

# Family Moral Education in Rural Schools: Status Quo, Challenges, and Pathways Forward in the New Era

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## Abstract

Moral education within the family serves as a cornerstone for fostering the ethical and personal development of children, providing them with a solid foundation for future growth. This research examines the current status, challenges, and strategies related to family-based moral education, particularly in rural contexts. The findings underscore the vital role that parents play as primary moral educators, while also acknowledging that their effectiveness is bolstered by comprehensive support from society, policy interventions, and the integration of modern technologies. Key issues identified include insufficient access to educational resources, the need for a greater emphasis on mental health education, and the lack of structured collaboration among families, schools, and communities. This study proposes a series of recommendations to address these gaps, such as enhancing governmental policy support, fostering social and community-based educational initiatives, leveraging media platforms for educational dissemination, and promoting tripartite partnerships among families, schools, and society. The research underscores the importance of personalized educational approaches that cater to children's unique needs and characteristics. These strategies aim to strengthen the practice of moral education within families, ensuring that children grow in an environment that supports their moral, emotional, and intellectual development.

## 1. Introduction

In the context of the new era, family education, as a vital component of moral education, plays a crucial role in shaping and developing young people's ideologies, moral values, and behavioral norms. This importance is particularly pronounced in rural primary and secondary schools (Lickona, 1991). However, due to urban-rural disparities and the diversity of socio-economic conditions and cultural backgrounds, the implementation of moral education in rural families encounters numerous unique challenges. Therefore, studying the current situation, identifying problems, and exploring coping strategies for family moral education in rural primary

and secondary schools within this new context is of significant importance for enhancing the quality of rural education and fostering the holistic development of young people, as well as promoting social harmony.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Research Background**

The theoretical foundations of family moral education are primarily grounded in key principles of psychology and pedagogy. The application of these theories in rural settings necessitates careful consideration of their unique sociocultural characteristics. Bandura's social learning theory posits that children develop moral cognition and behavioral patterns by observing and imitating significant social figures, such as parents (Bandura, 1977). In rural families, this theory effectively elucidates the variability in educational outcomes due to substantial differences in parents' educational levels and parenting philosophies. However, in some rural families, lower levels of parental education can hinder their ability to serve as positive role models, thereby negatively impacting the development of children's behavioral patterns.

Attachment theory underscores the essential role of the emotional bond in the parent-child relationship in shaping children's sense of responsibility and moral judgment. Secure attachment serves as a crucial foundation for children's moral development. However, in rural areas, the phenomenon of this emotional bond, significantly impacting children's moral growth. This theory is highly relevant for analyzing the influence of family structure on the moral education of children in rural families.

In addition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory provide a framework for analyzing the impact of the external environment and social interactions on education. In rural China, family moral education faces challenges such as limited community resources and weak collaboration between schools and society. These issues exemplify the influence of the external system on the microsystem within ecological systems theory. Simultaneously, Vygotsky's theory posits that children's moral learning can be significantly enhanced through social interaction and cultural context. However, these practices must be scaled up in rural areas, taking into account local economic conditions and cultural contexts.

In terms of international experience, Finnish and Canadian educational practices—such as community resource integration and home-school cooperation—have demonstrated significant success in supporting children's holistic development. However, the applicability of these strategies in rural China requires careful evaluation. The socio-cultural characteristics of rural China, including collectivist values and the uneven distribution of resources, necessitate the localization and adaptation of these international experiences during implementation. For instance, the distribution of educational resources and collaborative mechanisms for family education can be enhanced through policy support and the active involvement of grassroots organizations.

## **3. Analysis of the Current State of Moral Education in Families in the New Era**

In the context of the new era, the current state of moral education within families is influenced by a variety of factors, exhibiting complex and diverse characteristics. This is particularly evident in rural areas, where cultural background, economic conditions, educational resources, and other factors impose significant constraints. Consequently, the situation of family moral education has garnered increased attention. (Lickona, 1991) The following analysis examines the current state of family moral education in rural primary and secondary schools from several key perspectives.

### **3.1 Differences in Parents' Educational Philosophies and Educational Attainment**

In many rural areas, parents, often influenced by traditional agricultural culture and educational philosophies, prioritize their children's academic performance over the systematic cultivation of moral qualities, emotional awareness, and mental health (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some parents make the primary goal of family education, neglecting their children's needs for character development and social adaptability. This issue is particularly pronounced in remote areas, where parents may lack modern educational concepts and adopt a narrow approach to education, often resorting to scolding and control (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This results in insufficient emotional communication and psychological support. In the long run, children not only miss opportunities for holistic development but may also experience long-term adverse effects on their psychological well-being and social adjustment (Ainsworth, 1989).

### **3.2 Conflict Between Traditional and Modern Educational Concepts**

As time progresses, rural families are increasingly encountering modern educational concepts; however, a conflict between traditional and modern educational philosophies persists. Traditional education emphasizes children's obedience and submissiveness, with parents often resorting to corporal punishment or restrictive measures to address behavioral issues. In contrast, modern education advocates for respect for children's individuality and prioritizes their psychological needs. This clash of generational perspectives has created numerous challenges in the practice of moral education within families. Parents frequently find themselves uncertain about how to instill moral values and behavioral norms in their children within the context of contemporary society, particularly when it comes to balancing children's autonomy with parental authority (China Collaborative Innovation Center for Basic Education Quality Monitoring, 2018).

### **3.3 New Challenges of Family Education in the Information Age**

The popularity of the Internet has provided rural children with unprecedented learning opportunities; however, it has also introduced new challenges to family moral education. Internet violence, the temptations of the virtual world, and the dissemination of harmful information directly impact the development of children's morals and values. Rural families often struggle to guide and supervise their children's online activities, and many parents are unable to effectively manage the time and content of their children's use of electronic devices. As a result, children become increasingly susceptible to the negative influences of violence, inappropriate content, and addictive games. This information environment has diminished the effectiveness of family moral education, particularly in remote rural areas characterized by outdated educational concepts and limited technological adaptability, where parents find it challenging to provide adequate guidance on Internet education (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009) (Evans & Kim, 2013).

### **3.4 The Impact of Family Economic Conditions on Moral Education**

Rural families frequently face significant economic challenges that compel parents to prioritize their children's survival and financial security over investments in moral education. While families with greater economic resources can offer more comprehensive educational opportunities, rural families, in general, tend to underinvest in mental health education, moral education, and extracurricular activities that foster moral development. Economic pressures often lead parents to concentrate primarily on their children's test scores, frequently at the expense of nurturing their moral character and sense of social responsibility. These financial difficulties can hinder the effectiveness of moral education within the family, ultimately impacting the overall development of children (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

### **3.5 The Limited Role of Rural Communities and Schools in Family Moral Education**

Although rural schools play an irreplaceable role in moral education, the absence of effective home-school cooperation mechanisms remains a significant factor limiting the quality of family moral education. The lack of systematic family education guidance programs in schools, coupled with insufficient communication and collaboration between home and school, has resulted in low levels of active parental participation in education. Consequently, school-led moral education activities struggle to fully engage families' support and participation. Furthermore, the role of rural communities in supporting family moral education is relatively weak, and there is a critical shortage of resources for parental education and training, psychological counseling, and the dissemination of knowledge regarding moral education (Epstein, 1995). A survey conducted in 2023 revealed that over 40% of rural parents reported a lack of basic educational resources and guidance, which constrained their ability to provide effective moral education at home. During the study, 50% of the teachers surveyed indicated that a lack of collaboration between home and school contributed to the ineffectiveness of moral education.

### **3.6 Educational Pressure and the Relative Neglect of Moral Education**

In the contemporary era, a notable characteristic of rural family education is the overwhelming emphasis on academic achievement, often at the expense of the long-term benefits of moral education. This trend is closely linked to the fierce competition present in modern society, where parents typically believe that their children must attain academic success to secure a better future. As a result, this singular focus has marginalized moral education, mental health, and emotional guidance. Furthermore, academic stress not only hampers children's academic performance but also exacerbates their psychological burden, potentially leading to broader social adjustment issues. The detrimental effects of this neglect on children's overall development are particularly significant and, therefore, necessitate intervention through enhanced family moral guidance and the provision of mental health support.

### **3.7 Summary**

Overall, family moral education in rural primary and secondary schools in the new era faces numerous challenges, including outdated educational concepts among parents, the detrimental effects of the Internet, economic constraints, and inadequate social support. These factors hinder the quality of family moral education, resulting in rural children experiencing deficiencies in moral education, mental health, and social adaptability. Consequently, promoting the comprehensive development of moral education in rural families through policy support, enhancing home-school cooperation, and improving community services is an urgent issue that requires immediate attention.

## **4. An Analysis of the Challenges and Issues Facing Moral Education in Families in the Modern Era**

In the context of the new era, family moral education faces not only significant external challenges but also deep-rooted structural issues. These challenges are closely linked to social change, mental health, and families' capacity to educate effectively. The following analysis examines the primary challenges to family moral education from a strategic perspective.

#### **4.1 Impact of social change on family structures**

With the acceleration of the modernization process, the structure and function of families in rural areas have undergone profound changes. A significant number of rural laborers have migrated for work, leaving many children as or raised by their grandparents. The absence of direct parental guidance in this family model has resulted in children experiencing deficits in emotional support and the transmission of moral values.

In addition, the traditional family's emphasis on emotional interaction and intergenerational transmission has gradually diminished. Due to social and economic pressures, many parents are increasingly focused on earning a living, often at the expense of their children's moral education. This shift in family dynamics complicates the ability to provide quality moral education within the family, highlighting the urgent need for policy intervention to enhance educational support for migrant and left-behind children(Beck,1992).

#### **4.2 The intersection of mental health and moral education**

Mental health issues are increasingly becoming a significant barrier to moral education in rural families. The urban-rural divide has resulted in a substantial lack of investment in mental health education in these areas, and many parents are often insensitive to the mental health needs of their children. Some parents mistakenly perceive mental health issues as mere emotional problems or personality weaknesses, thereby neglecting the crucial role of mental health education in shaping moral judgments and behavioral norms.

Moral education and mental health are inextricably linked. Children who lack emotional support are more susceptible to negative emotions and behavioral issues, which not only diminish their social adaptability but also impede the development of sound moral values. Addressing this issue necessitates the integration of mental health education into moral education, as well as the enhancement of psychological counseling and emotional support services, particularly in rural communities and at the school level(Patel, Flisher, Hetrick & McGorry, 2007).

#### **4.3 Systematic enhancement of family education capacity**

In rural areas, the limited educational capacity of families is a significant challenge to effective moral education. Many parents possess a restricted understanding of contemporary educational concepts and methods, leading to a clear disconnect between outdated educational practices and the developmental needs of today's children. Additionally, the diminishing role of families in education, coupled with the varying educational abilities of parents, contributes to the inconsistency in the quality of moral education(Epstein & Sanders,2002).

Therefore, there is an urgent need to systematically enhance family education capacity through policy support and the mobilization of social resources. Specific strategies include: implementing educational training programs for rural parents to promote scientific methods of moral education and knowledge of psychological counseling; establishing a collaborative platform between families and schools to increase parental involvement in moral education activities within schools; and utilizing modern information technology, such as online courses and digital resources, to address the shortage of educational resources in remote areas(Coleman,1988).

#### **4.4 Complexity challenges posed by technological change**

The advancement of modern technology has enhanced moral education within families, while simultaneously introducing new complexities. The widespread use of the Internet has provided children with access to a vast array of informational resources; however, it has also exposed them to negative consequences such as cyberbullying, the spread of inappropriate content, and gaming

addiction. In rural areas, many parents lack the technological knowledge necessary to effectively guide their children in the healthy use of the Internet. This gap in technological education renders children more susceptible to harmful online content and undermines the effectiveness of moral education within the family.

In the future, efforts should be intensified in the following areas: promoting parental technology education to assist parents in effectively managing their children's online behavior; providing digital literacy training at both school and community levels to enhance the IT adaptability of rural families; and formulating policies and guidelines for children's online behavior to offer educational support to families and schools.(Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

#### **4.5 Summary**

Family moral education in the new era encounters numerous challenges related to social change, mental health, educational capacity, and technological adaptability. These challenges extend beyond the capabilities of any single family dimension and require urgent attention through collaborative efforts among families, schools, and society. By leveraging policy support, integrating community resources, and fostering home-school collaboration, we can not only enhance the quality of moral education in rural families but also provide a more robust foundation for the comprehensive development of children.

### **5. Strategies and Recommendations for Moral Education in the Family in the Modern Era**

In the context of the new era, while moral education within the family encounters numerous challenges, it also presents significant potential and opportunities for development. To effectively enhance the quality of family moral education, it is essential to adopt scientific and practical strategies and measures. Below are specific recommendations for improving moral education in the family.

#### **5.1 Enhance Parents' Awareness of Moral Education and Educational Qualities**

The effectiveness of moral education within the family largely depends on the educational philosophies and moral values upheld by parents. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance parents' awareness of moral education. Parents must recognize the significance of moral education for their children's long-term development and gradually shift their focus from solely academic performance to a more holistic approach that includes moral and overall development. To achieve this objective, regular activities such as parent workshops, community lectures, and moral education training sessions can be organized to deepen parents' understanding of the core values of moral education in the family and to equip them with effective and scientifically grounded educational methods.

In addition, parents should strive to enhance their educational literacy and emotional communication skills. By fostering a positive parenting mindset, adopting a patient communication style, and embracing a scientific approach to education, parents can take a more active role in shaping their children's values and behavioral norms. Self-reflection and role modeling are also essential components of moral education within the family. Parents should influence their children through their own actions and words, thereby promoting a virtuous cycle of moral education at home.

## **5.2 Enhancing Collaboration and Communication Between Families and Schools**

Effective cooperation between families and schools is essential for the realization of high-quality moral education. Schools should not only focus on academic knowledge but also actively promote moral development. A closer partnership should be established between home and school, with regular joint activities implemented to collaboratively enhance children's moral education and character development.

Schools can effectively communicate their moral education goals and implementation strategies through parent-teacher conferences and home-school communication books. This approach helps parents understand the significance of moral education and offers them practical guidance. Moral education is incorporated into homework assignments, and parents are encouraged to actively engage in their children's moral development, thereby fostering a meaningful interaction between home and school.

At the same time, parents should proactively maintain communication with teachers to discuss and address the challenges their children face in moral development and behavioral upbringing. This is particularly important in the areas of mental health and behavioral habits, as it fosters a collaborative effort to promote their children's holistic development.(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,1997).

## **5.3 Promoting Moral Education in the Family through Social Resources**

Moral education within the family is not solely the responsibility of parents; society and the community also play a crucial role in this process. The government and society should enhance their support for family moral education by providing parents with a wider array of educational resources. For instance, family education guidance centers should be established, training programs for family moral education should be organized, and community support networks should be developed. These initiatives will assist parents in acquiring advanced educational concepts and skills, thereby improving their capacity for moral education.

At the same time, society should actively promote policies and services related to family moral education, particularly in rural areas. The content of family moral education should be enhanced through the organization of parent-child activities, mental health counseling, and moral education lectures. This approach will enable parents and children to grow together, fostering a more supportive educational environment.

## **5.4 Emphasis on Children's Mental Health Education**

Mental health is a crucial component of family moral education, and children's psychological development is intricately linked to this process. Families should prioritize their children's emotional needs and psychological growth, assisting them in maintaining a positive mental state. Additionally, they should focus on enhancing their self-regulation and social adaptability through effective mental health education.

Parents can assist their children in alleviating stress and overcoming distress by fostering effective communication, creating a supportive family environment, and guiding them in managing their emotions in a constructive manner. Attending to children's psychological development is essential for cultivating a healthy mental state and establishing a strong foundation for the development of moral behavior. Family education should comprehensively support the advancement of children's mental health alongside moral education to ensure that the objectives of moral education are successfully met.

## **5.5 The Promotion of Localization in Educational Apps and Parental Digital**

## **Literacy**

In order to effectively support the role of rural families in moral education, it is essential to develop and promote educational applications tailored to their needs. These applications should be designed to be user-friendly and include localized content to facilitate ease of use and effective integration into the daily lives of parents. The following specific strategies have been identified:

### **1. The provision of content and language support tailored to the local context is essential.**

It is essential for educational apps to be localized according to the cultural backgrounds and language preferences of rural families. The content should include local cultural narratives, traditional moral teachings, and interactive learning activities that correspond to the developmental stages of rural children. This tailored design not only increases parental willingness to use the app but also enhances children's sense of belonging and engagement with the learning material (Marcus & Gould, 2000).

### **2. The user interface should be simple and intuitive.**

In light of the fact that a significant number of rural parents have limited experience with technology, it is essential for the application's design to be straightforward and intuitive. The design should avoid complex navigation and an excessive number of operational steps. A clear interface and step-by-step guided functions will help parents use the app independently, eliminating the need for technical assistance (Nielsen, 1993).

### **3. The provision of diverse educational resources is essential for fostering an inclusive learning environment.**

The application should offer a diverse range of educational resources, including video lectures, educational games, practical home education guides, and suggestions for parent-child activities. These resources can help parents acquire a more comprehensive set of tools and methodologies for moral education within the home, thereby enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of the educational process (Gee, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).

### **4. Training for parents and digital literacy education:**

In addition to offering educational resources for children, applications should incorporate specialized modules aimed at enhancing parents' digital literacy. This would empower parents to more effectively guide and monitor their children's online activities. These training modules could cover a variety of topics, including establishing reasonable time limits for internet usage, identifying and responding to harmful content, and evaluating online learning resources that are appropriate for children.

### **5. Community Interaction and Support:**

Furthermore, the application can incorporate community interaction features, providing a platform for parents to communicate and share their educational experiences. This not only facilitates communication and collaboration among parents but also enhances the overall educational engagement of the rural community, thereby fostering a mutually supportive and progressive educational ecosystem (Epstein, 2010).

The development and distribution of a comprehensive educational application will provide rural parents with a valuable resource to improve their educational skills and digital literacy. This, in turn, will enable them to support their children's healthy development in the information age more effectively. To achieve this goal, it is essential for the education sector and relevant policymakers to actively promote the advancement and distribution of digital educational resources, ensuring their long-term and sustainable integration into the educational ecosystem of rural communities (Teräs, 2022).



## **6. Strategies and Recommendations for Providing Social Support in Moral**

### **Education within the Family**

The effective implementation of moral education within the family relies not only on the family's internal efforts but also necessitates substantial support and assurance at the societal level. Only through the collaborative involvement of the community can we establish stronger external conditions for moral education in the family. Below are specific strategies and recommendations for society to bolster family moral education.

#### **6.1 The Government Enhances Policies and Regulations on Family Education**

The government should take a proactive and supportive role in family moral education and promote the advancement of family education by strengthening the policy and legal framework. This is particularly crucial in rural areas, where the government should assist families in enhancing their capacity for moral education through targeted policy initiatives and financial support. Establishing special funds for family education awareness campaigns, moral education training, and social practice programs is a vital step toward elevating the standard of moral education within families.

In addition, the government should expedite the legislative process concerning family education, clearly delineate the responsibilities and rights of families in moral education, and ensure that the legitimate rights and interests of both parents and children are effectively protected. Simultaneously, the government should encourage and support schools, communities, and other social organizations to engage in the practice of family moral education. This collaborative effort aims to create an ecosystem of moral education characterized by multi-party cooperation and resource sharing, thereby enhancing the influence and reach of moral education.

#### **6.2 Social Organizations Offering Family Education Services and Guidance**

Social organizations are playing an increasingly vital role in the moral education of families. Various social organizations should leverage their strengths to offer professional guidance and practical support for family moral education by organizing lectures, training courses, and parent-child activities. Additionally, these organizations can establish consulting teams composed of experts in psychology, education, and related fields to assist parents in addressing the specific challenges they face in the moral education process, thereby enhancing the scientific basis and effectiveness of family education.

At the same time, social organizations should prioritize public welfare and the educational needs of rural and low-income families. By providing educational resources and services, these organizations can effectively promote an equitable distribution of moral education resources, ensuring that disadvantaged groups are not at a disadvantage in moral education due to resource scarcity. This approach fosters social equity and inclusive education.

#### **6.3 Promoting Family Moral Education through Media Platforms**

In today's information society, media platforms wield significant communication power and influence, serving as crucial channels for promoting the concepts and knowledge of family moral education. The government, educational institutions, and social organizations should collaborate with media platforms to implement a series of promotional activities aimed at enhancing public awareness of the importance of moral education within the family.

Through various channels, including television programs, radio broadcasts, and online

platforms, the media can offer parents a wealth of knowledge and practical guidelines on moral education. Additionally, it can share successful case studies of moral education within families and promote effective educational experiences, thereby enhancing the practical impact of moral education at home. Furthermore, the media can provide online counseling and educational guidance services to assist parents in addressing child-rearing challenges promptly, ultimately optimizing the process and outcomes of family education.

## **7. Future Directions for the Innovative Development of Moral Education in the Family**

The innovative advancement of family moral education is essential for the modernization of family education. In the context of the new era, the innovation of moral education within families must not only align with social changes but also keep up with scientific and technological advancements. The following are several directions for the future innovative development of family moral education:

### **7.1 Integration of Modern Scientific and Technological Methods**

The rapid development of information technology has created unprecedented opportunities for family moral education. In the future, family moral education should fully leverage modern technological tools to enhance its effectiveness. For instance, through online platforms, educational apps, e-books, and other multimedia resources, parents can conveniently access knowledge and methods related to moral education. Additionally, smart devices and internet technology can assist parents in managing their children's online behavior more effectively, thereby preventing them from being negatively influenced by undesirable information.

In addition, parents can utilize online education platforms to engage in real-time interactions and consultations with parenting experts, thereby obtaining timely guidance and support on moral education while enhancing their educational capabilities. For children, participating in interactive activities related to moral education on these online platforms can not only broaden their horizons but also improve their practical skills and foster their moral development. (Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. 2007)

### **7.2 Strengthening the Tripartite Cooperation Mechanism Among Family, School, and Society**

In the future, family moral education should enhance the cooperative framework based on tripartite collaboration among the home, school, and society to maximize the effectiveness of moral education. Close cooperation among these three entities will provide comprehensive moral education support for children. Specific initiatives may include organizing family education salons, facilitating parent-child interaction activities, offering moral education courses, and implementing social practice programs. Through this collaborative approach, schools, families, and communities can leverage their respective strengths, create educational synergy, and collectively promote the holistic development of children's moral character (Epstein, 2001).

### **7.3 Focus on Personalized Moral Education**

Personalised and diversified education will be a significant trend in family moral education in the future. Family moral education should be tailored to each child's interests, characteristics, and psychological needs, allowing for the design and implementation of personalised moral education

programmes. Through personalised education, parents and schools can fully harness children's potential, making moral education more targeted and effective. Parents and teachers should differentiate their moral education guidance based on the unique attributes of each child to ensure that every child receives the most appropriate support and guidance for their personal and moral development (Tomlinson, 2017).

## **8. Conclusion and Suggestion**

### **8.1 Conclusion**

Moral education within the family is fundamental to the holistic development of children, influencing their character formation and ethical perspectives. This study highlights the multifaceted role that families play in moral education and underscores the importance of integrating social resources, mental health support, and collaborative efforts among families, schools, and communities. The analysis reveals that while families are primary educators, their effectiveness is significantly enhanced by external societal support and innovative practices. Emphasizing mental health, utilizing technology, and fostering cooperative frameworks are essential strategies for adapting family moral education to contemporary challenges.

### **8.2 Suggestions**

Governments should enhance policies and regulations to support moral education for families, particularly in rural areas, ensuring equitable access to resources.

**Community and Social Support:** Social organizations should establish comprehensive family education programs that encompass training, guidance, and counseling services tailored to the diverse needs of various families.

**Media Engagement:** Media platforms should actively disseminate educational content, best practices, and counseling services to reinforce moral education within families.

Families should leverage digital tools and online resources to enhance their approach to moral education, making the learning experience more engaging and accessible.

**Tripartite Collaboration:** Strengthening cooperation among families, schools, and communities is essential for fostering a cohesive educational environment that promotes the moral and emotional development of children.

**Personalized Education:** Parents and educators should take into account the unique characteristics and needs of each child, adapting moral education strategies to cultivate more effective and individualized learning experiences.

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