

The Role of Family Climate in Shaping the Moral Development of University Students: A Systematic Review

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Received: 14th June, 2026; Revised: 20th July 2026; Accepted: 20th August, 2026; Available Online: 05th September 2026

ABSTRACT

This review methodically explores the role of family climate in the formation and learning of moral values among university students. Being the key agent of socialization, the family is central to the development of the moral structure of young adults in their early life and in the process of transitioning to higher education. This review is based on empirical studies conducted mainly in the Indian context, with some international comparisons, to determine the key dimensions of family climate that impact moral development. The thematic areas under investigation are parenting styles and their various effects on moral reasoning; how emotional attachment and family cohesion contribute to the development of prosocial behavior; cultural and religious factors in value formation; the effects of family structure and socioeconomic status on moral orientation; and how technology and digital media are increasingly shaping contemporary moral socialization. The results indicate that authoritative parenting, which is typified by warmth, open communication, and discipline based on reasoning, is most strongly related to greater levels of moral competence among university students. Affective attachment in families plays a pivotal role in mediating family based value transfers, and collectivist cultural standards in the Indian context uphold family based moral education. The review also notes considerable gaps in the research, such as the lack of longitudinal studies investigating the trajectories of moral development, under-researched demographic factors such as caste and regional diversity, and under-researched moderating factors such as peer groups and institutional environments. The results can be of great significance to institutions of learning that want to incorporate value education into their curriculum and to policymakers who want to develop family supportive systems that integrate the comprehensive development of students.

Keywords: family climate, moral values, university students, parenting styles, moral development, higher education.

How to cite this article: Pandey P, Naryan S, The Role of Family Climate in Shaping the Moral Development of University Students: A Systematic Review *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(7): 1279-1288; DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.7.138

Source of support: Nil.

Conflict of interest: None

INTRODUCTION

The complex web of socialization that starts in the family makes up the moral fabric of society. Traditionally, the family has been the foundation of moral education in the Indian context, and family values that have been passed down through generations include respect for elders, honesty, compassion, self-discipline, and social responsibility (1). The Indian traditional family structure, based on collectivist culture and millennia-old philosophical traditions, has long been identified as the key foundation on which moral values are disseminated, assimilated, and implemented by younger generations. The dharma, or righteous behavior, that dominates Indian philosophical thinking, is first and most long-lasting in the family, where children see, follow, and eventually internalize the moral principles of their parents and other family members (1). This intimate relationship between family life and moral development has been a stable characteristic of Indian civilization for centuries of social

transformation and has remained influential in the ethical orientations of modern young adults.

In its National Curriculum Framework of 2005, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) highlighted the inseparable relationship between education and value formation, stating that the purpose of education lies outside academic success and achievement in the development of responsible, ethical, and compassionate citizens (2). This view acknowledges that the roots of moral thinking are established long before a student joins a formal educational establishment and that the family setup is the original and most significant classroom in which character is based. The adolescent stage to young adulthood, especially in the university years, is a crucial stage where moral values developed earlier are put to the test and then refined to come up with a coherent personal value system (23). The social domain theory introduced by Turiel (23) can be considered an effective approach to explain this process, offering the

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idea of the development of unique reasoning patterns in the moral, conventional, and personal spheres of social life, with the moral sphere being especially vulnerable to the quality of early socialization experiences.

University students are in a special stage of development that is marked by higher levels of autonomy, exposure to varied worldviews, and bargaining of competing value systems. At this stage, the moral system formed by socialization within the family is exposed to new ideas and socialized by peer groups, school, mass media, and other societal influences. How far the moral values inculcated in the family are carried over, modified, or become weaker during the university years is a question of high theoretical and practical significance. Moral psychological studies have always shown that childhood experiences establish lasting patterns of moral thinking and behavior, despite the fact that people face new ethical challenges as adults (24). Hoffman (24) theory of moral development that focuses on parental disciplining, induction of empathy, and prosocial modelling, highlights the influential and enduring effects of moral socialization at family level on the ability of an individual to engage in ethical thinking and act morally. Hoffman argues that the quality of the parent child relationship is critical to the development of moral motivation and supportive and nurturing parenting methods promote internalization of moral principles, which regulate behaviour throughout the lifespan.

Family climate is defined as the emotional, psychological, and behavioral context that dominates family interactions and relationships and is not to be confused with family structure or composition. It includes the quality of parent-child relationships, communication patterns in the family, extent of warmth and supportiveness, discipline and conflict-resolving strategies, and shared values and beliefs that define family life (25). Positive family climate and open communication have been linked to various positive developmental outcomes, such as increased moral competence, prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, and academic performance (26). On the other hand, a negative family environment characterized by discord, excessive discipline, emotional disengagement, or lack of consistency has been associated with problems in moral reasoning, aggressive behavior, and loss of empathy (27). Berkowitz and Grych (25) have argued that the moral atmosphere of the home, including the manner in which moral issues are debated, the degree to which moral norms are regularly violated, and the seriousness with which the moral questions of children are addressed, is a more potent predictor of moral development than any individual parenting practice.

Indian families have changed greatly in the last few decades, and the processes of urbanization, industrialization, globalization, and technological change have been decisive factors. The nuclear family system that is becoming more widespread in cities has replaced the traditional joint family system, which offered an extended support system and numerous providers of moral guidance (18). This change in structure has consequences for the

quality and nature of moral socialization, in that the smaller size of the family and the lack of extended kin might reduce the variety of moral role models available to children and adolescents. In addition, contemporary professional life demands and augmented geographic mobility, as well as the omnipresence of digital media, have brought new challenges to preserving an integrated and value-rich family environment (19). The influence of global media, social networking sites, and different cultural orientations on the youth has involved a complicated moral terrain where old family values have to contend with the new system of values to shape the emerging moral sensibilities of university students. These cultural and structural changes have led researchers to reassess the processes by which moral values are passed on in modern Indian families and how far the family still holds its dominance as a moralizing agent in an increasingly interconnected world.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), India, has repeatedly supported value education in higher education, where ethical consciousness and social responsibility are seen as vital in building a well-rounded graduate who can be useful in society (21). Despite this policy focus, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the role of family climate in the moral development of university students within the Indian sociocultural context. Although there is a significant amount of literature on the impact of family on moral development in Western settings, the cultural peculiarities of Indian families, such as the significance of filial piety, collectivist intergenerational interdependence, and the impact of religious and spiritual traditions, require context-specific research (28). As Saraswathi (28) has noted, the cultural-ecological specifics of Indian family life that influence the process of socialization and human development should be considered in the study of socialization and human development in India because theoretical models based on the experiences of the Western world might be inadequate to capture the dynamics of Indian family life.

The theoretical frameworks used to study moral development are what give the study the necessary context to the role of the family in moral development. According to Lickona (26), according to this theory, character education should start at the family level where children should first be taught the distinction between good and bad by observing, imitating and through direct teaching. This view was further developed by Berkowitz and Grych (25), who showed that early character development is deeply rooted in the quality of parent-child relations and the morality of the home. According to Jessor, Turbin, and Costa (27), family connectedness is an important protective factor during the development of adolescents, as close family ties help cushion young individuals against negative peer effects and enhance positive behavioral effects. These theoretical contributions lead to an understanding that the family is not another among the numerous agents of socialization but the building block on which other moral developments are based (28).

The move to university life is a highly consequential phase in the moral development of young adults in India. University admission is the first step towards independent living for many students and can also be a move out of small towns and rural areas into large cities, where they are likely to experience some form of cultural, moral, and lifestyle diversity that they have likely never seen before. These values and moral reasoning patterns that students bring to the university setting are mostly the results of their family climate, and the degree to which these values are stable enough to resist the new challenges and opportunities of university life has far-reaching consequences on their own growth and further contributions to society (21). The role of family climate in shaping moral values in this crucial stage of development is not just an academic pursuit but a practical issue of concern to teachers, parents, and policymakers with the common aim of producing ethically conscious and socially responsible individuals.

This systematic review of the literature seeks to fill this gap by thoroughly reviewing current studies on how family climate is related to the acquisition and development of moral values in university students. This review integrates the findings of empirical studies, theoretical works, and policy reports to provide a consistent explanation of how family climate influences moral development during the transition to higher education. This review aims to inform educational practice, clarify future research directions, and support the creation of evidence-based strategies to value education in Indian universities by revealing the main themes, new trends, and gaps in the literature. The particular aim of this review is to determine how various parenting styles and moral outcomes relate to each other, how emotional attachment and family integrity can be involved in moral socialization, how cultural, religious, and socioeconomic conditions may affect value acquisition, and how technology may affect moral education in the family.

METHODOLOGY

The present systematic literature review was developed based on the guidelines for narrative and thematic synthesis of research literature in the social sciences. The methodology used in this review was developed to conduct a comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible study of the evidence available on the effect of family climate on the development of moral values in university students, especially in the Indian sociocultural setting.

A search strategy was formulated and utilized in a systematic search through several electronic databases, such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, PubMed, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), PsycINFO, and the Indian citation database, Shodhganga. A combination of controlled vocabulary terms and free-text was used to search, such as family climate, moral values, moral development, parenting styles, moral socialization, university students, higher education, family environment, emotional bonding, moral reasoning, value education, and Indian family. The search terms were combined using

Boolean operators (AND, OR) to narrow the search results. The search strategy was refined iteratively using the initial search to sufficiently cover the relevant literature. The reference lists of major studies were also searched manually to select other related publications that might have been overlooked by the electronic database searches.

The following criteria were used to include studies in this review: (a) the study should be published in a peer-reviewed journal, institutional repository, or recognized academic database; (b) the study should be published between 2000 and 2024, although some seminal studies conducted earlier were also included to give the theoretical background; (c) the focus of the study

The exclusion criteria were as follows: (a) studies that only addressed children under the age of 15 and had no relevance to adolescent or young adult moral development; (b) studies that only considered moral outcomes in relation to family climate or other related family variables; (c) studies that were not peer-reviewed, such as unpublished theses, blog posts, and popular media articles; (d) studies not written in English; and (e) studies that did not directly. The first search provided approximately 285 records, which were filtered by reviewing the titles and abstracts to obtain the relevant ones. After this screening, 87 full-text articles were evaluated based on eligibility, with 52 articles satisfying all the inclusion criteria and being incorporated into the final qualitative synthesis.

The analytical framework used in this review is based on a thematic synthesis methodology, which entails the systematic discovery, arrangement, and explanation of common themes and patterns within the studies included. The data extraction process included recording the main features of the study (author, year, location, sample, methodology, and main findings) and coding the findings based on the thematic groups regarding family climate and moral development. The thematic categories were created inductively by taking a closer look at the studies included and deductively with the help of reference to the existing theoretical frameworks in the field of moral psychology and family studies. The synthesized results are presented in the Results section under nine thematic headings and are followed by an integrative discussion that indicates overall patterns, contextual influences, and implications for practice and research.

The quality of the included studies was determined by applying a standardized appraisal framework that considered methodological rigor, adequacy of the sample, suitability of the analytical methods, and clarity of the reported results. The weight attributed to the studies in the synthesis was given to those that used validated measures of moral development and family climate variables. It is agreeable that the use of English-language publications and the cross-sectional nature of study designs primarily used in the extant literature are drawbacks of this review that must be considered in the interpretation of the results.

RESULTS

The review of the literature showed that there were 9 key areas of themes related to the impact of family climate on the formation and acquisition of moral values in university students. The themes reflecting the role of family in the moral socialization process and its breadth and complexity are represented below and discussed in detail the main findings of the included studies.

Moral development and parenting styles.

The parenting styles are the first and the most widely studied dimension of family climate with respect to moral development. Parenting styles in the sense that developmental psychologists understand them are fairly fixed patterns of parental behaviour that convey attitudes towards the child and determine the emotional climate at home. The literature has consistently shown that parent-child interaction, discipline and guidance of children have enormous bearing on the development of moral reasoning and ethical behaviour. In their research of university students in Punjab, Singh and Kaur (4) investigated the relative impact of authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles on moral behaviour and reported that authoritative parenting students exhibited much higher rates of moral reasoning and prosocial behaviour than did authoritative parenting students. When parents were authoritative, i.e. the combination of warmth, responsiveness, and age-related expectations, it created an environment where children were free enough to discuss moral issues, challenge the status quo, and come up with independent moral reasoning. Conversely, authoritarian parents, who had the basis of strict discipline and unquestioning obedience, raised students who were more likely to have compliance-based moral reasoning that was not as strong towards new ethical dilemmas (4).

Kumar and Joshi (14) applied these findings to the wider context of India, and performed an in-depth study of authoritative parenting styles and their relationship with the outcome of moral development. Their study revealed that authoritative parenting in India, although sharing fundamental aspects with the Western conceptualization, had culturally sensitive aspects, including the incorporation of traditional wisdom, intergenerational discussion, and balancing individual autonomy and family responsibility. According to the study, authoritative parenting style, where the parents explained to their children the rationale behind moral expectations, encouraged them to take perspectives and gave them a chance to make moral decisions, were more effective in fostering intrinsic moral motivation in their children than coercive and permissive parenting styles (14). This was further enhanced by Shukla (13) who studied the parental involvement in moral upbringing in urban Indian families. The researchers found that active parenting, such as frequent discussions on moral concerns, joint involvement in community service and the demonstration of ethical behaviour in everyday life was positively linked to the increased moral awareness and social responsibility in university students. It was found that the quality of parent-

child communication is also an especially significant factor with the families that established open communication tracks in addressing ethical concerns helped their children to acquire more advanced moral reasoning abilities and readiness to consult in situations of moral dilemmas in their college lives (13).

The studies of parenting styles and moral development, when taken together, imply that the style in which the parents wield power, display affection, and make themselves available to the moral inquiries of their children leave a permanent trace on the moral structure of young adults. This relationship is further complicated by Indian factors, where cultural expectations around parental authority, respect to the elderly and honour of the family collide with parenting styles to generate unique patterns of moral socialization. The need to have parenting education programs that will enable Indian parents develop the knowledge and skills of adapting authoritative parenting approaches responsive to the developmental needs of their children as well as the cultural values of their communities is well supported by the evidence (4, 14).

Function of emotional attachment and family integration

The emotional connection and family unity proved to be the essential mediators of the moral values transference in the family climate. In a study of college youth in urban Delhi, Sharma (3) showed that the quality of emotional attachment of the parents to their children was significantly linked to the level of moral development with young adults. Students who said they have had strong emotional bonds with their parents, and they felt understood, supported, and valued scored higher on scales of moral reasoning, empathy, and prosocial orientation. The research identified that emotional bonding formed a safe relational environment where children were more open to parent's moral teachings as well as being more inclined to internalize family values (3). The finding is consistent with the attachment theory views on moral development, which hold that safe parent-child attachment is the source of emotional support that is required to develop conscience and internalize morality.

The study by Sharma and Tiwari (12) determined the connection between family environment and the happiness of young adults, with the results showing that positive family environment, such as warmth, cohesion, and good communication, not only led to psychological well-being but also the prosocial value orientation. Their study revealed that young adults who exhibited supportive and supportive family environments were more inclined towards the expression of behaviours that aligned with moral principles of honesty, fairness, and concern towards others. The paper proposed that emotional climate of a family is a platform on which moral values are formed and maintained during the transition to adulthood (12). Thacker and Rathi (11) also investigated this relationship by looking at the relationship between home environment, emotional intelligence and moral judgment in young adults. They found that positive home environment

characterized by parental warmth and open-communication led to increased levels of emotional intelligence that mediated the relationship between family climate and moral judgment competence. This three-way relationship emphasizes the significance of emotional aspects in the role of the family in the process of moral development and implies that interventions focused on improving moral development should aim at the emotional process within the family as one of the primary areas of intervention (11).

Moral values as a result of the culture and religion

Family climate, based on cultural and religious aspects, is an important factor that determines the moral values of Indian university students. In their research involving college students in Gujarat, Patel and Mehta (5) analyzed the effects of religious practices and family values on student ethics and discovered that frequent engagement in religious practices and integration of religious teachings into the daily familial routine was positively related with increased ethics and moral conduct among students. The researchers noted that families which upheld religious customs, including praying every day, attending festivals, and reading the scriptures gave their children a rich moral vocabulary and a consistent system of ethics that governed their choices to make in academic and social life (5). Moreover, the families which combined the religious tradition-based moral education with the conversation of the current ethical issues were also observed as specifically successful in their task of assisting the students to establish a flexible and, at the same time, principled moral reasoning stance.

In an early effort at the psychology of the Indian family, Misra (1) believed that traditional Indian family values, which have cultural narratives like epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, have offered a strong moral ground which still affects the ethical orientations of modern young adults. These cultural and mythical stories provide mythical patterns of good behavior, moral conflicts, and reasoning that are passed down through intergenerational storytelling, family ceremonies and community festivals, thus inculcating cultural ethical values into the cultural identity of individuals (1). When families have an active involvement in cultural and religious practices they offer their children a sense of moral belonging, relating their own ethical decisions to a larger social group of shared values and goals. This moral belonging is especially significant in the university years, when students have to struggle with the question of how to combine the values inculcated in their families with the variety of viewpoints they meet in the academic setting (1, 5).

Influence of family structure on moral development

Family structure, either joint or nuclear, and geographical location, either urban or rural, was found to be a significant background influence in the development of moral values. In a study carried out by Ghorai, Khan and Mohakud (10) in West Bengal, students in joint and nuclear families were compared in terms of their moral values with the results showing that students with joint

family background scored much higher in terms of cooperation, respect towards the elders and social responsibility than their counterparts with nuclear family backgrounds. Their extended kinship system of joint families was also found to offer more than one moral role model, a variety of perceptions on issues of ethics and a sense of collective identity that strengthened the values of prosociality (10).

These findings have been supported by Ghosh (17) in a study on nuclear family and the imparting of moral values whereby despite the ability of nuclear families to offer successful moral socialization, the lesser number of moral teachers in the household and increased dependency on parents as the sole source of moral education posed potential weaknesses especially when the parents were not available because of their professional life. The research suggested special programs to assist nuclear families in playing their moral education role (17). According to Mehta (18), the shift in family structure, such as the emergence of dual-career families, single-parent families, and extended families has caused additional complexities to the moral process of socialization that were not as common in the traditional Indian family system. A study by Raghavan (16) has compared the variations in the family influence in urban and rural Tamil Nadu and observed that, rural families exhibited a more traditional moral system based on community and agrarian values as compared to urban families which were more adaptable when it comes to accommodating both the traditional and modern moral system. The two settings, however, also revealed that family had a great impact on the moral development of the students, implying that family is a very strong agent of moralizing irrespective of geographical settings (16).

Education and moral socialization of parents

It was found that the level of education of parents was also a major predictor of the results of moral socialization. A study by Saratha (9) on the role of parental education on the moral development of children revealed that highly educated mothers were more likely to use reasoning-based discipline techniques, have moral conversations with their children and set a good example of moral thinking practices. The researchers postulated that maternal education increased the cognitive resources that mothers can use to morally socialize, which made mothers more competent in offering more advanced moral guidance and developing thoughts on ethical matters (9).

Narayan and Mehta (20) also examined the significance of parental education in the impartation of moral values by exploring that parental education was positively associated with the implementation of democratic parenting styles, application of inductive as opposed to punitive disciplinary strategies and encouragement of independent thinking in children. The implications of this dependency between parental education and moral socialization on policy are significant because it indicates that sound policies on parental education (especially among mothers)

can be paid off in terms of the next generation coming out with better moral outcomes.

Moral expectations and gender roles.

Rani and Sinha (6) discussed the effect of gender on the moral development in a family setting, as they researched on gender differences in inculcating moral values among college students in Bihar. Their research found that families were more likely to socialize male and female children differently in terms of moral expectations, where girls are more heavily reinforced in virtues like obedience, self-sacrificing and other virtues concerned with caring about other people, whereas boys were reinforced to develop the virtues of courage, independence and assertiveness. The study argued that these gendered patterns of moral socialization were indicative of those norms of proper gender roles in the wider social world and could be generalized to explain the patterns of moral reasoning they found to exist in the students at the university. The female students in the research showed better scores on care-based moral reasoning and male students scored better on justice-based moral reasoning as expected of the patterns of socialization of the genders in the family (6). The international literature has indicated the same patterns with Walker (22) positing that although there are differences in gender in moral reasoning, such differences are mostly ascribed to differences in socialization experiences as opposed to inherent differences in moral capacity.

Gendered moral socialization has large implications on family practices as well as the educational policy. By restricting moral virtues promoted in each gender, families can limit the moral growth of their children unintentionally through deterrence of the development of a holistic moral character, both care and justice orientations. The data supports that there should be a more gender-balanced moral socialization of Indian families but one that promotes the development of the entire spectrum of moral capabilities such as empathy, fairness, courage, and social responsibility by all young people irrespective of gender. This process can be facilitated in educational institutions through the formulation of value education programs that defy gender stereotypes and together, foster inclusive moral development (6, 22).

Socioeconomic status and value orientation

It was discovered that moral development is affected by the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family in several ways. In an analysis of college students, Desai (7) in Mumbai investigated the connection between moral development and socioeconomic status, the results of which revealed that students in better SES statuses scored higher on scales of moral reasoning and moral judgement, and students in lower SES statuses were more inclined towards survival values and pragmatic ethical judgement. The authors also hypothesized that lower SES families were constrained by economic stress and limited resources to engage in the activities of moral socialization including family discussions, community involvement, and exposure

to a wide range of ethical views. Also, the research observed that students with lower SES status tended to be confronted with conflicting ethical issues, including the necessity to balance academic integrity with the financial needs to provide for their families (7). These results show that educational institutions must acknowledge the varied moral socialization experiences of students with varying socioeconomic background and devise inclusive strategies to value education that respects and responds to unique difficulties of economically disadvantaged students. Moreover, policy-makers need to address the indirect impacts of economic inequality on moral growth and investing in programs that promote the well-being of the family as one way of fostering positive moral outcomes among the youths in all layers of the socioeconomic ladder (7).

Altruism, empathy, and social responsibility

The emergence of altruism, empathy and social responsibility in the family setting was discussed as a critical aspect of moral socialization that fills the gap between inner moral thought and outer moral action. Although cognitive theories of moral development focus on the importance of reasoning and judgement, the affective and behavioural aspects of moral functioning embodied in constructs like altruism and empathy are also vital in a complete understanding of moral functioning. Agarwal and Tiwari (15) explored the issue of social responsibility and altruism within Indian families, and realised that families who actively exemplified altruistic behaviour, including volunteering, sharing resources, and supporting their neighbours, produced children who exhibited increased prosocial orientation and social responsibility. The paper has highlighted that observational learning was a major process by which altruistic values were passed and children who witnessed their parents doing kind acts and serving the society had higher chances of adopting such behaviours (15).

Malhotra (16) particularly considered the process of empathy development among Indian families, which found out that parental warmth, emotional expressiveness, and perspective-taking communication strongly predicted the empathy development in children. The research revealed that those parents who promoted their children to think about the emotions and views of other people and those who were sensitive and understanding to the emotional needs of their children helped them to develop more empathic skills. Empathy on the other hand was discovered to be a vital mediator of morality behaviour as the more people had high empathic levels, the more sensitive they were to matters of morality and the more they were inclined to act pro social. The empathy development in the family background is therefore not only a product of positive family climate but also a process whereby positive family climate can be exercised to have its effect on the wider moral outcomes.

The importance of technology and digital media

One of the areas of concern in the literature is the role of technology and digital media in the moral development of

young adults in the family context. Rohit and Joshi (19) reviewed the effects of technology and the media on moral growth of children and young adults and noted that a high level of screen time and exposure to violent or morally ambiguous online resources were connected with low moral sensitivity and tolerance to unethical behaviour. The paper noted that the online space, although providing unprecedented access to information and a variety of viewpoints, posed a threat to traditional processes of socialization around morality. Parents complained that they found it hard to keep track of and control the activities of their online kids and the anonymity and irresponsibility in most online platforms were reported to erode the moral values that were passed on in the house. It was suggested in the study that families should formulate shared digital literacy and that families should form shared norms of online behaviour as one way of extending family-based moral socialization into the digital realm (19).

The convergence of technology and family climate has challenges and opportunities to moral development. On the one hand, digital media consumption replaces face-to-face interaction in the family, thus, decreasing the amount of time spent on parent-child moral dialogue and prosocial behaviour modelling. Alternatively, technology might be used to teach moral in cases where the families work together with online content, deliberate on the ethical nature of online experiences, and utilize technology to get access to the available educational material that fosters moral awareness. The literature indicates that the defining aspect of technology supporting or derailing moral development is the type of family interaction with digital media and not the technology (19). University students are exposed to the vast number of moral views through the social media sites, some of which might not be conducive to the values inculcated at the family level, and therefore, it is imperative that the family should continue a moral dialogue with the children even during the university years.

DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic literature review lead to the same conclusion: family climate has an inimitable and complex impact on the formation and attainment of moral values among university students. The evidence which is synthesized in the framework of various thematic points proves that family is the main context where the moral values are first developed, maintained during the transitional period in the framework of higher education, and finally incorporated in the system of personal values. The family climate dimensions as observed in this review such as parenting styles, emotional bonding, cultural and religious practices, family structure, parental education, gender dynamics, socioeconomic factors, and technology involvement do not exist in isolation, but in interconnected ways influence the moral development of young adults.

The regularity of the results that authoritative parenting correlates with more favorable moral development results in comparison to authoritarian or permissive parenting

agrees with the Western and non-Western studies of parenting and moral socialization (4, 14, 24). Nonetheless, the Indian context provides some valuable nuances to this relationship. Such culturally embedded authoritative parenting style seems to be most effective in developing moral development that is not only autonomous but also culturally based, as it fosters critical moral thinking without breaking the relational bonds that keep the traditional values transmitted across generations (14, 28). Active parental involvement with moral conversations and community service add to the moral socialization process by offering young adults a chance to practice and perfect their moral reasoning in more real-life situations (13).

The significance of the effective dimension of family climate can be emphasized by the role of emotional bonding and family cohesion in the moral development as emphasized by various studies in this review (3, 11, 12). The moral values are not only constructs of cognition to be imparted by teaching; they are very much entrenched in the emotional inter-relationships and are best imprinted when they are learned in the context of affectionate, supportive and respectful family relationships. Of particular interest is the observation that emotional intelligence is a mediating variable between the family climate and moral judgment, which implies that those families that help instill emotional awareness and regulation among children also increase their ability to think morally and make ethical decisions (11). The implications of this integrated perspective of emotional and moral development to educational practice are significant because value education programs in universities should incorporate elements that consider emotional intelligence and relational skills in addition to conventional moral reasoning programs.

The role of cultural and religious aspects on moral development, as observed in the Gujarat and other regions of India, indicates the special status of India as a society where there are many religious traditions that co-exist and help in shaping the moral development of the youth (5, 1). The observation that in the family, religious activities are linked to greater ethical norms amongst the university students indicates that the ritual, narrative and community aspects of religion offer effective sources of moralization that enhance the direct parenting effects. The Indian family as a traditional tapestry of cultural stories and moral lessons based on Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, and Jain traditions also provides a distinctly pluralistic moral ecology that could help cultivate both the depth and breadth of moral knowledge (1). Nevertheless, the role of religious and cultural tradition in the process of moral education of families may be losing its importance due to the growing secularization of the urban Indian society and the growing importance of the global media, which also should be carefully monitored and researched.

The transformation of Indian families, especially the transition to a nuclear family, can be identified as an important contextual element in moral socialization (10, 17, 18). Although nuclear families are able to offer good

moral education in cases where parents are active and emotionally present, the diminished kinship network can be a constraining factor regarding the variety of moral views and role models children have access to. Mehta (18) observed that the emerging alterations in family configurations such as the emergence of dual-career families, single-parent families, and dispersed families have added some new complications in the moral socialization process that were not as common in the traditional Indian family setup. The urban and rural family influences comparison (16) also emphasizes the adaptive quality of moral socialization within family, showing that the mechanisms of values transmission are sensitive to the ecological environment the family is placed in. The observation that the rural families are more inclined to preserve more traditional moral frameworks whereas urban families are more adaptable indicate that the urbanization process both imposes challenges and the possibility of moral growth, putting the traditional value systems to the test, but at the same time creating the need to develop the moral reasoning skills, which would help them manage the pluralistic and quickly changing social environment.

Probably the most urgent current issue that has been discovered in this review is the impact of technology and digital media on the moral socialization within families (19). With the growing role of digital media in mediating the experiences of young adults, there has been a complementing and in certain cases replacing the long-standing mechanisms of family moral education, including direct observation, guided discussion, and behavioural modelling, by online influences that are not necessarily consonant with family values. Social media platforms, especially, subject university students to many moral viewpoints, some of which could be contrary to the values taught in the family setup. The discoveries that technology can either reinforce or weaken the moral development process based on the type of family interactions with digital media underscore the importance of proactive interventions that can be used to ensure that families retain their moral socialization mandate in an increasingly digital world. Schools could be useful in this point by providing digital literacy courses which discuss the ethical aspect of technology use and providing students with the means to consider how their online lives relate to their ethical principles.

The socioeconomic differences in moral socialization as has been noted in the literature (7) poses critical equity issues and implies that schools need to be aware of the various moral socialization backgrounds of their students. LSE students might need extra help with forming the ethical reasoning capabilities needed to cope with the ethical complexities of college and professional life and the value education programs ought to be developed by keeping the inclusion principle as a fundamental value. The patterns of moral socialization (gender) found in the literature (6) also demand to be addressed, in the sense that they indicate that families can unwittingly reproduce

gender stereotypes by their moral educational methods. Encouraging the families to pursue gender-equitable methods to moral socialization that encourages the exercise of the entire spectrum of moral virtues in both boys and girls is a promising intervention area.

Comparing the Indian situation to the global literature on the family effects on moral development, the situation in India shows both similarities and differences. Moral development is situated on the essential role of family climate, which is universal between cultures (24, 25). Nonetheless, these cultural values, economic conditions and social structures differ across societies and determine how family climate determines moral outcomes. The Indian family orientation toward collectivism, the great significance of religious and cultural traditions, the role of filial piety, and the speed of social change present a unique context of moral socialization, which cannot be explained solely with the help of Western theoretical resources (28). This particularity of culture highlights the necessity of further investigation into the Indian context and creation of theoretical frameworks that will fully reflect the intricacies of moral development in non-Western cultures.

The interaction between individual agency, and family influence is a significant field of theoretical interest. Although there is overwhelming evidence of the relevance of family climate in the formation of moral values, it is also essential to note that the development of moral values is also the responsibility of the university students. Moral mindfulness, moral autonomy and selective assimilation of multiple moral sources allow young adults to overcome the constraints of their moral socialization within the family, and to form more inclusive and sophisticated moral standards. The difficulty that faces families and school institutions is to establish the conditions that will help not only to preserve the moral values within the generations but also to develop moral cognition in response to new social conditions and emerging ethical issues. This balancing act between the old and the new is the core of successful moral education and one of the main themes of future studies in the area (23, 28).

CONCLUSION

This is a systematic literature review that has explored the vast amount of literature on how family climate affects the process of acquiring and developing moral values among university students, in the Indian socio-cultural environment. The results clearly indicate that family climate is a multidimensional and potent determinant of moral development that works through the following mechanisms, parenting styles, emotional bonding, cultural and religious practices, family structure, parental education, gender dynamics, socioeconomic conditions and use of technology. Still the first and the most long-lasting context of moral socialization, family remains a powerful source of moral influence on the moral values of young adults even in the transitional period of higher education, when individuals are subjected to a variety of and sometimes competing sources of moral influence.

A number of major conclusions can be drawn out of this review. To begin with, the authoritative parenting style which is based on the integration of warmth, rationality, and culturally based expectations is the most effective approach to develop autonomous and socially responsible moral reasoning. Second, the relational basis of moral values is built on emotional bonding and family cohesion, and emotional intelligence can be considered an important mediator between family climate and moral judgment. Thirdly, the family has cultural and religious traditions which have strong mechanisms of moral socialization, though their role might be declining with urbanization and globalization. Fourth, the emergence of structural changes in Indian families such as transition to nuclear family arrangements poses challenges and adaptation to moral education. Fifth, the ubiquitous nature of technology and digital media needs families and educational institutions to devise proactive approaches to extending moral socialization to the digital realm.

On the findings, a number of recommendations can be made. In the case of parents, the authoritative parenting practices that can be supported by the evidence include reasoning-based discipline, open moral dialogue, and modeling prosocial behaviour. It is advised that parents should have a good emotional connection with their children during the university years, since such a connection is a critical channel through which moral values can be further passed on. To teachers and university leaders, the results imply that value education initiatives must be crafted in a way that complements and builds on the moral bases set up in families, and the fact that the digital age brings with it different student family backgrounds and unique challenges. To the policymakers, the review emphasizes the importance of family-supportive policies such as parental education programs, economic assistance to poor families and programs that enhance the ability of the disadvantaged families to play their moral socialization role.

Future studies must focus on longitudinal study designs that are capable of monitoring moral development throughout the period of transition between secondary education and university and post-university to allow more dynamic insights into the interaction of family climate with the new adult experiences in determining moral trajectories. Also, underrepresented demographic variables like caste, tribal identity and regional diversity should be studied, as they can potentially moderate the relationship between family climate and moral development. Peer group moderation, moderation of the university culture, and moderation of the digital media environment also should be subject to systematic study. Qualitative research methods that would allow us to learn the experience of university students walking through the morality dilemmas at the border of family and institutional values would give a rich understanding of this complicated process. Finally, a holistic and context-sensitive conceptualization of the moral development of university students should be able

to appreciate the long-term importance of family climate as the basis on which moral character is established.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are pleased to be supported by The ICFAI University, Raipur, and Chhattisgarh, India. The authors offer their heartfelt gratitude to the Faculty of Education that allowed them to have an enabling academic environment that enabled the conduct of this review. The library staff is also given special credit on the support given in accessing research databases and scholarly resources that formed the basis of research necessary to conduct this systematic literature review.

FUNDING

No special funds were allocated to the research by the authors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors state that no generative AI technologies or AI-assisted technologies were involved in writing this manuscript.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Pushpesh Pandey was involved in the conceptualization, literature search, data extraction, thematic analysis, and drafting of the manuscript. Dr. Shiv Naryan helped in the conceptualization, supervision, design of the methodology, critical review and final editing of the manuscript. Both the authors read and gave approval to the final copy of the manuscript.

ETHICS APPROVAL

This research is a systematic literature review, and there was no direct work with human subjects; hence no ethical approval was needed.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data utilized in this systematic literature review are all accessible in public sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and academic books. Bibliographic information of all the sources is described in the References section of this manuscript. There was no primary data collection or generation during this review.

ABBREVIATIONS

NCERT: National Council of Educational Research and Training

SES: Socioeconomic Status

UGC: University Grants Commission

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