

Original Article

A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF MORAL VALUES AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN KAKCHING DISTRICT OF MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

The period of adolescence is a crucial phase for development of moral and ethical values, which is influenced by the socio-ecological environment. The present study aims to study the moral values of adolescents in the Kakching district of Manipur. The descriptive method of research was used to describe the moral values of 1,592 adolescents (Classes IX and X; Mean Age = 14.53), selected through a two-stage stratified cluster sampling technique. The Moral Values Scale (MVS-Gs, 2016) developed by Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta and Dr. Arun Kumar Singh was used to measure the moral values of adolescents. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur possess average to high levels of moral values, and there were no statistically significant differences based on their gender. However, the 16-year-old adolescents exhibit significantly higher moral values (lower susceptibility to dishonesty and stealing) as compared to their 13 and 15-year-old peers ($p < .05$). The findings of the study suggested the integration of targeted moral and psychosocial support systems within the educational framework to foster lasting peace and stability in conflict-affected regions.

Keywords: Moral Values, Adolescence, Manipur Violence, Kakching District, Manipur

INTRODUCTION

Moral values scaffold the gap between our raw, primal impulses and our highest social ideals. Moral values are a set of principles that guide us in evaluating what is right or wrong. It helps to shape the character and personality of an individual [Panchal and Desai \(2020\)](#). It empowers individuals to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. Moral values include integrity, determination, truthfulness, honesty, loyalty, respect for others, and so on. An individual's worldview is largely determined by moral values [Abdulbagiyeva \(2021\)](#). It can be considered an invisible architecture for a stable society, ensuring progress as a collective responsibility rather than personal gain.

The development of moral values is a dynamic and lifelong process that transitions from the externalised compliance of early childhood to the principled autonomy of late adolescence. This development begins with the pre-conventional stage towards conventional morality, characterised by a desire for social harmony and respect for established authority. The transition of morality from concrete to abstract reasoning during adolescence is accompanied by the consolidation of ethical identity, which becomes a societal necessity [Kohlberg \(1984\)](#), [Piaget \(1932\)](#). However, this development is not an

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Received: 21 January 2026; Accepted: 28 February 2026; Published 12 April 2026

DOI: [10.29121/granthaalayah.v14.i3.2026.6869](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v14.i3.2026.6869)

Page Number: 34-41

Journal Title: International Journal of Research -GRANTHAALAYAH

Journal Abbreviation: Int. J. Res. Granthaalayah

Online ISSN: 2350-0530, Print ISSN: 2394-3629

Publisher: Granthaalayah Publications and Printers, India

Conflict of Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors' Contributions: Each author made an equal contribution to the conception and design of the study. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Transparency: The authors affirm that this manuscript presents an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study. All essential aspects have been included, and any deviations from the original study plan have been clearly explained. The writing process strictly adhered to established ethical standards.

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isolated psychological process; it is deeply intertwined with the environmental and social context of an individual. The ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) stated that macro-level disruptions significantly influence micro-level development.

In the context of Manipur, the ongoing Manipur violence (since 3rd May, 2023) has brought continuous disruption in educational activities and social support systems thereby placing an unprecedented pressure on the adolescents. This atmosphere of uncertainty and breakdown of social and institutional systems has necessitated a re-evaluation of how adolescents internalise and manifest moral principles. Despite the critical nature of this developmental stage, there is a scarcity of empirical data regarding the moral status of adolescents in conflict-affected regions.

Furthermore, the attempt to understand the moral values of adolescents in the Kakching district of Manipur is no longer an academic pursuit; rather, it is an essential diagnostic necessity for ensuring the psychological well-being of adolescents in the region. Therefore, an attempt has been made in the present study to measure the moral values of adolescents in the Kakching district of Manipur. This study also aims to provide empirical knowledge for educators, policymakers and other responsible stakeholders for developing a holistic environment that prioritises moral development as a fundamental pillar for fostering lasting peace and stability in the region.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Cognitive development studies have extensively documented moral development during adolescence and established that the transition from heteronomous morality (external authority) to autonomous morality (internal understanding) occurs during this period of development [Piaget \(1932\)](#). Furthermore, there is a critical shift from pre-conventional to conventional reasoning, in which interpersonal and social law become paramount [Kohlberg \(1984\)](#). Recent studies also supported these foundational theories by emphasising that adolescents are actively consolidating their moral and ethical identities and worldviews [Abdulbagiyeva \(2021\)](#), [Panchal and Desai \(2020\)](#). Another literature also reported that the moral values of adolescents typically range from high to extremely high [Vaishnavi et al. \(2016\)](#), suggesting a stable moral development during this period.

Moreover, contemporary literature heavily emphasises the role of the environment through cognitive maturation and moral reasoning. The ecological systems theory states that human development is shaped by the interaction between the immediate microsystem and the macrosystem [Bronfenbrenner \(1979\)](#). Studies suggested that stable environments foster consistent moral growth, whereas a disrupted ecosystem can alter the moral development trajectory [Betancourt and Khan \(2008\)](#). In this context, the adolescents are navigating towards moral and ethical dilemmas when the educational and social support systems are compromised thereby promoting moral maturation or adoption survival-centric ethical paradigms.

Studies examining the psychological and moral aspects of adolescents living in conflict affected region. They indicated that chronic exposure to social violence, institutional breakdown and academic disruption severely impacts the well-being of adolescents [Slone and Mann \(2016\)](#). The concept of justice, honesty and social harmony are tested in such environment and reported that adolescents in conflict affected region exhibits higher moral resilience and increasing social responsibility as they navigate through complex community dynamics [Betancourt and Khan \(2008\)](#) and instances of increasing norm-violating behaviour as survival mechanisms temporarily override abstract moral principles during periods of acute threat [Posada and Wainryb \(2008\)](#).

Based on the above literature, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on the socio-cultural landscape of Northeast India, particularly in Manipur, where a socio-political violence has been facing since 3rd May 2023 (Manipur Violence), creating an unprecedented disruption in the macrosystem. However, there is no localised evidence detailing how these disruptions are influencing the moral values of adolescents in Manipur, with special reference to Kakching district. Thus, the present study is an attempt to address this gap and provide essential diagnostic data to understand the moral values of adolescents in this unique context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The period of adolescence is a critical juncture for moral and ethical development, which serves as the foundation for adult citizenship and social responsibility. The significance of the present study is multi-dimensional and offers insights into the moral development of adolescents within the socio-cultural and political framework of Manipur. It also contributes to the existing body of knowledge on moral development by providing empirical evidence from a cross-

sectional perspective. The study also validated the developmental theories proposed by Kohlberg and Piaget with the indigenous context of Manipur.

Moreover, the findings of this study will be helpful in understanding the psychological wellbeing and moral resilience among the adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur since it was conducted during a period of social unrest and disrupted educational situation due to the Manipur Violence (since 3rd May 2023). These insights will be particularly useful for school administrators, curriculum designers, teachers, parents and other stakeholders for advocating a holistic educational environment that prioritises moral development among adolescents, thereby promoting lasting peace and stability in Manipur.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To measure the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur.
- 2) To compare the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their gender.
- 3) To compare the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their age.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- 1) There is no significant difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their gender.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their age.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopted the *descriptive method of research* and it was *cross-sectional* and *quantitative* in nature.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

All the adolescents enrolled in Class IX and X during 2024-25 in the Kakching district of Manipur form the population of the present study. A total of 1592 students (Male=802, Female=790) within the age range 13 to 18 (Mean Age=14.53) were selected as samples of the study through *two-stage stratified cluster sampling* based on their *school management (government/private)*. The process of sampling includes identification of schools having no enrolment, stratification of schools based on their management (Government =20, Private=32), randomly selection of 50% schools (Government =10, Private = 16 from each stratum forming a natural cluster and selection of 1592 regular students as the samples. The process of sampling was done in such a way that it ensures proportional representation of the samples across different schools in the district.

INSTRUMENT

The Moral Value Scale (MVS-GS, 2016) developed and standardized by Dr. Alpana Sen Gupta and Dr. Arun Kumar Singh was used to measure the moral values of the adolescents. The tool consists of 36 items distributed across four dimensions-Lying, Dishonesty, Stealing and Cheating. Each item of the MVS-GS has two response options as "Yes" or "No". The tools consist of negative and positive items in which a score of 1 was given for responding 'Yes' to a positive item and 'No' to a negative item while, a score of 0 was awarded to all other responses. Thus, the higher score on the scale means the respondents sustained higher level of moral values. Furthermore, the Cronbach Alpha reliability (α) of MVS-GS was 0.869 with scale mean 22.62 ± 7.22 .

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for the present study, was started after getting approval from the Zonal Education Officer (ZEO), Kakching and the Principal of selected schools. The investigator personally visited each classroom and a formal orientation was conducted to establish rapport with the students thereby emphasized the voluntary nature of

participation and guarantee respondent anonymity and data confidentiality. Despite logistical constraints and unpredictable field conditions arising from the regional law and order situation since 3rd May 2023, the investigator with the supports of school staffs, successfully administered questionnaires to 1,592 students and concluded the data collection process by November 2024.

DATA ANALYSIS

LEVELS OF MORAL VALUES OF ADOLESCENTS IN KAKCHING DISTRICT OF MANIPUR.

Table 1

Table 1 Levels of Moral Value				
Moral Value	Percentile Range	Raw Score Range	Frequency	Percent
Extremely Low	≤ P ₁₀	03-Dec	185	11.6
Very Low	P ₁₁ to P ₂₀	13-15	154	9.7
Low	P ₂₁ to P ₃₉	16-21	297	18.7
Average	P ₄₀ to P ₆₀	22-26	357	22.4
High	P ₆₁ to P ₇₉	27-29	271	17
Very High	P ₈₀ to P ₉₄	30-32	274	17.2
Extremely High	≥ P ₉₅	33-35	54	3.4
Total			1592	100

Table 1 presents the categorization of moral values based on seven discrete ordinal levels. The result indicated that the largest segment of the respondents falls into the Average level of moral values (22.4%, n = 357), High (17.0%, n = 271), Very High (17.2%, n = 274) and a marginal portion of respondents scored the Extremely High level of moral values (3.4%, n = 54). Additionally, a small group of respondents fell into the Extremely Low Moral Values (11.6%, n = 185), Very Low (9.7%, n = 154) and Low (18.7%, n = 297) categories encompass exactly 40.0% of the respondents. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the respondents possess average to above average level of moral values with a very few respondents scoring extremely high or low levels.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MORAL VALUES AMONG ADOLESCENTS BASED ON THEIR GENDER.

In order to compare the moral values of adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur based on their gender, a null hypothesis was advanced i.e. *There is no significant difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their gender.* For testing the hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether moral values of the high school in Kakching district of Manipur differ based on gender.

Table 2

Table 2 Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Moral Values and Gender									
	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE _M	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Overall Moral Value	Male	802	22.76	7.074	0.25	0.754	1590	0.451	0.04
	Female	790	22.48	7.385	0.263				
Lying	Male	802	4.35	1.578	0.056	-0.801	1590	0.423	-0.04
	Female	790	4.41	1.647	0.059				
Dishonesty	Male	802	6.13	2.116	0.075	0.751	1590	0.453	0.04
	Female	790	6.05	2.15	0.076				
Stealing	Male	802	6.14	2.553	0.09	0.959	1590	0.338	0.05
	Female	790	6.01	2.68	0.095				
Cheating	Male	802	5.49	2.077	0.073	0.419	1590	0.651	0.02
	Female	790	5.45	2.028	0.072				

The analysis in Table 2 revealed no statistically significant difference in overall moral values between male and female students $t(1590) = 0.75, p = 0.451$. Further analysis revealed no significant difference among male and female students in the dimensions of Lying [$t(1590) = -0.80, p = 0.423$], Dishonesty [$t(1590) = 0.75, p = 0.453$], Stealing [$t(1583.63) = 0.96, p = 0.338$], or Cheating [$t(1590) = 0.42, p = 0.675$], respectively.

Thus, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their gender.” is retained (2-tailed test at 95% confidence interval). Therefore, gender of the adolescents has nothing to do with moral values in Kakching district of Manipur.

COMPARISON OF MORAL VALUES OF ADOLESCENTS IN KAKCHING DISTRICT OF MANIPUR BASED ON THEIR AGE.

For comparing the moral values of adolescents, a null hypothesis was advanced i.e. *There is no significant difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching District of Manipur based on their age.* A one-way Analysis of Variance Test (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if the age of adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur significantly impacts their moral values.

Table 3

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of Age variable									
	Age (in years)	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% CI for Mean		Min	Max
						Lower	Upper		
Moral Value	13	199	22.62	7.25	0.51	21.6	23.63	4	33
	14	553	22.61	7.29	0.31	22.01	23.22	5	35
	15	653	22.26	7.28	0.28	21.7	22.82	3	35
	16	165	24.17	6.61	0.51	23.15	25.19	5	35
	17	20	21.75	7.26	1.62	18.35	25.15	8	33
	18	2	25	5.65	4	-25.82	75.82	21	29
	Total	1592	22.62	7.22	0.18	22.27	22.98	3	35
Lying	13	199	4.36	1.55	0.11	4.14	4.57	1	8
	14	553	4.33	1.59	0.06	4.19	4.46	0	8
	15	653	4.36	1.63	0.06	4.24	4.49	0	8
	16	165	4.61	1.66	0.12	4.36	4.87	0	8
	17	20	4.5	1.53	0.34	3.78	5.22	2	7
	18	2	6	0	0	6	6	6	6
	Total	1592	4.38	1.61	0.04	4.3	4.46	0	8
Dishonesty	13	199	5.79	2.21	0.15	5.48	6.1	1	9
	14	553	6.11	2.11	0.09	5.94	6.29	1	9
	15	653	6.04	2.13	0.08	5.87	6.2	1	9
	16	165	6.62	2.02	0.15	6.31	6.93	1	9
	17	20	5.95	2.06	0.46	4.98	6.92	2	9
	18	2	5.5	3.53	2.5	-26.27	37.27	3	8
	Total	1592	6.09	2.13	0.05	5.99	6.2	1	9
Stealing	13	199	6.22	2.54	0.18	5.87	6.58	0	9
	14	553	6.12	2.63	0.11	5.9	6.34	0	9
	15	653	5.89	2.69	0.1	5.68	6.09	0	9
	16	165	6.61	2.26	0.17	6.26	6.95	0	9

Stealing	17	20	5.25	2.59	0.58	4.04	6.46	0	9
	18	2	7	1.41	1	-5.71	19.71	6	8
	Total	1592	6.08	2.61	0.06	5.95	6.21	0	9
Cheating	13	199	5.67	2	0.14	5.39	5.95	1	9
	14	553	5.46	2.12	0.09	5.28	5.63	0	9
	15	653	5.39	2.04	0.08	5.23	5.54	0	9
	16	165	5.61	1.92	0.15	5.32	5.91	1	9
	17	20	5.4	1.81	0.4	4.55	6.25	2	9
	18	2	6	1.41	1	-6.71	18.71	5	7
Total	1592	5.47	2.05	0.05	5.37	5.57	0	9	

Table 4

Table 4 Analysis of Variance for Maral Value based on Age variable							
Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
Overall Moral Value	Between Groups	509.38	5	101.87	1.95	0.082	0.006
	Within Groups	82643.22	1586	52.11			
	Total	83152.6	1591				
Lying	Between Groups	16.29	5	3.25	1.25	0.281	0.004
	Within Groups	4120.3	1586	2.59			
	Total	4136.6	1591				
Dishonesty	Between Groups	66.67	5	13.33	2.95	0.012*	0.009
	Within Groups	7169.11	1586	4.52			
	Total	7235.79	1591				
Stealing	Between Groups	89.88	5	17.97	2.63	0.022*	0.008
	Within Groups	10801.61	1586	6.81			
	Total	10891.49	1591				
Cheating	Between Groups	16.35	5	3.27	0.77	0.567	0.002
	Within Groups	6686.31	1586	4.21			
	Total	6702.67	1591				

*. The test is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 revealed no statistically significant differences across the overall moral values, $F(5, 1586) = 1.96, p = 0.082$ including the sub dimensions of Lying ($p = .281$) and Cheating ($p = .567$). For these dimensions, moral development remains relatively stable regardless of the student's age. However, statistically significant differences was found for the sub-dimensions of Dishonesty, $F(5, 1586) = 2.95, p = 0.012$, and Stealing, $F(5, 1586) = 2.64, p = 0.022$. Further, a Gabriel's post-hoc test was conducted to find out where the exact significant difference occurred.

Table 5

Table 5 Multiple Comparisons of Moral Values based on Age Variable						
Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Upper

Dishonesty	13	16	-0.824*	0.224	0.004	-1.48	-0.17
	15	16	-0.581*	0.185	0.014	-1.1	-0.07
	16	13	0.824*	0.224	0.004	0.17	1.48
		15	0.581*	0.185	0.014	0.07	1.1
Stealing	15	16	-0.718*	0.227	0.013	-1.35	-0.08
	16	15	0.718*	0.227	0.013	0.08	1.35

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post-hoc analysis in Table 5 revealed that 16-year-old students ($M = 6.62$) scored significantly higher in the Dishonesty dimension than both 13-year-olds ($M = 5.79, p = .004$) and 15-year-olds ($M = 6.04, p = .014$). In the Stealing dimension, 16-year-old students ($M = 6.61$) also scored significantly higher than 15-year-old students ($M = 5.89, p = .013$).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is partially rejected (at 0.05 significance level). Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant age-base difference in the overall moral values of adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur except the 16-year-old adolescents possess lower level of dishonest and stealing behaviours as compared to their younger counterparts.

FINDINGS

- 1) The adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur possess average to high level of moral values.
- 2) Gender has nothing to do with the moral values adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur.
- 3) 16-years-old adolescents exhibits higher moral values with lower susceptibility to dishonesty and stealing as compare to their 13 and 15-years-old counterparts in Kakching district of Manipur

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide a vital diagnostic assessment of the moral values of adolescents in the Kakching district of Manipur. The findings revealed that adolescents in the Kakching district of Manipur possess an average to high level of Moral values. This finding shows remarkably stable moral values despite the breakdown of macro-level support systems in the region. The second finding indicated that there is no significant gender-based difference in the moral values of adolescents in Kakching district of Manipur, suggesting the uniformity of influence of the current environmental stressors on the moral and ethical development of adolescents. Moreover, the third finding revealed a distinct peak of moral values at 16 years old having lower scores in dishonesty and stealing dimensions which provides a robust validation of cognitive development theories at the local level.

Moreover, the implications of this study extend beyond academic theory into immediate and practical application. The stable nature of moral values emphasizes the critical functions of the school and family as a microsystem. Therefore, it is of vital importance for school administrators, curriculum designers, policy makers, and other responsible stakeholders to prioritise holistic psychological and moral support for adolescents rather than academic recovery. The present study also calls for targeted psychosocial interventions for younger adolescents (13 to 15 years of age) to scaffold their moral and ethical development before they reach the natural maturation observed at 16 years of age. Thus, efforts should be made to nurture the moral values of adolescents to cultivate a generation capable of sustaining long-term peace and social cohesion in Manipur, which is a fundamental prerequisite for development rather than an educational objective.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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