
The Role of Family Education in Early Childhood Moral Education in Henan Province, China

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Abstract

Introduction: This study investigates how family education shapes the moral development of 3–6-year-old children in Henan Province,

Methodology: This qualitative study, Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 27 parents (15 urban, 12 rural) and 13 kindergarten teachers, non-participant observations of 18 family interactions, and document analysis of local educational policies and parenting resources.

Results and discussion: Key findings identify four core familial mechanisms influencing moral socialization: parental role modeling, disciplinary strategies, value transmission through daily rituals, and family-school collaboration. Responsive parenting (warmth, reasoning, emotional support) fosters empathy, prosocial behavior, and moral autonomy, while authoritarian practices (strict obedience, punishment) prioritize compliance over internalized ethical understanding. Confucian values (filial piety, collectivism) permeate both rural and urban contexts, yet rural-urban disparities emerge in resource access, parenting ideologies, and value implementation.

Conclusion: This study addresses gaps in research on central Chinese provinces, offering practical implications for targeted parenting interventions, policy development, and family-school partnerships to enhance early childhood moral education.

Keywords: *family education; early childhood moral development; Henan Province; qualitative research; parental practices; Confucian values; rural-urban disparities; moral socialization*

1. Introduction

Early childhood (3–6 years) is universally recognized as a critical period for moral development, during which children internalize social norms, cultivate empathy, and establish foundational ethical values that shape lifelong behavior (Damon & Hart, 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2015). The family, as the primary agent of socialization, plays a decisive role in this process, with parental practices, value systems, and daily interactions serving as the cornerstone of moral learning (Grusec & Davidov, 2015; Grusec & Hastings, 2014). In Chinese contexts, family education is deeply intertwined with cultural traditions, particularly Confucianism’s emphasis on filial piety (xiao), respect for authority, and collective harmony—values that have guided intergenerational moral transmission for millennia (Chen & Eisenberg, 2012; Li et al., 2020). However, China’s rapid modernization, urbanization, and globalization have created tensions between traditional and contemporary parenting approaches, reshaping how families engage in moral education (Wang & Liu, 2019; Zhang et al., 2018).

Henan Province, located in central China, embodies these societal contradictions. As one of China’s most populous provinces (over 99 million residents; National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022) and a cultural heartland with strong Confucian roots, Henan features diverse rural and urban communities, persistent socioeconomic disparities, and a unique blend of tradition and modernity (Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Over 40% of Henan’s population resides in rural areas, where agricultural traditions and extended family structures remain influential, while urban centers like Zhengzhou and Luoyang undergo rapid industrialization, Western cultural exposure, and the proliferation of nuclear families (Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Despite its demographic and cultural significance, Henan has been largely overlooked in existing research on Chinese family moral education, which has predominantly focused on coastal metropolises (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai) or southern provinces (Wang & Liu, 2019; Zhao & Chen, 2017). This gap is critical: rural and central Chinese provinces like Henan face distinct challenges—limited access to modern parenting resources, higher rural populations, and stronger adherence to traditional values—that may shape moral socialization in ways not captured by studies of more developed regions.

1.1 Research Questions

This study addresses three core research questions to fill these gaps:

What are the dominant parental practices and value systems guiding early childhood moral education in Henan Province?

How do cultural factors (e.g., Confucianism) and regional contexts (rural vs. urban) intersect to influence family-based moral socialization?

What challenges do families in Henan face in fostering children's moral development, and what opportunities exist for enhancing the effectiveness of family moral education?

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge. Theoretically, it enriches cross-cultural moral development literature by examining the interplay of family, culture, and region in a non-Western, understudied context. By focusing on Henan, it highlights how local cultural traditions and socioeconomic realities shape moral socialization, challenging universalist assumptions about parenting and moral development (Chen & Eisenberg, 2012; Liu et al., 2021). It extends Baumrind's (2013) parenting style theory by demonstrating how cultural values mediate the impact of parenting practices on moral outcomes in Chinese central provinces, where traditional and modern ideologies coexist. Practically, the findings provide evidence-based insights for parents, educators, and policymakers to design contextually appropriate moral education strategies. For example, rural families may benefit from targeted workshops on responsive parenting tailored to Confucian values, while urban families may need support in balancing traditional values with modern autonomy. Additionally, the study informs regional education policy by emphasizing the need to address rural-urban resource disparities and strengthen family-school collaboration, ultimately fostering holistic moral development for children in Henan and similar central Chinese provinces.

1.3 Structure of the Paper

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature on early childhood moral development, the family's role in moral socialization, cultural influences in Chinese contexts, and rural-urban disparities. Section 3 details the methodology, including research design, participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis procedures. Section 4 presents the results and discussion, exploring parental practices, cultural influences, rural-urban differences, and challenges. Section 5 offers conclusions, including theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future research directions. Section 6 includes acknowledgments, and Section 7 lists references in APA 7th Edition format.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Early Childhood Moral Development: Theoretical Foundations

Moral development in early childhood is a multifaceted process involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Eisenberg et al., 2015). Damon and Hart (2008) note that young children's moral understanding evolves from egocentrism to prosocial awareness, as they learn to recognize others' perspectives, navigate fairness, and internalize social norms through daily interactions. Key components of early moral development include empathy (the ability to share and respond to others' emotions), prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, helping,

comforting), and moral reasoning (distinguishing right from wrong and justifying actions; Grusec & Davidov, 2015).

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the role of observation and imitation in moral development, arguing that children learn ethical behavior by modeling caregivers' actions, attitudes, and values. For example, a child who witnesses a parent helping a stranger is more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior themselves, as they internalize the value of kindness through repeated exposure. Baumrind's (2013) parenting style theory further identifies four distinct styles that shape children's moral outcomes: authoritative (responsive and demanding), authoritarian (demanding but unresponsive), permissive (responsive but undemanding), and neglectful (unresponsive and undemanding). Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, reasoning, and clear expectations, is consistently linked to enhanced moral autonomy, empathy, and prosocial behavior, as children learn to understand the rationale behind rules rather than merely complying (Baumrind, 2013; Grusec & Hastings, 2014). In contrast, authoritarian parenting—marked by strict rules, punishment, and limited emotional responsiveness—tends to foster compliance rather than internalized moral understanding, as children act out of fear of consequences rather than ethical conviction (Grusec & Davidov, 2015).

Constructivist theories, such as Piaget's (1932/1965) cognitive development theory, highlight the role of active engagement in moral learning. Piaget argued that children construct moral knowledge through interactions with peers and adults, progressing from heteronomous morality (obedience to authority) to autonomous morality (understanding of fairness and mutual respect) by the end of early childhood. This progression is shaped by contextual factors, including parental practices, cultural values, and social interactions, underscoring the need to examine moral development within specific cultural and regional contexts (Piaget, 1932/1965). Together, these theories provide a framework for understanding how family, culture, and context intersect to shape early childhood moral development.

2.2 The Family's Central Role in Moral Socialization

The family is widely regarded as the primary context for moral socialization, providing the first and most sustained exposure to ethical values, norms, and behaviors (Grusec & Davidov, 2015; Grusec & Hastings, 2014). Parental practices that influence moral development include role modeling, disciplinary strategies, value communication, and emotional responsiveness (Eisenberg et al., 2015). Role modeling is particularly impactful: children imitate caregivers' prosocial behaviors (e.g., honesty, kindness, respect for others) and internalize their moral values, forming a foundation for their own ethical identity (Bandura, 1986). For example, parents who consistently tell the truth and apologize when they are wrong teach their children the value of honesty through their actions, rather than just their words.

Disciplinary strategies also play a critical role in moral socialization. Inductive discipline—explaining the consequences of actions for others—fosters empathy and moral reasoning by helping children understand how their behavior affects those around them

(Grusec & Davidov, 2015). For instance, a parent who says, “Hitting your sister hurts her feelings, and she won’t want to play with you” helps the child connect their behavior to its emotional impact, promoting empathy and self-regulation. In contrast, power-assertive discipline—such as punishment, threats, or physical force—promotes obedience but not internalized moral understanding, as children focus on avoiding punishment rather than understanding why a behavior is wrong (Grusec & Hastings, 2014).

Implicit family dynamics—such as emotional climate, parent-child attachment, and family routines—also shape moral development. A warm, supportive family environment fosters secure attachment, enabling children to take risks, empathize with others, and develop a strong sense of moral responsibility (Thompson, 2014). Family routines, such as meal times, storytime, or cultural rituals, provide opportunities for value transmission: for example, discussing a story about sharing during bedtime or emphasizing gratitude during family meals can reinforce moral values (Fiese & Marjinsky, 1999). These routines create a consistent context for moral learning, helping children internalize values through repeated exposure and practice.

2.3 Cultural Influences on Chinese Family Moral Education

Chinese family moral education is deeply rooted in Confucianism, a cultural and philosophical tradition that has shaped Chinese society for over 2,000 years (Chen & Eisenberg, 2012; Li et al., 2020). Core Confucian values relevant to moral education include filial piety (*xiao*), respect for authority (*jing*), collective harmony (*he*), and humility (*qian*). Filial piety, often considered the foundation of Chinese morality, emphasizes respect for parents, elders, and ancestors, as well as the obligation to care for family members (Chen & Eisenberg, 2012). This value is transmitted through family interactions, such as teaching children to greet elders with honorifics, help with household chores, and prioritize family needs over individual desires.

Collective harmony is another key Confucian value, emphasizing the importance of group needs over individual interests (Wang & Liu, 2019). Parents teach children to avoid conflict, cooperate with others, and contribute to family and community well-being, as individual success is seen as intertwined with the success of the group. For example, children may be encouraged to share toys with siblings or peers to maintain harmonious relationships, or to help neighbors in times of need to strengthen community bonds. These values are reinforced through cultural practices, such as family gatherings, ancestor worship, and storytelling, which pass down Confucian ethics from one generation to the next.

However, China’s rapid modernization has challenged traditional Confucian parenting models. The one-child policy (1979–2015) led to smaller family sizes, increasing parental focus on children’s academic achievement and individual success (Li et al., 2020). Urbanization and globalization have also exposed families to Western educational ideologies, emphasizing children’s autonomy, creativity, and emotional intelligence (Zhang et al., 2018). This has

created a tension between traditional values (obedience, filial piety, collective harmony) and modern values (autonomy, individualism, critical thinking), leading to diverse parenting styles across China (Wang & Liu, 2019). Urban families often adopt authoritative parenting practices that balance Confucian values with Western-style responsiveness, while rural families may retain more traditional authoritarian approaches, as they are more deeply rooted in Confucian traditions and have less exposure to modern ideologies (Liu et al., 2021).

2.4 Rural-Urban Disparities in Chinese Family Education

China's significant rural-urban divide—shaped by socioeconomic status, educational resources, and cultural exposure—has profound implications for family education (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022). Urban families typically have higher incomes, better access to educational resources (e.g., parenting books, online courses, kindergarten support), and greater exposure to modern parenting ideologies (Zhang et al., 2018). As a result, urban parents are more likely to prioritize holistic moral development, emphasizing empathy, critical thinking, and social skills alongside academic achievement (Wang & Liu, 2019). They may use inductive discipline, model prosocial behavior, and engage in value-laden conversations with their children, drawing on both Confucian values and modern educational practices.

In contrast, rural families often face resource constraints, with parents frequently working long hours in agriculture or migrating to cities for employment (leaving children in the care of grandparents; Liu et al., 2021). Rural parents may have lower educational levels and limited access to modern parenting resources, relying instead on traditional knowledge and practices passed down through generations (Zhao & Chen, 2017). As a result, rural parents are more likely to prioritize obedience, filial piety, and academic success as pragmatic values that can improve their children's life chances, with limited emphasis on prosocial behavior or autonomy. They may use authoritarian disciplinary strategies, such as punishment or verbal reprimands, to enforce compliance, as these methods are seen as efficient and consistent with traditional values (Liu et al., 2021).

These disparities are particularly pronounced in central provinces like Henan, where rural populations remain large and access to modern resources is limited (Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2021). However, few studies have explored rural-urban differences in moral education within Henan specifically. Existing research on Henan's family education has focused primarily on academic achievement (e.g., Zhao & Chen, 2017) rather than moral development, leaving a critical gap in understanding how regional contexts shape children's ethical growth.

2.5 Research Gap and Justification

Despite a growing body of literature on family moral education in China, three key gaps remain: (1) a lack of focus on central provinces like Henan, where traditional and modern values intersect in unique ways due to demographic and socioeconomic factors; (2)

insufficient exploration of rural-urban differences in moral socialization within a single province, which limits understanding of regional-specific challenges and opportunities; and (3) an overreliance on quantitative methods in many studies, which fail to capture the lived experiences, beliefs, and practices that shape moral education (Li et al., 2020; Wang & Liu, 2019). Quantitative studies may identify correlations between parenting styles and moral outcomes, but they cannot fully capture the nuanced ways in which cultural values, regional contexts, and individual experiences influence moral socialization.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative approach to explore family moral education in Henan's rural and urban communities. By centering the voices of parents and teachers, this research offers a more holistic understanding of moral socialization in an understudied region, capturing the lived experiences and perspectives that quantitative methods often overlook. The qualitative design allows for in-depth exploration of how cultural values and regional contexts intersect to shape parenting practices and moral development, providing nuanced insights that can inform targeted interventions and policy changes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a constructivist qualitative research design, which emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and the importance of understanding participants' perspectives within their cultural, social, and regional contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivism is particularly well-suited for exploring complex phenomena like moral socialization, as it allows for in-depth investigation of beliefs, practices, and experiences that cannot be reduced to numerical data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative research also enables researchers to capture the dynamic interplay of family, culture, and region, providing rich, context-specific insights that quantitative methods often overlook (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.2 Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants from two rural counties (Lankao and Minquan) and two urban cities (Zhengzhou and Luoyang) in Henan Province. This sampling strategy ensured representation of diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and regional contexts, allowing for comparison between rural and urban families. The final sample included:

27 parents of children aged 3–6 years old: 15 urban parents (9 mothers, 6 fathers) and 12 rural parents (7 mothers, 5 fathers). Parents varied in educational background (primary school to university) and occupation (e.g., urban: teachers, office workers, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals; rural: farmers, migrant workers, small business owners, homemakers).

13 kindergarten teachers: 7 urban teachers and 6 rural teachers, with 3–16 years of teaching

experience. Teachers were recruited from public and private kindergartens to ensure diversity in educational settings, including those serving low-income and middle-class communities.

Participants were recruited through local kindergartens, community centers, and snowball sampling. Kindergartens distributed information sheets to parents, and interested individuals contacted the research team directly. Snowball sampling was used to recruit additional participants, particularly in rural areas where community networks are strong. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity. Parents provided additional consent for observations of their children, and teachers provided consent for interviews and the use of classroom observation data (where relevant).

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected over a 7-month period (April–October 2023) using three complementary methods to ensure triangulation and enhance trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were the primary data collection method, as they allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' beliefs, practices, and experiences. Interviews with parents lasted 45–60 minutes and focused on: (1) their moral education goals for their children (e.g., prioritized values); (2) specific parenting practices (discipline, role modeling, value transmission); (3) cultural/regional influences on their approach; (4) challenges in moral education; and (5) perceptions of family-school collaboration.

Interviews with teachers lasted 30–45 minutes and explored: (1) observations of children's moral behavior; (2) perceptions of parental practices; (3) rural-urban differences in moral development; (4) family-school collaboration strategies; and (5) recommendations for supporting family moral education.

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim. Field notes captured nonverbal cues (tone, body language) to contextualize responses.

3.3.2 Non-Participant Observations

Non-participant observations of 18 family interactions (10 urban, 8 rural) lasted 3–4 hours, focusing on daily routines (meal times, play, chores, interactions with elders/peers) where moral socialization occurred. Field notes documented: (1) parental responses to moral dilemmas (sharing, lying, disobedience); (2) value-laden conversations; (3) role modeling of prosocial/antisocial behavior; and (4) family emotional climate. Observations were conducted by two trained researchers using a standardized checklist, with regular discussions to resolve discrepancies.

3.3.3 Document Analysis

Relevant documents included: (1) kindergarten parent handbooks and moral education curricula; (2) local education policies (Henan Provincial Department of Education, 2022); (3) popular parenting resources (blogs, books, social media content); and (4) demographic/socioeconomic data (Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2021; National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022). Document analysis contextualized family practices within broader educational and cultural frameworks.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis:

Familiarization: Researchers read and re-read transcripts, field notes, and documents to deepen understanding. Transcripts were coded in Mandarin to preserve nuance, with key quotes translated to English.

Coding: Initial inductive codes (e.g., "parental role modeling," "filial piety," "rural-urban differences") were identified using NVivo 12.

Generating Themes: Codes were grouped into four core themes: dominant parenting practices, cultural influences, rural-urban disparities, and challenges.

Reviewing Themes: Themes were cross-validated across data sources to ensure alignment with research questions.

Defining Themes: Themes were refined with sub-themes (e.g., "responsive parenting" and "authoritarian parenting" under dominant practices).

Writing Up: Themes were presented with supporting quotes, translated by the research team and back-translated by a bilingual expert for accuracy.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was enhanced through:

Triangulation: Cross-validating data from interviews, observations, and documents.

Member Checking: Sharing findings with 5 parents (3 urban, 2 rural) and 3 teachers (2 urban, 1 rural) for verification.

Peer Debriefing: Discussing themes with two qualitative research experts.

Reflexivity: Maintaining journals to document biases and assumptions.

The study adhered to APA ethical guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2022) and was approved by the university's IRB (No. 20230402). Anonymity was preserved, and participants could withdraw without penalty (none did). Data were stored securely and destroyed post-study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Dominant Parenting Practices in Moral Education

Two primary parenting styles emerged, aligning with Baumrind's (2013) typology and reflecting traditional-modern value tensions:

4.1.1 Responsive Parenting

Predominant among urban parents (12 out of 15) and a small number of rural parents (2 out of 12), responsive parenting featured warmth, emotional responsiveness, inductive discipline, and explicit value communication. Urban parents prioritized helping children understand moral rules through reasoning: "If you don't share, your friend will feel sad—just like you do when someone won't share with you" (Parent U6). They modeled prosocial behavior (volunteering, helping neighbors) and discussed these actions with children to reinforce values.

Observations confirmed these practices. For example, an urban parent (U3) asked her 5-year-old to set the table, explaining: "We're a family—everyone contributes." The child was praised for being "responsible." Teachers noted that children of responsive parents exhibited more empathy and prosocial behavior (e.g., comforting peers) in kindergarten (Teacher U4). These findings align with Grusec and Davidov (2015), linking responsive parenting to enhanced moral autonomy. Urban parents' access to modern resources and exposure to Western ideologies explain this prevalence (Zhang et al., 2018; Wang & Liu, 2019).

4.1.2 Authoritarian Parenting

Dominant among rural parents (10 out of 12) and a minority of urban parents (3 out of 15), authoritarian parenting featured strict rules, obedience emphasis, power-assertive discipline (verbal reprimands, physical punishment), and limited emotional responsiveness. Rural parents prioritized obedience and filial piety: "You must listen to me—I'm your parent" (Parent R5) or "Spanking teaches you not to misbehave" (Parent R9).

Observations revealed obedience enforced through fear. A rural mother scolded her 4-year-old for refusing to greet his grandmother: "Kneel and apologize—rudeness won't be tolerated" (Family R2). The child complied out of fear, not remorse. Teachers reported that children of

authoritarian parents complied with rules but lacked empathy or independent moral reasoning (Teacher R3). These results support Baumrind (2013), as authoritarian parenting fosters compliance without internalized understanding. Rural parents' adherence to Confucian values, limited resources, and economic pressures explain this persistence (Liu et al., 2021; Chen & Eisenberg, 2012).

4.2 Cultural Influences on Moral Socialization

Confucian values—filial piety (xiao) and collective harmony (he)—dominated moral education across rural and urban areas:

4.2.1 Filial Piety

Identified as the most important moral value by all parents, filial piety was taught through daily routines. Urban parents encouraged regular grandparent visits and gratitude: “We visit grandma every weekend—my daughter helps clean, and I teach her to say ‘thank you’” (Parent U2). Rural parents emphasized obedience and duty: “A child who isn’t filial is shunned. My son carries water for his grandma daily and never talks back” (Parent R3). Urban parents combined filial piety with reasoning, while rural parents prioritized obedience (Wang & Liu, 2019).

4.2.2 Collective Harmony

Parents taught children to prioritize group needs. Urban parents encouraged sharing and cooperation: “My son learns his actions affect others—he must get along with his class” (Parent U5). Rural parents emphasized community and family honor: “In our village, everyone knows everyone. Selfishness shames the family” (Parent R4). Urban parents balanced collectivism with autonomy, while rural parents prioritized harmony over individual needs (Liu et al., 2021).

4.3 Rural-Urban Differences in Moral Education

Significant disparities emerged, shaped by socioeconomic status, resources, and cultural exposure (Table 1):

Dimension	Urban Areas	Rural Areas
Moral Goals	Holistic development (empathy, autonomy, prosocial behavior, filial piety)	Obedience, filial piety, collective responsibility
Parenting Practices	Responsive (reasoning, warmth, role modeling)	Authoritarian (strict rules, punishment)
Resources	Parenting books, online courses,	Traditional knowledge, family

Dimension	Urban Areas	Rural Areas
Family-School Collaboration	kindergarten workshops Frequent communication (WeChat groups, parent-teacher meetings)	networks Minimal collaboration; teachers as primary educators

Urban parents' higher education and resource access enabled modern practices, while rural parents relied on traditional values (Zhang et al., 2018; Zhao & Chen, 2017). Rural kindergartens lacked resources to support family moral education (Teacher R4).

4.4 Challenges in Family Moral Education

Participants identified three key challenges:

4.4.1 Time Constraints

Urban parents (9 out of 15) reported work-related time shortages: "I work 8 a.m.–7 p.m.—by the time I get home, my son is asleep. I can't teach him values" (Parent U8). Rural parents (8 out of 12) faced similar issues, with migration leaving children in grandparents' care: "I work in Guangzhou 10 months a year—grandma lets my daughter do whatever she wants" (Parent R7).

4.4.2 Conflicting Values

Urban parents (7 out of 15) struggled to balance tradition and modernity: "I want my daughter to respect elders but also be independent. I don't know how to balance both" (Parent U4). Rural parents (6 out of 12) worried traditional values were outdated: "Obedience is important, but will it help my son in the workplace?" (Parent R2).

4.4.3 Lack of Support

Urban parents (6 out of 15) found Western-focused online resources irrelevant: "Parenting books from abroad don't account for Chinese values" (Parent U3). Rural parents (9 out of 12) had no access to professional support: "We have no workshops—we just do what our parents did" (Teacher R6).

5. Conclusion

This qualitative study explored family education's role in early childhood moral development in Henan Province. Findings show responsive parenting fosters empathy and moral autonomy, while authoritarian parenting promotes compliance without internalized understanding. Confucian values (filial piety, collectivism) shape moral socialization, with urban families balancing tradition and autonomy and rural families prioritizing obedience. Rural-urban

disparities in resources and socioeconomic status further influence practices.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The study enriches cross-cultural moral development literature by highlighting regional context's role, challenging universalist assumptions. It extends Baumrind's (2013) theory by demonstrating how cultural values mediate parenting practices' impact in Chinese contexts. Additionally, it fills gaps in research on central Chinese provinces, providing insights into rural-urban disparities in moral education.

5.2 Practical Implications

Actionable insights for stakeholders:

Targeted Interventions: Develop responsive parenting workshops for rural parents, tailored to Confucian values. Offer online courses for urban parents to balance tradition and modernity.

Strengthen Family-School Collaboration: Encourage kindergartens to focus on moral education in parent-teacher meetings and train teachers to engage rural parents.

Address Resource Disparities: Allocate funding to rural kindergartens for parenting resources. Use technology (e.g., WeChat groups) to provide context-specific advice to rural parents.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Limitations include a small sample size (limiting generalizability) and cross-sectional design (no longitudinal moral development tracking). Future research could expand the sample to other central provinces, use mixed methods, and include children's perspectives via interviews or drawings.

Despite limitations, this study provides valuable context-specific insights into moral socialization in Henan. Supporting families in balancing traditional values with modern needs is critical to fostering ethical, harmonious societies as China modernizes.

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