

# Disruptors of Value Systems among High-School Students in the Context of Branch Didactics

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## Abstract

In contemporary society, the values held by adolescents have become a focal point of discussion and has significant influence on the learning process. Adolescence is a period marked by a rapid personality development and the formation of individual values, which are closely tied to the establishment of one's lifestyle. The current era, characterized by quick changes and uncertainty, is dominated by information overload, and is not favourable for youth. Identifying these disruptors is essential for the systematic application of branch didactics across various sub-disciplines, such as pedagogy, general didactics, and developmental psychology, to enhance academic outcomes among adolescents. The objective of this article is to identify the most significant disruptors affecting the value systems of high school students. Furthermore, this paper will propose potential interventions that can be applied not only within branch-specific didactics and related disciplines but also by adolescents themselves to guide their lives in a more positive direction.

*Keywords:* Disruptors, Value System, Learning Process

## 1 Introduction

Values are the principles and standards that guide individuals' decisions, behaviours, and interpretations of what is important or worthwhile in life. Values serve as a compass for personal and social conduct, shaping how individuals prioritize goals, relate to others, and evaluate right and wrong (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022). The value systems of high-school students therefore represent a crucial element of their personal and social development, as they shape how students understand themselves, relate to others, and engage with the world (Puyo, 2021).

Adolescence represents one of the most formative periods in an individual's life, marked by profound changes across physical, emotional, and cognitive domains (Silvers, 2022). During this critical stage, young people begin to establish their sense of identity and to shape the values that will guide their decisions, actions, and interactions with others. As they transition

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from childhood to adulthood, adolescents experience significant exposure to various external and internal influences that impact their value systems. These values, which encompass beliefs about morality, ethics, justice, and social responsibility, provide the foundation for navigating the complexities of adult life. However, the process of value formation is far from straightforward. Adolescents often find themselves confronting diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas and perspectives, particularly as they engage with new experiences, peer groups, and social norms (Van Doeselaar et al., 2020).

For high-school students, the educational environment serves as a key arena for value development. As they progress through school, students are not only exposed to subject-specific content but also to the broader social, ethical, and cultural contexts within which this content is situated. According to Griffin et al. (2011) the role of the educational system, therefore, is not limited to the transmission of knowledge; it also involves helping students develop the moral and ethical frameworks necessary for understanding themselves and the world around them. The teaching methods employed within specific academic disciplines—referred to as branch didactics—play a critical role in this process. These methods, tailored to each subject area, shape how students engage with and internalize knowledge, including the ethical implications embedded within various academic fields.

Branch didactics, encompassing the specialized pedagogical approaches for different subjects, can serve as both a platform for reinforcing core values and a disruptor of existing belief systems (Doulík & Škoda, 2010). Subjects like history, literature, social studies, and the sciences present students with opportunities to engage with complex moral dilemmas, social issues, and cultural narratives that may challenge or broaden their values. While these subjects provide opportunities for the development of ethical reasoning, the ways in which they are taught—using values-laden content, critical thinking exercises, and classroom discussions—can either support or disrupt students' emerging value systems.

This article explores the disruptors of value systems among high-school students within the context of branch didactics. It seeks to identify the key factors—both external and internal—that influence how students form, challenge, or adapt their values during this critical stage of development. Furthermore, the article examines the educational strategies that can help mitigate the negative effects of these disruptors and promote positive value development. In doing so, it aims to highlight the importance of an integrated approach to teaching that considers both academic knowledge and the moral growth of students. Through a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of education in shaping the ethical and moral development of young people.

## 2 Literature review

The concept of values in educational contexts has been widely studied by scholars, including Rokeach (1973), who defined values as enduring beliefs that guide behaviour and serve as a

framework for making ethical decisions. Adolescence, as described by Erikson (1968), is a critical period for identity formation, during which individuals begin to explore, redefine, or adopt values that will guide their future lives. Kohlberg (1981), in his studies on moral development, emphasized the importance of cognitive development and ethical reasoning, illustrating how individuals progress through stages of moral understanding. Adolescents are especially vulnerable to the influences of both peer groups and external forces such as media, family, and school, all of which contribute to the fluid nature of their value systems.

In the context of education, branch didactics refers to the pedagogical approaches and content-specific teaching methods that are designed to engage students within individual subject areas. Previous research done by Neminska (2018) has demonstrated that the curriculum and subject-specific teaching strategies influence students' moral and value development. Klafki (2000) outlined the importance of branch didactics in facilitating value development by shaping how students engage with academic content. Each subject offers unique opportunities for students to engage with moral and ethical questions.

For example, history lessons might address issues of justice and human rights, while literature classes may explore themes of empathy, diversity, and the human condition. Beane (1997) suggested that curricula designed with an awareness of students' moral and social development can foster engagement with core values and ethical reasoning. Similarly, Schiro (2013) emphasized the potential of education to shape not only cognitive outcomes but also ethical and moral understandings. Branch didactics thus becomes a tool through which values are communicated and internalized, as the pedagogical strategies within individual subjects deeply affect students' perceptions of the world and their place within it.

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of social interaction in the development of higher-order thinking and values. As students are exposed to complex ideas in subjects such as history, literature, or science, they are not merely absorbing information but actively engaging with moral questions that may challenge their beliefs. Vygotsky's ideas on scaffolding suggest that teachers play a pivotal role in guiding students through these moral dilemmas, helping them negotiate the complexities of their value systems.

However, branch didactics can also act as a disruptor to students' value systems. For example, when the content or pedagogical methods of a subject conflict with students' personal, familial, or cultural values, it may lead to cognitive dissonance or moral confusion. This tension between the values presented in the classroom and students' pre-existing beliefs can cause students to question their values, reconsider their beliefs, or reject certain aspects of the subject matter altogether (Vollmer, 2024). As adolescents are already in a stage of significant psychological and social development, these disruptions can result in either growth or confusion depending on how they are navigated. On the other hand, if these tensions are not addressed in a supportive way, they can lead to disconnection, disengagement, or a rejection of the learning process altogether. Ultimately, how students respond to these disruptions depends not only on the content and methods of branch didactics but also on the broader context of their social environment and personal development.

### 3 Disruptors of Value System Among High-School Students

Disruptors of value systems among high-school students refer to the various factors that interfere with or reshape the core beliefs, morals, and priorities that students begin to establish during adolescence (Taylor et al., 2017). Disruptors—often social, cultural, technological, or psychological—can significantly impact how students interpret, accept, or reject values presented by their families, schools, and society (Laldinpui et al., 2024). These disruptors may introduce conflicting ideas or perspectives that challenge established values, which can create both confusion and opportunity for growth. They refer to the various forces—both internal and external—that challenge or reshape students' established beliefs and ethical frameworks.

Understanding these disruptors is essential for educators who seek to guide students in forming balanced and resilient value systems that are adaptive yet grounded in ethical principles. By recognizing the forces that influence students' values, educators can support them in developing a cohesive, reflective approach to personal and social priorities in an increasingly complex world.

#### 3.1 External Disruptors

Research has identified a range of external disruptors that influence adolescents' value systems. One of the most significant influences in contemporary society is the media, which plays a central role in shaping adolescents' perceptions of the world and their place within it. Studies such as that from Fikkers et al. (2016) have shown that media exposure, particularly to violent or materialistic content, can influence adolescents' attitudes toward issues such as aggression, empathy, and social justice. For example, children and adolescents exposed to television programmes that glorify violence, or unethical behaviour may be more likely to internalize these behaviours as acceptable or even desirable. The media's pervasive portrayal of gender roles, consumerism, and success also creates a framework for adolescents to assess their own value systems, often at odds with traditional values learned within families or schools (Gunter, 2011).

In addition to media, peer pressure is a powerful external disruptor. According to Brown & Larson (2009), peer relationships during adolescence often challenge established norms, with adolescents seeking acceptance and validation from their peers. This social pressure can result in the modification or even abandonment of previously held values, especially in contexts where peer groups emphasize values such as conformity, popularity, or material success over more traditional ethical principles like honesty or respect for others. Peer influence can be particularly potent when it interacts with the desire for social belonging and identity formation, making it difficult for adolescents to critically evaluate the values promoted by their peer groups.

Technology, particularly social media platforms, represents another external disruptor that can reshape value systems. Research by Frison & Eggermont (2015) has highlighted the impact of social media use on adolescents' self-esteem, social comparisons, and attitudes toward body image, which are all integral components of broader value systems. The constant exposure to idealized images and the pressure to present oneself in a curated way on social media may lead adolescents to internalize values based on superficiality or external approval, rather than deeper moral or ethical convictions.

### 3.2 Internal Disruptors

In addition to external factors, internal psychological processes also play a significant role in the disruption of value systems. Cognitive development theories emphasize that as adolescents' cognitive abilities mature, they become capable of abstract thinking and more sophisticated moral reasoning (Piaget, 1977). However, this increased cognitive capacity can also lead to doubt and scepticism regarding previously accepted beliefs. As adolescents begin to question societal norms and the values espoused by their families and schools, they may experience a sense of dissonance or confusion. This process of questioning can disrupt value systems as adolescents test the boundaries of what they believe to be true or acceptable.

Research on moral reasoning also suggests that as adolescents engage with more complex ethical questions, they may begin to reconsider or even reject traditional values. According to Gilligan (1982), adolescent girls are influenced by the relational dynamics of their social environments, which can lead them to adopt values that prioritize relationships and care over justice and fairness. This shift in values is often shaped by personal experiences and the social contexts in which adolescents are immersed.

## 4 Educational Strategies for a Positive Value Development

Given the significant role that educational practices, social influences, and technological factors play in shaping value systems, it is crucial for educators to be mindful of these disruptors and implement strategies that support the positive development of students' values. The educational strategies designed to promote positive value development among students are not only effective in fostering ethical and moral growth but also play a vital role in enhancing academic performance, social skills, and emotional intelligence (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008).

Previous research in the field of value development and educational strategies from Shek et al. (2019) has demonstrated the significant role that structured interventions play in shaping students' moral, social, and emotional growth. Studies from Lockwood (1978) and Edwards & Kirven (2019) have shown that educational strategies such as values clarification, moral dilemma discussions, and service learning can effectively foster ethical reasoning, empathy, and civic responsibility. Kohlberg's (1981) work on moral development highlighted the

importance of engaging students in discussions of moral dilemmas, which can stimulate critical thinking and encourage students to consider multiple perspectives when faced with ethical decisions.

Similarly, Lickona (1991) emphasized the value of character education programs, which provide structured opportunities for students to internalize positive traits such as honesty, responsibility, and respect. Research on service learning, such as Eyler & Giles (1989), further supports the idea that combining community service with academic learning enhances both social responsibility and academic achievement, with students showing increased empathy and engagement with societal issues.

Additionally, studies on collaborative learning, including those by Johnson & Johnson (1989), have found that cooperative learning environments improve social interaction, promote respect for diverse viewpoints, and encourage teamwork. These strategies, supported by decades of research, not only enhance academic outcomes but also contribute significantly to the personal and moral development of students, preparing them to navigate complex social and ethical challenges in their lives. Integrating such evidence-based strategies into educational practices allows educators to create environments that nurture well-rounded, socially responsible individuals who can contribute positively to society.

In addition, Berkowitz & Bier (2005) argued that character education programs should be integrated across the curriculum to promote a holistic approach to value development. They emphasized that schools that consistently model and reinforce ethical behaviour create environments in which students are more likely to internalize positive values. The integration of character education into everyday classroom practices has been shown to enhance students' ability to navigate moral challenges and strengthen their commitment to ethical decision-making. Moreover, Noddings (2002) introduced the concept of "care ethics" in education, which emphasizes the importance of nurturing empathy, compassion, and relational values in students. Noddings' approach suggests that fostering a caring environment in schools can positively influence students' emotional development and value systems, enabling them to build strong, supportive relationships and make decisions based on empathy and mutual respect.

Other researchers, such as Schaps et al. (2004), have explored the role of school culture in value development. Their work highlights the importance of creating school environments that promote positive relationships, shared values, and a sense of belonging. These environments, they argue, contribute to the development of students' ethical values, which in turn lead to improved academic and social outcomes.

Together, these studies support the idea that value development is an ongoing process that is deeply influenced by the educational environment. Integrating strategies such as moral dilemma discussions, service learning, collaborative learning, and character education within the classroom provides students with the tools to navigate ethical challenges, develop moral reasoning, and foster positive interpersonal relationships. The research underscores the importance of creating an educational framework that not only focuses on academic

achievement but also nurtures the personal and social growth of students. By applying evidence-based educational strategies, educators can help students form balanced, resilient value systems that guide them through both academic and real-world challenges.

## 5 Conclusion

Adolescence represents a critical phase in the development of value systems, a time when individuals begin to shape their identities and question the beliefs and norms they have inherited from their families, societies, and cultural environments. During this time, high-school students are particularly vulnerable to various disruptors—both external and internal—that can influence and sometimes challenge their value systems. These disruptors are multifaceted, stemming from societal influences such as media, peer groups, and technology, as well as from the internal psychological processes of identity formation and moral reasoning. Together, these factors create a dynamic environment where students constantly navigate between existing value structures and new, potentially conflicting perspectives.

The role of branch didactics, or subject-specific teaching methods, in this process cannot be understated. Through the specific content and pedagogical approaches of various academic disciplines, students are presented with unique opportunities to engage with complex moral, ethical, and societal issues. For instance, subjects such as literature, history, social sciences, and the arts are rich in opportunities for moral reflection, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning. How these subjects are taught—through both the content presented and the teaching methods employed—can significantly impact the way students interact with and internalize the values that they encounter. By integrating ethical discussions, moral dilemmas, and reflective practices into the curriculum, educators can guide students in navigating these complex value conflicts, helping them form resilient and balanced value systems that are both informed and reflective of broader societal norms.

While students are exposed to a variety of external pressures that may disrupt their value systems—such as media portrayals, peer influences, and the quest for social belonging—the educational system can serve as a powerful counterbalance, providing students with the tools and frameworks needed to critically evaluate and integrate these external influences. Educational strategies like values clarification, service learning, moral dilemma discussions, character education, and integrating values directly into branch didactics are all instrumental in helping students not only navigate the complexities of adolescence but also develop the ethical competencies needed for responsible and reflective citizenship in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

In this regard, the responsibility of educators extends beyond the transmission of knowledge in specific subject areas. Teachers have a unique opportunity to shape the moral and social development of students by fostering environments that encourage ethical dialogue, empathy, and critical thinking. Moreover, educators must recognize the diversity of values

that students bring into the classroom and strive to create inclusive environments where multiple perspectives are respected and discussed in a constructive manner.

Ultimately, the study of disruptors to value systems and the implementation of positive educational strategies is crucial for helping students develop into ethically aware individuals who are capable of critically reflecting on their beliefs and making informed decisions. As the external world continues to change rapidly, the role of education in supporting the formation of strong, flexible, and ethical value systems becomes more essential. The integration of values-focused pedagogical strategies within the context of branch didactics offers a promising avenue for supporting the development of students' moral compasses and ensuring that they are well-equipped to navigate the complex challenges of the future.

By addressing the disruptors of value systems and implementing effective educational strategies, schools can contribute significantly to the development of students who not only excel academically but are also capable of thoughtful moral reasoning and responsible engagement with the world around them. The role of branch didactics offers educators a powerful means of shaping the ethical and intellectual growth of students, guiding them to become active, responsible, and reflective members of society. Thus, a well-rounded approach to value development, one that acknowledges the complexity of adolescent experiences and utilizes subject-specific teaching methodologies, can significantly enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to the holistic development of young individuals.

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