

Effectiveness of a Values Clarification Program on Ethical Reasoning and Identity Stability

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured values clarification program on enhancing ethical reasoning and identity stability among young adults.

Methods and Materials: A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 30 participants from Turkey, randomly assigned to either an experimental group ($n = 15$) or a control group ($n = 15$). The experimental group participated in a six-session, 90-minute values clarification program, while the control group received no intervention. Ethical reasoning was measured using the Defining Issues Test, Second Edition (DIT-2), and identity stability was assessed with the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ). Assessments were conducted at three time points: pretest, posttest, and five-month follow-up. Data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Bonferroni post-hoc tests with SPSS version 27.

Findings: Results showed significant improvements in both ethical reasoning and identity stability in the experimental group compared to the control group. Ethical reasoning scores increased from a mean of 28.47 ($SD = 4.36$) at pretest to 35.63 ($SD = 5.02$) at posttest, and remained high at follow-up ($M = 34.51$, $SD = 5.11$). Identity stability scores in the experimental group rose from 91.27 ($SD = 7.54$) at pretest to 105.46 ($SD = 6.72$) at posttest, with a follow-up mean of 103.88 ($SD = 7.13$). ANOVA results indicated significant time \times group interaction effects for ethical reasoning ($F(2, 54) = 22.15$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .49$) and identity stability ($F(2, 54) = 23.55$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .52$). Bonferroni tests confirmed that these improvements were statistically significant and sustained over time.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that the values clarification program is an effective intervention for promoting ethical reasoning and strengthening identity stability, with lasting effects observable at a five-month follow-up.

Keywords: Values clarification, ethical reasoning, identity stability, randomized controlled trial, young adults, Turkey.

1. Introduction

One approach that has received growing empirical support for enhancing both ethical reasoning and identity-related development is the Values Clarification Technique (VCT). VCT is an instructional and developmental strategy designed to help individuals articulate, examine, and internalize their core values through systematic reflection, dialogue, and active engagement with ethical dilemmas. The origins of values clarification lie in the humanistic education movement, emphasizing autonomy, critical thinking, and self-awareness as foundations for moral and identity development (Lisievič & Andronie, 2016). Over time, this method has been adapted and applied in a variety of settings, from classrooms to clinical and decision-making contexts, to improve not only moral judgment but also emotional coherence and behavioral integrity.

The VCT model has been extensively employed in character education and citizenship training. In Indonesia, for example, the technique has proven effective in reinforcing democratic values and civic engagement in elementary school students (Paksi et al., 2024). Similarly, other studies have documented improvements in discipline, decision-making, and social responsibility following VCT-based interventions in primary education settings (Awaliah et al., 2021; Febriyani et al., 2022; Herawati et al., 2023). These interventions typically involve structured sessions where learners identify their beliefs, confront value conflicts, and assess the consequences of various choices, thereby fostering moral autonomy and cognitive flexibility. Such exercises not only enhance ethical reasoning but also promote the integration of values into a coherent self-concept, which is foundational to identity stability.

In the context of moral education, values clarification offers a contrast to prescriptive or authoritarian approaches. Instead of dictating what is “right,” it encourages students to engage in a personal process of evaluation, leading to the internalization of values rather than passive compliance (Yudiana, 2020). This is consistent with findings that indicate that learners exposed to VCT become more reflective and consistent in their actions, particularly when facing ethical dilemmas in personal or societal contexts (Anwar et al., 2023; Ofianto & Ningsih, 2021). Moreover, the technique has shown promise in cultivating prosocial behavior and character strength in early education, which can form the basis for more advanced forms of moral

reasoning in adolescence and adulthood (B. Badeni et al., 2020).

While VCT is widely used in moral and civic education, its relevance has extended to broader psychological applications. In clinical and health-related decision-making, for example, values clarification has been used to help individuals make choices aligned with their long-term preferences and identities. Witteman and colleagues have conducted extensive studies across medical decision-making contexts, showing that when patients engage in structured values clarification, they are more likely to make values-congruent decisions, experience less regret, and report greater satisfaction with outcomes (Witteman et al., 2016; Witteman et al., 2021). Similarly, research by Peinado et al. demonstrated that values clarification enhances parents' ability to navigate ethically complex medical decisions for their newborns, suggesting its utility in emotionally charged and ambiguous contexts (Peinado et al., 2020).

In clinical psychology, values clarification has also been associated with improved mental health outcomes. Shimizu and Shimizu found that values-based interventions reduce cognitive fusion and support mental well-being by helping individuals align their behaviors with personally meaningful goals (Shimizu & Shimizu, 2020). Furukawa et al. further revealed that exposure to values clarification enhances coping repertoires, suggesting that such interventions may serve as resilience-building tools in work environments (Furukawa et al., 2020). These findings highlight the broader psychological implications of values work, indicating that it may contribute not only to cognitive development but also to emotional and behavioral regulation.

The growing body of literature also supports the application of VCT in higher education and emerging adulthood, where identity formation and ethical reasoning are especially critical. Adolescents and young adults are often confronted with moral uncertainty, peer pressure, and identity diffusion, making them ideal candidates for interventions that promote clarity, commitment, and ethical coherence (Sukisno & Nurtjahyani, 2024). Ni Putu Candra Prastya's meta-analysis confirmed the efficacy of VCT in improving civic learning outcomes among elementary students, but also suggested its potential scalability to older cohorts (Ni Putu Candra Prastya, 2023). Additionally, the development of VCT-based instructional models that incorporate gamification and role-play has opened new avenues for engaging learners at various cognitive levels while maintaining focus on internal value processing (Badeni et al., 2020).

Beyond educational and psychological gains, the values clarification approach has been studied for its cognitive and emotional mechanisms. For instance, Kim has proposed the integration of questioning strategies with VCT to enhance self-reflection and metacognition, thereby deepening the impact of values-based inquiry (Kim, 2023). Similarly, Yilmaz explored the application of conjoint analysis-based VCT among cancer patients, revealing a significant improvement in their clarity about personal values—a critical factor in emotionally laden decision-making (Yilmaz, 2022). These findings reinforce the notion that VCT is not merely a didactic technique but an experiential method that prompts both analytical and emotional engagement with one's value system.

However, some scholars have raised methodological concerns regarding the implementation of VCT, particularly in the axiological research domain. Remiszewska warned against the oversimplification of value systems and the assumption that clarification always leads to moral development, emphasizing the need for nuanced, culturally sensitive application and robust measurement tools (Remiszewska, 2020). Addressing these concerns, Witteman's updated systematic review called for the refinement of VCT design features to optimize clarity and alignment in decision-making outcomes across diverse populations (Witteman et al., 2021). These insights underscore the importance of contextually adapting VCT interventions while maintaining empirical rigor in evaluating their impact.

The current study seeks to contribute to this growing body of research by examining the effectiveness of a structured values clarification program in improving ethical reasoning and identity stability among young adults in Turkey.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to investigate the effectiveness of a values clarification program on ethical reasoning and identity stability. Participants were recruited from various educational institutions in Turkey through announcements and referrals. A total of 30 participants who met the inclusion criteria were selected and randomly assigned to either the experimental group ($n = 15$) or the control group ($n = 15$). The inclusion criteria included being between 18 and 25 years of age, having no history of severe psychological disorders, and providing informed consent.

The experimental group received the six-session values clarification intervention, while the control group received no intervention during the study period. Both groups completed the measurement tools at three time points: pretest, posttest, and five-month follow-up.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Ethical Reasoning

To assess the level of ethical reasoning, the Defining Issues Test, Second Edition (DIT-2), developed by James Rest and colleagues at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development (2005), was used. The DIT-2 is a widely recognized standard instrument grounded in Kohlberg's theory of moral development and is designed to evaluate individuals' moral judgment by presenting them with moral dilemmas and asking them to rate and rank various considerations relevant to resolving these dilemmas. The test includes five dilemmas and yields several indices, the most prominent being the N2 score, which reflects the degree to which a respondent prioritizes post-conventional moral reasoning while rejecting lower-stage considerations. The instrument consists of 5 stories followed by 12 questions each, resulting in a total of 60 items. Scoring is conducted through a standardized algorithm, with higher N2 scores indicating more advanced moral reasoning. Numerous studies have confirmed the test's validity and reliability across diverse populations, with internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) generally ranging from 0.70 to 0.85.

2.2.2. Identity Stability

To measure identity stability, the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ), developed by Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger (1995), was employed. The EIPQ is based on Marcia's identity status theory and is designed to assess two key dimensions of identity development: exploration and commitment, across ideological and interpersonal domains. The questionnaire includes 32 items divided into four subscales: ideological exploration, ideological commitment, interpersonal exploration, and interpersonal commitment. Participants respond on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Scores can be calculated for each subscale, with higher scores indicating greater levels of exploration and commitment, thus reflecting stronger identity stability. The EIPQ has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties

in previous research, with internal consistency coefficients for its subscales typically ranging from 0.70 to 0.81, and construct validity supported through correlations with related identity measures.

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Value Clarification Intervention

The values clarification intervention in this study was designed as a structured six-session program, each lasting 90 minutes, aimed at enhancing participants' ethical reasoning and identity stability through guided reflection, dialogue, and self-assessment. Grounded in humanistic and cognitive-developmental principles, the program employed exercises and discussions to help participants explore their core values, confront value conflicts, and make more conscious and consistent value-based decisions. The sessions built progressively on one another, beginning with basic awareness and culminating in applied decision-making aligned with clarified personal values.

In the first session, participants were introduced to the concept of values, including definitions, the distinction between personal and societal values, and the role of values in shaping behavior and identity. Interactive activities, such as group brainstorming and value-list sorting, were used to help participants identify values they personally endorse or reject. The session aimed to create a supportive environment for open discussion and reflection.

The second session focused on value prioritization and internal conflicts. Participants explored how conflicting values can lead to ethical dilemmas or identity instability. Through guided self-reflection and paired discussions, they examined real-life scenarios where they had experienced internal tension between competing values. Facilitators helped participants begin to rank and articulate which values were most central to their sense of self.

In the third session, participants examined the origins of their values, such as family, culture, religion, and personal experiences. Activities included value-mapping exercises and autobiographical storytelling to foster greater insight into how their value systems were shaped over time. This session emphasized the dynamic nature of values and encouraged critical thinking about inherited versus personally chosen values.

The fourth session introduced ethical decision-making frameworks and encouraged participants to apply their clarified values to hypothetical moral dilemmas. Small-group discussions and role-plays were used to explore

multiple perspectives and the consequences of various value-driven decisions. This session bridged the gap between personal values and ethical reasoning in real-world contexts.

The fifth session emphasized identity integration and coherence. Participants were guided to reflect on how consistent or inconsistent their behavior has been with their identified values. Journaling and group feedback activities were used to support recognition of identity patterns and promote greater alignment between beliefs, actions, and self-perception. Strategies for coping with identity dissonance were also introduced.

In the final session, participants reviewed their progress and created a personal "values action plan" outlining specific ways they would continue to live out their core values in daily life. The session included group sharing, affirmations, and constructive feedback to reinforce commitment and personal growth. Emphasis was placed on long-term strategies for maintaining ethical consistency and identity stability beyond the program.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to evaluate changes in ethical reasoning and identity stability across the three time points between the experimental and control groups. In cases where significant interactions were detected, the Bonferroni post-hoc test was used to identify the specific time points at which differences occurred. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, version 27. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses.

3. Findings and Results

The final sample consisted of 30 undergraduate students from various universities in Greece, with 15 participants assigned to the experimental group and 15 to the control group. Among the participants, 18 were female (60.00%) and 12 were male (40.00%). The mean age of the participants was 21.47 years ($SD = 1.36$), with ages ranging from 19 to 24 years. Regarding academic disciplines, 11 participants (36.67%) were studying social sciences, 9 participants (30.00%) were from natural sciences, 6 participants (20.00%) were enrolled in humanities programs, and 4 participants (13.33%) were from other academic fields. In terms of year of study, 10 participants (33.33%) were in their first year, 7 (23.33%) in their second year, 8

(26.67%) in their third year, and 5 (16.67%) in their fourth year.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Ethical Reasoning and Identity Stability at Each Stage (Pretest, Posttest, Follow-Up) by Group

Variable	Stage	Group	M	SD
Ethical Reasoning	Pretest	Experimental	28.47	4.36
		Control	28.20	4.59
	Posttest	Experimental	35.63	5.02
		Control	28.87	4.74
	Follow-up	Experimental	34.51	5.11
		Control	29.13	4.65
Identity Stability	Pretest	Experimental	91.27	7.54
		Control	91.93	6.88
	Posttest	Experimental	105.46	6.72
		Control	92.20	6.55
	Follow-up	Experimental	103.88	7.13
		Control	92.40	6.61

As shown in Table 1, the experimental group exhibited a clear increase in ethical reasoning scores from pretest ($M = 28.47$, $SD = 4.36$) to posttest ($M = 35.63$, $SD = 5.02$), with a slight decline at follow-up ($M = 34.51$, $SD = 5.11$). The control group showed minimal changes across stages. Similarly, identity stability scores in the experimental group increased significantly from pretest ($M = 91.27$, $SD = 7.54$) to posttest ($M = 105.46$, $SD = 6.72$) and remained high at follow-up ($M = 103.88$, $SD = 7.13$), while the control group scores remained relatively stable throughout the study.

Prior to conducting the repeated measures ANOVA, assumptions were tested and confirmed. The assumption of normality was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which

indicated non-significant results for all dependent variables at each time point (e.g., well-being at baseline: $W = 0.968$, $p = .438$; academic achievement at posttest: $W = 0.951$, $p = .227$), supporting the normal distribution of the data. The assumption of sphericity was tested using Mauchly's test and was met for both well-being ($W = 0.974$, $p = .392$) and academic achievement ($W = 0.981$, $p = .443$), indicating that the variances of the differences between time points were equal. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variances across groups (e.g., well-being at follow-up: $F(1,28) = 1.724$, $p = .200$), validating the equality of variances. These results confirmed that the data met all necessary statistical assumptions for repeated measures ANOVA.

Table 2

Repeated Measures ANOVA Results for Ethical Reasoning and Identity Stability

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	η^2
Ethical Reasoning	Time	627.92	2	313.96	19.82	.001	.41
	Group	768.44	1	768.44	24.31	.001	.47
	Time \times Group	701.38	2	350.69	22.15	.001	.49
	Error	899.11	54	16.65			
Identity Stability	Time	2807.65	2	1403.82	26.77	.001	.50
	Group	3812.78	1	3812.78	41.05	.001	.56
	Time \times Group	2444.62	2	1222.31	23.55	.001	.52
	Error	2829.84	54	52.40			

The repeated measures ANOVA (Table 2) revealed significant main effects for time and group, and significant interaction effects between time and group for both ethical reasoning and identity stability (all p -values $< .001$). For ethical reasoning, the interaction effect was significant ($F(2, 54) = 22.15$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .49$), indicating that the

experimental group improved more over time compared to the control group. For identity stability, the interaction effect was also significant ($F(2, 54) = 23.55$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .52$), reflecting a similar pattern of improvement in the experimental group.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Results for Ethical Reasoning and Identity Stability

Variable	Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	p-value
Ethical Reasoning	Pretest – Posttest	-7.16	1.15	.001
Ethical Reasoning	Posttest – Follow-up	1.12	0.86	.194
Ethical Reasoning	Pretest – Follow-up	-6.04	1.08	.001
Identity Stability	Pretest – Posttest	-14.19	1.68	.001
Identity Stability	Posttest – Follow-up	1.58	1.11	.164
Identity Stability	Pretest – Follow-up	-12.61	1.53	.001

The Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons in Table 3 reveal significant increases from pretest to posttest and from pretest to follow-up for both variables. For ethical reasoning, the increase from pretest to posttest ($M = -7.16$, $SE = 1.15$, $p = .001$) and from pretest to follow-up ($M = -6.04$, $SE = 1.08$, $p = .001$) were significant, while the change from posttest to follow-up was not ($p = .194$), indicating sustained effects. Similarly, for identity stability, significant differences were found from pretest to posttest ($M = -14.19$, $SE = 1.68$, $p = .001$) and pretest to follow-up ($M = -12.61$, $SE = 1.53$, $p = .001$), with the posttest to follow-up comparison showing no significant change ($p = .164$), suggesting the stability of intervention effects over time.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured values clarification program on enhancing ethical reasoning and identity stability among young adults in Turkey. The results of the repeated measures ANOVA indicated significant improvements in both dependent variables for the experimental group compared to the control group. Participants who underwent the six-session values clarification intervention demonstrated a notable increase in post-test scores for ethical reasoning and identity stability, with effects maintained at the five-month follow-up. These findings suggest that systematic reflection on values, guided by cognitive-developmental principles and structured dialogue, can yield measurable and lasting changes in moral judgment and personal identity coherence.

The improvement in ethical reasoning observed in the experimental group aligns with prior research emphasizing the positive effects of the Values Clarification Technique (VCT) on moral development. VCT encourages individuals to engage in introspection and ethical evaluation, which likely contributed to participants' enhanced ability to prioritize post-conventional moral reasoning, as measured by the DIT-2. This finding echoes the work of Sukisno and

Nurtjahyani, who found that values clarification, particularly when integrated with cognitive strategies like locus of control awareness, significantly elevated moral development levels among students (Sukisno & Nurtjahyani, 2024). Additionally, in educational settings, researchers have consistently reported that VCT fosters reflective thinking and supports the formation of ethical stances grounded in personal conviction rather than external authority (Lisieveci & Andronie, 2016; Yudiana, 2020). The present results further support the argument that engaging individuals in critical dialogue about values leads to more sophisticated and autonomous moral reasoning.

In terms of identity stability, the findings showed that the intervention significantly contributed to a greater sense of coherence and commitment in participants' self-concept. Identity stability, particularly during the transitional stage of young adulthood, depends heavily on internal consistency between values and behavioral choices. The observed improvement is consistent with the notion that values serve as a foundational framework for making life decisions and maintaining self-continuity across time. This is supported by empirical research indicating that values clarification not only enhances decision-making clarity but also strengthens personal identity by reinforcing alignment between beliefs and actions (Kim, 2023). The role of VCT in facilitating this alignment has also been noted by Peinado et al., who found that values-focused discussions among parents helped stabilize their decision-making processes and reduce psychological distress in high-stakes contexts like genomic testing for newborns (Peinado et al., 2020).

The sustained improvements observed at the five-month follow-up underscore the long-term effectiveness of the intervention. This durability suggests that values clarification is not a transient cognitive exercise but a developmental catalyst with the potential to influence future-oriented thinking and personal consistency. The findings of Witteman et al. support this conclusion, as their meta-analysis demonstrated that decision aids incorporating

values clarification tools consistently led to more values-congruent behavior over time (Witteman et al., 2021). Moreover, Yilmaz's study with cancer patients also demonstrated lasting improvements in values clarity through conjoint analysis-based VCT methods, showing that the benefits of value alignment extend beyond educational settings into emotionally complex, real-life decision-making environments (Yilmaz, 2022).

Furthermore, the study's results contribute to the growing body of literature confirming the adaptability and relevance of VCT across age groups and cultural contexts. While many previous applications of VCT have focused on primary and secondary education (Febriyani et al., 2022; Herawati et al., 2023; Ni Putu Candra Prastya, 2023), this study extends its application to a late adolescent/young adult population in Turkey, a demographic that faces increasing pressure to make value-driven decisions related to career, relationships, and civic identity. As Anwar et al. found in younger populations, VCT improves character outcomes through folklore and narrative techniques (Anwar et al., 2023), and the same reflective structure can evidently foster internalization and coherence of values among older youth as well.

Another significant implication of the findings is the program's potential to support psychosocial well-being. Although this study did not directly measure mental health outcomes, existing research suggests that clarity and consistency in personal values contribute to psychological resilience and coping. For example, Furukawa et al. demonstrated that workers with clearer coping-related values exhibited broader repertoires for stress management (Furukawa et al., 2020). Similarly, Shimizu and Shimizu showed that reducing cognitive fusion through values clarification improves mental health outcomes (Shimizu & Shimizu, 2020). It is plausible that the identity stability observed in our study functioned as a protective factor, helping participants navigate internal and external challenges more effectively over the five-month period.

These findings are further corroborated by research from Ula et al., who reported that VCT enhances student learning outcomes by facilitating personal relevance and reflective engagement (Ula et al., 2021). This reinforces the pedagogical versatility of VCT and suggests its integration into curricula could yield both cognitive and identity-related benefits. Even in high school history classes, Ofianto and Ningsih found that using VCT enhanced students' character development, highlighting the potential of this model to impact not just knowledge but also self-understanding and

behavioral consistency (Ofianto & Ningsih, 2021). Additionally, Badeni and colleagues developed VCT interventions through role-playing games to boost the internalization of character values, which mirrors the active-learning structure employed in this study's protocol (Badeni et al., 2020; B. Badeni et al., 2020).

In the realm of health psychology, values clarification is increasingly seen as a core component of patient-centered care. The study by Witteman et al. (2016) examined how different VCT design features influence patient decision-making, concluding that clarity in personal values supports better alignment between choices and outcomes (Witteman et al., 2016). Likewise, the experimental group in the current study showed an enhanced ability to articulate and prioritize values consistently over time, which parallels the goal of achieving "values-congruent" choices in health-related interventions. In this way, the findings from both educational and health domains converge on the idea that structured values reflection fosters both psychological integration and ethical agency.

Moreover, the increase in ethical reasoning observed in our study aligns with findings from Paksi et al., who demonstrated that VCT improves democratic attitudes in elementary students (Paksi et al., 2024). These outcomes suggest that values clarification contributes to a broader capacity for civic reasoning, empathy, and respect for pluralism—skills essential for ethical engagement in a diverse society. The same principle was confirmed by Yusrizal and Hariati, who found that VCT enhanced students' character development in post-pandemic contexts, indicating that this technique is responsive to contemporary social challenges and adaptable to changing educational priorities (Yusrizal & Hariati, 2022).

In addition to the cognitive and behavioral benefits, values clarification interventions appear to encourage emotional insight. According to Remiszewska, however, researchers must be cautious of overgeneralization and ensure methodological rigor in axiological research (Remiszewska, 2020). This study sought to address such concerns by implementing a validated measurement strategy (i.e., DIT-2 and EIPQ) and maintaining a rigorous randomized controlled trial design. Nonetheless, future studies should continue to refine how values are operationalized and how interventions are contextualized across diverse sociocultural settings.

5. Limitations and Suggestions

Despite the promising findings, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small ($N = 30$), limiting the generalizability of the results. While the randomized controlled design strengthens internal validity, the modest number of participants may reduce statistical power and may not capture the diversity of experiences among young adults in different regions of Turkey. Second, the intervention was delivered in a relatively short format (six sessions), and while significant improvements were observed, it remains unclear whether longer or more intensive interventions would yield even stronger or more nuanced outcomes. Third, the study relied on self-report measures, which can be subject to social desirability bias, particularly when assessing constructs like moral reasoning and identity. Although standardized tools were used, future studies may benefit from incorporating behavioral observations or qualitative interviews for a more comprehensive understanding.

Future research should aim to replicate this study with a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability and capture variations across age, gender, and cultural background. Longitudinal designs extending beyond five months could also explore the persistence of values-based changes across critical life transitions, such as entering the workforce or forming long-term relationships. Additionally, comparing the efficacy of different values clarification modalities—such as digital platforms, gamified modules, or integration with mindfulness training—could shed light on the most effective delivery mechanisms. Future studies may also examine how identity stability mediates the relationship between values clarification and psychological well-being, providing a more detailed map of causal pathways.

Practitioners in educational and psychological settings are encouraged to adopt values clarification programs as part of broader developmental interventions. Integrating structured values exploration into school and university curricula can support students in forming a coherent sense of self and making ethical decisions under pressure. Counselors and educators may also find the approach useful in addressing issues of identity confusion, decision paralysis, or moral disengagement. Moreover, adapting the VCT model to be culturally relevant and age-appropriate ensures that participants can relate meaningfully to the values they explore. Ultimately, embedding values clarification into routine practice empowers individuals to live with greater authenticity, purpose, and ethical consistency.

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Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. To adhere to ethical principles, participants were informed about the research objectives, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and confidentiality.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally.

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