



Preserving cultural-roots: Indigenous parenting practices in shaping ethical foundations in children

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly globalised world, the preservation of cultural heritage is vital in nurturing the ethical and moral development of children. Indigenous parenting practices, deeply embedded in ancestral traditions and communal values, provide a distinct framework for shaping ethical behaviour and instilling virtues such as respect, responsibility, empathy, and community consciousness. This study aims to explore the role of indigenous parenting practices in fostering ethical development in children and to assess their impact on children's ethical decision-making and the intergenerational transmission of cultural norms. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature and analyzed case studies from various indigenous communities. Key indigenous parenting methods identified include storytelling, communal living, rites of passage, and traditional mentoring systems all of which serve as tools for ethical education. The findings reveal that these practices effectively nurture ethical values by embedding children within a strong cultural identity, fostering a sense of communal responsibility, and reinforcing virtues such as honesty, respect, and empathy. The study underscores the importance of integrating these time-tested values into modern child-rearing practices to reinforce ethical foundations in children while preserving cultural heritage.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 23 Jan 2025

Revised: 7 May 2025

Accepted: 10 May 2025

Available online: 23 May 2025

Publish: 28 May 2025

Keywords:

children; cultural root; indigenous; parenting-practices

Open access

Inovasi Kurikulum is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

ABSTRAK

Dalam dunia yang semakin mengglobal, pelestarian warisan budaya sangat penting dalam memelihara perkembangan etika dan moral anak-anak. Praktik pengasuhan adat, yang tertanam dalam tradisi leluhur dan nilai-nilai komunal, menyediakan kerangka kerja yang berbeda untuk membentuk perilaku etis dan menanamkan nilai-nilai seperti rasa hormat, tanggung jawab, empati, dan kesadaran komunitas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran praktik pengasuhan adat dalam membina perkembangan etika pada anak-anak dan untuk menilai dampaknya terhadap pengambilan keputusan etis anak-anak dan transmisi norma-norma budaya antargenerasi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif, studi ini melakukan tinjauan komprehensif terhadap literatur yang relevan dan menganalisis studi kasus dari berbagai komunitas adat. Metode pengasuhan adat utama yang diidentifikasi meliputi mendongeng, kehidupan komunal, ritus peralihan, dan sistem bimbingan tradisional yang semuanya berfungsi sebagai alat untuk pendidikan etika. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa praktik-praktik ini secara efektif memelihara nilai-nilai etika dengan menanamkan anak-anak dalam identitas budaya yang kuat, menumbuhkan rasa tanggung jawab komunal, dan memperkuat nilai-nilai seperti kejujuran, rasa hormat, dan empati. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai yang telah teruji waktu ini ke dalam praktik pengasuhan anak modern untuk memperkuat landasan etika pada anak-anak sambil melestarikan warisan budaya.

Kata kunci: adat, akar budaya, anak-anak, praktik pengasuhan

How to cite (APA 7)

Abdulkareem, H. B., Yusuf, J. & Tiamiyu, K. A., (2025). Preserving cultural-roots: Indigenous parenting practices in shaping ethical foundations in children. *Inovasi Kurikulum*, 22(2), 1129-1140.

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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INTRODUCTION

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 (Yusuf & Abdulkareem, 2024; Abdulkareem & Lasisi, 2024; Olanrewaju et al., 2023), particularly in a diverse global setting.

This discussion explores the role of family engagement strategies in different cultural contexts and how they can be used to enhance ethical values in children. Indigenous parenting practices are deeply embedded in cultural traditions, values, and communal upbringing. Unlike Western individualistic parenting styles, indigenous parenting emphasises collectivism, oral traditions, spirituality, and intergenerational transmission of values (Hassan & Abdulkareem, 2023; Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Indigenous parenting practices are firmly embedded in the cultural, spiritual, and social structures of Indigenous communities (Kamilu et al., 2022). These time-honored practices, transmitted across generations, prioritize core values such as interconnectedness, respect for the natural world, communal responsibility, and holistic well-being.

A summary of the essential elements of these parenting approaches, supported by academic references, is provided below. In many Indigenous cultures, child-rearing is regarded as a shared responsibility, involving not just parents but also extended family, elders, and other community members (Suleiman & Abdulkareem, 2023). This collaborative approach ensures that children benefit from the guidance and support of multiple caregivers, fostering a deep sense of belonging and emotional security (Abdulkareem et al., 2024; Adeoye et al., 2023). Indigenous families often function within intricate kinship networks system that outline specific roles, responsibilities, and interpersonal connections. These systems create a supportive framework in which children are cared for and guided by a diverse group of relatives and community members (Lasisi, et al., 2024; Muir & Bohr, 2019).

Studies on indigenous communities across Africa, Latin America, and North America indicate that storytelling serves as a fundamental method for imparting ethical lessons. Narratives featuring ancestors, deities, and moral consequences help children internalize societal norms (Tlali & Sepiriti, 2013). For example, research on the Yoruba of Nigeria highlights the role of folktales and proverbs in reinforcing honesty, respect, and communal responsibility (Badru & Odutayo, 2023). Children are taught to respect and connect with nature, understanding their role as stewards of the environment. This connection to the land is integral to their identity and spiritual well-being, as stated by Muir (2024) on “*Indigenous Parenting*” book. Spiritual teachings and practices, such as naming ceremonies and rites of passage, are integral to a child’s development. These rituals instill cultural values and a sense of identity (Muir & Bohr, 2019). Children also learn through observing adults and participating in daily activities, such as fishing, hunting, farming, or craft-making. This hands-on approach allows children to acquire practical skills and cultural knowledge. Oral storytelling is a primary method for teaching morals, history, and life skills. Through stories, children learn about their heritage and the values of their community (Olanrewaju et al., 2023 ; Muir & Bohr, 2019).

Emphasis on autonomy and independence, non-coercive discipline is also important. Discipline is often indirect and focused on natural consequences, encouraging children to learn from their actions. This approach fosters self-discipline and responsibility. Then, respect for individuality, children are respected as individuals with their own paths, allowing them to develop autonomy. This respect for personal growth supports the development of self-confidence and decision-making skills (Muir & Bohr, 2019). Parenting practices aim to balance physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. This holistic approach

ensures the comprehensive development of the child. Another thing is intergenerational wisdom, which elders play a critical role in imparting cultural knowledge and values, fostering a deep sense of identity. Their involvement bridges generations and maintains cultural continuity (Abdulkareem et al., 2025; Muir & Bohr, 2019). Parents emphasise teaching their native languages, which carry cultural and spiritual significance. Language preservation is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and transmitting traditional knowledge (Muir & Bohr, 2019). Finally, cultural practices such as arts, dances, and traditional customs are integral to a child's upbringing, ensuring the preservation of heritage. Participation in cultural practices reinforces community bonds and personal identity.

While these studies provide rich insights into various Indigenous practices across continents such as Africa, Latin America, and North America, they often remain context-specific and do not offer a comparative synthesis of their impact within modern educational and familial systems, as stated by Barker and Anderson on "*Indegenous Knowledge and Family Systems*" and Berk on "*Development Through the Lifespan*". Moreover, few studies have holistically examined how these traditional methods can be integrated with contemporary parenting and educational approaches to create a balanced and comprehensive model of ethical development for children.

The novelty of this research lies in its comparative and integrative approach. Unlike previous works that focused primarily on isolated communities or traditions, this study synthesizes diverse indigenous parenting practices and evaluates how they can be thoughtfully integrated into modern educational and family engagement frameworks. By doing so, it contributes to the development of culturally grounded yet globally adaptable strategies for nurturing ethical values in children.

This study aims to explore and document how culturally specific family engagement strategies, particularly indigenous parenting practices, can enhance ethical development in children. It seeks to advocate for the integration of traditional values with universal ethical principles, thus preparing children to navigate moral complexities in a multicultural world while preserving cultural identity and intergenerational wisdom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, supported by insights from Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) framework. Together, these theories offer a holistic, culturally sensitive lens through which to understand and analyze the transmission of ethical values to children through family engagement strategies.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory that stated in a book titled "*The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*" posits that a child's development is influenced by multiple layers of environmental systems—namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each of these layers interacts with one another to shape a child's behavior, values, and identity. In the context of this study, the microsystem includes the immediate family and elders; the mesosystem captures the relationship between family and schools; the exosystem involves community norms and cultural institutions; the macrosystem represents societal and cultural beliefs; and the chronosystem reflects the changes over time in cultural practices and educational expectations. This framework is particularly useful in examining how indigenous parenting practices, deeply rooted in cultural values and communal life, interact with formal educational systems to influence ethical development in

children, as stated as well by Bronfenbrenner on a research titled “*Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*”.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory, later developed into Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) by Engeström (1987) (explained in a book titled “*Learning by Expanding: And activity-theoretical Approach to Developmental Research*”), emphasizes the importance of mediated learning—where children acquire knowledge and values through tools such as language, cultural rituals, and social interactions. CHAT supports the idea that storytelling, participation in traditional ceremonies, and communal labor are culturally embedded practices that serve as vehicles for transmitting ethical values. In this framework, ethical development is not seen as a linear or isolated process but as one that is co-constructed through engagement with culturally meaningful activities, as stated by Daniels (2008) on “*Vygotsky and Research*”. This makes CHAT an appropriate lens for understanding how indigenous parenting fosters morality and communal responsibility through experiential learning.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Based on a book titled “*Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education*” by Battiste, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent the philosophical and epistemological foundation of indigenous cultures, encompassing traditional values, spiritual beliefs, languages, and ecological relationships. IKS affirms that knowledge is relational, context-specific, and transmitted intergenerationally through oral traditions, communal living, and rituals. By integrating IKS, this study ensures that indigenous parenting practices are not only described but also interpreted through the worldview from which they originate. IKS provides cultural authenticity and helps frame parenting practices such as storytelling, respect for elders, nature stewardship, and collective child-rearing as central to ethical development, as stated by Semali and Kincheloe on “*What is Indigenous Knowledge? Voices from Academy*”.

Integrated Theoretical Model

The integration of these theories, as seen at the **Table 1** allows for a multi-dimensional understanding of how culturally specific family engagement strategies influence ethical development.

Table 1. Integrated Theoretical Model

Theory	Application to the Study
Ecological Systems Theory	Highlights the multi-layered influences (family, community, culture) on ethical development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)	Emphasizes learning through culturally meaningful activities like storytelling and participation (Engeström, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978).
Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)	Provides a culturally grounded lens rooted in traditional values and wisdom (Dei, 2000; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

Source: Research, 2024

METHODS

The research work is a Persuasive Opinion Paper in which articles were reviewed systematically by reporting scholars' submission on the above topic. A persuasive opinion paper is a form of argumentative writing that aims to convince readers to agree with the writer's perspective on a particular issue. This type of paper combines logical reasoning, emotional appeals, and factual evidence to present a compelling argument, as stated by Hale on "*Persuasive Writing Techniques and Strategies*". A clear thesis is established early in the paper, and structured points are used to support the main argument. To further enhance its effectiveness, the inclusion of relevant examples, expert opinions, statistical evidence, and real-life case studies is recommended to strengthen the argument and increase reader engagement, as stated by Jones on "*Mastering the Art of Persuasive Argument*".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Its Implications for Fostering Ethical Values in Nigerian Children

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is an educational framework that emphasises the importance of recognizing and integrating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching practices. This approach aims to make learning more meaningful and relevant by connecting academic content to students' lived experiences and cultural identities. In diverse societies, such as Nigeria, where students come from various ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, culturally responsive pedagogy can play a vital role in fostering ethical values among children. This is especially significant in Nigeria's multicultural context, where students can benefit from learning ethical principles that resonate with their cultural heritage while also engaging with universal values.

Understanding Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: At its core, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is about making education more inclusive and reflective of the diverse backgrounds of students. Scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) have described CRP as an approach that encourages students to connect their cultural experiences to the academic content being taught. This method goes beyond simply recognizing cultural differences; it actively incorporates these differences into the teaching process. CRP focuses on three primary goals: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. It challenges educators to rethink traditional teaching strategies and create a learning environment that values all students, regardless of their cultural background. The goal of CRP is not just to improve academic outcomes but to create a classroom culture that fosters respect, inclusivity, and ethical behaviour. By recognizing and validating students' cultural identities, teachers can help them develop a sense of pride and belonging, which in turn promotes their ethical development.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Nigerian Contexts

Nigeria is a diverse country, home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct language, traditions, and ethical values. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for the education system. Culturally responsive pedagogy offers a framework for harnessing the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria to enhance the educational experience for all students. In Nigerian classrooms, CRP involves incorporating local values, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, making education more relevant and engaging for students.

One important aspect of CRP in Nigeria is the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and practices. Nigerian culture is rich in traditional stories, proverbs, and moral teachings that can be used to reinforce ethical values. By integrating these cultural elements into lessons, teachers can help students connect academic

content with their cultural identities. This process allows children to see the relevance of what they are learning and understand the ethical lessons embedded in their cultural traditions, such as respect for elders, communalism, and fairness. Incorporating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum strengthens the link between students' cultural backgrounds and their educational experience, fostering ethical behaviours rooted in their own cultural values (Olopona, 2014).

Another key component of CRP in Nigeria is promoting intercultural dialogue. Given the country's ethnic and religious diversity, it is important for students to learn from one another's perspectives. CRP encourages teachers to create an environment where students from different cultural backgrounds can share their experiences, engage in discussions, and learn from each other. This dialogue fosters respect for diversity, tolerance, and empathy ethical values that are essential for promoting social harmony in Nigeria's multicultural society. When children are exposed to diverse cultural perspectives, they become more likely to develop an inclusive and compassionate worldview (Nwosu, 2019).

Furthermore, culturally responsive pedagogy can help students engage with ethical dilemmas that reflect their cultural context. In Nigeria, moral challenges often involve balancing individual interests with communal responsibility a central value in Nigerian society. By presenting students with ethical situations that relate to their own cultural experiences, teachers can foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning. For instance, children can explore the consequences of their actions on the community and learn to prioritize collective well-being over individual desires. This approach not only promotes ethical reasoning but also helps students internalize cultural values like fairness, social responsibility, and mutual respect (Abiola & Abdulkareem, 2025).

Implications for Fostering Ethical Values in Nigerian Children

The integration of culturally responsive pedagogy into Nigerian classrooms has profound implications for fostering ethical values in children. By connecting ethical principles to students' cultural backgrounds, CRP helps develop moral identities that align with local values while also promoting universal ethical principles. Through this approach, children are better able to reflect on their cultural heritage and make ethical decisions that consider both individual needs and collective responsibilities. One of the core values promoted through CRP is communalism. In Nigerian culture, communalism emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals within a society and the importance of working together for the common good. Culturally responsive pedagogy reinforces this value by encouraging students to think beyond their own personal interests and consider the broader implications of their actions on their families and communities. As students learn to appreciate the importance of shared responsibility, they are more likely to develop ethical behaviours that promote social cohesion and collective well-being (Majebi & Oduolowu, 2021; Nwosu, 2019).

Moreover, CRP encourages respect for diversity. In a country as ethnically and religiously diverse as Nigeria, fostering respect for cultural differences is essential for promoting social harmony. By incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, CRP helps students understand that people from different backgrounds may have different values and ways of life. This fosters ethical values such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for others. Students who engage with diverse cultural perspectives in a respectful and inclusive manner are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward others and act in ways that promote fairness and equality, as stated by Bennett on "*Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice*". Culturally responsive pedagogy helps develop critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills. By presenting students with culturally relevant ethical dilemmas and encouraging them to reflect on their values, CRP promotes moral reasoning. Children are challenged to think critically about ethical issues and consider the broader consequences of their actions. This approach fosters ethical decision-making by encouraging students to evaluate their choices through the lens of fairness, justice,

and the well-being of others, as stated by Gay on “*Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*”.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Nigeria

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in Nigeria faces several challenges. One significant challenge is ensuring that teachers are adequately trained to incorporate CRP into their teaching practices. Many Nigerian educators may not have the necessary knowledge or skills to integrate cultural content effectively into their lessons. To address this, professional development programs focused on cultural competency are crucial for helping teachers understand the diverse backgrounds of their students and how to incorporate these backgrounds into their teaching.

Another challenge is the curriculum itself, which often reflects a Western-oriented approach to education that may not fully recognize the cultural realities of Nigerian students. Adapting the curriculum to include more culturally relevant content is essential for making education more meaningful and engaging. This includes incorporating indigenous knowledge, cultural stories, and ethical teachings that reflect the moral values of Nigerian communities (Olupona, 2014). Additionally, Nigeria's education system needs to balance promoting national unity with respecting cultural diversity, ensuring that the curriculum fosters a sense of shared identity while celebrating the country's rich cultural heritage.

Culturally responsive pedagogy offers an effective framework for fostering ethical values in Nigerian children. By integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process, CRP enhances the relevance of education and promotes values such as respect, empathy, communal responsibility, and social justice. In Nigeria, where diversity is a key feature of society, culturally responsive pedagogy can help students develop ethical identities that reflect both local cultural traditions and universal moral principles. Although challenges such as teacher training and curriculum adaptation remain, the potential benefits of CRP for promoting ethical development in children are immense, making it a valuable approach for Nigerian education.

Incorporating Indigenous Cultural Values and Practices to Promote Moral Development in Educational Programs

Educational programs have a unique opportunity to integrate indigenous cultural values and practices to foster moral development in students. By embracing cultural heritage, traditional practices, and indigenous knowledge systems, educators can provide students with a more holistic and contextually relevant moral education. In societies such as Nigeria, where indigenous cultures hold a central place in daily life, the inclusion of indigenous values in education can enrich moral development and cultivate ethical behaviours grounded in cultural identity and community well-being. Many indigenous cultures emphasise non-violent discipline, using guidance rather than punitive measures to instill moral values. Studies among the Inuit of Canada demonstrate that patience, storytelling, and experiential learning are preferred over physical punishment, as stated by Briggs (1998) on “*Inuit Morality Play: The Emotional Education of a Three-Year-Old*”.

Understanding Indigenous Cultural Values in Education

Indigenous cultures are rich in traditions, wisdom, and ethical systems that have been passed down through generations. These cultural values often emphasise principles such as respect for nature, communal responsibility, respect for elders, and social harmony. In many African societies, including Nigeria, indigenous values emphasise the importance of community and collective well-being, often placing the needs of the group above those of the individual. Furthermore, ethical principles are often expressed through stories, proverbs, and rituals, which serve as tools for teaching moral lessons. For

instance, in Nigerian societies, respect for elders is a core value, and children are taught from a young age to honor their elders as custodians of knowledge and wisdom (Lasisi et al., 2024; Olanrewaju & Titilayo, 2020).

Additionally, indigenous Nigerian cultures often emphasise communalism, where individuals are encouraged to contribute to the collective welfare of the community. This practice fosters virtues such as sharing, kindness, and fairness, which are integral to moral development. Assigning responsibilities from a young age instills accountability, teamwork, and ethical decision-making. Among the Hausa of Nigeria, children are taught to contribute to household and community work, reinforcing values such as diligence and respect, as stated by Falola on “*The African Diaspora: Slavery, Modernity, and Globalization*”.

Integrating Indigenous Cultural Values into Educational Programs

Curriculum Design: Educational programs can be redesigned to include indigenous cultural values and practices that support moral development. This can involve embedding local proverbs, folktales, and stories into the curriculum as a way of teaching ethical principles. For example, traditional stories from Nigerian cultures often convey moral lessons about honesty, respect, and kindness. By including these stories in literature classes or as part of a broader ethical education curriculum, children can learn moral lessons in a context that is relevant to their own cultural experiences. These stories often portray virtuous behaviour and highlight the consequences of unethical actions, serving as moral guides for children. Integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum not only helps to preserve cultural heritage but also strengthens the ethical foundations of students, as they see their own cultural values reflected in their education (Ateequ, 2022; Nwosu, 2019).

Collaborating with Elders and Community Leaders: In many indigenous cultures, elders play a central role in guiding the moral development of children. Educational programs can build strong connections with the community by involving elders and community leaders in the teaching process (Yusuf et al., 2023). Elders can serve as role models and mentors, sharing their wisdom, experiences, and moral teachings with students. Community-based programs, where children are taught directly by elders, can provide opportunities for experiential learning and reinforce moral values such as respect for tradition, empathy, and social responsibility. This practice aligns with the principles of communal learning, where children learn not only from formal teachers but also from the broader community. Communal engagement is a powerful tool in the moral upbringing of children, as it provides a collective framework for reinforcing ethical behaviour (Onwuatiegwu & Paul-Mgbeafulike, 2023; Nwosu, 2019).

Traditional Rituals and Ceremonies: Many indigenous cultures use rituals and ceremonies as a way to instill moral values in children (Osei, 2024). These rituals are often designed to mark important milestones in a child's life, as stated by Clark on “*Ethics and Social Responsibility in Contemporary Society*”, such as their transition from childhood to adulthood, and to teach them the responsibilities that come with growing up (Nana, 2025). For example, in Nigerian societies, coming-of-age ceremonies often involve lessons on ethics, community roles, and societal expectations. Educational programs can incorporate these traditional rituals and ceremonies into the learning process by organising community events where students participate in cultural celebrations and rituals (Hassan & Abdulkareem, 2023; Abolarin, 2021). By doing so, students can gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage and its moral teachings. These experiences also provide students with an opportunity to practice ethical behaviour in real-world settings, fostering a sense of responsibility and community engagement (Dare et al., 2024).

Ethics in Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Indigenous knowledge systems often include moral and ethical teachings about the environment, relationships, and social conduct. For example, indigenous Nigerian cultures often emphasise the ethical treatment of the environment, recognizing the interconnectedness of humans and nature (Brownson et al., 2024). Children can be taught to respect nature by learning about

traditional ecological knowledge, such as sustainable farming practices, conservation, and the spiritual significance of nature in indigenous worldviews (Kamilu et al., 2022). Incorporating these teachings into educational programs can help students develop a sense of environmental stewardship, empathy, and responsibility toward the natural world (Lasisi et al., 2024). By connecting moral development with environmental education, schools can foster a sense of care for the planet and its resources, which is an important ethical value in both local and global contexts (Lasisi et al., 2024).

Developing Moral Reasoning through Cultural Context: Moral reasoning is shaped by cultural norms, and incorporating indigenous cultural values into educational programs can help students develop moral reasoning that is aligned with their cultural context (Suleiman & Abdulkareem, 2023). By addressing ethical dilemmas within the framework of indigenous cultural values, educators can encourage students to think critically about right and wrong, fairness, and justice (Lawal et al., 2024). For example, in Nigerian cultures, the importance of fairness and justice in social interactions is often emphasised, and children can learn to apply these values to everyday decisions. Cultural context plays a key role in moral development because it helps students understand the cultural underpinnings of ethical behaviour (Robinson & Taylor, 2022). Educators can facilitate discussions and debates around cultural values, encouraging students to reflect on their actions and the consequences they have on others. This approach not only strengthens moral reasoning but also reinforces ethical behaviours such as empathy, kindness, and respect for others (Olawajun et al., 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities

While there are numerous benefits to incorporating indigenous cultural values into educational programs, there are also challenges. One of the primary challenges is the risk of marginalizing indigenous practices within a globalized educational system that may prioritize Western perspectives. Additionally, the diversity of indigenous cultures means that what is considered ethical may vary between communities, making it important for educators to be sensitive to cultural differences. These challenges also present opportunities for dialogue and innovation. By embracing indigenous cultural values and incorporating them into educational practices, schools can create more inclusive, culturally relevant, and meaningful learning experiences. This not only promotes ethical development but also helps preserve indigenous knowledge and fosters respect for cultural diversity.

Integration of Students' Cultural Backgrounds into Teaching Practices

The integration of students' cultural backgrounds into classroom instruction has emerged as a pivotal approach to fostering ethical development and academic success. Central to this perspective is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), which emphasizes validating students' cultural experiences and utilizing them as instructional assets. When learners see their cultural identities reflected in the curriculum, it not only enhances their engagement but also promotes ethical behavior and improved academic performance (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In the Nigerian context, this approach resonates strongly, where the recognition and inclusion of diverse home cultures have been shown to enhance classroom relevance and learner participation.

One effective strategy in this regard is the use of indigenous stories, proverbs, and moral teachings. This practice is deeply rooted in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky on "*Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*", which posits that cognitive and moral development are mediated by cultural tools such as language and traditional knowledge systems. Folktales and oral traditions serve not merely as entertainment but as vehicles for ethical socialization, transmitting values

like honesty, respect, and communal living. These culturally rich narratives help students internalize societal norms, reinforcing moral learning through familiar and contextually relevant means.

Furthermore, the promotion of intercultural dialogue in multicultural classrooms aligns with CRP's goal of fostering critical consciousness. This component of CRP encourages learners to analyze social inequalities and engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives. Through such interactions, students develop empathy and an appreciation for diversity, ultimately preparing them to be ethically aware citizens in pluralistic societies like Nigeria (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Engaging learners with culturally relevant ethical dilemmas is another instructional practice supported by Vygotsky's framework. By presenting students with scenarios rooted in their socio-cultural realities—such as choosing between communal and individual interests—educators activate the zone of proximal development, thereby promoting higher-order moral reasoning. Guided reflection on these dilemmas cultivates ethical decision-making that is both developmentally appropriate and culturally grounded.

A related dimension involves fostering communal responsibility and moral identity among students. This approach draws on both Sociocultural Theory and CRP's emphasis on cultural competence. Vygotsky's idea of socially mediated learning complements CRP's goal of nurturing collective values. In Nigerian classrooms, instilling values such as cooperation, selflessness, and mutual accountability aligns with local traditions and contributes to the development of ethically grounded individuals.

Cultivating respect for diversity and tolerance is another outcome of CRP. By embedding inclusive and multicultural content into the curriculum, educators create democratic learning environments that value equality and pluralism. Such classrooms support ethical development through positive social interaction and an emphasis on human dignity and coexistence (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Critical thinking and moral reasoning are further enhanced when instruction integrates both culturally relevant content and scaffolded dialogue. CRP encourages learners to interrogate ethical issues within familiar cultural contexts, while Vygotsky underscores the importance of guided discourse and reflection in promoting moral growth. Through culturally grounded discussions of moral questions, students cultivate reasoning skills oriented toward justice, empathy, and ethical problem-solving.

The inclusion of elders and community leaders in moral instruction reinforces the sociocultural foundation of ethical development. Vygotsky's concept of the "more knowledgeable other" underscores the role of cultural custodians in mediating learning. Community elders contribute to moral education by linking school-based learning with indigenous ethical frameworks, ensuring that instruction is contextually relevant and culturally authentic.

Rituals and ceremonies also function as significant tools for moral transmission. From a sociocultural perspective, these events act as scaffolds that embed ethical instruction within emotionally resonant and symbolically rich experiences. Rites of passage, in particular, serve as milestones for teaching responsibility, maturity, and community values, thereby reinforcing internalization of ethical norms.

Teaching environmental stewardship through indigenous worldviews represents another valuable intersection of CRP and Sociocultural Theory. By connecting ecological ethics with traditional practices, students gain a culturally grounded understanding of sustainability. This approach not only fosters environmental responsibility but also strengthens cultural identity and moral commitment to communal well-being (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Finally, moral reasoning itself is shaped by the cultural contexts in which learners are embedded. Vygotsky (1978) argues that ethical development emerges through socially guided interaction within specific cultural frameworks. Presenting ethical dilemmas that reflect community values and everyday experiences enables students to apply critical thinking to real-life decisions, thereby reinforcing ethical behavior in both personal and communal settings.

CONCLUSION

Incorporating indigenous cultural values and practices into educational programs is a powerful way to promote moral development in children. By embedding indigenous knowledge, traditions, and ethical teachings into the curriculum, schools can foster ethical values that are relevant to students' cultural identities. In contexts like Nigeria, where cultural diversity is rich and varied, integrating indigenous values offers an opportunity to promote respect, empathy, social responsibility, and fairness. While challenges exist, the integration of indigenous cultural values into educational systems presents a valuable approach to developing morally grounded, culturally competent, and socially responsible individuals.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism

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