

Original Research Article

Awareness of DepEd Core Values Among Grade 12 Students in a Public High School in the Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study determined the level of awareness of Department of Education (DepEd) core values among grade 12 students in a public school in Antique, Philippines, in the areas of *maka-Diyos* (Godly), *makatao* (person-oriented), *makakalikasan* (pro-environment), and *makabansa* (patriotism). Likewise, the study assessed the significant difference in their awareness of DepEd core values relative to their demographics. Hence, the study utilized quantitative research design, particularly descriptive-comparative approaches. The theoretical framework of the study is the ecological systems theory, which assumes the influence of a series of nested systems and environments in shaping human development. This indicates the need for considering the larger ecological context that drives core value awareness. Meanwhile, using the adopted questionnaire, data were collected from 293 Grade 12 senior high school students in a public high school in Antique, Philippines, during the school year 2023-2024. In the analysis of data, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, and Kruskal-Wallis test were employed to analyze both the descriptive and inferential problems. The study revealed that the overall core value awareness of students was very high ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.48$). This shows that the students at this public school fully recognized the four DepEd core values, namely, *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*. Also, among all the four demographics, only sex [$U=7782.5$, $P=0.001$] and strand [$\chi^2(5) = 13.739$, $P=0.017$] were found with significant differences. The findings postulate that to elicit students' core value awareness, strengthening educational policies on consistent core value integration in school curricula, programs, and activities is greatly encouraged. The findings also convey the need to strengthen sustainable teacher orientation to maintain their students' high awareness.

Keywords: Core values, awareness, descriptive-comparative, Grade 12 students, Philippine public school

1. INTRODUCTION

Core values are fundamental principles that determine a person's actions and choices [1]. Similarly, moral codes such as caring, honesty, fairness, and respect, akin to core values, play a vital role in shaping an individual's behavior and attitudes [2]. These values significantly influence an individual, as their impact is profound across many areas of life, including education, professional settings, organizational development, and cultural formation [3]. Additionally, these are crucial throughout a person's life, and their incorporation into the education system is essential for developing successful students who will elevate the nation to greater heights. Hence, integrating these values into education is necessary for character development and societal well-being [4].

In Asia, various studies underscore the significance of core value awareness, highlighting the role of values and ethics in shaping the character of individuals, particularly

among students [5]. Consequently, Shobana [6] emphasized the significance of core values in the training of educators and the necessity of ethical consciousness in learners. Kropi and Roy [7] also posited that students' value awareness is critical in the field of education, as it leads to the eventual practice. Additionally, core value awareness in educational settings can significantly improve student conduct, ultimately creating a center for holistic development [8].

In Philippines, Monterola and Basilan [9] noted that the Department of Education actively promoted values-based education, highlighting *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*. This measure was anchored on the Philippine Constitution mandating that "all educational institutions shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster love of humanity, respect of human rights, teach the rights and duties of citizenship, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character, and personal discipline..." [10]. Despite this initiative from DepEd, its effectiveness is still a concern due to various factors. The two-year instructional gap during the pandemic necessitated reliance on online modular instructions. During this period, content delivery, strategies, assessments, and values integration were perceived as questionable [11]. Additionally, integrating DepEd core values into curricula and subjects is inconsistent and often overlooked due to time constraints and limited incorporation in self-guided modules [12,13].

In Central Philippines, a study conducted by Garcia and Bual [14], core value awareness is generally upheld in public educational institutions. Fernando et al. [15] attribute the adherence and practice of DepEd core values in the local context to the high level of student awareness [14]. Moreover, this is mainly due to the DepEd prioritization of core values assessment simultaneously with academic performance [9]. However, perennial institutional problems such as overburdened teachers, various workloads, and abrupt curriculum changes continue to pose threats to successfully realizing and perpetuating a deep awareness of these core values [16]. Likewise, conflicting priorities between academic requirements and extracurricular commitments hinder students' core values acquisition [17]. Nonetheless, the efficacy of the awareness of DepEd core values is reflected in the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of students, as these affect students' academic performance and character development [18]. Furthermore, this validates the findings of Banusing and Bual [19] as well as Jorilla and Bual [20] that core value awareness is an essential element in ensuring the quality of education in academic institutions.

Various research efforts have examined the application of DepEd core values, investigating their implementation and impact within the Philippines. Monterola and Basilan [9] stress the need for a cultural shift to promote these values, while Betonio [21] highlights the necessity of a values restoration program among Grade 8 students. Khan [12] identifies gaps in incorporating these values into the senior high school English curriculum, particularly regarding environmentalism. Olipas [18] offers a positive assessment of a learning institution's effectiveness in integrating and internalizing these core values. The role of teachers in shaping students' values and proposes a project to enhance spiritual stewardship in elementary schools [22]. Additionally, the study of Garcia and Bual [14] on the practice and awareness of DepEd core values among junior high school students recommends further research on public senior high school students. Despite the existing studies, there remains a gap in the literature that this study aims to address.

Thus, this study focused on awareness of DepEd core values among grade 12 students in a public high school in Antique, Philippines, during 2023-2024, in the light of *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa* relative to their sex, religion, family structure, and strand. Likewise, it investigated the significant differences in the awareness of these core values among students based on demographic factors. The findings of this study provide a basis for developing value-formation activities to enhance the awareness of DepEd core values among grade 12 students.

The study theoretically assumed that the awareness of DepEd core values of the grade 12 students varies according to their sex, religion, family structure, and strand. Hence, this study was anchored on the theory of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems [23], which asserts that individuals are influenced by a series of nested systems or environments. This

theory underscores the importance of considering the comprehensive ecological context that shapes the awareness of DepEd's core values. Applied to the context of DepEd core values, the ecological systems theory provides a framework for the researchers to understand how various factors at different ecological levels shape students' awareness of core values. These nested systems in the environment include individual characteristics such as sex and religion, family dynamics such as family structure, educational settings such as academic strands, and broader cultural influences. By acknowledging these interconnected systems, researchers and educators can better understand and facilitate the awareness of core values among students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-comparative approach. This approach involved statistical description and comparison of variables to address the study's hypothesis and theory-driven questions [24]. On one hand, the descriptive analysis examined the level of awareness of DepEd core values among grade 12 students. On the other hand, the comparative approach analyzed the significant difference between the students' level of core value awareness and their demographics. The respondents were 293 Grade 12 students from a public school in Antique, Philippines. They were selected using stratified random sampling and the fishbowl technique.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	f	%
Sex		
Male	113	38.6
Female	180	61.4
Religion		
Catholic	229	78.2
Non-Catholic	64	21.8
Family Structure		
Nuclear	194	66.2
Single Parent	46	15.7
Extended	53	18.1
Strand		
ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management)	29	9.9
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)	54	18.4
TVL (Technical Vocational Livelihood)	67	22.9
HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences)	133	45.4
AD (Arts and Designs)	3	1.0
Sports	7	2.4
Total	293	100.0

The data collection instrument utilized the adopted questionnaire developed by Garcia and Bual [14]. This questionnaire assessed the awareness of DepEd core values in terms of *maka-Diyos*, *makatao makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*. Regarding validity, the instrument achieved a content validity index of 0.96. For reliability, it yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient score of 0.781. In assessing the students' awareness of DepEd core values, it utilized a Likert scale ranging from very low to very high ratings.

In analyzing the data, this study employed both descriptive and inferential analyses. The descriptive analysis assessed students' awareness of DepEd core values using mean

and standard deviation. Additionally, the comparative analysis examined variations in awareness across groups categorized as to sex, religion, family structure, and academic strand. The normality of the variable was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, revealing a non-normal distribution for awareness ($KS=0.078$, $p=0.000$). Hence, the Mann-Whitney U-Test and Kruskal-Wallis test were employed to address research questions requiring comparisons.

Meanwhile, ethical considerations in this study were aligned with the guidelines established by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB). The study upheld principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice to ensure ethical integrity. Special measures were taken to safeguard the vulnerability of participants, maintain anonymity in data collection, and ensure the confidentiality of gathered information.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Students' Awareness of DepEd Core Values in a Public High School

According to the Department of Education [25], students who are aware of the fundamental values recognize the principles of *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*. Tables 2 and 3 present the level of awareness of DepEd core values among grade 12 students in a public high school in Antique, Philippines during 2023-2024. Generally, their level of awareness ($M=4.34$, $SD=0.48$) is very high. All areas were rated very high, where the highest rated domain is *Makabansa* ($M=4.50$, $SD=0.49$), then *Makatao* ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.54$), followed by *Makakalikasan* ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.60$), and *Maka-Diyos* ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.55$) as the lowest rated domain. Meanwhile, when grouped according to sex, males ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.53$) and females ($M=4.43$, $SD=0.42$) rated very high. Regarding religion, Catholic ($M=4.34$, $SD=0.46$), and non-Catholic ($M=4.37$, $SD=0.53$) rated very high. Relative to family structure, nuclear ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.48$), single parent ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.48$), and extended ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.45$) rated very high. According to strand, ABM ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.46$), STEM ($M=4.51$, $SD=0.32$), TVL ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.57$), and HUMSS ($M=4.37$, $SD=0.47$) rated very high while AD ($M=3.88$, $SD=0.25$), sports ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.43$) rated high.

The exceptionally high awareness observed among grade 12 students in a public school regarding the DepEd core values of *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*, indicates a thorough understanding of these principles. This result is supported by the study of Garcia and Bual [14], which was also conducted in public schools. This heightened awareness may be attributed to the school's integration of DepEd core values into its curriculum, policies, and codes of conduct [26], which are explicitly reflected in DepEd's mission and vision statements, thereby fostering awareness among students. Suprianto et al. [27] also conducted a study that confirmed the result of integrating core values into the curriculum, demonstrating how it shapes students' awareness and behaviors. Public schools are encouraged to exhibit these core values prominently alongside their mission-vision statements, likely contributing to the students' heightened awareness [28]. Embedding these core values in the school's vision and mission statements positively impacts the school's internal efficiency by significantly increasing value awareness among students and stakeholders [29,30]. These findings underscore the importance of reinforcing the visibility of core values in public schools and providing ongoing teacher training to sustain students' high awareness levels.

The findings also reveal that both male and female students exhibit excellent awareness of the DepEd core values *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa*, indicating a shared recognition of the significance of these values. This parity in awareness could be attributed to uniform instructions, programs, and activities implemented by the school to promote awareness of DepEd's core values among all students [9,14]. Likewise, Ahipanyo [31] and Mollahosseini et al. [32] reported no notable difference in core values awareness between genders because of homogenous value teaching. This highlights

the continuous efforts of schools to integrate programs and activities that cultivate awareness of DepEd's core values.

Similarly, the study shows that Catholic and Non-Catholic students alike demonstrate high awareness of these core values, suggesting a universal recognition of their importance irrespective of religious affiliation [33,34]. This suggests that character education is all-encompassing, enhancing students' understanding and respect for diverse values such as social justice and ethical conduct [35,36]. Collaboration between schools and local churches may contribute to students' awareness of DepEd core values through religious education programs. Achadah et al. [37] emphasized the significant role of churches and religious institutions in shaping students' awareness of values. Ramalingam and Palanivelu[38] further suggested that collaboration with churches and improved teacher training could enhance this heightened recognition of values among students. Thus, students receive reinforcement of these values within their religious communities as well as in their educational institutions.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that students from various family structures—nuclear, extended, and single-parent families—show equally high awareness of DepEd core values; this signifies that value occurs both at home and in school [39]. At the same time, this also underscores the role of the family in complementing school efforts in values education [14,40]. Initiatives such as parental involvement through Parent-Teacher Associations create supportive environments where these values are reinforced both at home and in school [41]. This demonstrates the importance of continued collaboration between parents and educators in promoting awareness of DepEd's core values.

Lastly, the study finds that students across all academic strands demonstrate very high awareness of DepEd core values, indicating uniform instruction and integration of these values across various subjects [42]. This can be attributed to the inclusion of school programs and co-curricular activities that are accessible to all strands, as many elements of value awareness are integrated into these activities [43]. This may also be influenced by teachers who serve as role models by embodying these core values in their interactions with students, regardless of academic specialization [44,45]. The study confirms the ongoing efforts of DepEd in integrating core values instruction within the curriculum across all strands, ensuring consistent implementation and reinforcement.

Table 2. Students' Awareness of DepEd Core Values in a Public High School

Variables	Maka-Diyos			Makatao			Makakalikasan		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex									
Male	4.07	0.60	Hi	4.20	0.59	Hi	4.16	0.65	Hi
Female	4.33	0.49	VH	4.42	0.49	VH	4.40	0.55	VH
Religion									
Catholic	4.23	0.52	VH	4.32	0.54	VH	4.30	0.59	VH
Non-Catholic	4.23	0.64	VH	4.37	0.55	VH	4.34	0.64	VH
Family Structure									
Nuclear	4.24	0.55	VH	4.34	0.55	VH	4.30	0.61	VH
Single Parent	4.04	0.53	Hi	4.18	0.56	Hi	4.24	0.60	VH
Extended	4.34	0.52	VH	4.42	0.49	VH	4.39	0.56	VH
Strand									
ABM	4.14	0.51	Hi	4.16	0.49	Hi	4.15	0.63	Hi
STEM	4.37	0.45	VH	4.52	0.36	VH	4.50	0.45	VH
TVL	4.19	0.60	Hi	4.19	0.63	Hi	4.27	0.68	VH
HUMSS	4.22	0.57	VH	4.39	0.53	VH	4.31	0.58	VH
AD	3.89	0.25	Hi	3.79	0.36	Hi	3.80	0.35	Hi
Sports	4.24	0.45	VH	4.07	0.68	Hi	4.00	0.65	Hi
Whole	4.23	0.55	VH	4.33	0.54	VH	4.31	0.60	VH

Note: High (Hi), Very High (VH)

Table 3. Students' Awareness of DepEd Core Values in a Public High School

Variables	Makabansa			Awareness		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex						
Male	4.41	0.57	VH	4.21	0.53	VH
Female	4.57	0.42	VH	4.43	0.42	VH
Religion						
Catholic	4.50	0.48	VH	4.34	0.46	VH
Non-Catholic	4.54	0.54	VH	4.37	0.53	VH
Family Structure						
Nuclear	4.49	0.50	VH	4.35	0.48	VH
Single Parent	4.47	0.50	VH	4.23	0.48	VH
Extended	4.59	0.47	VH	4.44	0.45	VH
Strand						
ABM	4.41	0.47	VH	4.22	0.46	VH
STEM	4.64	0.35	VH	4.51	0.32	VH
TVL	4.41	0.60	VH	4.26	0.57	VH
HUMSS	4.54	0.48	VH	4.37	0.47	VH
AD	4.06	0.10	Hi	3.88	0.25	Hi
Sports	4.40	0.29	VH	4.18	0.43	Hi
Whole	4.50	0.49	VH	4.34	0.48	VH

Note: High (Hi), Very High (VH)

3.2 Difference in the Students' Awareness of DepEd Core Values in a Public High School

Table 4 presents the difference in the students' awareness of DepEd core values in a public high school when grouped according to demographics. Mann Whitney U-Test and Kruskal Wallis were used to analyze the significant differences. There were no significant differences in the level of students' awareness of DepEd core values when grouped according to religion and family structure [$\chi^2(2) = 5.093$, $P = 0.078$]. Hence, the hypotheses are accepted. Meanwhile, there were significant differences in terms of sex [$U = 7782.5$, $P = 0.001$], and strand [$\chi^2(5) = 13.739$, $P = 0.017$]. Hence, the hypotheses were rejected. Post hoc analysis shows that in terms of sex, females rated significantly higher than males. In terms of strand, HUMSS, and STEM students rated significantly higher than their counterparts.

The no significant difference in religion and family structure indicates that regardless of whether the student is Catholic or not, from a nuclear, extended, or single-parent family, they share the same perception of the core value awareness. This suggests that these two variables have nothing to say concerning students' awareness of DepEd core values. This conclusion is validated by the studies conducted by Garcia and Bual [14] and Kuyateh [46]. Likewise, this finding supports the claim of Ayo-Vaughan and Amosun [47] that students' core value awareness does not differ in family structure. This insight could be influenced by the reality that the development of grade 12 students' core value awareness is primarily facilitated by the school and not by religion or family structure. This means that their awareness is established through school instruction, as Ayo-Vaughan and Amosun [47] and Schepher [48] support. Hence, these findings signify the need for a public school to initiate activities that promote the students' core value awareness, inviting the students' religious affiliations and parents to participate.

In terms of sex, the significant difference indicates that the awareness of DepEd core values varies if the student is male or female. This claim validated the findings of Garcia and Bual [14]. This means that awareness of *maka-Diyos*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *makabansa* has something to do with the sex of grade 12 students [49]. This result could be anchored to the fact that female students are more engaged in school activities that elicit the awareness of DepEd core values than male students [50]. Likewise, female students

engaged more in co-curricular activities, which helped them become aware of the said values. This implies that public schools need to enhance the inclusive participation of students regardless of sex.

In terms of strands, the significant difference indicates that awareness of DepEd core values has something to do with the strand of grade 12 students. This means that awareness of DepEd core values depends on the chosen strand of students. This could be because the variance in students' awareness can be attributed to their distinct orientations toward core values [14,49]. Some strands have specialized programs that focus on aspects of DepEd core values [51]. This claim is further validated by Barakoska and Jovkovska, [52] and Matić, [53] who revealed that different school strands lead to varying value orientations and levels of awareness. It is also generally viewed that girls have a stronger tendency to be goal-oriented than boys [14]. This result implies reinforcement of integrating DepEd core values in classroom management and instruction in TVL, ABM, Sports, Arts, and Design strands. Meanwhile, continuous integration of these core values is necessary in HUMSS and STEM strands.

Table 4. Difference in the Students' Awareness of DepEd Core Values

Variable	U	z	p
Sex	7782.500*	-3.384	0.001
Religion	6834.000	-0.825	0.409
Variable	χ^2	df	p
Family Structure	5.093	2	0.078
Strand	13.739*	5	0.017

Note: *difference is significant when $P \leq 0.05$

The study theoretically assumed that the awareness of DepEd core values of the grade 12 students varies according to their sex, religion, family structure, and strand. As posited by the ecological systems theory, students' awareness is significantly influenced by how a series of interconnected systems extend from immediate surroundings to wider social and cultural contexts. The findings of this study validate this theoretical assumption. Also, the findings confirmed that the school plays a vital role in fostering DepEd core values as evidenced by the high level of students' core values awareness. Meanwhile, this means that students' high level of awareness is attributed to the combined efforts of the school enhancing the development of their awareness of DepEd core values. Furthermore, this emphasizes the need for the school to initiate activities to foster awareness both in male and female students. Also, this study suggests enhancing core value awareness across all strands.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings suggest the reinforcement of the implementation of school-initiated programs and activities to elicit awareness of DepEd's core values. The result also indicates that students become aware of DepEd's core values because of their religion and not necessarily in the school. Hence, this implies sustained collaborative efforts between parents, religious affiliations, and teachers to actively engage in promoting core values awareness. Moreover, these findings highlight the reinforcement of integrating DepEd core values in classroom management and instruction in TVL, ABM, Sports, Arts, and Design strands. Meanwhile, continuous integration of these core values is also necessary in HUMSS and STEM strands. This implies that public schools need to enhance the inclusive participation of students regardless of sex. This study also conveys the need to strengthen not only core value integration in public schools but also sustainable teacher orientation to maintain students' high awareness.

Meanwhile, this study acknowledges several limitations. It was conducted in a public school on six senior high school strands employing a quantitative research design. Moreover, this study was limited to the demographics. With these limitations, further studies are encouraged utilizing similar or other designs, expanded demographic data, or other frameworks to confirm the study's hypothesis. This paper seeks to provide additional baseline data and insights on the topic of core value awareness to expand and improve institutional policies and initiatives to help develop holistic student formation.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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