

Values Identified and Lived by the Senior High School Students: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study at Surigao Education Center

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Abstract

This study explored the values identified and lived by Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center through a descriptive phenomenological inquiry. Specifically, it examined how students who had been enrolled in the institution since Grade 7 experienced, interpreted, internalized, and expressed values in their academic and personal lives. Guided by Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological psychological method and interpreted through Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, the study gathered data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected Senior High School students. The interview narratives were analyzed through bracketing, holistic reading, identification of meaning units, psychological transformation of meaning units, and synthesis of essential structures. Findings revealed six major themes: relational values and sense of belonging, development of self-regulation and responsibility, emotional regulation as a pathway to personal growth, influence of social relationships on values formation, development of moral and ethical values, and personal transformation toward maturity. These findings indicate that values are not merely taught as abstract principles but are gradually formed, internalized, and lived through social interaction, reflection, responsibility, emotional experiences, and daily school engagement. The essence of the phenomenon is transformative character development through lived values, showing that students' character formation is a continuous process shaped by meaningful relationships, institutional values, and real-life experiences. The study offers implications for values education, curriculum enrichment, student formation programs, and educational leadership in values-centered school contexts.

Keywords: Character Development, Descriptive Phenomenology, Lived Experiences, Senior High School Students, Values Education, Values Formation

1. Introduction

Education extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge and technical competence. It also involves the development of learners' moral judgment, social responsibility, emotional maturity, and civic consciousness. In contemporary education, this broader role of schooling is increasingly framed through holistic learning and social-emotional development. UNESCO (2024) explains that social and emotional learning develops learners' ability to recognize and manage emotions, show concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and manage challenging situations. Similarly, the OECD (2023) emphasizes that social and emotional skills are associated with students' academic success, well-being, social participation, and long-term personal development. These perspectives indicate that values education should not be treated merely as an added curricular component but as a central dimension of learner formation.

In the Philippine basic education system, values formation is formally supported through Republic Act No. 11476, also known as the GMRC and Values Education Act. The law institutionalizes Good Manners and Right Conduct and Values Education in the K to 12 curriculum and affirms the role of schools in strengthening learners' moral character, civic responsibility, discipline, respect, honesty, and concern for others (Republic Act No. 11476, 2020). The Department of Education (2020) likewise recognizes this policy as part of the formation of Filipino learners who are morally, socially, intellectually, and civically prepared for responsible participation in society. This policy context is particularly relevant to Senior High School students because they are at a developmental stage where identity formation, moral reasoning, emotional regulation, peer influence, and decision-making become increasingly significant.

At Surigao Education Center, values formation is reflected in the institution's core values known as SECIANS, which include social responsibility, excellence, cooperation, integrity, accountability, noteworthy work attitude, and sympathy. These values provide a school-based framework for guiding student conduct, learning engagement, interpersonal relationships, and personal development. However, the existence of institutional values does not automatically mean that students understand, internalize, or practice them in meaningful ways. Values become educationally significant when learners encounter them in concrete situations, reflect on their meaning, and express them through actual behavior. For this reason, the present study focuses on Senior High School students who had been enrolled at Surigao Education Center since Grade 7, as their sustained exposure to the school environment may provide meaningful insights into how values are experienced and lived over time.

Values are also important because they function as guiding principles that influence choices, actions, relationships, and responses to social expectations. Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values explains that values are organized around motivational goals such as benevolence, conformity, self-direction, achievement, security, and universalism (Schwartz, 2012). These value dimensions provide a useful theoretical lens for understanding how students' lived experiences may reflect broader orientations toward care, responsibility, discipline, personal growth, and concern for others. However, because this study is grounded in descriptive phenomenology, the students' narratives are treated as the primary source of meaning. Schwartz's theory is therefore used only after the emergence of themes, allowing the analysis to remain grounded in the informants' lived experiences.

Despite the recognized importance of values education, several research gaps remain. First, much of the discussion on values education emphasizes policy, curriculum, institutional programs, or teacher implementation, while less attention is given to how students themselves experience and interpret values in everyday school life. This creates a student-voice gap. Second, values are often discussed as prescribed virtues or abstract moral ideals, but fewer studies examine how learners personally encounter, internalize, and enact values in concrete academic, social, and personal situations. This creates an experiential gap. Third, while the Philippine curriculum formally integrates GMRC and Values Education, there remains a need for context-specific research that examines how values formation is experienced within particular school cultures, especially in institutions with explicit core values systems. This creates a contextual gap. Finally, limited descriptive phenomenological inquiry has examined how Senior High School students understand values formation as part of their personal transformation. This creates a methodological gap.

These gaps justify the need for a descriptive phenomenological study that gives direct attention to students' narratives. By exploring how Senior High School students identify and live values at Surigao Education Center, the study moves beyond determining whether values are taught and instead examines how values are experienced, reflected upon, internalized, and embodied in daily life. This focus is significant because values education becomes meaningful when learners connect institutional and curricular values with lived realities, including relationships with family, peers, and teachers; academic responsibilities; emotional challenges; ethical decisions; and personal growth. Through this inquiry, the study contributes to values education by providing evidence on how students' lived experiences reveal the formation of character, social awareness, responsibility, emotional regulation, and moral maturity.



Therefore, this study, titled “Values Identified and Lived by the Senior High School Students: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study at Surigao Education Center,” seeks to describe the essence of students’ lived experiences of values formation. Anchored in descriptive phenomenology and interpreted through Schwartz’s Theory of Basic Human Values after the emergence of themes, the study aims to generate a deeper understanding of how values are identified, internalized, and practiced by Senior High School students. Its findings may provide relevant insights for teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, parents, and future researchers who seek to strengthen values education as a lived, reflective, and transformative process.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Schwartz’s Theory of Basic Human Values, which explains values as guiding principles that influence people’s choices, behavior, relationships, and responses to social expectations. Schwartz (2012) identifies broad value dimensions such as benevolence, conformity, self-direction, achievement, security, and universalism, which help explain how individuals prioritize moral, social, and personal goals. In this study, the theory serves as an interpretive lens for understanding how Senior High School students identify, internalize, and live values through their daily experiences at Surigao Education Center. Since the study follows Giorgi’s (2009) descriptive phenomenological method, Schwartz’s theory is not used to predetermine the themes but to deepen the interpretation of the meanings that emerge from students’ lived experiences. Thus, the framework supports the study’s focus on values as lived, relational, developmental, and transformative aspects of student character formation.

Aim of the Study

This study aimed to explore and describe the values identified and lived by Senior High School students of Surigao Education Center who had been enrolled in the institution since Grade 7.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to describe the lived experiences of Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center in identifying, internalizing, and practicing values in their academic and personal lives.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What values do Senior High School students commonly identify and experience through classroom interactions and the learning process?
2. How do students make sense of and reflect upon the values integrated into their learning experiences?
3. In what ways do students manifest the values they have learned in their academic, social, and personal lives?
4. What meanings and insights do students derive from their experiences of values integration?
5. What themes emerge from students’ narratives that describe the essence of becoming better individuals through values integration in education?

2. Review of Related Literature

Values education remains a core component of holistic education because schooling is expected to develop learners not only intellectually but also morally, socially, emotionally, and civically. Contemporary education increasingly recognizes that academic learning alone is insufficient for preparing students to participate responsibly in society. Learners also need dispositions such as empathy, self-regulation, responsibility, cooperation, integrity, and respect. UNESCO (2024) explains that social and emotional learning supports learners in recognizing and managing emotions, caring for others, building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and responding constructively to challenging situations. Similarly, the OECD (2024) reports that social and emotional skills are associated with academic success, life satisfaction, healthier behavior, lower anxiety, and



future aspirations. These perspectives provide a broader foundation for the present study, which views values education not merely as formal instruction but as a developmental process through which students learn to live values in everyday school and personal contexts.

Recent evidence on social and emotional learning also strengthens the argument that values formation is connected to students' behavior, relationships, and school functioning. Cipriano et al. (2023), in a contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based social and emotional learning interventions, found that students who participated in such programs showed significant improvements in skills, attitudes, behavior, peer relationships, school climate and safety, school functioning, and academic achievement. This evidence is relevant to the present study because the values identified by the students—such as responsibility, cooperation, patience, respect, and empathy—are closely linked with social and emotional competencies. However, while meta-analytic evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of structured programs, it does not fully explain how students personally experience, interpret, and internalize values in a specific school culture. This gap supports the use of descriptive phenomenology in the present study.

In the Philippine basic education context, values formation is formally supported through Republic Act No. 11476, also known as the GMRC and Values Education Act. The law institutionalizes Good Manners and Right Conduct and Values Education in the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum and recognizes the school's role in strengthening learners' moral character, spiritual formation, civic responsibility, discipline, patriotism, and respect for human dignity (Republic Act No. 11476, 2020). The Department of Education (2020) likewise emphasized that GMRC and Values Education support the formation of learners who contribute to nation-building while developing moral, social, intellectual, and civic responsibility. This policy context is directly connected to the present study because Senior High School students are at a stage where values are not only taught as prescribed content but are also negotiated through relationships, academic expectations, peer influence, emotional experiences, and daily decisions.

The literature on character education further indicates that values education can contribute to both behavioral and academic outcomes. Jeynes (2019), in a meta-analysis involving 52 studies, found that character education was associated with higher educational outcomes and with expressions of integrity, compassion, self-discipline, and related character traits. Johnson, McGrath, Bier, Brown, and Berkowitz (2022), in their meta-analysis of the What Works in Character Education research, likewise emphasized the continuing relevance of character education programs and instructional practices, including moral discussion and cooperative learning. These findings support the present study's concern with values as lived behaviors rather than abstract ideals. However, the present study differs from program-effectiveness research because it does not measure whether a values program produces predefined outcomes. Instead, it examines how students themselves describe the values they identify, internalize, and practice through lived experience.

Values become meaningful when students encounter them in concrete situations. Formal instruction may introduce values, but students internalize values more deeply when they experience them through family support, classroom interaction, peer relationships, academic responsibility, emotional challenges, and moral choices. For example, responsibility becomes meaningful when students complete tasks, manage time, and accept obligations. Respect becomes meaningful when students listen to others, regulate their speech, and recognize the dignity of classmates, teachers, and family members. Empathy becomes meaningful when students respond to others' needs and consider the feelings of peers. This experiential understanding aligns with the present study's focus on Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center, where values are examined as lived realities rather than merely as institutional statements or curricular expectations.

The moral and social environment of the school is also significant in values formation. Gálvez-Nieto et al. (2022) found that school climate is related to values and attitudes toward authority among adolescents, suggesting that the broader school environment can influence how students orient themselves toward norms, relationships, and social expectations. This is relevant to Surigao Education Center because its institutional values, collectively known as SECIANS—social responsibility, excellence, cooperation, integrity, accountability, noteworthy work attitude, and



sympathy—provide a school-based framework for learner formation. However, institutional values become educationally meaningful only when students experience them in real academic, relational, emotional, and ethical situations. The present study therefore addresses the gap between institutional value articulation and students' lived appropriation of those values.

Values are theoretically significant because they function as guiding principles for human choices, behavior, and relationships. Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values explains that values are motivationally distinct but interconnected principles that guide behavior across cultural contexts (Schwartz, 2012). Schwartz identified value dimensions such as benevolence, conformity, self-direction, achievement, security, tradition, and universalism. These values are relevant to the present study because students' lived experiences may reflect broader value orientations. Their concern for family and friends may relate to benevolence; their obedience to school rules may relate to conformity and security; their sense of responsibility in academic work may reflect achievement and self-direction; and their concern for others may connect with universalism and sympathy. Nevertheless, because the present study is descriptive phenomenological, Schwartz's theory is used only after the emergence of themes. This ensures that students' narratives remain the primary basis of meaning.

Adolescence is a critical period for values formation because peer relationships, identity development, and moral reasoning become increasingly important. Ciecuch et al. (2024), using a longitudinal social network approach with adolescents, found evidence of both peer selection and socialization effects in the development of value preferences. Their findings suggest that students' peer networks can influence value formation over time. Benish-Weisman et al. (2021) similarly argued that children's values may become more similar to those of their peers and that peer values can predict classroom behavior. These studies support the present inquiry because the students' narratives show that friendship, peer support, sharing, encouragement, and peer guidance are important sources of values formation. The present study extends this line of literature by providing qualitative evidence on how students themselves describe the role of relationships in shaping values.

Social relationships are particularly influential because values are often learned through interaction with family members, teachers, classmates, friends, and the wider school community. Family relationships may cultivate gratitude, respect, responsibility, and appreciation. Peer relationships may foster belonging, cooperation, loyalty, empathy, and emotional support. Teacher-student interactions may model discipline, fairness, accountability, and respect. These relational processes show that values formation is not only an individual cognitive process but also a social and emotional process. This connects directly with the present study because students' lived experiences reveal that values are formed through repeated interaction with significant others in school and home contexts.

Meaning-making is another central issue in values education. Learners do not simply absorb values mechanically; they interpret them through reflection, interaction, and experience. A student may understand gratitude after recognizing parental sacrifice, cooperation after receiving help from peers, patience after facing delays, and honesty after recognizing the importance of trust. This meaning-making process is central to phenomenological inquiry because the researcher seeks to describe how participants experience and interpret a phenomenon. In the present study, this means giving priority to students' own descriptions of how they understand values, how they connect values with real situations, and how values become personally significant in their academic, social, and personal lives.

Values education is also meaningful only when values are translated into behavior. Students' daily actions provide evidence of how values are lived: helping classmates, following rules, completing academic tasks, speaking respectfully, managing emotions, forgiving others, and accepting responsibility. The OECD (2024) identifies self-control, cooperation, sociability, tolerance, achievement motivation, empathy, and responsibility as social and emotional skills linked to important life outcomes. Cipriano et al. (2023) likewise found that social and emotional learning interventions can improve peer relationships, behavior, school functioning, and academic achievement. These findings support the present study's focus on the manifestation of values in academic, social, emotional, and moral life.



Self-regulation and responsibility are especially important because they show how values become internalized as personal discipline. Students demonstrate responsibility when they complete schoolwork, follow expectations, manage time, accept consequences, and regulate their own behavior. These actions reflect the connection between values and self-management. Schwartz's (2012) discussion of achievement, self-direction, conformity, and security provides a useful interpretive lens for understanding such behaviors because students' responsibility reflects both personal goals and social expectations. In the present study, narratives related to obedience, accountability, time management, and academic effort are therefore interpreted as evidence of developing self-regulation and responsibility.

Emotional regulation is another dimension of values formation. Values such as patience, forgiveness, sympathy, respect, and empathy require students to manage emotional responses and consider the feelings of others. A learner who avoids impulsive reactions, waits patiently, forgives a peer, or responds calmly to conflict demonstrates that values are not only cognitive or behavioral but also affective. UNESCO (2024) identifies emotional awareness and emotional management as important components of social and emotional learning, while Cipriano et al. (2023) show that school-based social and emotional learning can improve student attitudes and behaviors. The present study contributes to this literature by describing how students experience emotional growth through ordinary situations such as waiting, frustration, peer conflict, forgiveness, and reflection.

Moral and ethical development is also central to values education. Values such as honesty, integrity, respect, forgiveness, loyalty, obedience, and accountability serve as ethical guides in social life. Republic Act No. 11476 (2020) reinforces this point by emphasizing GMRC and Values Education as part of the K to 12 curriculum. However, moral development cannot be fully understood through curriculum policy alone. It must also be examined through learners' lived experiences. The present study addresses this need by exploring how students describe honesty as a basis for trust, respect as a way of maintaining harmonious relationships, forgiveness as a response to conflict, and obedience as part of discipline.

The reviewed literature also suggests that values formation is transformative. Values education is not limited to short-term behavioral compliance; its deeper purpose is the gradual formation of character. When students repeatedly experience, reflect on, and practice values, they may develop greater maturity, confidence, empathy, responsibility, and social awareness. This connects with the present study's emerging essence of transformative character development through lived values. The students' narratives suggest that values are not simply remembered from classroom lessons but gradually integrated into their sense of self. They describe becoming more patient, responsible, open, caring, respectful, and mature. Thus, values formation may be understood as a movement from external instruction toward internalized character.

Despite the growing literature on values education, social-emotional learning, character education, and adolescent peer influence, several research gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature emphasizes programs, policies, school climate, or measurable outcomes, while less attention is given to how students themselves experience and interpret values in everyday school life. This creates a student-voice gap. Second, values are often discussed as prescribed virtues or general moral ideals, but fewer studies examine how learners identify, internalize, and live values in concrete academic, social, and personal situations. This creates an experiential gap. Third, although Philippine policy formally institutionalizes GMRC and Values Education, there remains a need for context-specific inquiry into how values are lived within school cultures, especially institutions with explicit core values systems. This creates a contextual gap. Fourth, there remains limited descriptive phenomenological research on how Senior High School students understand values formation as part of personal growth and transformation. This creates a methodological gap.

The present study responds to these gaps by examining the lived experiences of Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center. Rather than measuring values or evaluating curriculum implementation, it explores how students describe the values they identify, how they make meaning of these values, how they manifest them in daily life, and how these experiences contribute to personal transformation. In doing so, the study contributes to



values education by showing that character formation is not only taught through curriculum but is lived through relationships, responsibilities, emotional experiences, ethical choices, and reflective engagement with school life.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the values identified and lived by Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center. The design was guided by Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological psychological method, which seeks to describe the essential structure of lived experience from the perspective of the participants (Giorgi, 2009). This approach was appropriate because the study did not intend to measure variables or test causal relationships; rather, it aimed to understand how students experienced, interpreted, internalized, and expressed values in their academic and personal lives.

Descriptive phenomenology was used to remain faithful to the participants' own descriptions of their experiences. Consistent with Giorgi's method, the researcher adopted the phenomenological attitude through bracketing, wherein prior assumptions about students' values, behavior, and character formation were set aside during data collection and analysis. This allowed the meanings of the participants' experiences to emerge from their narratives rather than from predetermined categories or theoretical assumptions. Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values was used only after the descriptive analysis as an interpretive lens to enrich the discussion of the emergent themes.

Research Environment

The study was conducted at Surigao Education Center, specifically in the Senior High School Department. The school served as an appropriate research environment because it provided authentic contexts where students encounter and practice values through classroom learning, peer interaction, teacher-student engagement, school activities, and institutional culture. The institution promotes the SECIANS core values, namely social responsibility, excellence, cooperation, integrity, accountability, noteworthy work attitude, and sympathy. These values formed part of the school context within which the informants' lived experiences were explored, although they were not used as predetermined categories during analysis.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of the study were Senior High School students of Surigao Education Center who were selected through purposive sampling. This sampling method was appropriate because the study required participants who had direct, sustained, and meaningful experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were currently enrolled in Grades 11 or 12, had been enrolled at Surigao Education Center since Grade 7, were actively involved in classroom interactions and school activities, and were willing and able to describe their experiences of values formation.

A sample of 8 to 12 participants was considered suitable for the phenomenological nature of the study because it allowed in-depth exploration of lived experiences while maintaining manageability in the analysis of narratives. The final selection focused on students who could provide rich descriptions of how values were identified, experienced, reflected upon, and practiced within the school context.

Research Instrument

The researcher served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, consistent with qualitative phenomenological inquiry. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews using an interview guide composed of open-ended questions. The guide was designed to elicit students' narratives about the values



they identified, how they experienced values integration, how they made meaning of these values, how they practiced them in daily life, and how these experiences contributed to their personal development.

The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up and probing questions when clarification or elaboration was needed. This supported a deeper exploration of the informants' lived experiences while allowing them to describe their thoughts, feelings, and reflections in their own words. Field notes were also used to document contextual details, non-verbal cues, and relevant observations during the interviews.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher secured formal permission from the school administration to conduct the study. After approval was granted, coordination was made with the Senior High School Principal to identify eligible participants based on the inclusion criteria. The purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards of the study were then explained to the prospective participants.

Because the participants were minors, parental consent was secured before their participation. Student assent was also obtained to ensure that participation was voluntary and understood by the students themselves. The participants were informed of their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet and appropriate venue within the school, particularly the school library, to ensure privacy and minimize distractions. With the permission of the participants and their parents or guardians, the interviews were audio-recorded. Field notes were taken during the interviews to capture relevant contextual and non-verbal information. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to preserve the participants' original expressions, pauses, and meanings.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological psychological method. First, the researcher adopted the phenomenological attitude through bracketing to reduce the influence of personal assumptions and prior knowledge about values education. Second, each transcript was read several times to obtain a sense of the whole experience. This step allowed the researcher to understand the general meaning of each participant's narrative before dividing it into parts.

Third, the transcripts were divided into meaning units based on shifts in meaning. These meaning units represented significant statements or segments that reflected how the participants experienced, interpreted, and lived values. Fourth, the meaning units were transformed into psychologically sensitive expressions while preserving the participants' original intent. This process allowed everyday descriptions to be restated in terms that reflected the psychological and experiential meaning of values formation.

Fifth, the transformed meaning units were synthesized into a general structural description of the phenomenon. Through this process, the study identified the essential structure of how Senior High School students experienced values in their school and personal lives. The analysis led to the emergence of major themes that described relational values and belonging, self-regulation and responsibility, emotional regulation, social relationships, moral and ethical values, and personal transformation toward maturity. Only after the descriptive themes had emerged was Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values used as an interpretive lens to deepen the discussion.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Voluntary participation was ensured by informing the participants that they had the right to decide whether to join the study and the right to withdraw at



any time. Informed consent was secured from parents or guardians, while assent was obtained from the student participants. The purpose of the study, the interview process, the use of audio recording, and the academic use of the data were clearly explained.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using codes or pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names. Identifying information was removed from transcripts and reports. Audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. The participants' responses were treated with respect, and the findings were reported honestly and responsibly to preserve the integrity of their lived experiences.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

The rigor and trustworthiness of the study were ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and methodological discipline. Credibility was strengthened by selecting participants who had sustained experience in the school environment and could provide rich descriptions of the phenomenon. The use of in-depth interviews and probing questions allowed the researcher to obtain detailed accounts of informants' lived experiences.

Dependability was supported through the maintenance of an audit trail that documented the stages of data collection, transcription, coding, transformation of meaning units, and theme development. Confirmability was ensured through reflexive practice and bracketing, which helped the researcher remain aware of possible biases during data analysis. The findings were grounded in the participants' actual narratives and supported by significant statements. Methodological rigor was further maintained by following Giorgi's analytic steps systematically, from holistic reading to meaning-unit identification, psychological transformation, and synthesis of the essential structure of the phenomenon.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on the lived experiences of Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center. The findings are organized according to the Statement of the Problem and the six major themes that emerged from the descriptive phenomenological analysis. Direct quotations from the informants are included to preserve the participants' voices and to show how the identified values were experienced, interpreted, and lived in their academic, social, and personal lives.

Table 1. Summary of Findings According to the Statement of the Problem

Statement of the Problem	Synthesized Findings	Supporting Themes
1. What values do Senior High School students commonly identify and experience through classroom interactions and the learning process?	Students commonly identified and experienced values such as family appreciation, friendship, cooperation, responsibility, obedience, patience, respect, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, empathy, and social support. These values were experienced through classroom interactions, peer support, teacher influence, academic tasks, and school responsibilities.	Relational Values and Sense of Belonging; Development of Self-Regulation and Responsibility; Development of Moral and Ethical Values
2. How do students make sense of and reflect upon the values integrated into their learning experiences?	Students made sense of values by connecting them with personal experiences, family sacrifices, peer relationships, academic duties, emotional challenges, and social encounters. Values became meaningful when students reflected on how these experiences shaped their behavior and relationships.	Relational Values and Sense of Belonging; Influence of Social Relationships on Values Formation; Emotional Regulation as a Pathway to Personal Growth
3. In what ways do students manifest the values they have learned in their academic, social, and	Students manifested values by completing tasks responsibly, following rules, managing time, helping friends, sharing with others, controlling emotions, showing respect, practicing honesty, forgiving others,	Development of Self-Regulation and Responsibility; Development of Moral and Ethical Values; Personal

Statement of the Problem	Synthesized Findings	Supporting Themes
personal lives?	and becoming more open and socially confident.	Transformation Toward Maturity
4. What meanings and insights do students derive from their experiences of values integration?	Students realized that values are not only taught but lived through relationships, responsibilities, challenges, and reflection. They understood that values help them become more responsible, patient, respectful, caring, emotionally controlled, and socially aware.	Emotional Regulation as a Pathway to Personal Growth; Influence of Social Relationships on Values Formation; Personal Transformation Toward Maturity
5. What themes emerge from students' narratives that describe the essence of becoming better individuals through values integration in education?	Six themes emerged: relational values and sense of belonging; development of self-regulation and responsibility; emotional regulation as a pathway to personal growth; influence of social relationships on values formation; development of moral and ethical values; and personal transformation toward maturity. Together, these themes point to the essence of transformative character development through lived values.	All six themes

The findings in Table 1 show that values formation among the participants was not limited to formal instruction. Rather, values were experienced through family relationships, classroom interactions, friendships, academic responsibilities, emotional regulation, moral choices, and school culture. Across the informants' narratives, values appeared as lived realities that gradually shaped their behavior, self-understanding, and personal maturity.

Table 2. Major Themes, Direct Quotes, and Phenomenological Meanings

Emergent Theme	Direct Informant Quotes	Values Identified	Phenomenological Meaning
Relational Values and Sense of Belonging	<i>"I really value my family... I can imagine their effort in sending me to school." / "My friends support me in schoolwork and activities." / "Friendship is to be loved..."</i>	Family appreciation, gratitude, friendship, belonging, care, support	Students first experienced values through relationships. Family and friends became sources of care, support, and belonging, allowing students to recognize the importance of valuing others.
Development of Self-Regulation and Responsibility	<i>"When important tasks are given to me... I can do them..." / "Responsibility is very important..." / "By being obedient, I follow rules..." / "I should try hard to do my school work on time..."</i>	Responsibility, obedience, discipline, accountability, time management	Students internalized values through academic tasks, rule-following, and daily responsibilities. Responsibility became a lived practice rather than a mere concept.
Emotional Regulation as a Pathway to Personal Growth	<i>"I used to rush things... but now I learned to be patient." / "Waiting... taught me patience." / "I didn't want to explode at classmates..."</i>	Patience, self-control, emotional awareness, restraint	Students learned values through emotional experiences. Patience and self-control emerged as important parts of personal growth and conflict management.
Influence of Social Relationships on Values Formation	<i>"My friends make me happy..." / "We shared what we had..." / "My friend told me to calm down..." / "Friendship helped me to become better."</i>	Empathy, cooperation, peer support, sharing, social influence	Peer relationships shaped students' values by providing emotional support, behavioral guidance, and opportunities to practice empathy and cooperation.

Emergent Theme	Direct Informant Quotes	Values Identified	Phenomenological Meaning
Development of Moral and Ethical Values	<i>"I learned to respect others..." / "I learned to forgive..." / "Being honest helps me gain their trust." / "Loyalty is important..."</i>	Respect, forgiveness, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, integrity	Moral and ethical values were lived through daily decisions and relationships. Students understood that values guide how they treat others and maintain trust.
Personal Transformation Toward Maturity	<i>"Before, I was shy... now I am more open..." / "These values made me more mature..." / "Values helped me understand suffering..." / "Friendship and school helped me grow."</i>	Maturity, confidence, empathy, openness, personal growth	Values contributed to personal transformation. Students described becoming more mature, socially confident, empathetic, and aware of others.

The direct quotations in Table 2 indicate that values were not experienced as isolated lessons. They emerged through concrete situations: recognizing family sacrifice, receiving support from friends, completing tasks, following rules, waiting patiently, controlling emotional reactions, sharing with others, forgiving, practicing honesty, and becoming more open. These experiences show that values were gradually internalized and expressed through behavior.

Table 3. Values Commonly Identified and Lived by the Students

Values Identified	Context Where the Value Was Experienced	How the Value Was Lived by Students
Family appreciation	Family sacrifices and support for schooling	Students developed gratitude and respect for parents and family members.
Friendship	Peer relationships and school interactions	Students valued companionship, emotional support, and belonging.
Cooperation	Group interactions and helping classmates	Students shared resources, helped peers, and supported one another.
Responsibility	Academic tasks and school expectations	Students completed tasks, followed deadlines, and accepted obligations.
Obedience	School rules and behavioral expectations	Students followed rules and recognized the importance of discipline.
Patience	Waiting, frustration, and peer conflict	Students controlled impulsive reactions and learned emotional restraint.
Respect	Interaction with classmates, teachers, and others	Students listened, considered others, and acted with courtesy.
Honesty	Maintaining trust in relationships	Students recognized honesty as a basis for trustworthiness.
Forgiveness	Misunderstandings and interpersonal conflict	Students learned to let go of conflict and restore relationships.
Loyalty	Friendships and close relationships	Students valued faithfulness and commitment to others.
Empathy	Awareness of others' needs and suffering	Students became more understanding, caring, and socially aware.
Maturity	Long-term school experiences and reflection	Students described becoming more open, responsible, confident, and emotionally aware.

The values most commonly identified by the participants in Table 3 were relational, behavioral, emotional, moral, and developmental in nature. Relational values included family appreciation, friendship, belonging, cooperation, empathy, and peer support. Behavioral values included responsibility, obedience, accountability, and time management. Emotional values included patience, self-control, and emotional regulation. Moral and ethical values

included respect, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, and integrity. Developmental values included confidence, maturity, openness, and personal growth.

Table 4. Findings on Students' Meaning-Making of Values

Source of Meaning-Making	Student Experience	Interpretation
Family relationships	Students recognized the effort and sacrifice of parents in supporting their education.	Values became meaningful when students connected them with gratitude, appreciation, and family responsibility.
Peer relationships	Students experienced friendship, support, sharing, and guidance from classmates and friends.	Values became meaningful through belonging, emotional support, cooperation, and social connection.
Academic responsibilities	Students completed tasks, managed time, and followed school expectations.	Values became meaningful when responsibility was practiced in academic life.
Emotional experiences	Students learned patience by waiting, controlling reactions, and avoiding conflict.	Values became meaningful through self-control, emotional awareness, and personal reflection.
Moral decisions	Students practiced honesty, respect, forgiveness, obedience, and loyalty.	Values became meaningful when they guided students' actions toward others.
Personal reflection	Students described becoming more mature, open, caring, and socially aware.	Values became meaningful as part of personal transformation and character development.

The findings in Table 4 show that students made sense of values through reflection on real experiences. They did not simply define values in abstract terms; rather, they understood values in relation to people, events, responsibilities, and emotional encounters. For instance, family sacrifice helped them understand gratitude, peer support helped them understand friendship, schoolwork helped them understand responsibility, and conflict helped them understand patience and forgiveness. This shows that values integration became meaningful when students related values to lived situations.

Table 5. Manifestation of Values in Academic, Social, and Personal Life

Area of Life	Manifested Values	Observable Manifestations
Academic life	Responsibility, discipline, obedience, time management, excellence	Completing schoolwork, following rules, accepting assigned tasks, meeting deadlines, and trying to do schoolwork properly
Social life	Friendship, cooperation, empathy, respect, loyalty, belonging	Supporting friends, sharing with classmates, listening to others, calming peers, valuing friendship, and maintaining positive relationships
Personal life	Patience, self-control, emotional regulation, honesty, maturity	Controlling anger, avoiding impulsive reactions, waiting patiently, telling the truth, forgiving others, and becoming more open and confident
Moral life	Integrity, accountability, forgiveness, trustworthiness	Recognizing the importance of honesty, gaining trust, respecting others, and acting responsibly in relationships

Table 5 shows that the students manifested values in visible and practical ways. In academic life, values appeared through responsibility, obedience, and effort. In social life, values appeared through friendship, sharing, cooperation, and respect. In personal life, values appeared through patience, emotional control, and maturity. In moral life, values appeared through honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, and integrity. These findings indicate that values were not merely understood but enacted in daily situations.

Table 6. Emergent Themes and Essence of the Phenomenon

Emergent Theme	Core Finding	Contribution to the Essence
Relational Values and Sense of Belonging	Values began through experiences of family support, friendship, care, and belonging.	Relationships served as the foundation of value awareness.
Influence of Social Relationships on Values Formation	Peers and school interactions shaped behavior, emotional responses, and social understanding.	Social interaction became a major source of values formation.
Development of Self-Regulation and Responsibility	Students learned discipline, accountability, time management, and responsibility.	Values became internalized through repeated academic and behavioral responsibilities.
Emotional Regulation as a Pathway to Personal Growth	Students learned patience, restraint, and emotional control.	Values became part of emotional maturity and self-awareness.
Development of Moral and Ethical Values	Students practiced respect, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, and obedience.	Values became guides for ethical conduct and relationships.
Personal Transformation Toward Maturity	Students became more confident, empathetic, responsible, and mature.	Values became integrated into identity and character.

The six themes in Table 6 reveal a progressive but interconnected movement in values formation. Students first experienced values through relationships and belonging. These values were then shaped through social relationships, internalized through responsibility and emotional regulation, expressed through moral and ethical behavior, and eventually integrated into personal maturity. The essence of the phenomenon is therefore **transformative character development through lived values**. This means that values are not only taught by the school but are experienced, reflected upon, practiced, and embodied by students over time.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings answer all the research questions of the study. First, the students commonly identified values such as family appreciation, friendship, cooperation, responsibility, obedience, patience, respect, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, empathy, and maturity. Second, they made sense of these values through reflection on family, peers, school responsibilities, emotional challenges, and moral situations. Third, they manifested values through academic responsibility, social support, emotional control, honest behavior, forgiveness, and respectful interaction. Fourth, they derived the insight that values are important because they help them become better, more mature, more responsible, and more caring individuals. Finally, six major themes emerged from the narratives, all pointing to the essence of transformative character development through lived values.

The findings therefore show that values formation among Senior High School students is a lived, relational, reflective, and developmental process. Values are first encountered through relationships, strengthened through social interaction, internalized through responsibility and emotional regulation, expressed through moral action, and ultimately integrated into students' developing character.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the values identified and lived by Senior High School students at Surigao Education Center are formed through continuous engagement with relationships, responsibilities, emotional experiences, moral choices, and school-based interactions. The participants' narratives revealed that values such as family appreciation, friendship, cooperation, responsibility, obedience, patience, respect, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, empathy, and maturity were not merely learned as abstract concepts but were experienced and practiced in concrete academic, social, and personal situations. The six emergent themes—relational values and sense of belonging, development of self-regulation and responsibility, emotional regulation as a pathway to personal

growth, influence of social relationships on values formation, development of moral and ethical values, and personal transformation toward maturity—show that values formation is a lived, reflective, and developmental process. The essence of the phenomenon is transformative character development through lived values, indicating that students become more responsible, emotionally aware, socially connected, morally guided, and personally mature when values are consistently experienced, reflected upon, and enacted in daily life.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Surigao Education Center strengthens values integration by making values education more experiential, reflective, and connected to students' real-life situations. Teachers may design learning activities that allow students to practice responsibility, cooperation, empathy, honesty, respect, and emotional regulation through group work, reflection journals, classroom dialogue, peer mentoring, service-learning, and values-based performance tasks. School administrators may enhance existing student formation programs by aligning them more explicitly with the SECIANS core values and by creating school-wide activities that promote belonging, accountability, integrity, sympathy, and social responsibility. Guidance personnel may provide structured reflection sessions, emotional regulation activities, and peer-support programs to help students process conflicts, relationships, and personal challenges. Parents and guardians may also be encouraged to collaborate with the school in reinforcing values at home, particularly gratitude, responsibility, respect, discipline, and empathy. Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other grade levels, school contexts, or educational systems, and may also use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine how values formation develops over time and how school-based values programs influence students' character development.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

This study observed the ethical principles required in research involving student participants. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the school administration of Surigao Education Center. Since the participants were Senior High School students, parental consent and student assent were obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, the use of audio recording, confidentiality safeguards, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of the participants, and assent was secured from the student participants before the interviews were conducted. The participants were informed that their responses would be used only for academic and research purposes.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The identities of the participants were protected throughout the study. Codes or pseudonyms were used in place of real names in the transcripts, analysis, and final report. All identifying information was removed or modified to ensure anonymity. Interview recordings, transcripts, and field notes were kept confidential and were accessible only to the researcher.

Data Availability Statement

The data generated and analyzed in this study are not publicly available to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the student participants. However, anonymized data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and subject to applicable ethical restrictions.



Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial, professional, or personal interests that could have influenced the conduct, analysis, or reporting of this study.

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Authors' Contributions

Glenda Z. Buo served as the principal researcher and was responsible for conceptualizing the study, conducting the literature review, gathering and analyzing the data, and preparing the manuscript. Maria Lelanie A. Goyonan provided research supervision, methodological guidance, scholarly review, and technical advice throughout the development and completion of the study. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript for submission.

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Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Artificial intelligence tools were used only for language refinement, organization of ideas, and manuscript editing support. The authors reviewed, verified, and approved all AI-assisted outputs and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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