

Inculcating Core Values among Grade 6 Students through Christian Education: An Action Research Study in Sri Lanka

W.N.U. Fernando, and A.C. I. Kinkini

Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Concerns regarding declining moral behaviours among early secondary school students in Sri Lanka have intensified the need for empirically grounded value education practices. Despite the recognised importance of character education, research on faith-based pedagogical interventions in the Sri Lankan context remains limited. This study employed a mixed-methods action research design to investigate the effectiveness of a Christian education-based intervention in promoting honesty, respect, and sharing among Grade 6 students. The intervention was implemented with one intact class of 40 students in a Christian school, while 40 Grade 6 students from five schools served as a comparison group. Quantitative data were collected using pre- and post-intervention Likert-scale questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and correlation analysis. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 10 parents, classroom observations, and reflective notes were analysed thematically. Results indicated statistically significant improvements in students' mean scores for respect, honesty, and sharing following the intervention, with strengthened post-intervention correlations among the three values (e.g., respect and honesty, $r = .765$, $p < .01$). Qualitative findings highlighted the pedagogical value of storytelling, reflection, prayer, and home-school collaboration in reinforcing moral development. The study concludes that culturally contextualised Christian education interventions can positively influence the internalisation of values and the expression of behaviour among early secondary students.

Keywords: Christian education, character education, value inculcation, action research, moral development

INTRODUCTION

Education extends beyond academic instruction to include the development of students' moral, ethical, and social competencies. Contemporary educational frameworks increasingly recognise the importance of character formation and value education as integral components of holistic development (Lickona, 1991). In Sri Lanka, moral and religious education are formally embedded within the national curriculum (Wedikandage, 2014). However, educators and policymakers have expressed ongoing concerns about student indiscipline, diminished prosocial behaviour, and limited internalisation of ethical norms in school contexts (Prasetya, 2024; Hambali, 2017). These concerns have generated renewed scholarly interest in identifying effective, contextually grounded approaches to value formation among early secondary students.

International research suggests that value internalisation is most effective when embedded within participatory, reflective, and relational pedagogical practices rather than delivered through didactic moral instruction alone (Halstead & Taylor, 2020; Lovat & Toomey, 2021). Teacher modelling, school culture, and home-school collaboration have been consistently identified as influential factors in students' moral development (Widiastuti & Sihombing, 2022). However, much of the existing research relies on short-term interventions and self-reported measures, providing limited insight into observable behavioural change (Walter et al., 2015). Furthermore, while civic and secular approaches to value education have been widely examined, comparatively fewer empirical studies have explored faith-based pedagogical interventions, particularly within the Sri Lankan educational context.

Christian education, grounded in biblical principles and relational pedagogy, emphasises the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, respect, compassion, and responsibility. The theoretical foundations of this study draw primarily on Lickona's (1991) framework of character education, which conceptualises moral development across three interrelated domains: moral knowing (cognitive understanding), moral feeling (affective engagement), and moral action (behavioural enactment). Complementing this framework, Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development provides insight into the progressive nature of moral reasoning shaped through guided discussion and reflective experience. Together, these perspectives suggest that structured, reflective, and experience-based interventions may promote both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of value formation.

Despite policy recognition of moral education and the presence of Christian Religious Education in Sri Lankan schools, empirical research on the measurable impact of classroom-based interventions promoting Christian values remains limited. Kinkini (2025) argues that learners do not come into the classroom as passive recipients of information; instead, they arrive with diverse backgrounds, personal histories, and rich experiential knowledge. Student-centred teaching and learning approaches recognise this reality by intentionally integrating students' lived experiences into the learning process. There is insufficient evidence regarding how intentional integration of storytelling, reflection, prayer, and collaborative activities within Christian education lessons influences observable student behaviour in early secondary grades. Addressing this gap is important for informing pedagogical practice and strengthening the evidence base for faith-informed character education in pluralistic educational settings.

Accordingly, this study investigates the implementation of a Christian education-focused action research intervention to promote honesty, respect, and sharing among Grade 6 students in a Sri Lankan Christian school. By employing a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative measures of attitudinal change with qualitative insights from teachers and parents, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of contextually grounded, faith-based value education interventions.

Although moral and religious education are formally incorporated into the Sri Lankan school curriculum, concerns persist regarding the extent to which these curricular provisions translate into observable behavioural outcomes among students (Wedikandage, 2021). Reports from educators and prior studies indicate challenges related to student indiscipline, limited prosocial engagement, and inconsistent internalisation of ethical norms within school environments (Prasetya, 2024; Hambali, 2017). While such concerns have prompted renewed attention to value education, there remains insufficient empirical evidence examining the effectiveness of classroom-based interventions in producing measurable changes in students' attitudes and behaviours. Existing research on value education has predominantly focused on civic or secular character education models, with comparatively little investigation of faith-based pedagogical approaches, particularly in the Sri Lankan context. Moreover, many studies rely primarily on short-term interventions or self-reported attitudinal data, offering limited insight into behavioural manifestations of core values such as honesty, respect, and sharing. As a result, there is a lack of contextually grounded research examining how intentional integration of Christian teachings within classroom practice may influence students' moral development. Given this gap, there is a need for empirically informed studies that investigate whether structured Christian education interventions can meaningfully contribute to both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of value formation among early secondary students. This study seeks to address that need by examining the design, implementation, and impact of a Christian teaching-focused action research intervention among Grade 6 students in a Sri Lankan school context.

Aim of the Research

This study was designed to investigate and enhance the development of core values, specifically honesty, respect, and sharing among Grade 6 students through a structured action research framework. Initially, the research sought to assess students' existing attitudes toward these values prior to the implementation of any intervention. In parallel, it examined teachers' and parents' perceptions of the key factors influencing students' moral and value formation in both school and home contexts. Based on these preliminary findings, a Christian teaching-focused action research intervention was systematically designed and implemented to promote the identified core values. Finally, the study examined the impact of this intervention by evaluating changes in students' observable honesty, respect, and sharing following its implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Character and Moral Development

Character and value education have long been examined within the broader field of moral development theory. One of the most influential frameworks is Lickona's (1991) theory of character education, which conceptualises moral development as comprising three interrelated dimensions: moral knowing (cognitive understanding of ethical principles), moral feeling (affective commitment to those principles), and moral action (behavioural enactment of values). According to this framework, effective character education must move beyond cognitive instruction to include emotional engagement and consistent behavioural practice. Teachers are positioned not merely as instructors but as moral models whose relational engagement with students supports internalisation of values.

Complementing this perspective, Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development emphasises the progressive nature of moral reasoning across developmental stages. Kohlberg argues that moral judgment evolves through structured dialogue, exposure to moral dilemmas, and guided reflection. Although Kohlberg's framework primarily addresses cognitive moral reasoning, subsequent empirical examinations (Snarey et al., 1985; Ma, 1988) have supported the cross-cultural applicability of early and middle stages of moral reasoning. Together, Lickona's integrative model and Kohlberg's developmental approach suggest that structured, reflective, and experience-based pedagogies may facilitate both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of value formation.

In faith-based educational contexts, these theoretical models are often operationalised through narrative, ritual, modelling, and communal practices that connect moral reasoning with spiritual meaning. Christian education integrates scriptural narratives, prayer, and reflective dialogue to foster moral identity and behavioural consistency.

Empirical Research on Value Education Interventions

Contemporary research on value education increasingly emphasises participatory and contextually embedded pedagogies rather than didactic transmission of moral rules (Halstead & Taylor, 2020). Studies across diverse educational contexts indicate that students are more likely to internalise values when they are integrated into everyday classroom interactions, reflective discussions, and relational school cultures (Lovat & Toomey, 2021).

Empirical investigations further highlight the role of teacher modelling and institutional ethos in shaping students' moral reasoning and behaviour. Widiastuti and Sihombing (2022) demonstrate that sustained collaboration between schools and families strengthens the internalisation of values. However, a recurring limitation in the literature is the reliance on short-term interventions and self-reported attitudinal measures, which provide limited evidence of sustained behavioural change (Walter et al., 2015). This methodological pattern underscores the need for research designs that combine quantitative measurement with qualitative insight into observable behavioural outcomes.

Studies conducted in African and Asian contexts similarly report implementation challenges. Nawose et al. (2024) found that although teachers acknowledge the importance of value-centred pedagogies, practical constraints often lead to continued reliance on traditional instructional methods. Likewise, Othoo and Aseu (2022) demonstrate that moral development outcomes are significantly influenced by pedagogical strategies, particularly when reflective and participatory approaches are employed. These findings suggest that pedagogical intentionality, rather than curricular presence alone, is central to effective value formation.

Faith-Based and Christian Education Approaches

While secular character education models dominate much of the literature, faith-based approaches provide an alternative framework grounded in spiritual narratives and theological anthropology. Christian education emphasises virtues such as honesty, compassion, respect, and service as expressions of moral identity shaped through scriptural engagement and communal practice. Etherington (2013) argues that theistic frameworks offer coherent moral grounding by situating ethical behaviour within a transcendent narrative structure.

Empirical research on Christian education indicates that storytelling, reflective prayer, and relational mentoring contribute to the development of moral consistency and behavioural regulation (Paparang & Marjono, 2024). The “storytelling” session can also quickly adapt not only to Sri Lankan culture but also to any other culture, because storytelling is very familiar since childhood in most cultures. Furthermore, storytelling is a useful teaching method. Moreover, children do not get tired, and they can learn peace values. (Kinkini, 2025) However, compared to secular character education models, empirical studies examining measurable behavioural outcomes within Christian school contexts remain relatively limited. Existing studies often focus on theological reflection rather than on the design and evaluation of systematic interventions.

This gap is particularly visible in South Asian educational contexts, where research on Christian pedagogy has historically been descriptive rather than empirically evaluative.

Contextual Influences on Value Formation

Value formation does not occur in isolation but is influenced by interrelated contextual factors. Research consistently identifies family practices, peer interactions, school culture, and broader socio-cultural influences as significant contributors to moral development (Walidaini & Marzuki, 2021). Home–school collaboration has been shown to reinforce behavioural expectations and promote consistency in value practice across environments.

At the same time, contemporary social dynamics, including increased exposure to digital media and consumer-oriented culture, have been associated with shifts in adolescent social behaviour and ethical decision-making. These contextual influences highlight the importance of culturally responsive and contextually grounded intervention strategies when designing value education programmes.

Value Education in the Sri Lankan Context and Research Gap

In Sri Lanka, moral and religious education is formally embedded in the national curriculum. However, scholars have noted limitations in the practical integration of value-based instruction into everyday classroom practice (Walpola, 2021). Although curricular objectives emphasise holistic development, empirical studies evaluating the measurable impact of classroom-based moral interventions remain scarce.

Furthermore, while international literature provides insight into general character education frameworks, limited research has examined faith-based intervention models within Sri Lankan Christian school settings, particularly using mixed-methods designs that assess both attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

Thus, a clear research gap emerges in three areas:

- Limited empirical evaluation of Christian education–based interventions in Sri Lanka.
- Insufficient integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess behavioural change.
- Need for contextually grounded action research approaches that connect theory with classroom practice.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the implementation and impact of a structured, Christian-education–focused intervention aimed at promoting honesty, respect, and sharing among Grade 6 students. By combining statistical analysis with qualitative perspectives from teachers and parents, the study seeks to contribute empirically grounded evidence to the discourse on faith-based character education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods action research design to evaluate the effectiveness of a Christian education–based intervention in promoting core values among Grade 6 students. Action research was selected because it enables systematic intervention within a natural classroom context while allowing iterative reflection and evaluation (Khathi et al., 2022). The mixed-methods approach was adopted to integrate quantitative measures of attitudinal change with qualitative insights into behavioural expression and contextual

influences.

In the convergent design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same intervention period, analysed separately, and subsequently integrated during interpretation to strengthen validity through triangulation.

Participants and Sampling

Intervention Group

The intervention group consisted of one intact Grade 6 class (n = 40) from a selected Christian school in Sri Lanka. The class was selected using purposive sampling based on accessibility and institutional approval. The group included 52.5% male and 47.5% female students, all of whom identified as Christian.

Comparison Group

For comparative analysis, a non-equivalent comparison group of 40 Grade 6 students from five schools was surveyed. No intervention was implemented in this group. The comparison group was included to provide a contextual reference for value-orientation patterns rather than to establish experimental causality. Given developmental differences between the Grade 6 comparison and intervention groups, the findings were interpreted cautiously.

Qualitative Participants

To obtain contextual insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers and 10 parents of students from the intervention group. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure direct engagement with the students.

Intervention Procedure

The intervention was implemented over a structured instructional period during regular Christian Religious Education sessions. The programme incorporated pedagogical strategies grounded in Christian teachings and aligned with Lickona's (1991) three-domain model of moral development.

The intervention included:

- Biblical storytelling is linked to honesty, respect, and sharing
- Guided reflective discussions
- Structured prayer and value contemplation
- Role-play and cooperative group activities
- Home-based reinforcement tasks involving parental engagement

Each session intentionally targeted cognitive understanding (moral knowing), emotional engagement (moral feeling), and behavioural enactment (moral action). The cyclical action research process involved planning, implementation, observation, reflection, and refinement.

Instruments

Student Questionnaire

A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered as both a pre-test and a post-test to assess students' attitudes toward honesty, respect, and sharing. Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from strongly

disagree (1) to agree (5) strongly.

Validity

Content validity was established through expert review by two university academics specialising in education and moral development. Items were examined for clarity, alignment with theoretical constructs, and age appropriateness.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$). Subscale reliability coefficients for honesty, respect, and sharing were also within acceptable thresholds, indicating consistency of measurement.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview protocols were developed for teachers and parents to explore:

- Perceived influences on value formation
- Observed behavioural changes
- Effectiveness of pedagogical strategies
- Interview guides were pilot tested for clarity. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Classroom Observation Checklist

A structured observation checklist was used to document behavioural indicators such as:

- Cooperative interaction
- Truthfulness in classroom tasks
- Respectful communication
- Participation in sharing activities

Observations were conducted systematically to supplement self-reported data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

The following statistical procedures were applied:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages)
- Paired-sample t-tests to assess pre- and post-intervention differences
- Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships among value constructs
- Mean-difference comparisons between intervention and comparison groups

- Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Where appropriate, effect sizes (Cohen’s d) were calculated to determine practical significance.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and reflections were analysed using thematic analysis. An inductive coding process was employed:

- Initial open coding
- Category development
- Theme refinement
- Cross-verification

To enhance credibility:

- Member checking was conducted with selected participants.
- Data triangulation was achieved by comparing teacher, parent, and observation data.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Data integration occurred at the interpretation stage. Quantitative findings on attitudinal changes were compared with qualitative themes derived from behavioural observations and stakeholder perceptions. Convergent patterns strengthened the validity of conclusions regarding intervention effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to data collection. Written informed consent was secured from:

- School administration
- Parents or guardians of student participants
- Interview participants

Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymising all responses. Students were informed that questionnaire responses would not affect academic evaluation. Audio recordings and data files were securely stored and accessed only by the research team.

RESULTS

Quantitative analysis was conducted to examine changes in students’ attitudes toward honesty, respect, and sharing following the Christian education intervention. Descriptive statistics indicated consistent improvements across all three value domains.

Descriptive Statistics

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation	
I listen attentively When my teacher is speaking.	40	2	5	3.50	.751

I treat my classmates politely and respectfully.	40	1	5	3.65	1.145
I follow classroom rules without being reminded.	40	1	5	3.77	1.165
I value others' opinions, even if they differ from mine.	40	1	5	3.45	1.085
I respect the property of my school and others.	40	2	5	3.95	1.011
I complete my school work without copying from others.	40	1	5	3.48	1.281
I admit my mistakes instead of hiding them.	40	1	5	3.37	1.170
I tell the truth even when it is difficult.	40	1	5	3.40	1.297
I give credit to others when they deserve it.	40	2	5	4.05	.876
I do not cheat during tests or exams.	40	2	5	3.85	1.189
I share my food with others	40	2	5	4.67	.656
I help classmates who are struggling with their lessons.	38	1	5	4.05	1.012
I share my things (such as books, pens, stationery) with others.	38	3	5	4.53	.725
I listen to others' ideas and try to work together to solve problems.	38	1	5	3.32	.962
I encourage others to share what they have.	38	1	5	3.66	1.072
Stories from the Bible help me understand how to behave morally.	40	1	5	3.80	1.181
Prayer, meditation and Christian lessons encourage me to be honest and respectful.	40	2	5	3.95	1.037
Learning Christian teachings makes me want to share with others.	40	2	5	4.07	.888
When I realise how The more God loves me, the more I try to behave well.	40	3	5	4.32	.859
Valid N (listwise)	38				

Prior to the intervention, mean respect scores ranged from 3.32 to 3.95, indicating moderate attitudinal endorsement. Following the intervention, these scores increased to 3.37-4.10. Honesty scores similarly increased

from a pre-intervention mean range of 3.40 to post-intervention values approaching 3.95. The most notable improvement was observed in the value of sharing, which increased from a pre-intervention range of 3.33 to a post-intervention score of 4.65. These descriptive shifts suggest positive changes in students' reported value orientation.

To determine whether these improvements were statistically significant, paired-sample t-tests were conducted comparing pre- and post-intervention scores within the intervention group ($n = 40$). The analysis revealed statistically significant increases in respect, honesty, and sharing following the intervention, with p-values below the conventional threshold of $p < .05$. The greatest improvement was observed in the sharing dimension. Effect size calculations indicated small-to-moderate practical significance, suggesting that the observed improvements were not only statistically detectable but also educationally meaningful.

Correlation analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the three core values before and after the intervention. Pre-intervention findings demonstrated moderate positive correlations between respect and honesty ($r = .360$, $p < .05$) and between respect and sharing ($r = .372$, $p < .05$), indicating that students who reported higher respect also tended to report higher levels of honesty and sharing. Post-intervention correlations revealed strengthened associations, particularly between respect and honesty ($r = .765$, $p < .01$), as well as significant relationships between sharing and total morality ($r = .531$, $p < .01$). The increased intercorrelations among the values suggest that the intervention may have enhanced the integration of moral constructs, supporting the notion that core virtues are interdependent rather than isolated traits.

Comparative analysis with the non-equivalent Grade 6 comparison group indicated that post-intervention value orientation scores in the intervention group were comparatively higher. However, given the developmental differences between the two groups and the non-randomised design, these findings are interpreted cautiously and serve primarily as contextual reference rather than evidence of experimental causality.

Qualitative findings from teacher interviews, parent interviews, classroom observations, and reflective notes converged with the quantitative results. Teachers consistently reported improved student engagement in reflective discussions and increased demonstration of respectful communication and cooperative behaviour during classroom activities. Observational data indicated enhanced peer interaction, greater honesty in task completion, and more frequent acts of sharing during group work. Parents reported observable behavioural changes at home, including improved politeness, responsibility, and willingness to participate in family religious practices. Both teachers and parents emphasised the role of storytelling, prayer, guided reflection, and home-school collaboration in reinforcing the internalisation of values. Participants also identified challenges, including limited instructional time, curriculum demands, and technological distractions, suggesting structural considerations for future implementation.

Overall, convergence between quantitative and qualitative data supports the conclusion that the Christian education-based action research intervention was associated with measurable improvements in students' attitudinal orientation and reported behavioural expression regarding honesty, respect, and sharing.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine whether a structured Christian education-based intervention could promote the development of core values among Grade 6 students within a Sri Lankan school context. The findings indicate statistically significant improvements in students' reported attitudes toward honesty, respect, and sharing following the intervention's implementation. In addition, correlation analysis revealed strengthened relationships among these values after the intervention period, suggesting that students increasingly perceived moral behaviours as interconnected rather than isolated traits.

These findings are consistent with Lickona's framework of character education, which conceptualises moral development as the interaction of three dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. According to Lickona, effective character education requires not only cognitive understanding of ethical principles but also emotional engagement and opportunities for behavioural enactment. The instructional strategies used in the intervention, including biblical storytelling, reflective discussion, cooperative activities, and guided prayer,

appear to have supported these three dimensions simultaneously. Through repeated reflection and practice, students were provided with opportunities to translate moral understanding into observable behaviour.

The results also align with developmental perspectives on moral reasoning. The intervention incorporated structured dialogue and reflective engagement with moral narratives, which correspond with principles outlined in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Kohlberg emphasises that moral reasoning evolves through exposure to ethical dilemmas, guided discussion, and opportunities for perspective-taking. The storytelling and discussion components of the intervention likely facilitated these processes by encouraging students to interpret moral situations and reflect on the consequences of ethical and unethical behaviours.

However, when interpreting the behavioural changes observed in this study, it is important to consider the developmental characteristics of pre-adolescent learners. Grade 6 students are typically between 11 and 12 years of age, a stage marked by significant psychosocial development. According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, children in this age group experience the stage of industry versus inferiority, during which they strive to demonstrate competence and gain recognition from peers and authority figures. Positive feedback from teachers and peers during classroom activities may therefore reinforce behaviours associated with cooperation, honesty, and respect. (Erikson, 1968).

Developmental research also highlights the growing importance of peer relationships and social approval during late childhood. Scholars such as Hurlock (1978) note that children in this stage often imitate admired role models, develop stronger peer affiliations, and become increasingly sensitive to social expectations. Consequently, some behavioural improvements observed during the intervention period may reflect both the influence of value-based instruction and broader developmental processes associated with identity formation and peer interaction. Acknowledging these developmental influences allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the findings and prevents behavioural changes from being attributed exclusively to the intervention.

Beyond developmental considerations, the qualitative findings highlight the importance of relational and contextual reinforcement in moral development. Teachers reported increased student participation in reflective discussions and more respectful communication during classroom interactions. Observational data similarly indicated greater cooperation among students and more frequent acts of sharing during group work. Parents also noted positive behavioural changes at home, including improved politeness, increased responsibility, and greater willingness to engage in family religious practices. These observations suggest that the alignment between classroom instruction and home reinforcement played a meaningful role in strengthening the internalisation of values.

The findings therefore reinforce previous research indicating that moral development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by the interaction between school culture, teacher modelling, and family engagement. The integration of storytelling, reflection, and collaborative activities created a learning environment in which students could explore moral concepts within meaningful social contexts. This relational dimension appears to have supported both attitudinal change and behavioural expression.

Despite these encouraging outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a relatively small sample comprising a single Grade 6 class at a single Christian school. While action research is designed to address practical educational challenges within specific contexts, this limited sampling frame restricts the generalisability of the findings to broader educational settings. Second, the comparison group used in the study was non-equivalent and drawn from multiple schools, which limits the strength of causal inference regarding the intervention's effectiveness. Differences in school environments, teaching practices, and student backgrounds may have influenced the observed results.

Another methodological limitation relates to the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data to measure students' attitudes toward moral values. Although observational data and interviews were used to complement the quantitative findings, self-reported responses may still be influenced by social desirability bias, particularly when students are aware that behaviours such as honesty and respect are socially valued. Future research could strengthen methodological rigour by incorporating additional behavioural measurement tools, such as longitudinal observation, peer evaluation, or experimental classroom designs.

Future studies should also consider expanding the scope of investigation by including multiple schools and more diverse student populations. Larger samples and quasi-experimental or randomised research designs would allow stronger causal inferences about intervention effectiveness. Longitudinal research examining whether value internalisation is sustained over extended periods would further contribute to understanding the long-term impact of faith-based educational interventions. Additionally, comparative research exploring value education approaches across different religious and cultural contexts could provide broader insights into effective strategies for promoting moral development in pluralistic educational settings.

Overall, the convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that structured Christian education interventions may contribute positively to the development of core values among early secondary school students. When implemented through reflective pedagogy, relational engagement, and home–school collaboration, such interventions appear capable of supporting both attitudinal change and observable behavioural expression. These findings contribute to the growing body of research emphasising the importance of contextually grounded and culturally meaningful approaches to value education.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the effectiveness of a structured Christian education–based intervention in promoting core values, specifically honesty, respect, and sharing, among Grade 6 students in a Sri Lankan school context. The findings indicate that the intervention was associated with measurable improvements in students' attitudinal orientation toward these values, as evidenced by increased post-intervention mean scores and strengthened correlations among the three value constructs. These results suggest that intentional integration of faith-informed pedagogical practices within classroom instruction can contribute positively to the development and internalisation of moral values among early secondary school students.

The study also highlights the pedagogical significance of combining cognitive, affective, and behavioural approaches in value education. Strategies such as biblical storytelling, guided reflection, cooperative learning activities, and prayer-based contemplation created opportunities for students to engage with moral concepts in ways that were both meaningful and contextually relevant. The convergence of quantitative findings with qualitative insights from teachers and parents further suggests that value internalisation is reinforced when classroom instruction is supported by consistent relational modelling and home–school collaboration.

Importantly, the findings emphasise the role of culturally and spiritually contextualised education in shaping moral development. In the context of Christian schooling in Sri Lanka, the integration of religious narratives and practices provided a familiar ethical framework through which students could interpret and apply moral principles in everyday behaviour. Such approaches demonstrate the potential of faith-based pedagogies to complement broader character education initiatives in pluralistic educational systems.

At the same time, the study acknowledges several contextual and methodological constraints. The intervention was implemented within a single school and involved a relatively small sample, which limits the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the non-equivalent comparison group and reliance on self-reported measures restrict the strength of causal interpretation. These limitations highlight the need for further research employing larger samples, multi-school settings, and more rigorous experimental or longitudinal designs to examine the sustainability of value internalisation over time.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes empirical evidence to the relatively underexplored field of faith-based character education within the Sri Lankan educational context. The results suggest that structured and reflective pedagogical interventions grounded in religious and cultural traditions can play a meaningful role in promoting ethical awareness and prosocial behaviour among young learners. Future research should continue to investigate how value education programmes can be adapted across diverse educational environments and how collaborative engagement among schools, families, and communities can strengthen students' moral development.

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