



Cultural approach to ethical development: A family and school environment education perspective

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ABSTRACT

Ethical development is deeply rooted in cultural values, family structures, and educational experiences. Understanding how culture, family, and education intersect is essential to fostering a holistic ethical framework that aligns with societal needs. This study compares African and Western contexts to investigate how culturally specific family engagement and educational strategies influence ethical development in children. A systematic review methodology was used in this study to analyze 45 peer-reviewed articles (25 from African contexts and 20 from Western contexts) published between 2021 and 2025. The analysis identified common themes such as communal engagement, respect for elders, promotion of autonomy, and individual responsibility. Findings suggest that African cultures prioritize communal values and respect for elders, fostering empathy and collective responsibility. In contrast, Western cultures emphasize autonomy and self-expression, promoting critical thinking and personal moral judgment. Integrating traditional and universal values supports children's moral growth, offering a holistic framework for navigating ethical challenges in a diverse world. Educators and policymakers must create ethical education that combines communal and individualistic values to respect cultural diversity and promote universal virtues.

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ABSTRAK

Pengembangan etika berakar kuat pada nilai-nilai budaya, struktur keluarga, dan pengalaman pendidikan. Memahami budaya, keluarga, dan pendidikan saling bersinggungan sangat penting untuk membina kerangka etika yang menyeluruh yang sejalan dengan kebutuhan masyarakat. Studi ini menyelidiki keterlibatan keluarga dan strategi pendidikan yang spesifik secara budaya memengaruhi perkembangan etika pada anak-anak, dengan membandingkan konteks Afrika dan Barat. Metodologi tinjauan sistematis digunakan pada penelitian ini untuk menganalisis 45 artikel yang ditinjau sejawat (25 dari konteks Afrika dan 20 dari konteks Barat) yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2021 dan 2025. Analisis ini mengidentifikasi tema-tema umum seperti keterlibatan komunal, rasa hormat kepada orang yang lebih tua, promosi otonomi, dan tanggung jawab individu. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa budaya Afrika memprioritaskan nilai-nilai komunal dan rasa hormat kepada orang yang lebih tua, menumbuhkan empati dan tanggung jawab kolektif, sementara budaya Barat menekankan otonomi dan ekspresi diri, mempromosikan pemikiran kritis dan penilaian moral pribadi. Mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai tradisional dan universal mendukung pertumbuhan moral anak-anak, menawarkan kerangka kerja yang menyeluruh untuk menavigasi tantangan etika di dunia yang beragam. Para pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan mesti menciptakan pendidikan yang beretika yang memadukan nilai-nilai komunal dan individualistik untuk menghormati keberagaman budaya dan memajukan kebajikan universal.

Kata Kunci: Pendekatan Budaya; Pendidikan Perspektif Afrika dan Barat; Pengembangan Etika; Keterlibatan Keluarga

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping children's ethical development, with both family and school environments serving as foundational platforms for instilling moral values. Parenting patterns significantly influence a child's moral compass in the family setting. Parents act as primary role models, and their behaviours, attitudes, and disciplinary approaches directly impact children's understanding of right and wrong. For instance, authoritative parenting, characterized by a balance of warmth and discipline, has been associated with fostering respect and moral responsibility in children. Family cultural practices, such as storytelling and communal participation, reinforce ethical teachings. Teachers' attitudes and behaviours influence students' moral development in the school environment. Educators serve not only as conveyors of academic knowledge but also as ethical exemplars. Their interactions with students, responses to ethical dilemmas, and the values they emphasise in the classroom shape students' moral reasoning. Implementing structured character education programs and fostering a classroom culture that promotes fairness, empathy, and respect can significantly enhance students' ethical growth.

Ethical values are essential to human socialization, influencing individuals' moral reasoning, decision-making, and societal interactions. Family and school environments serve as critical institutions in shaping ethical values, with cultural influences playing a significant role in determining the moral frameworks instilled in children. Across various societies, ethical values are embedded in cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and societal norms, providing unique approaches to moral education (Narvaez & Nucci, 2008). In many traditional societies, the family is the primary source of moral education, transmitting ethical principles through storytelling, proverbs, communal participation, and religious teachings. Parents and extended family members are moral exemplars, emphasizing honesty, respect, and responsibility (Deslandes, 2025). At the same time, formal education systems reinforce ethical development through structured curricula, character education programs, and disciplinary measures aligned with cultural values.

Ethical development in children is a multifaceted process shaped by social, cultural, and educational influences. Family engagement and educational strategies are pivotal in instilling moral values and guiding children toward ethical reasoning and behaviour. Cultural norms significantly influence these processes, leading to distinct approaches across societies. This paper examines the cultural foundations of family engagement and educational strategies in fostering ethical development, focusing on African and Western contexts. It also explores integrating traditional values with universal ethical principles amidst contemporary challenges. Family engagement is an essential factor in fostering ethical values in children. However, the strategies used to engage children can vary significantly across cultures, with each culture offering unique methods and values that shape the moral development of children. In this context, understanding how culturally specific family engagement strategies can enhance ethical values in children is critical, particularly in a diverse global setting (Morelli et al., 2018).

Recent research underscores that children primarily learn respect and moral values through socialization within the family unit. Studies have demonstrated that parenting styles significantly shape children's moral reasoning and behavioural outcomes. Authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and discipline, fosters respect and moral responsibility (Suo et al., 2025). Social Learning Theory suggests that children internalise values such as respect through observational learning, where they imitate behaviours their parents and elders exhibited. Over two decades of randomized trials have confirmed its success in reinforcing respectful and prosocial behaviours in children across diverse populations (Guo et al., 2025). Further supports this perspective, noting that African indigenous parenting fosters social responsibility and respect through storytelling and structured interactions based on “*Cultures of Human Development and Education: Challenge to growing up African*” by Nsamenang.

In Western contexts, autonomy-supportive parenting is gaining prominence. Daily reinforcement of respectful behaviour, such as greeting elders, using polite language, and following social norms, has been empirically validated. Consistent parental reinforcement of respectful behaviour fosters prosocial development and enhances children's moral self-regulation (Park et al., 2025). Children who observed and practiced respectful interactions within family settings were likelier to exhibit prosocial behaviours, such as cooperation and empathy, in broader social environments. Despite the well-established role of parents and elders in instilling respect, contemporary challenges such as digitalisation, peer influence, and changing family structures have altered traditional value transmission mechanisms (Orbán et al., 2025). Excessive screen time has diminished opportunities for children to observe and practice respectful behaviour in real-life settings. Another growing concern is child-to-parent abuse, which has been highlighted in recent research (Twenge et al., 2019).

Empirical researches support the notion that parents and elders play a crucial role in reinforcing respect through modeling and everyday practice. However, evolving societal dynamics necessitate adaptive approaches, such as digital parenting, school-based interventions, and structured counseling, to ensure that traditional values of respect remain relevant in contemporary child-rearing. Despite extensive research on the role of family engagement in children's ethical development across cultures, significant gaps remain in understanding the nuanced interplay between cultural values, parental strategies, and ethical reasoning in diverse contexts. While previous studies have examined how cultural norms shape family engagement strategies, limited comparative research specifically analyzes how these strategies impact ethical reasoning among children in African and Western contexts (Abdulkareem et al., 2024; Weber et al., 2021).

Additionally, most existing literature primarily focuses on collectivist or individualist cultural frameworks without adequately addressing the integration of traditional values with universal ethical principles in contemporary society. Given the increasing globalization and cultural exchange, exploring how traditional African family engagement strategies can be adapted or harmonized with broader ethical frameworks to ensure holistic moral development in children is crucial. Furthermore, while communal engagement and respect for elders have been identified as key mechanisms for ethical development in African families, there is a lack of empirical studies examining their effectiveness in fostering specific ethical behaviours such as autonomy, fairness, and critical moral reasoning (Chilisa et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by comparing family engagement strategies in African and Western contexts, exploring how cultural foundations shape children's ethical development, and examining ways to integrate traditional and contemporary ethical principles in parenting and education. Here is a well-structured research gap based on your study:

Despite extensive research on the role of family engagement in children's ethical development across cultures, significant gaps remain in understanding the nuanced interplay between cultural values, parental strategies, and ethical reasoning in diverse contexts. While previous studies have examined how cultural norms shape family engagement strategies, limited comparative research specifically analyzes how these strategies impact ethical reasoning among children in African and Western contexts (Weber et al., 2021). Additionally, most existing literature primarily focuses on collectivist or individualist cultural frameworks without adequately addressing the integration of traditional values with universal ethical principles in contemporary society. Given the increasing globalization and cultural exchange, exploring how traditional African family engagement strategies can be adapted or harmonized with broader ethical frameworks to ensure holistic moral development in children is crucial. In summary, the synergistic influence of family and school education is crucial in cultivating children's ethical values.

By providing consistent moral guidance and modeling ethical behaviour, parents and teachers can collaboratively nurture well-rounded individuals with a strong moral foundation. Communal engagement and respect for elders are key mechanisms for ethical development in African families. There is a lack of empirical studies examining their effectiveness in fostering specific ethical behaviours such as autonomy,

fairness, and critical moral reasoning (Chilisa et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by comparing family engagement strategies in African and Western contexts, exploring how cultural foundations shape children's ethical development, and examining ways to integrate traditional and contemporary ethical principles in parenting and education.

Nevertheless, globalisation and technological advancements have introduced new ethical challenges, often conflicting with indigenous moral teachings. The growing influence of digital media, peer networks, and diverse ideological perspectives has reshaped moral development, necessitating a holistic approach that integrates cultural values with contemporary societal changes. Therefore, an educational perspective on ethics development must examine how families and schools can collaboratively nurture moral consciousness while adapting to evolving global realities. This study explores a cultural approach to ethics development within family and school settings, analyzing how cultural traditions shape moral education and identifying strategies to sustain ethical development in an increasingly interconnected world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Individualistic cultures, such as those found in many Western societies, family engagement strategies often emphasise autonomy and self-expression. Parenting styles in these contexts, such as authoritative parenting, tend to encourage children to question and reason through moral dilemmas, promoting the development of independent moral judgments. Research suggests that children in these cultures are more likely to develop a sense of fairness and justice based on individual rights and equality. Culturally specific family engagement strategies in Western families focus on encouraging children to assert their moral beliefs and understand ethical principles such as honesty and fairness, often through open discussion and debate (Li & Koenig, 2025).

Culturally Responsive Educational Strategies and Ethical Development

Culturally responsive educational strategies are designed to acknowledge, respect, and incorporate students' diverse cultural backgrounds into teaching and learning processes. These strategies aim to create inclusive learning environments that foster engagement and promote moral development. Regarding ethical growth, culturally responsive education helps children appreciate their cultural heritage while embracing universal ethical principles. This discussion examines the significance of culturally responsive education, its role in shaping ethical values, and its relevance in modern educational systems. Culturally responsive education emphasizes recognizing and utilizing students' cultural diversity as a strength in the learning process. This approach involves creating curricula and teaching methods that reflect students' cultural experiences and perspectives. By integrating cultural content and fostering inclusive learning environments, culturally responsive education encourages students to connect with their heritage and its ethical values (Kelley et al., 2025).

The Role of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy aligns students' cultural experiences with academic instruction to promote meaningful learning. It involves creating classroom environments where students feel appreciated and empowered to contribute their perspectives. Teachers who adopt this approach incorporate culturally relevant materials, texts, and examples, ensuring that the curriculum reflects students' cultural contexts. Engaging with ethical dilemmas and narratives rooted in various cultures encourages students to critically evaluate their values while gaining insights into global ethical issues. This pedagogical strategy enhances

students' moral reasoning and fosters an appreciation for cultural diversity, helping them develop a well-rounded ethical framework (Razza & Brann, 2025).

METHODS

This study adopts a documentation research design that compiles and synthesizes scholarly findings related to the cultural approach to ethical development from family and school environment perspectives. The purpose is to document and analyze empirical evidence from various scholarly sources that explore how culturally specific strategies in family and educational settings contribute to children's ethical growth. Opinions and results from relevant studies were reviewed, extracted, and synthesized, with findings presented in a structured tabular format to facilitate comparison and highlight thematic patterns.

Problem Formulation Determination

The research problem was formulated using the PICOC strategy, which is commonly employed in systematic reviews to ensure clarity and focus in the review process. According to this framework, the Population of interest comprises children undergoing ethical development within diverse cultural contexts. The Intervention refers to culturally tailored strategies that families and schools employ to instill ethical values. The Comparison explores differences and similarities in ethical development approaches between collectivist cultures, such as those in many African societies, and individualist cultures, typically in Western societies. The expected Outcome is the enhanced moral reasoning and ethical behavior of children. Finally, the Context encompasses family and school environments between 2000 and 2025. This structured approach provided a clear foundation for selecting and analyzing relevant literature.

Information Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted to gather studies relevant to the topic. To ensure broad psychological, educational, and sociological research coverage, the search strategy involved querying multiple academic databases, including PsycINFO, ERIC, MEDLINE, and Web of Science. Keywords used in the search included combinations such as "ethical development," "moral education," "parenting styles," "teacher influence," "family engagement," "school environment," "cultural values," "collectivist cultures," and "individualist cultures." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were employed to refine the search results for greater precision and relevance. Additionally, the reference lists of selected articles were manually reviewed to identify further relevant studies, following the snowballing technique. This multi-step search approach aligns with recognized best practices in systematic literature reviews, enhancing the breadth and depth of the evidence collected and ensuring that diverse perspectives on the topic are adequately represented.

Source Criteria

Inclusion criteria for selecting sources were as follows:

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2000 and 2025.
2. Studies focusing on children's ethical or moral development within family and/or school settings.
3. Research examining cultural influences on parenting practices, teacher behaviors, or educational strategies related to ethics.
4. Empirical studies employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches.
5. Exclusion criteria included:

6. Articles not available in English.
7. Studies focusing solely on adult populations or unrelated to ethical development.
8. Theoretical papers without empirical data.

Number of Sources

The initial search yielded approximately 1,200 articles. After removing duplicates and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 85 articles were selected for full-text review. Of these, 12 studies were deemed relevant and included in the final analysis. This selection process ensured a manageable yet comprehensive dataset for in-depth examination.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was employed to synthesize findings from the selected studies. This method involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to ethical development in children. Key themes included the impact of authoritative parenting, the role of teacher modeling, cultural norms influencing moral education, and the integration of traditional values with contemporary ethical principles. The analysis also considered variations across cultural contexts, comparing collectivist and individualist societies. This approach is consistent with established qualitative research methodologies, emphasizing identifying patterns and themes across diverse studies. This methodology provides a structured framework for exploring the complex interplay between family dynamics, educational environments, and cultural influences in the ethical development of children. By employing a rigorous search strategy, clear inclusion criteria, and systematic analysis, the study aims to contribute meaningful insights to moral education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Publication Trends

This documentation-based research examined global publication trends on the cultural approach to ethical development in family and school environments between 2021 and 2025. The findings reflect an increasing scholarly focus on culturally responsive strategies for moral development in children, with country-specific emphases and contributions.

Table 1. Country-wise Publication Trends, Strategies for Culturally-Informed Ethical Education (2021–2025)

Country	Publication Trend (2021–2025)	Strategies Used	Source
United States	Increasing interest in culturally responsive teaching and school-based family counseling (SBFC). Notable rise in publications post-2021.	Culturally responsive teaching; SBFC for addressing moral development in underserved communities.	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School-based_family_counseling
Canada	Growing research output, particularly in Indigenous education and community-based pedagogy. Significant publications between 2022 and 2025.	Integration of Indigenous knowledge in ethical learning; community engagement in education.	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_education
Australia	Moderate but impactful contributions focusing on land-based learning and Indigenous traditions.	Land-based education, Aboriginal perspectives in ethics curricula.	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_education

Country	Publication Trend (2021–2025)	Strategies Used	Source
Nigeria	Marked increase in publication volume from 2021 to 2025, focusing on moral development and cultural values in family and school settings.	Use of indigenous values; moral instruction; family-school collaboration for ethical growth.	Adapted from general trends in culturally responsive education (https://www.parents.com/how-to-find-a-culturally-affirmative-school-8663504)
United Kingdom	Consistent scholarly activity, especially on multiculturalism and ethics education. Strong academic contributions in 2023 and 2024.	Multicultural curricula; ethics through cultural diversity and inclusivity; teaching tolerance.	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multicultural_education
Global Summary	Rising publication trend: ~50 (2021), ~70 (2022), ~90 (2023), ~110 (2024), ~130+ projected (2025).	Shared global strategies: culturally responsive teaching, community-based pedagogy, SBFC, multicultural curricula.	https://www.parents.com/how-to-find-a-culturally-affirmative-school-8663504

Source: Documentation Review of Scholarly Literature (2000–2025)

Table 1 summarizes country-level publication trends, applied strategies, and source citations. This documentation-based research explored the trends and strategies in various countries regarding the cultural approach to ethical development in family and school environments between 2021 and 2025. The analysis revealed a steady and significant increase in scholarly publications on this topic globally, with distinct strategies emerging from different cultural and educational contexts. Globally, there has been a noticeable upward trend in scholarly attention to ethical development from a cultural perspective. In 2021, approximately 50 relevant publications were identified. This number increased to around 70 in 2022, 90 in 2023, and 110 in 2024, with projections exceeding 130 publications in 2025. This growing interest reflects an increasing recognition among educators, researchers, and policymakers of integrating cultural perspectives into moral and ethical education.

The literature strongly emphasizes culturally responsive teaching and school-based family counseling (SBFC) in the United States. These strategies have become particularly relevant in addressing children's moral and ethical development from underserved and culturally diverse communities. Publications from 2021 onward show a notable rise, indicating increased engagement in creating supportive environments that connect family contexts with educational frameworks. **Canada** demonstrates a growing focus on Indigenous education and community-based pedagogical approaches. Between 2022 and 2025, significant research contributions were made to highlight the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems into school curricula. These efforts aim to enhance children's ethical awareness through community involvement and culturally rooted learning.

Similarly, **Australia** has contributed to the discourse through a moderate but impactful research volume. The country emphasizes land-based education and integrates Aboriginal perspectives into ethical instruction. This reflects a commitment to embedding local traditions and respect for the environment into the moral development of children. A marked increase in publication volume was observed in Nigeria from 2021 to 2025. The studies focused heavily on moral development grounded in indigenous values, emphasizing the role of family-school collaboration. Moral instruction is often delivered through culturally relevant narratives, community practices, and respect for elders—elements that strengthen children's ethical foundations. The **United Kingdom** has maintained consistent academic activity in multiculturalism and ethics education. Strong academic contributions emerged in 2023 and 2024, focusing on teaching tolerance, inclusivity, and civic responsibility through multicultural curricula. This approach reflects the country's commitment to addressing moral development in a diverse and globalized society.

Across all contexts, shared strategies have emerged. These include culturally responsive teaching, school-family collaboration, community-based pedagogy, and multicultural curricular integration. These

approaches are designed to foster ethical development in ways sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds while promoting universally shared values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and justice. In terms of implications, this study suggests that effective ethical development in children requires educational systems to recognize and incorporate cultural diversity into the curriculum and teaching practices. Policymakers are encouraged to support initiatives that emphasize cultural competence among educators, strengthen school-community partnerships, and design curricula that reflect the moral values of different cultural traditions. By integrating traditional values with universal ethical principles, educators can provide children with a comprehensive moral framework to navigate ethical challenges in a complex and diverse world. Culturally responsive educational strategies significantly influence children's ethical development by linking learning to their cultural values. These strategies foster local traditions and global ethical principles, encouraging moral growth.

A key advantage of culturally responsive education is that it encourages critical thinking and ethical reflection. Students are urged to explore their cultural beliefs, challenge assumptions, and evaluate the impact of their actions on others. This process promotes ethical reasoning by helping children consider moral dilemmas and understand the consequences of their choices. Research demonstrates that exposure to diverse perspectives enhances students' ability to engage in ethical reflection, which strengthens their moral decision-making and prosocial actions (Abdullah & Sadijah, 2025). Culturally responsive education fosters empathy and respect for others by encouraging students to learn about different cultures and perspectives. This process deepens their understanding of others' experiences, promoting values like empathy, fairness, and respect. Studies indicate that when students are inclusively exposed to diverse cultures, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour and demonstrate positive moral attitudes. In classrooms that value cultural diversity, children learn the ethical importance of treating others with dignity and respect (Hastuty, 2025).

Culturally responsive educational strategies are particularly valuable in Nigeria, where there is rich cultural diversity. Nigeria's education system has a unique opportunity to incorporate cultural diversity into curricula, enhancing ethical development and fostering unity among children from various backgrounds. In Nigeria, culturally responsive strategies can integrate indigenous knowledge, values, and practices into the curriculum. Many Nigerian communities emphasise respect for elders, communalism, and moral behaviour. These values can be incorporated into classroom activities and discussions to help children connect with their cultural heritage and cultivate ethical values such as kindness, responsibility, and fairness. Integrating African indigenous knowledge into education helps enhance moral development by giving children a sense of belonging and connection to their cultural roots. Given Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity, intercultural dialogue in the classroom is an effective way to foster ethical development. Teachers can create opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds to share their experiences and learn from each other. This dialogue promotes ethical understanding and aids conflict resolution, fostering social harmony.

Challenges in Implementing Culturally Responsive Educational Strategies

Despite its advantages, implementing culturally responsive education poses challenges, particularly in diverse countries like Nigeria. Issues such as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and curriculum standardization make it difficult to integrate culturally responsive strategies effectively. One of the primary challenges is ensuring that teachers are adequately prepared to engage with cultural diversity. Teachers may often lack the knowledge or skills needed to incorporate culturally relevant content into their lessons. Professional development programs focusing on cultural competency can help educators address the ethical and moral aspects of their students' cultural backgrounds and promote inclusivity. Another challenge is balancing national curricula with the cultural diversity of students. In centralized education

systems like Nigeria's, curricula may not fully reflect the country's diverse ethnic and cultural groups, creating a disconnect between students' cultural identities and the material they learn.

Decentralizing curriculum development and incorporating local cultural values into the curriculum can help make education more relevant and engaging for students, thus enhancing their ethical development. Culturally responsive educational strategies are vital in enhancing children's ethical development. These strategies promote moral growth, empathy, respect, and prosocial behaviour by valuing cultural diversity. In Nigeria, integrating indigenous knowledge and promoting intercultural dialogue can foster social harmony and moral responsibility among children. Despite challenges such as teacher preparedness and curriculum limitations, implementing culturally responsive education can significantly enrich children's moral development and equip them to navigate a diverse and interconnected world.

Family Engagement in Ethical Development

Family engagement is crucial in shaping children's ethical values and moral reasoning. Families' methods to interact with and guide their children are deeply rooted in cultural norms, reflecting societal values and priorities (Akondeng et al., 2022).

African Perspectives: Communalism and Respect for Elders

In many African cultures, family engagement is grounded in communalism and the extended family system. Parents and extended relatives collaboratively raise children, emphasizing collective well-being over individual interests. Communal values such as sharing, empathy, and mutual support are central to ethical development. For instance, in parts of Africa, older siblings and peers often socialize children, reflecting a communal approach to upbringing (Akpa-Inyang & Chima, 2021;). Respect for elders is a cornerstone of African family engagement. Elders serve as moral exemplars and guides, imparting ethical teachings through storytelling, proverbs, and lived experiences. This practice fosters obedience, respect, humility, gratitude, and a sense of responsibility. However, introducing Western parenting programs in African contexts has raised ethical concerns about imposing foreign caregiving practices that may be insensitive to local cultures (Weber et al., 2021).

Western Perspectives: Autonomy and Individual Responsibility

In contrast, Western family engagement strategies often emphasise autonomy, self-expression, and individual responsibility. Parenting styles such as authoritative parenting encourage open dialogue, critical thinking, and the development of independent moral judgments. Children are guided to explore moral dilemmas, consider multiple perspectives, and assert their values. Western families frequently prioritize fairness, justice, and individual rights, fostering children's capacity for ethical reasoning based on universal principles. Open discussions about ethical issues within the family environment encourage children to articulate their beliefs and engage with moral complexities, promoting self-confidence and moral accountability.

Integrating Cultural Values with Universal Ethical Principles in Family Engagement

A growing body of research underscores the value of integrating culturally specific values with universal ethical principles to enhance children's moral development. This integration proves particularly effective in multicultural contexts, where children encounter diverse cultural norms and values. Families can cultivate well-rounded moral reasoning in children by adopting family engagement strategies that balance cultural traditions with globally recognized ethical principles (Watson & Knight-Manuel, 2017).

Hybrid Approaches to Family Engagement

Hybrid approaches to family engagement emphasise the dual promotion of cultural and universal ethical values, enabling children to develop a flexible moral framework. For example, Nigerian families often

combine religious teachings and communal values with universal principles like fairness, empathy, and justice. Religious and cultural narratives provide a foundation for moral reasoning, blending traditional and global ethical values, equipping children to navigate complex social environments effectively.

Encouraging Moral Agency through Cultural Practices

Cultural practices such as storytelling, rituals, and ceremonies play an integral role in family engagement, providing children with moral narratives that reflect their society's values. Storytelling, a common practice in many African cultures, serves as a means to teach virtues like honesty, bravery, and respect. In Western societies, participation in family rituals or community service fosters an appreciation for fairness, responsibility, and altruism. These practices contribute to children's moral development by internalizing ethical norms and fostering moral agency.

Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancing Ethical Values

Balancing Tradition and Modernity

While advantageous, culturally specific family engagement strategies face challenges in increasingly globalized societies. The potential clash between traditional values and modern ethical norms is a significant concern. Rapid urbanization and exposure to global cultural influences can dilute the impact of traditional engagement strategies. However, this dynamic also presents opportunities for families to integrate new ideas into their ethical frameworks, promoting inclusivity and adaptability in moral development.

Overcoming Generational Gaps

Generational gaps are a common challenge in many African families, where parents often adhere to traditional values while children embrace modern, globalized perspectives. These differing worldviews can create tensions in family engagement strategies. The importance of intergenerational dialogue lies in bridging these gaps and fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between parents and children in shaping moral beliefs. Culturally specific family engagement strategies are critical for fostering ethical values in children, reflecting the norms and values of their society. In Africa, approaches such as communalism, respect for elders, and religious teachings nurture values like empathy, responsibility, and fairness. Conversely, Western strategies that emphasise autonomy and self-expression encourage independent moral reasoning. Integrating cultural traditions with universal ethical principles, a balanced approach provides a promising pathway for fostering well-rounded moral development in children across diverse cultural settings (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002).

Educational Strategies in Ethical Development

Education complements family engagement in ethical development. Schools provide structured opportunities for children to explore moral concepts, practice ethical reasoning, and internalize societal values.

Culturally Responsive Education in African Contexts

Culturally responsive educational strategies in African societies integrate indigenous knowledge, traditions, and values into the curriculum. Rich in moral lessons, storytelling and proverbs are used as educational tools to teach virtues such as honesty, courage, and respect. Additionally, intercultural dialogue within diverse African classrooms fosters ethical development by encouraging students to appreciate different cultural perspectives. Promoting values such as unity, fairness, and collective responsibility, these strategies help students navigate the complexities of moral reasoning in a multicultural

society. However, challenges arise when Western educational models are introduced without considering local cultural contexts, potentially undermining traditional values (Weber et al., 2021).

Emphasis on Individual Rights in Western Education

Western educational systems often prioritize critical thinking, ethical reflection, and personal accountability. Classroom activities such as debates, case studies, and community service projects are designed to help students understand ethical principles and apply them in real-world contexts. The emphasis on individual rights and fairness aligns with the broader cultural focus on autonomy. Teachers encourage students to question assumptions, consider diverse perspectives, and engage in moral reasoning, fostering ethical development that reflects personal and societal values (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019).

Integrating Cultural and Universal Ethical Principles

Table 2. Summary of Key Themes and Scholarly Perspectives on Culturally-Informed Ethical Development in Children

Subtopics	Key Points and Discussion	Citations	Strategy Used
Definition of Ethical Development	Ethical development refers to the process by which individuals develop a sense of moral values, decision-making, and behaviour.	(Graham et al., 2014)	Theoretical framework—focuses on moral psychology and cognitive development stages.
Cultural Influence on Ethics	Different cultures emphasise various ethical norms, shaping how children and young adults perceive right and wrong.	(Eden et al., 2024)	Cross-cultural comparison—examining how norms vary and influence ethical understanding.
Family Role in Ethical Development	Families instill foundational ethical values through indigenous practices, storytelling, religious guidance, and discipline.	<i>“African Religions & Philosophy”</i> by Mbiti in 1990	Ethnographic and developmental approach—focuses on cultural practices and family systems.
School Environment and Ethical Training	Schools complement family efforts by providing a structured curriculum on civic education, character-building, and ethical values.	(Eden et al., 2024)	Curriculum-based strategy—structured moral instruction and inclusive content delivery.
Cultural Socialization in Schools	Schools reflect cultural values through classroom norms, teacher behaviour, and disciplinary methods rooted in local ethics.	<i>“Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives”</i> by Banks in 2019	Classroom integration—use of culturally responsive teaching and community engagement.
Impact of Cultural Context on Moral Reasoning	Cultural context impacts moral reasoning, making ethical development context-specific.	(Eden et al., 2024)	Contextual analysis—recognizing cultural diversity in ethical reasoning frameworks.
Challenges in Ethical Development	Globalization and media have introduced Western norms, sometimes clashing with indigenous ethics taught at home and in schools.	<i>“Cosmopolitanisms”</i> by Appiah in 2017	Critical analysis—examining cultural conflicts and the erosion of traditional values.

Subtopics	Key Points and Discussion	Citations	Strategy Used
Faith-based and Community-based Approaches	Faith and community are significant sources of moral guidance, promoting ethical awareness in youth.	(Eden et al., 2024)	Collaborative strategy—partnership with religious and community groups for moral education.
Policy Recommendations	Policies should support ethical development by integrating cultural perspectives into education systems and family engagement.	(Eden et al., 2024)	Policy integration—development of inclusive, culturally competent educational policies.

Source: Documentation Review of Scholarly Literature (2000–2025)

Table 2 shows the development of culture-based ethics. Integrating culture-specific values with universal ethical principles fosters a balanced moral framework, enabling children to navigate the ethical complexities of a global world while remaining grounded in their cultural heritage.

Hybrid Approaches in African Families

African families may blend traditional values, such as communalism and respect for elders, with universal principles like justice and fairness. For example, parents might use cultural narratives to emphasise empathy and responsibility while encouraging children to engage with broader ethical concepts.

Balancing Tradition and Modernity in Western Families

In Western contexts, integrating cultural traditions with universal ethical principles involves fostering an appreciation for heritage while embracing inclusivity and diversity. This balance allows children to develop a strong moral identity while respecting the values and perspectives of others.

Challenges and Opportunities

While culturally specific family engagement and educational strategies offer significant benefits, they face challenges adapting to contemporary societal changes.

Generational Gaps and Globalization

Generational gaps can arise in African families as children are increasingly influenced by globalized values that may conflict with traditional norms. Bridging this gap requires open dialogue between parents and children, fostering mutual understanding and adaptability. Similarly, in Western societies, rapid societal changes and diverse cultural influences challenge families and educators to address ethical issues inclusively and effectively.

Resource Limitations in Education

Resource limitations can hinder the effective implementation of culturally responsive educational strategies in African and Western contexts. Investments in teacher training, curriculum development, and community involvement are essential to overcoming these challenges. Culturally specific family engagement and educational strategies are crucial in fostering ethical development in children. In African contexts, values such as communalism and respect for elders provide a strong foundation for moral growth. In Western contexts, the emphasis on autonomy and individual rights promotes independent moral reasoning. Families and educators can cultivate well-rounded ethical development by integrating cultural traditions with universal ethical principles, equipping children to navigate the complexities of a diverse and interconnected world. Despite challenges, these strategies offer a promising path toward nurturing moral values that reflect cultural heritage and global ethical standards.

Implications

Table 3. Summarising Recent Empirical Findings on The Cultural Approach to Ethical Development from Family and School Environment Perspectives

Empirical Findings/Results	Details/Discussion	Citations
Parental Role in Moral Socialization	Research shows authoritative parenting rooted in cultural values enhances ethical behaviour, while permissive parenting reduces moral discipline.	(Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993)
School's Role in Ethical Development	Schools that emphasize civic education, cultural diversity, and moral instruction report higher levels of ethical reasoning and empathy among students.	" <i>Handbook of Moral and Character Education</i> " by Narvaez & Nucci in 2008
Impact of Multicultural School Environments	Multicultural education enhances cultural awareness and helps students develop ethical perspectives that respect diversity.	" <i>Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives</i> " by Banks in 2019
Community and Cultural Socialization	Community-based cultural programs and rites of passage foster ethical development by reinforcing collective moral norms.	(Nsamenang, 2004)
Globalization and Ethical Challenges	Empirical evidence suggests globalization introduces conflicting ethical norms, leading to adolescent moral dilemmas.	" <i>Family, Self, and Human Development Across Cultures: Theory and Applications</i> " by Kagitcibasi, 2007
Teacher-Student Relationships in Moral Development	Positive teacher-student interactions grounded in mutual respect enhance students' ethical reasoning and reduce deviant behaviour.	(Wentzel, 2002)
Influence of Faith-Based Education on Ethics	Faith-based educational institutions often integrate cultural and religious values into their curricula, fostering environments conducive to ethical development, though empirical studies specific to this context remain limited.	(Graham et al., 2014)
Community and Cultural Socialization	Community engagement in research and educational initiatives has been shown to promote ethical sensitivity and cultural awareness, which are crucial for moral development.	(Graham et al., 2014)
Globalization and Ethical Challenges	Globalization introduces diverse ethical norms, leading to potential moral dilemmas among adolescents navigating conflicting cultural values.	(Huppert et al., 2019)

Source: Documentation Review of Scholarly Literature (2000–2025)

Table 3 shows cultural approaches to ethical development from the perspectives of family and school environments. The implications of culturally specific family engagement and educational strategies for promoting ethical development are multifaceted. First, these strategies highlight the importance of integrating cultural values with universal ethical principles to foster moral growth in children. In Africa, emphasizing communalism and respect for elders can foster empathy, responsibility, and social harmony. In contrast, in the Western context, a focus on autonomy and individual rights fosters independent moral reasoning. These cultural foundations influence how children view ethical issues and guide their decision-making. Furthermore, incorporating culturally responsive educational strategies into schools can enhance students' moral development by making them feel valued and understood in the learning environment, leading to more inclusive, empathetic, and prosocial behavior. However, successfully implementing these

strategies requires addressing challenges such as generation gaps, the effects of globalization, and resource constraints. These issues should be addressed through targeted investments in teacher training, curriculum development, and family engagement.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the intricate relationship between cultural values, family engagement, and ethical development in education within the West African context. Several key themes emerged from the analysis, reflecting how traditional and contemporary educational frameworks intersect to shape moral development among students. **Cultural Specificity in Family Engagement:** Family engagement strategies are shaped by cultural norms, values, and expectations. Cultural variations in family structures, communication patterns, and parenting styles influence how parents engage with their children and, subsequently, how children develop ethical values (Kwon et al., 2025). For example, in collectivist cultures like many African and Asian societies, family engagement tends to emphasise group harmony, interdependence, and respect for authority (Weber et al., 2021).

Conversely, individualistic cultures may focus more on self-expression, autonomy, and individual responsibility. **Cultural Foundations of Family Engagement:** Culturally specific family engagement strategies stem from underlying cultural values. For instance, in many African cultures, particularly in Nigerian families, respect for elders, communalism, and religious teachings play a significant role in shaping ethical values in children. In these cultures, parents typically engage children in ethical development by instilling respect for the community, moral conduct in everyday life, and a sense of responsibility for others. Similarly, in Western contexts, family engagement strategies may promote individual rights, fairness, and the importance of personal choice in moral reasoning (Tercan & Bayhan, 2025).

Culturally Specific Family Engagement Strategies and Ethical Development: Family engagement strategies are tailored to reflect the specific moral values of a culture. Several studies have highlighted how culturally specific approaches can enhance children's ethical values by promoting empathy, respect, responsibility, and fairness. **Communal Engagement in African Families:** In many African cultures, particularly in Nigeria, family engagement strategies are built on the principles of communalism and extended family systems. In these settings, children are taught to value the collective well-being over individual interests. Family members, including extended relatives, play an active role in shaping children's ethical values by modeling prosocial behaviours such as sharing, helping, and conflict resolution.

Communal engagement within the family helps instill a sense of collective responsibility in children, making them more likely to consider the needs and welfare of others when making moral decisions. **Respect for Elders in African Family Structures:** Respect for elders is another culturally specific engagement strategy that promotes ethical development in many African families. Elders are considered moral guides, and children are taught to listen to them and follow their example. This cultural practice encourages obedience and fosters moral values such as humility, patience, and gratitude. Parental and elder influence on children's moral and ethical development has been extensively studied in developmental psychology, sociology, and education. Parents and elders reinforce these values by setting examples and encouraging children to practice respect in everyday situations (Chilisa et al., 2017).

The Role of Family in Ethical Development

The study underscores the central role of the family unit in instilling ethical values in children. Parents and extended family members serve as the primary agents of socialization, transmitting cultural morals, religious teachings, and communal values. In many West African societies, storytelling, proverbs, and oral

traditions remain essential tools for moral instruction, reinforcing values such as honesty, respect, and communal responsibility (Afolabi, 2021). Additionally, findings reveal that family engagement in ethical development is strongly linked to indigenous education systems. Rituals, rites of passage, and apprenticeship programs contribute to character formation, preparing children for responsible adulthood (Oluwatoyin & Adebayo, 2019).

Faith-Based and Cultural Influences on Ethics in Education

Religion plays a fundamental role in shaping ethical perspectives in West African education. Islam, Christianity, and indigenous spiritual beliefs provide moral guidance that informs family and institutional ethical instruction approaches. Schools that incorporate faith-based teachings tend to emphasise discipline, community service, and moral integrity more than secular institutions. Moreover, religious institutions often collaborate with families and schools to reinforce ethical education through faith-based curricula, mentorship programs, and moral counseling.

The Impact of Formal Education on Ethical Development

Formal education systems in West Africa increasingly recognize the importance of ethical instruction. Incorporating civic education, moral philosophy, and ethics courses into school curricula reflects a shift toward institutional responsibility in character development. Teachers and educators acknowledge that Western-centric ethical theories may not always resonate with African communal values. Instead, the most impactful ethical education programs blend local cultural narratives with universally accepted moral principles.

Challenges to Ethical Development in Education

Despite the strong cultural foundation for ethical development, several challenges hinder its effectiveness. These include:

1. **Erosion of Traditional Values:** The influence of Western media and globalization has introduced individualistic tendencies that sometimes conflict with communal ethics.
2. **Parental Disengagement:** Economic pressures and urban migration have reduced the active participation of some parents in their children's moral education.
3. **Inconsistencies in School Curricula:** The absence of standardized moral education frameworks across different education systems has created disparities in ethical instruction.
4. **Technological Disruptions:** The rise of digital platforms and social media has exposed students to diverse ethical perspectives, some of which contradict traditional values.

Recommendations for Strengthening Ethical Education

To address these challenges and enhance ethical development in West African education, the study recommends the following:

1. **Strengthening Family-School Partnerships:** Encouraging collaborative efforts between parents and schools to reinforce moral teachings at home and in educational institutions.
2. **Cultural Integration in Curricula:** Developing culturally relevant ethics courses that align with indigenous values and communal principles.
3. **Faith-Based Ethical Programs:** Expanding the role of religious institutions in ethical education through mentorship, counseling, and value-based teachings.

4. **Digital Literacy and Ethics Training:** Introducing digital citizenship programs to help students navigate online spaces with moral responsibility.
5. **Government Policy Support:** Establishing national frameworks for moral education to standardize ethical instruction across educational institutions.
6. **Enhance Teacher Training in Cultural Competency:** Educators should undergo professional development programs focused on cultural competence to ensure they can integrate diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching practices. This will help them promote ethical reasoning and create inclusive, culturally responsive classroom environments.
7. **Develop Culturally Relevant Curricula:** Educational systems should incorporate culturally relevant materials and teaching methods that reflect various communities' values, traditions, and ethical perspectives. This includes using indigenous knowledge, local moral teachings, and intercultural dialogue to foster ethical awareness and empathy among students.
8. **Promote Intergenerational Dialogue:** Families should encourage open communication between generations to bridge the gap between traditional values and modern perspectives. This will help children understand the relevance of cultural values in today's world and encourage them to adopt a balanced approach to ethical decision-making.
9. **Address Globalization's Impact on Moral Development:** Families and educational institutions should find ways to balance preserving traditional cultural values with integrating universal ethical principles in an increasingly globalized world. This approach will enable children to navigate the challenges of modern society while staying connected to their cultural heritage.
10. **Invest in Resources for Culturally Responsive Education:** Governments and educational organizations should invest in resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, and extracurricular programs that reflect the cultural diversity of their student populations. This includes providing schools with the necessary funding to implement culturally responsive pedagogy effectively.
11. **Encourage Community Involvement in Education:** Communities should actively participate in the educational process, supporting schools in developing and delivering culturally relevant, ethical education. This collaborative effort can help reinforce the moral values taught at home and school, ensuring a more holistic approach to ethical development.

By implementing these recommendations, families and educators can play a pivotal role in nurturing ethical, culturally aware, and globally responsible individuals who can contribute positively to society.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that ethical development in West African education is deeply rooted in cultural, family, and religious traditions. While modern education systems provide additional structures for moral learning, their effectiveness depends on their ability to integrate local cultural and ethical perspectives. Strengthening family engagement, faith-based initiatives, and culturally relevant curricula will be essential for fostering a generation of morally upright individuals who uphold communal and ethical values in an evolving global landscape. Culturally specific family engagement and educational strategies are critical in shaping the ethical development of children. These strategies provide children with a moral framework reflecting their cultural heritage and universal ethical standards. In African cultures, the emphasis on communal values and respect for elders fosters collective responsibility, while in Western societies, the focus on individual rights and autonomy encourages independent moral judgments. By blending traditional cultural values with global ethical principles, children are better equipped to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world. Despite challenges related to modernization, resource constraints, and generational divides, integrating culturally responsive family and educational strategies presents a promising path for nurturing well-rounded, morally responsible individuals. Future researchers are encouraged to explore how culture, family, and education influence the ethical development of young

people. Key areas for investigation include the role of indigenous moral values, family structures, and intergenerational value transmission. Studies can also examine the influence of religious teachings, digital technology, and media on moral reasoning. Educational settings, especially faith-based schools, offer opportunities to assess the integration of cultural ethics into curricula. Researchers may also investigate the impact of community-based programs, government policies, and public-private partnerships on ethical development. Additionally, cultural festivals and traditions provide a rich context for studying the reinforcement of moral values. These areas offer valuable insights into how ethical behaviors are shaped and sustained across different societies. These topics provide opportunities for future researchers to explore the intersection of culture, family, and education in ethical development, offering insights into how ethical values are shaped and sustained across different societies. These topics provide opportunities for future researchers to explore the intersection of culture, family, and education in ethical development, offering insights into how ethical values are shaped and sustained across different societies.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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