of faith and courage. He paid less attention to abstract philosophical moral questions. In ethical theory, virtue in this context refers to the qualities of integrity, courage and kindness as integral and relatively stable traits of the personality of the individual, acting as the main sources of their behavior and actions (Rushton, 2025).

Virtue in character can be as diverse as the individual, and includes famous virtues such as courage, generosity and fairness, and less known virtues such as generosity and nobility. In Aristotelian terms, virtue is a built-in personality trait that persists in different circumstances throughout one's life (Smith, & Vickers, 2024). Virtue is truly internalized by the individual when he or she responds to various events, social interactions, and obstacles in a balanced and optimal way, demonstrating the harmony between his or her ideals and actions (Swanton, 2003). Virtue can be significantly cultivated and enhanced by formal education. The focus on devotional and moral instruction in the Iranian educational system effectively demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting a virtuous education. The main aim of the Virtue Based Education method is to develop moral qualities such as courage, integrity, generosity, honesty and generosity (George & Rose, 2025).

But only a true virtuous person has three basic characteristics: (1) he/she must recognize that the act is virtuous; (2) he must understand the nature of virtue and be inspired by it; and (3) he must act from a consistent will to uphold virtue (Mortari, 2025).

According to several educational paradigms, the four cardinal virtues are: prudence: prudence is the ability to recognize and choose the best in any situation. It contains practical wisdom for making wise and ethical decisions. Justice: justice is the virtue that compels us to give everyone his or her due, to treat everyone with fairness, respect their dignity and contribute to the common good. Temperance: temperance is a virtue that helps us to be balanced and circumspect in our actions and our desires. It means controlling our emotions to do the right thing (Rodríguez Barroso et al., 2025).

According to Fatimah (2019), Virtue-based ethics is a normative ethical theory that puts the character and virtues of the moral person above obligations, rules, or the outcomes of his actions. According to Meivawati, Kartowagiran, and Rustini (2018), This method bases moral reasoning on virtues such as integrity, courage, restraint, compassion, and self-restraint, as well

as vice such as dishonesty, cruelty, greed, lack of integrity, and cowardice. Through the development of knowledge, awareness and skills necessary to live up to these principles, Virtue-Based Moral Education cultivates the moral character of students (Bamkin, 2018).

Character training is a key component of Virtue Based Education, which emphasises the development of moral character in formal education. As a subset of moral education, character-building emphasizes the development of positive qualities that promote ethical behaviour, such as integrity, compassion and accountability (López González et al, 2025).

According to Fernández Espinosa & López González, (2024), the integration of virtues in formal education improves the cognitive, emotional and behavioural development of students, strengthening their character and promoting moral behaviour. The teaching of intellectual virtues is essential for formal education and is closely linked to the cultivation of moral (Tanaka, 2025). Schools provide an environment in which students can practice these virtues in all areas of their lives (Singh, 2019). Schools are clearly designed to function as environments that foster and enforce moral and virtuous values. Schools are not only a physical environment, but also a relational and cultural ecosystem designed to foster cognitive habits and character traits that transcend the classroom. Education institutions must provide a deliberate environment in which values such as intellectual humility, openness, and perseverance are deliberately demonstrated and promoted through teaching methods, because, as Aristotle notes, virtues are developed through consistent practice in a social context, not just theoretical instruction.

Analysis of trends in virtue-based education shows that since the 1980s, European and Western countries have been strongly emphasizing pedagogical values, especially civic values. This focus remains relevant today. In this context, Virtue and Character Education is often considered synonymous with Values Education.

In fact, education systems often highlight specific aspects of morality and character in their curricula (Sanderse, 2024).

The fundamental tenets of a virtue-based learning approach include an awareness of human nature, a belief in the importance of virtue, recognition of both innate and acquired human dignity, and a voluntary exercise of moral self-improvement, epistemological acquisition, and purpose-making. According to the model, the first step in personal growth and development is to have a strong sense of self-awareness, together with a comprehensive understanding of virtue and its importance. This understanding then promotes the intrinsic motivation that consciously guides the will to act morally in the external environment (Movahedi-Rad et al, 2023).

Given the concept of virtue and the way it is used in the personal development of teachers and students, it can be argued that virtue can be integrated into formal and non-formal education, help students to become self-aware, and ultimately lead to ethical practices between teachers and students. While value education and virtue education are different concepts, they are closely interrelated. According to Handayani et al. (2024), the teaching of human virtues also helps to develop their values, which in turn shapes their character. By taking into account

the hierarchy of values, moral education in the formal education system helps people to identify and navigate their own actions. In addition to the normative and cognitive dimensions of values (Huda et al, 2022), the development of compassion and other virtues should be emphasised in this training. Moreover, Virtue education should be self-reflective and free from unjustified behavioural biases (Pike et al., 2021). By actively promoting basic moral qualities, values, attitudes and actions, moral education plays a crucial role in the development of virtue (Rony & Nair, 2022). Virtue education increases the acceptance of virtuous behaviours and practices among students, teachers and all other school-goers, given its importance in formal and informal education. However, the generational gap between parents, teachers and students should be taken into account in this process and curricula adapted to meet the needs of students today in the field of moral education.

Having attractive and diverse curricula can, however, help schools to implement virtuous learning. By embracing a moral education framework based on virtue, schools can provide pupils with the necessary skills to fight injustice, take responsibility, foster cooperation and foster understanding between people. It also recognises racial and religious diversity, promotes peace and human rights, raises awareness of individual rights and promotes respect for cultural diversity. Apart from improving people's lives, this type of comprehensive education strengthens our civilization as a whole (Rushton, 2025).

Students who receive a moral education based on virtue will develop basic virtues such as compassion, patriotism and integrity. Students can improve their skills and correct their weaknesses through this method, which promotes personal growth. They are motivated to act morally, adopt constructive habits and live impactful lives, developing their own moral values through moral education (Tho, 2022).

Virtue-based approaches to education therefore help students to grow personally, correcting their shortcomings and improving their competences. Students can build on their strengths and work on their weaknesses through the lens of virtues such as perseverance, self-discipline and modesty, as long as character development is given priority over academic learning. Virtue ethics is the most reliable framework for understanding religious ethics in Islamic cultures such as Iran (Morvarid et al., 2020). The Quranic ethics are characterised by a monotheistic, virtuous, happy-go-lucky, and incentive-based approach to society. The Quranic ethics are characterised by a monotheistic, virtuous, happy-go-lucky, and incentive-based approach to society.

According to Dehghani-Firouzabadi and Alizadeh (2020), Virtue has an intrinsic value and is the path to true happiness, which is described as being close to God. According to recent surveys, Iran's formal education system is facing many challenges. These include an increase in non-conformist behaviour, a lack of respect for moral and legal requirements, and a reduction in the powers of parents and teachers (Moradi, 2024). In addition, moral and educational ideals have been eroded, critical-thinking skills suppressed, an increased emphasis on materialistic and unnecessary goals, and student privacy violated within the educational system. These issues

demonstrate the urgent need for revisions to improve ethical education and support. By combining disciplinary content with logical virtues, the curriculum aims to provide a thorough understanding of the subject under the influence of epistemology based on virtue. Teachers encourage, challenge and counsel students to take ownership of their education and develop critical-thinking skills. Evaluation shall include both a formative and a final evaluation, in accordance with the objectives of the course. Moreover, virtue-based epistemology offers a normative framework that offers a new perspective in learning pedagogy. (Zaghani & Fakhar, 2019). Moral education, which includes both a virtue-based education and a value-based education, is therefore the main focus of schools. In virtue-based approaches, the teacher's character is accepted as a fundamental element of the education of character and virtue (Sanjani, 2024).

This approach emphasises the importance of teachers who embody values such as integrity, honesty and trustworthiness. Hart et al. (2020) and colleagues. (2020) has shown that study of literature plays a unique and valuable role in supporting students' development of virtue and offers opportunities for further character-building education based on literature. This approach highlights the importance of tutors embodying values, including honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. Hart et al. (2020) has shown that virtue plays a unique and valuable role in promoting the development of moral in students and offers opportunities for further character-building education through literature.

The development of moral and educational interventions can make a significant contribution to the moral education of students by providing positive role models. It is important that children understand the concept of virtue so that they can move from one intervention phase to another (Osman, 2019). Virtue-based educational programmes effectively promote moral education and promote the moral virtues of students (Pring, 2019). Etherington (2013) argues that the most justifiable basis for the teaching of values and virtues is a narrative from a transcendent source. Studies have revealed several factors that influence the teaching of moral values and virtues in educational systems. Some factors include the type of educational institution (Fernández Espinosa & López González, 2024), the management style used by the school and teachers (Thornberg, 2013), the relations between the school and the outsider stakeholders and their expectations regarding formal schooling (Li & Tang, 2025).

In addition, the cultural context of the society (Hazrati, 2023) and the introduction of a Virtue Based Curriculum (Zaghani & Fakhar, 2019) also play an important role. Research suggests that several factors contribute to students' moral development. These include their living and learning environments, the quality of interaction in cyberspace, the climate they are in and the impact of psychological, social and educational factors. In addition, the promotion of cognitive skills and moral virtue play an important role in this development (Shim, 2023). The Fundamental Transformation of Education outlines the different components of moral and virtue-based education. These elements are religious democracy, civic responsibility, social

participation, respect for the rule of law, the protection of values, unity, cooperation, brotherhood, communication skills, social relations, authority, commitment, openness to criticism, human dignity, justice, sacrifice, and social health. Studies show that technological advances, such as animation, have the potential to enrich moral intelligence. However, changing student life and culture, new educational imperatives and the growing demographic of NEETs (non-educational, professional or vocational) are major challenges for virtuous learning in schools. This problem has received limited attention in literature. The study highlights the key role of virtue-based education, which teaches students important moral qualities such as integrity, compassion, integrity and altruism. Instead, the prevailing educational framework often emphasizes codified rules, as illustrated by the grading of report cards on the basis of discipline. This legalistic approach to moral education seeks to influence the virtues of students by extrinsic coercion rather than allowing them to develop on their own. It is for this reason that we return to the problem of virtue education in formal education system. This study examines the factors that influence the teaching of moral virtues through a virtuous education framework.

Research Methodology

The research approach adopted is qualitative is based on a statement of purpose, outlined research challenges and objectives. In qualitative research, researchers use inductive methods, focus on the processes of making meaning, and attach great importance to the interpretation of the complexity of the situation (Creswell, 2014). Content analysis studies are classified as meta-analysis, meta-synthesis (thematic content analysis) and descriptive content analysis. Data have been analysed using a technique known as meta-synthesis for content analysis. The sample in this study was selected from research relevant to the research subject on the basis of its relevance. The selection of the sample resulted from research which directly addressed the research question (Noblit & Hare, 1998), Thus ensuring a thorough and thorough investigation. Meta- -s includes in-depth analysis of studies in a specific field (Paterson et al., 2001). It synthesizes and explains findings in order to generate comprehensive insights (Zimmer, 2006). This study has adopted the methodology outlined in Sandelowski and Barroso (2006) for meta-synthesis analysis, with the following procedural steps.

Step 1: Formulation of research question

This study starts by addressing its central question. The following section highlights the development of a conceptual framework to guide future research in line with this issue. The study examines the factors that influence the development of moral values among school pupils through virtue-based learning approaches.

Step 2: Systematic Review of Literature

In order to carry out a systematic and precise literature review, we initially proposed a structured research programme to achieve a comprehensive coverage of the material and scientific legitimacy of the research. We started by identifying key words related to the research theme by searching credible sources and examining how previous research had addressed this issue.

The imitation of the basic concepts of moral and virtue education served as a basic basis for the choice of keywords or word combinations. In this research work, the use of both technical and generic terminology in both Persian and English provided a broad coverage of domestic and international sources. In this research we have searched the following databases Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Magiran, Irandoc, SID, and ISC. In conducting the literature review, we used the following terms with their English and Persian counterparts: 'Virtue education', 'Virtue education in schools', 'Virtue-based moral education', and 'Moral education'. Implementing filters for time period, language and type of document (research or review) reduces resource waste and also removes irrelevant research. This research provides comprehensive results by incorporating a variety of academic databases from both domestic and international sources. We used snowballing and citation chain tracking to improve the identification of key articles, which ultimately led to the selection of the final articles. Table 1 illustrates the criteria for acceptance and rejection of resources in this study.

Table 1. *Acceptance and Rejection criteria of resources*

Rejection criteria	Acceptance criteria
Books, book chapters, library articles	Research and Review Articles
Other languages over English and Persian	English and Persian Articles
Articles before 2010	Articles Published Between 2010 and 2025
Library research method	Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed Method
unrelated to the research topic	Related to Effective Factors in the Development of Moral Virtues

Step 3: Developing a Search Strategy and Selection of Suitable Articles

This study employed the PRISMA (2020) method to filter articles, with the steps outlined in the following figure.

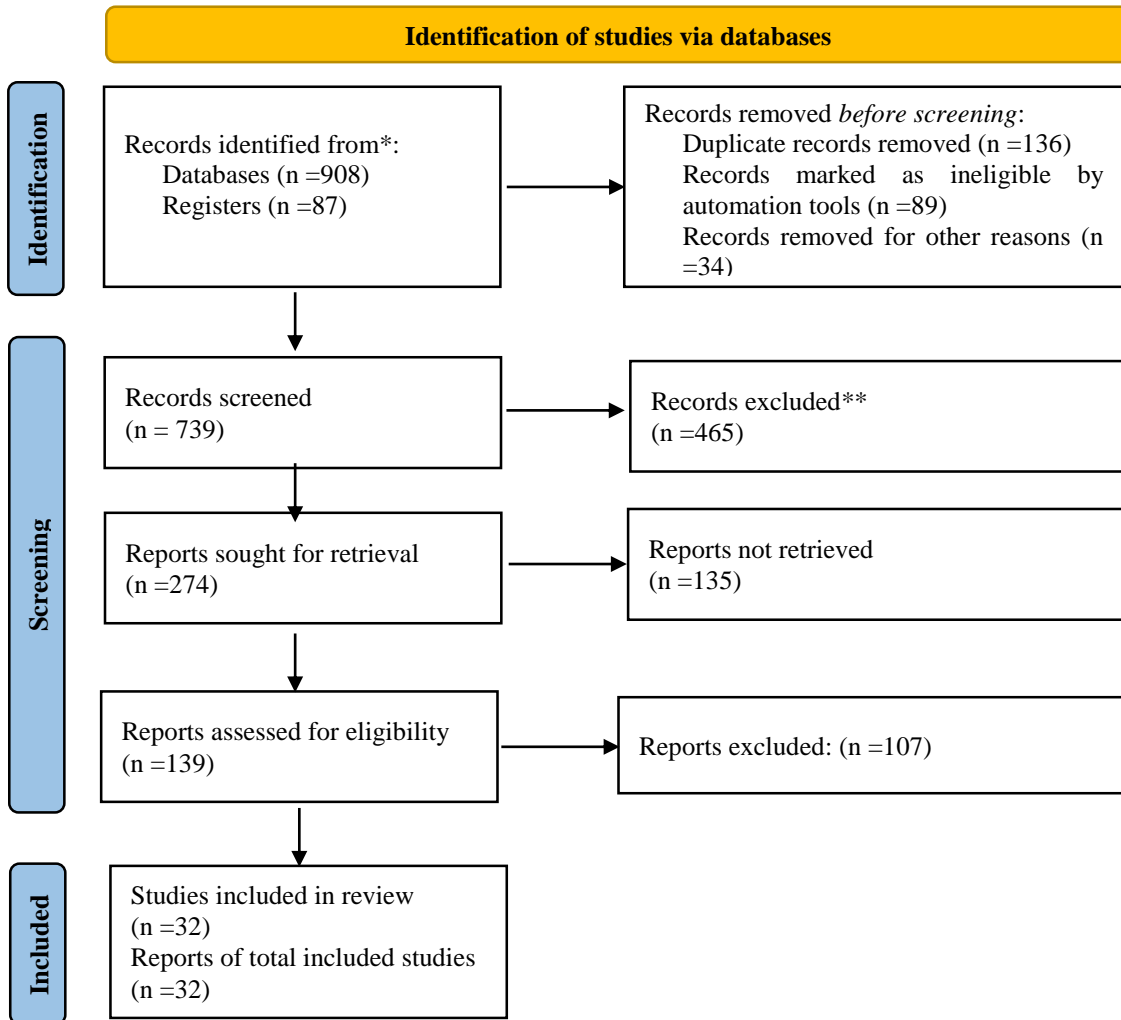


Diagram 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of study selection (database, 2010–2025; initial yield; 274, screened = 139, retracted = 9, Not related to education in schools =98, final = 32)

In the first phase of the Prisma identification process (2020), 995 articles relevant for the study and the search strategy were selected on the basis of criteria. After deletion of duplicates, the final number of articles and documents was 739. After the review of the titles and abstracts of the sources, 465 articles and documents were excluded from the processing of the sources due to non-compliance with the criteria (respect of the title of the study, being a research article and having a strong link with a moral education programme), and 274 sources entered the next stage of the process of accession. During the full text review phase 139 documents were screened for eligibility and 32 documents were advanced to the final stage of systematic analysis.

Step 4. Extraction of information from articles

This section extracted and categorised information from selected articles. Table 2 presents elements of research carried out on factors influencing the development of moral character in students in schools, with a focus on virtue education.

Step 5: Analyzing and synthesize findings

At this stage, thematic analysis (comprehensive, organizing, and basic) was used as a method of meta-analysis to identify patterns and categorise the results. With a focus on Virtue-based learning, factors influencing the moral growth of students in schools were examined by means of an inductive coding method, and themes were analysed with Maxqda software. [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) provide a six-step guide that is a very useful framework for carrying thematic analyses and we followed this guideline for conducting the thematic analysis.

A. Transcription, Familiarization with the Data, and Selection of Quotations

[Braun and Clarke \(2022\)](#) argue that this is a critical phase in understanding data in depth. This phase requires researchers to fully immerse themselves in the content, allowing them to absorb the richness, complexity, and nuance of their participants' experiences or phenomena recorded in their dataset, rather than rushing to code. In this research, we have monitored activities related to the familiarisation of data, transcription and selection of quotations, as described below.

1. Reading and re-reading through each document multiple times
2. Initial noting of preliminary thoughts, observations, and analytic hunches as they occur
3. Paying attention to non-verbal elements such as tone, pauses, or emotional expressions

B. Selection of Keywords

This stage in qualitative research is the most important, according to [Naeem and Ozuem \(2022\)](#). Selecting the appropriate phrase or term to replace a keyword is a crucial step in qualitative research that requires careful consideration. we chose statements and quotations based on significant keywords in these statements. The 6Rs (realness, richness, repetition, rationale, repartee, and regal) can be used to choose keywords, according to our proposal in this paper. **Realness:** The researchers' choice of keywords represented people's actual experiences and perspectives in moral education or virtue-based education.

Richness: The chosen keywords contributed to a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon under study and had a rich meaning.

Repetition: Certain words were chosen as keywords because their recurrence in the data demonstrated their importance and applicability to virtue-based education.

Rationale: The virtue-based education theoretical foundations informed the choice of keywords in this research.

Repertee: Words were chosen to symbolize the moral or virtue-based education.

Regal: Words that were crucial to understanding the phenomenon of virtue-based education were selected as keywords.

Table 2. *shows the keywords extracted from the selected documents.*

Code	Summary of the Influential Factors Placed in the Articles	date	Researchers
D1	Current philosophy in society, school educational system, educational content and school implementation factors	2013	Etherington
D2	Formal and hidden curriculum of schools, teachers' approach in teaching virtue and values, classroom and school management methods, school culture and climate, educational content in schools	2013	Thornberg
D3	Factors of moral development in the family, including parenting styles, emotional responses to abuse, grief, playing with siblings, and talking about moral issues	2018	Boosliki
D4	Approach, objectives, content, teaching-learning methods, role of human resources, evaluation, materials and resources, place and time	2018	Aghili & et al
D5	Virtue-based curriculum, motivated teachers, virtue-based educational and training goals, virtue-based educational content, and appropriate teaching and learning methods and strategies	2019	Zaghani & Fakhar
D6	ethical and educational interventions	2019	Osman
D7	Current philosophy of society, culture of society, social developments and international changes and globalization	2019	Hang
D8	Virtue-based educational program, moral educational content, modeling of moral characters, teacher training, supportive culture	2019	Pring
D9	Creating a list of moral virtues for students, a curriculum based on virtues, clarifying values, and utilizing a constructivist approach to connect students' educational experiences in value development with social norms, family influences, and school management	2020	Chan
D10	Students' personality, school environment and climate, educational content, hidden curriculum	2021	Siddiqui & Habib
D11	The impact of technology on virtue-based education, cyber wisdom, and cyber virtues	2021	Dennis& Harrison,
D12	Social and ethical curriculum, social and ethical knowledge of teachers and staff, practical behavior of teachers and staff, definition of ethics and community-oriented extracurricular activities, community culture, technological environment, global changes, individual personality, family	2021	Sepehri et al
D13	Curriculum, educational system, teachers, community culture	2021	Leung
D14	Teaching and learning strategies, school implementation and administrative factors, and educational content	2021	Pike et al
D15	In the family dimension, parental characteristics and parenting styles are influential in the formation of moral identity, interactions, and the	2022	Poorteimoori & et al

	individual's influence on school. In the school dimension, awareness and adherence to rules, the amount and type of encouragement and punishment, the way of interacting with peers, the teaching style and behavioral characteristics of teachers, the way of communicating and interacting with school staff, the amount and type of extracurricular activities and the school climate, and the content of textbooks		
D16	Living environment and upbringing (with three factors: the role of the family the Role of the educational environment in moral development, and the role of the peer group in moral development), moral arguments (with three factors: cognitive arguments, emotional arguments, and psychomotor arguments), supportive climate (with three factors: family and educators' access to scientific knowledge, use of incentives, and attention to spiritual issues), psychological, social, and educational harms (with four factors: harms resulting from personality and psychological characteristics, harms resulting from improper use of the media, harms resulting from family problems, and harms resulting from educational functions), creating recognition (with three factors: responsibility, empowerment, and role modeling), and moral virtues (with four factors: altruism, human dignity, law-abidingness, and decision-making ability).	2022	Amini & Hanifi
D17	The mental and physical conditions of students, the living conditions of students, good instructors, and appropriate content and a supportive curriculum	2022	Tho
D18	Curriculum, teachers and school staff, external environment, educational policies	2022	Nasibullov
D19	Developing a child's understanding of society and country, etc., self-awareness, curriculum, educational policies, environment and physical space	2022	Huda
D20	Focusing on multiple aspects in moral education, paying attention to the internal components of moral education and avoiding legalism in virtue-based education, the fluidity of moral education and its situation-based nature, paying attention to love, empathy, and truth-seeking in the virtue-based education program.	2023	Davoudi & et al
D21	Globalization and virtual social networks	2023	Shim
D22	upstream documents, school administration system, virtue-based curriculum, dominant culture of the society	2023	Movahhedi Rad & et al
D23	Teacher, content, school climate and classroom layout, peer group and school regulations	2023	Alborzi & et al
D24	Type of school, prevailing culture of the community, school administrative and executive staff, family and friends	2023	Huo
D25	Family environment, educational environment, friendly environment, cognitive learning, emotional learning, psychomotor learning, scientific abilities, encouragement and encouragement, attention to spiritual values, behavioral disorders, negative effects of the media, unsafe climate, failure to fulfill educational functions, making them responsible, empowering, raising awareness, conformity, seeking dignity, legalism and rationalism.	2023	Vatani & et al

D26	School cultural environment, society's governing philosophy, formal and hidden curriculum, family	2024	Sayfullayevna
D27	Type of school, teachers' thinking tendencies, connection with the external environment and influence of the dominant culture of society, and prevailing policies in society.	2024	Fernández Espinosa, & López González
D28	Teacher personality, effective school leadership, connection with the school's external environment, longitudinal relationship between virtue-based educational content	2024	Sanjani
D29	The role of the teacher and the student's personality traits, understanding the components of virtue-based moral education	2024	Sanderse
D30	Educational and public policies, character education, school curriculum	2024	Handayani
D31	Teaching literary works, examining social issues, practicing language skills, intercultural communication, and class sessions on moral education in order to cultivate human qualities and social responsibility in students.	2025	Li & Tang
D32	School environment, mental health, family environment, curriculum and content, friendly climate	2025	Tiann & Tang

C. searching for themes

In this phase, researchers start organizing codes into more general patterns or themes. A theme represents significant data patterns associated with the research question. For example, we had several codes that related to perceptions of moral education and what students wanted from virtue-based education. We collated these into an initial theme called Virtue-based educational goals. We end this phase with a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes that have been coded in Basic themes. Table 3 shows the Basic themes. All of these initial themes were further refuted at the next stage of the analysis. The refinement process in the analysis phase is explained in the next section.

Table 3. *Extracted Initial Themes*

Initial Themes
<p>Virtue-based educational goals</p> <p>Ethical skills</p> <p>promoting students' motivation and desire for moral virtues</p> <p>Paying attention to multiple areas in moral education</p> <p>Virtue-oriented formal curriculum content</p> <p>Formal curriculum content</p> <p>Informal educational and training content</p> <p>Social and moral knowledge</p> <p>Longitudinal relationship between virtue-oriented educational content</p> <p>Teaching religious and literary works in the form of open teaching in the classroom</p> <p>Formal Curriculum of Schools</p> <p>Hidden Curriculum of Schools</p> <p>Facilitative Teaching and Learning Methods</p> <p>Virtue-Based Curriculum</p>

Initial Themes

Identifying and Preparing a List of Moral Virtues for Students Clarifying Values and Constructivist Approach

Social and Moral Curriculum

Ethical Extracurricular Activities

Teachers' approach to teaching virtue and values

Classroom management methods

Motivated teachers

Teacher personality

Interpersonal relationships between teacher and student

Teaching style and behavioral characteristics of teachers

Teacher's personality, cognitive and educational characteristics

Teacher's role model in everyday behavior

Teacher's ability to discuss and analyze moral issues

Honesty, fairness, courage and kindness in interactions

Modeling moral characters in the classroom

Practical behavior of teachers and staff in school

teachers' thinking tendencies

Moral virtues of school vice-principals

Moral characteristics of school principals

communicate and interact with school staff

School Educational organisation and governance

Creating moral and educational interventions

Moral management in schools

encourage and punish system

Awareness and adherence to rules

Effective school leadership

School principal's management style

School regulations

Relationship with the external environment

interact with peers

Communication with classmates

development of moral virtues among students

School culture

School organizational climate

School physical environment

School type (government, non-government, etc.)

Factors of moral development in the family

parenting styles, emotional reactions

Existence of sadness in children's lives

Playing with siblings and talking about moral issues

Parental characteristics

Family Financial capability

Parental behavioral model in practicing virtue

Quality of emotional relationship between parents and children

Dominant values in the family (e.g. honesty, sacrifice, respect)

family deals with the child's mistakes and errors

Virtue-based educational policies

Initial Themes

The fluidity of moral education and its situational orientation
 The use of supporting upstream documents
 Culture of the community
 Supportive culture in the school
 Culture promoting moral virtues outside the school environment
 The degree of coherence or conflict between family, school, and community values
 Social changes in society
 Changing values and norms in society
 Virtue-based macro-educational policies
 Virtue-based macro-cultural and social policies
 Virtue-based macro-educational policies
 Avoiding legalism in virtue-based education
 Prevailing Philosophy societyPhilosophy in society
 Philosophy of education and training
 Philosophy of education and training institutions in society
 Cultural models and social moral heroes
 Attention to the professional ethics of applicants seeking admission to the educational system
 Attention to the personal ethics of applicants seeking admission to the educational system
 Virtue-based socialization within organizations
 The Impact of Technology on Virtue-Based Education
 Cyber Wisdom
 Cyber Virtues
 Cultural Exchanges
 The Impact of Media and Cyberspace
 Globalization
 Spreading Foreign Cultures
 Cultural Interactions
 Generation Gap Between Students, Parents, and Educators
 Different Expectations of the Alpha Generation
 Student personality
 Family problems and harms resulting from educational functions
 Creating awareness of responsibility, empowerment, and role modeling
 Students' mental and physical conditions
 Development of the child's understanding of society and country
 Freedom and authority in choosing moral action
 Level of moral development
 Emotional intelligence and empathy
 internal conflicts and external pressures
 Moral self-confidence
 spiritual motivators
 Encouraging habits from others
 The relationship between students' educational experiences in the development of values and social norms
 Academic abilities
 Positive or negative childhood experiences
 Moral intelligence
 Social responsibility of students

D. Theme Development

The preliminary themes that we identified in Step 3 are reviewed, modified, and developed during this phase. At the end of this phase, we have a fairly good idea of what our different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data. At this stage, all themes (global themes, organizing themes, basic themes) have been deliberately grouped together at this stage, as the aim is to refocus and present these themes in a more systematic way. [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) propose that the themes should be checked for internal consistency (consistency and coherence) and external heterogeneity (differences between themes). Table 4 shows the global themes, organizing themes and basic themes developed and elaborated during this phase.

Table 4. *Global Themes, Organizing Themes and Basic Themes influencing Virtue-based learning*

Global themes	Organizing Themes	Basic themes
Intra-school factors	Educational goals	Virtue-based educational goals Ethical skills promoting students' motivation and desire for moral virtues Paying attention to multiple areas in moral education
	Course content	Virtue-oriented formal curriculum content Formal curriculum content Informal educational and training content Social and moral knowledge Longitudinal relationship between virtue-oriented educational content Teaching religious and literary works in the form of open teaching in the classroom
	Formal and hidden curriculum	Formal Curriculum of Schools Hidden Curriculum of Schools Facilitative Teaching and Learning Methods Virtue-Based Curriculum Identifying and Preparing a List of Moral Virtues for Students Clarifying Values and Constructivist Approach Social and Moral Curriculum Ethical Extracurricular Activities
	Teachers and coaches	Teachers' approach to teaching virtue and values Classroom management methods Motivated teachers Teacher personality Interpersonal relationships between teacher and student Teaching style and behavioral characteristics of teachers

Global themes	Organizing Themes	Basic themes
		<p>Teacher's personality, cognitive and educational characteristics</p> <p>Teacher's role model in everyday behavior</p> <p>Teacher's ability to discuss and analyze moral issues</p> <p>Honesty, fairness, courage and kindness in interactions</p> <p>Modeling moral characters in the classroom</p> <p>Practical behavior of teachers and staff in school</p> <p>teachers' thinking tendencies</p>
	School Executive staff	<p>Moral virtues of school vice-principals</p> <p>Moral characteristics of school principals</p> <p>communicate and interact with school staff</p>
	School management style	<p>School Educational organisation and governance</p> <p>Creating moral and educational interventions</p> <p>Moral management in schools</p> <p>encourage and punish system</p> <p>Awareness and adherence to rules</p> <p>Effective school leadership</p> <p>School principal's management style</p> <p>School regulations</p> <p>Relationship with the external environment</p>
	Classmates and other students	<p>interact with peers</p> <p>Communication with classmates</p> <p>development of moral virtues among students</p>
	School climate and culture	<p>School culture</p> <p>School organizational climate</p> <p>School physical environment</p> <p>School type (government, non-government, etc.)</p>
micro-environment factors	Family	<p>Factors of moral development in the family</p> <p>parenting styles, emotional reactions</p> <p>Existence of sadness in children's lives</p> <p>Playing with siblings and talking about moral issues</p> <p>Parental characteristics</p> <p>Family Financial capability</p> <p>Parental behavioral model in practicing virtue</p> <p>Quality of emotional relationship between parents and children</p> <p>Dominant values in the family (e.g. honesty, sacrifice, respect)</p> <p>family deals with the child's mistakes and errors</p>

Global themes	Organizing Themes	Basic themes
	Educational policies announced by the Department of Education	Virtue-based educational policies The fluidity of moral education and its situational orientation The use of supporting upstream documents
	The cultural environment of the school location	Culture of the community Supportive culture in the school Culture promoting moral virtues outside the school environment The degree of coherence or conflict between family, school, and community values
	out-of-school social environment	Social changes in society Changing values and norms in society
macro-environment factors	macro-educational policies	Virtue-based macro-educational policies Virtue-based macro-cultural and social policies Avoiding legalism in virtue-based education
	dominant religious philosophy and beliefs	Prevailing Philosophy society Philosophy in society Philosophy of education and training Philosophy of education and training institutions in society Cultural models and social moral heroes
	Structure for recruiting teachers and educational trainers	Attention to the professional ethics of applicants seeking admission to the educational system Attention to the personal ethics of applicants seeking admission to the educational system Virtue-based socialization within organizations
	Global changes and developments	The Impact of Technology on Virtue-Based Education Cyber Wisdom Cyber Virtues Cultural Exchanges The Impact of Media and Cyberspace Globalization
	Cultural differences and cultural gap	Spreading Foreign Cultures Cultural Interactions Generation Gap Between Students, Parents, and Educators Different Expectations of the Alpha Generation
student Intrinsic and personal factors	Psychological dimensions	Student personality Family problems and harms resulting from educational functions Creating awareness of responsibility, empowerment, and role modeling Students' mental and physical conditions

Global themes	Organizing Themes	Basic themes
		Development of the child's understanding of society and country Freedom and authority in choosing moral action Level of moral development Emotional intelligence and empathy internal conflicts and external pressures Moral self-confidence
	Motivational factors	spiritual motivators Encouraging habits from others
	Experiences and abilities	The relationship between students' educational experiences in the development of values and social norms Academic abilities Positive or negative childhood experiences Moral intelligence Social responsibility of students

E. Defining and naming themes

To ensure that the themes identified in the previous phase adequately represent the data set and successfully answer the research question, this thematic analysis phase, which includes the definition and naming of themes, concentrates on their refinement and finalisation. We followed [Naeem and Ozuem \(2022\)](#) criteria to evaluate a defining and naming themes quality by considered the following indicators.

- Defining and naming themes make the meaning of the phrases or words picked as major concepts obvious.
- Defining and naming themes as new concepts help understanding of the research results.
- Defining and naming themes of the concepts accurate and reliable.
- Defining and naming themes reflect the real scenario or context of the research.
- All the concepts related to each other, which would support development of a conceptual model.

On the basis of the above criteria, we examined a number of themes and the overall extracted topics served as a basis for the design of the conceptual model for the next phase.

F. Development of Conceptual Model

The study's findings show that in schools that prioritise Virtue-based learning, there are 4 Global themes, 20 Organizing Themes and 103 Basic themes that identify the elements that influence the development of students' virtue- based education. The conceptual model below has been designed based on the findings of this research.

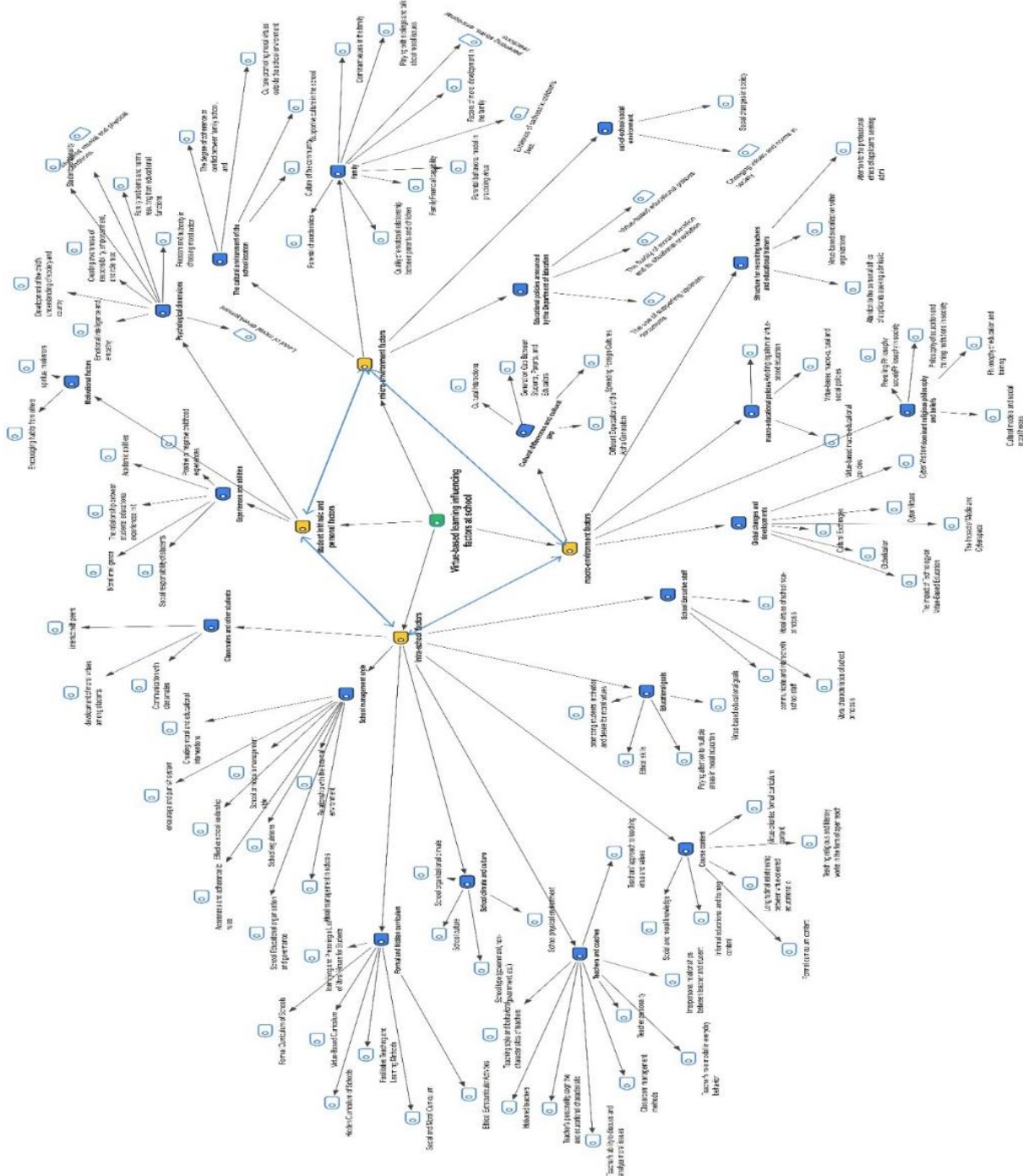


Diagram 2. *Virtue-based education influencing factors at school*

According to the research results, Virtue-based learning is influenced by four main factors, including Intra-school factors, Micro-Environment Factors, Macro-Environment Factors and Student's Intrinsic and personal factors. These four main factors can interact with each other

and can prepare the ground for the inclusion of virtuous learning in formal and informal curricula

Step 6: Assess Quality of Included Studies

In this study, the quality of the papers examined was assessed using the Batten, Oakes and Alexander (2014) checklist. The 43 questions give a total of a percentage point, which ranks the various aspects of the documents in three categories: 'Yes' (2 points), 'No' (1 point) and 'Not reported' (0 points). The evaluation results showed that the quality of the documents ranged between 71 and 83 percent. In order to ensure the quality of the results, every step in the research process has been carefully scrutinised and the standards of validity, accuracy and transparency have been respected at all stages. The results were reviewed by two reviewers who are well versed in the techniques of qualitative data analysis and the research subject.

In this research, we used the inter-coder agreement strategy for coding reliability. The reliability coefficient, which was calculated according to Miles and Huberman (1994) formula "reliability = {number of agreements/ (total number of agreements + disagreements)}", was (%85). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that an over 80 percent consensus would be acceptable. The validity of the categories in this study was determined by examining and contrasting the results with those of other studies.

Discussion

In the study, which was carried out with a qualitative approach, Virtue-based learning is influenced by four main factors, including intra-school factors, micro-environment factors, macro-environment factors and student's intrinsic and personal factors. Under each theme were relevant codes. The first of the themes revealed at the end of the study was Intra-school factors.

A holistic, virtuous education fosters the moral qualities of students by promoting a range of behavioural, emotional, and intellectual qualities. In addition to teaching moral skills, Virtue-based education seeks to help students internalize virtues such as fairness, courage, and integrity. These findings are consistent with the results of previous studies ([Zaghani & Fakhar \(2019\)](#), [Etherington \(2013\)](#)). This internalisation is fostered by the establishment of appropriate learning environments and good teacher models. The ability to self-regulate and make ethical choices are examples of moral competences that are improved by learning methods involving group discussion and in-the-world situations. Similarly, [Fernández Espinosa, & López González, \(2024\)](#), also stated that the internalisation is fostered by the establishment of appropriate learning environments and good teacher models.

The ability to self-regulate and make ethical choices are examples of moral competences that are improved by learning methods involving group discussion and in-the-world situations. Creating a learning environment that encourages moral reflection and active participation can also increase the motivation and desire of students to practice moral values, helping them to gradually embrace moral principles as part of their identity. This is even though the focus of

the current school education system on creating an active learning environment for teaching values based on virtue and ethics is far from the situation described above. Attention to the multiple dimensions of moral education, including the parallel development of intellect, emotion and behaviour, leads to inner harmony and balanced moral development. This type of view of Virtue-based Education is one of the notable results of this study, which was not previously addressed in previous research.

Institutionalization of virtues is greatly facilitated by hidden curricula that include positive personal relations between teachers and students, the modeling of values in daily interactions, and the practical behaviour of staff and teachers (Tiann & Tang, 2025). Through constructivist classroom management and ethics-oriented extracurricular activities, motivated teachers with exceptional personalities and epistemic qualities help students develop social and moral awareness. If supported by institutional support and well-thought-out planning, this strategy will lead to the long-term relationship between teaching materials and teacher models, especially in daily behaviour and intellectual attitudes, leading to students with lasting moral qualities. This is in line with (Li & Tang (2025), who explains that teaching literary works, exploring social issues, practicing language skills, cross-cultural communication and moral education theme class meetings can increase the moral skills of students.

The second of the themes revealed at study was micro-environment factors. The micro-environmental features can be divided into several categories, including family, educational policy announced by the Department of Education, school's local culture and the social environment outside the school. Family factors are essential for developing students' moral values in a Virtue Based Education approach that emphasises the development of lasting moral habits such as integrity, selflessness and respect. While selfish or disengaged parenting styles may lead to selfishness, supportive and empathetic parenting styles with warm and responsive emotional responses help children to develop empathy and moral judgement. This is in line with the research of Wang (2023) which states that the family environment is the basis for influencing children's future moral development. Children are inspired to emulate moral behaviour by parental characteristics such as cognitive empathy and a sense of fairness that support virtuous behavior. the ability of families to pay for necessities increases the likelihood of creating a safe environment for building virtue by relieving financial stress; otherwise, problems like lack of parental time may arise. According to Sanjani (2023), the development of moral virtue will be strongly influenced by the emotional attachment between parents and children. virtue-based learning strategies offer a framework to promote moral growth alongside cognitive learning, but their effectiveness depends on cultural harmony at home, in the community, and in schools. A supportive school culture provides a suitable basis for the institutionalisation of moral values through an atmosphere based on respect and empathy, but conflicting values between home, school and society may hinder this process. Similar to findings of previous studies (Davoudi et al., 2023; Amini & Hanifi, 2022). The dynamic nature

of moral education and its contextual emphasis require adaptability of teaching approaches to adapt to societal progress and changes in norms. Virtue-based learning requires dynamic coordination between these elements, as well as an emphasis on developing virtues such as fairness, responsibility and integrity in students' real-life situations.

The third theme identified in the study was macro-environmental factors. The macro-educational environment is also especially significant in the study of virtue-based learning, although prior research has focused more on the Intra-school factors and micro-environment factors in the educating of moral values. Virtue-based learning promotes the development of moral virtues in students not only through direct instruction but also through the integration of macro-education policies that emphasise the development of positive habits, such as integrity and honesty. Research shows that these policies increase pro-social behaviour by targeting available moral models, creating a flexible environment for moral decisions. [Handayani \(2024\)](#) stated that macro educational policy could change the moral education curriculum in schools. The development of virtue in a multicultural context is facilitated by the integration of individual and public values; the macro-level policies and pedagogy of the schools and educational institutions promote the cultivation of moral character. The recruitment of teacher with appropriate ethical credentials, together with macro-prudential policies, will be based on a focus on the professional and personal ethics of those working in education. Through virtue-based organisational socialization, the strategy will also nurture dedicated human resources and promote the long-term development of virtues such as empathy and responsibility in students.

Student's Intrinsic and personal factor was the fourth global theme identified in the study. Virtue-based learning approaches interact with the students' innate qualities and character traits, which are the basis of their personality supporting the research of [Sepehri et al. \(2021\)](#), [Amini & Hanifi \(2022\)](#). This interaction can help or hinder the adoption and internalisation of values such as empathy, fairness and integrity. For example, a student with high intrinsic motivation and high emotional self-awareness is likely to acquire moral qualities more quickly because of his or her ability to reflect and improve. Conversely, if the school environment does not compensate for these shortcomings through targeted programs and moral guidance, the development of these virtues may be hindered by a lack of positive experiences or a lack of social skills. The interaction between the natural characteristics of students and a values-based educational environment is important for their moral development. It also helps pupils develop their moral qualities through various psychological aspects, such as personality traits influenced by lasting patterns such as empathy and accountability. Emphasising social peace and a sense of belonging, the method also helps pupils to understand their society and their country, while improving their mental and physical health. Through accessible examples and real-life moral narratives, it enhances knowledge about responsibility, empowerment and role-models. By fostering independent judgement and improving moral decision-making, students are empowered to make their own ethical choices, thus moving their moral development from a

basic to a higher level. Virtue-based education emphasizes the cultivation of lasting moral habits and character development through practice of virtues such as fairness, courage and empathy. Improving students' moral virtue is shaped by critical indicators; research shows that spiritual motivators, including faith and intrinsic motivation, provide a solid basis for moral behaviour (Vatani et al, 2023). Both positive and negative experiences in childhood have an impact; while unpleasant experiences such as abuse may inhibit moral development, positive experiences such as love and support may improve the capacity for virtues such as empathy and self-restraint. Moral intelligence, the ability to distinguish between good and evil, and moral feelings, are key components of this development. A supportive learning environment, such as one based on equity and compassion, fosters moral intelligence, which in turn produces socially conscious students who uphold moral norms in their communities and lead a lifelong moral life. The results of this study are comprehensive in their approach to virtue-based education, covering all four factors of the intra-school, micro-environment, macro-environment and student's intrinsic and personal, as very few other studies have addressed this issue. One of the highlights of the study was, on the other hand, the attention paid to the interaction between the four factors in the model of factors influencing virtue learning in schools. Each of these factors is in effective synergy with the others, and synergies between these elements will improve and develop virtuous learning in schools.

Conclusion

In the context of the Virtue-Based Education philosophy, these factors show that internal learning structures and external support must be integrated to create a sustainable and morally sound education. Education policy, prevailing religious beliefs, teacher and coach recruitment processes, international events and cultural tensions provide a broader framework for developing student virtues. By bridging cultural gaps, this framework can pave the way for a virtuous education. However, the innate characteristics of students, including the psychological, motivation and aptitude dimensions, may help to internalize and assimilate these characteristics. Finally, macro-education policies should be designed to make moral instruction the focus of a virtuous education system, not just a secondary objective. Considering the results of the study which investigated virtue-based education influencing factors at school it is recommended to re-structured the objectives, content, teaching and learning strategies and assessments of a virtue-based education. In the meantime, the school environment may reflect the school's management style and the actions of the administrative, managerial and teaching staff. In the field of virtue-based learning, it is therefore recommended that in-service training focus on the empowerment of school leaders and administrators. As regards micro-environmental factors, the family is central to the moral education of students. Consequently, it is recommended that parents receive the necessary knowledge in the field of moral education and that family and school develop effective lines of communication. Global events and national macro policies

affect the moral education of pupils. It is therefore recommended to develop and implement gamification systems in virtual learning environments for virtuous learning. The accuracy and universality of the findings may be affected by the limitations of the present enquiry. The study examined research papers; government reports and textbook chapters were excluded from the analysis process, so the findings are likely to be limited. Finally, the time coverage of the research was limited as the peer reviewed publications were selected within a specific timeframe.

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