

Living the Makatao Values: Students' Lived Experiences of Human Dignity, Moral Growth, and Responsibility

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Abstract: This study explored how Grade 10 students understood Makatao values and how these values influenced their personal lives. It aimed to capture students' own reflections on self-awareness, moral behavior, decision-making, responsibility, and respect for human dignity as shaped by their everyday experiences in and beyond the classroom. A qualitative research design using thematic analysis was employed. The participants were Grade 10 students from a public secondary school who had been exposed to lessons integrating Makatao values. Purposive sampling was used to select students who were willing to share meaningful personal experiences. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews that allowed students to speak freely and comfortably using a familiar language. All interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed, and carefully reviewed. The data were analyzed through repeated reading, coding, and grouping of responses into themes that reflected shared experiences and insights. Ethical standards were observed throughout the study, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. The findings revealed five major themes that describe how Makatao values influenced the personal lives of Grade 10 students. These themes include personal self-development, conscience-driven moral growth, values-guided moral decisions, responsible life choices, and strengthened interpersonal relationships. Together, these themes reflect the students' growing self-awareness, moral sensitivity, and ability to make responsible and value-based decisions. They also highlight the importance of Makatao values in shaping learners' character, guiding their behavior, and improving their relationships with family, peers, and others in their daily lives.

Keywords: *Human Dignity, Makatao Values, Moral Development, Self-Reflection*

INTRODUCTION

Makatao values are central to values education as they emphasize respect for human dignity, moral responsibility, and ethical decision-making. In schools, these values play a vital role in shaping learners not only as academically capable individuals but also as morally responsible members of society. Through Makatao values, students are guided to develop self-awareness, conscience, empathy, and responsible freedom, which help them understand themselves, relate positively with others, and make sound life choices. Within the Philippine education system, Makatao is a core value integrated into the Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP) curriculum, reflecting the goal of holistic and learner-centered education that nurtures both character and competence (Department of Education, 2020). Scholars and international organizations have consistently highlighted the importance of values-based education in fostering moral growth and social responsibility. UNESCO (2020) emphasized that schools serve as key institutions in promoting empathy, respect, and human dignity through structured values education. In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (2023) stressed that Makatao values guide learners in developing ethical reasoning, compassion, and accountability in everyday life. Studies on moral and values education further suggest that when values are consistently integrated into teaching and school culture,

learners are more likely to internalize moral principles and apply them meaningfully in real-life situations.

Despite the strong inclusion of Makatao values in the EsP curriculum and supporting national policies such as the Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) and the Values Education Act (Republic Act No. 11476, 2020), there remains limited understanding of how students actually experience and live out these values. Most existing studies focus on quantitative measures such as awareness levels, compliance, or academic indicators, offering little insight into students' lived experiences, reflective moral processes, and ethical meaning-making. Moreover, there is a lack of qualitative research that captures how learners experience human dignity, moral growth, and responsibility within specific school contexts.

This study addressed these gaps by exploring students' lived experiences of Makatao values through a qualitative approach. It focused on how learners understood and practiced self-awareness, conscience, moral judgment, responsible freedom, and human dignity in their daily lives. By giving voice to students' personal reflections and moral experiences, the study provided deeper and more meaningful insights into how Makatao values influenced their moral growth and sense of responsibility. In doing so, the study contributed to a more human-centered understanding of values education, moving beyond policy and curriculum to highlight students' real-life experiences of living the Makatao values.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1958) and Rokeach's Value Theory (1973). These two theories provided complementary perspectives for understanding how Grade 10 students made sense of Makatao values and how these values were reflected in their lived experiences within the context of Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP). Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development served as a central framework in examining how students reasoned about moral issues and justified their actions. The theory proposed that moral reasoning develops through a sequence of stages grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Most adolescents, including Grade 10 learners, were generally situated at the conventional level, where moral decisions were influenced by social expectations, relationships, and respect for rules. This perspective is closely aligned with the goals of EsP, which sought to guide learners toward responsible and morally sound behavior grounded in social harmony and human dignity.

Using Kohlberg's theory, the study was able to look beyond observable behavior and focus on the reasoning behind students' actions. It helped distinguish whether learners practiced Makatao values because of external expectations or because they had internalized these values as part of their moral beliefs. For example, some learners expressed helping others to maintain good relationships or gain approval, reflecting conventional moral reasoning. Others described acting out of personal conviction, even without recognition, indicating a deeper sense of moral responsibility. Kohlberg's framework allowed the study to interpret these differences and identify varying levels of moral growth among students.

Rokeach's Value Theory further strengthened the study by explaining how learners prioritized and lived out values in their daily lives. The theory distinguished between terminal values, which represent long-term life goals, and instrumental values, which refer to everyday behaviors used to achieve those goals. In the context of Makatao values, this theory helped explain how respect, kindness, empathy, and fairness were expressed through students' actions as they pursued meaningful personal and social goals. Rokeach's theory enabled the study to understand not only what students valued, but also how these values were translated into behavior. Acts of empathy, respect, and responsibility reflected instrumental values that supported broader goals of dignity, harmony, and moral integrity. This perspective made it possible to examine whether Makatao values were merely taught concepts or genuinely lived experiences shaped by personal beliefs.

Together, Kohlberg's and Rokeach's theories provided a holistic lens for understanding students' moral and values development. Kohlberg explained how students reasoned about right and wrong, while Rokeach clarified which values

mattered to them and how these values guided their daily actions. The integration of these theories allowed the study to capture the depth of students' lived experiences, revealing how Makatao values influenced their sense of human dignity, moral growth, and responsibility.

The study focused on understanding how students experienced, interpreted, and practiced Makatao values in real-life situations. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development was anchored to the study because it explained the moral reasoning behind students' choices and actions. It helped reveal how learners understood right and wrong and how their sense of responsibility developed through social relationships and personal reflection. Rokeach's Value Theory was anchored to the study because it explained how values were prioritized and expressed in everyday behavior. It provided insight into how Makatao values were not only learned in school but also lived out through students' interactions, decisions, and relationships. By grounding the study in these theories, the research was able to meaningfully connect students' thoughts, emotions, and actions, offering a deeper understanding of how Makatao values shaped their lived experiences of dignity, moral growth, and responsibility.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis to explore the personal views of Grade 10 students on Makatao values and their influence on personal life. The qualitative approach was used to capture the participants' lived experiences, reflections, and meanings associated with Makatao values. This design allowed an in-depth understanding of how students interpreted and applied these values in their daily lives.

The participants of the study were Grade 10 students enrolled in a public secondary school. They were selected based on their exposure to lessons integrating Makatao values and their willingness to share personal experiences related to the study. The participants were assigned codes to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences. The interviews were conducted in a language familiar to the participants to ensure clarity and comfort. All responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The researchers read the transcripts repeatedly to become familiar with the data. Initial codes were generated, which were then grouped into categories and broader themes. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the participants' views and

experiences.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the study was secured from school authorities. Informed consent was obtained from the participants and their parents or guardians. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Sampling Technique and Sample

The sample consisted of selected Grade 10 students who had direct experiences related to Makatao values in school and personal contexts. Only students who met the inclusion criteria and provided informed consent were included in the study. Participation was voluntary, and the number of participants was determined based on the richness and saturation of the data collected. Purposive sampling was used in this study. This technique was employed to deliberately select participants who were able to provide relevant and meaningful information about Makatao values and their influence on personal life. The selection focused on students who demonstrated the ability to reflect on their experiences and articulate their personal views.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the personal views of the Grade 10 students towards Makatao Values and their influence to Personal Life

Table 1

Personal Views of Grade 10 Students on Makatao Values and their Influence on Personal Life

Participants	Code	Category	Themes	Interpretation
S2,S7,S11	Becoming aware of emotions	Reflective Self-Awareness	Personal Self-Development	Through reflection, students gained deeper self-understanding, emotional awareness, and
S1,S3,S4, S8,S12,S14	Self-reflect on personal experiences			
S9,S10,S13	Recognizing person			

S5,S6,S15	Strengthened self-confidence and self-worth			Recognition of personal growth.
S1,S2,S3, S8,S10,S15	Experiencing Moral Remorse	Moral Consciousness	Conscience-Driven Moral Growth	Feelings of remorse led students to recognize mistakes and develop stronger moral accountability.
S4,S5	Recalling Past Wrongdoing			
S6,S12, S13,S14	Accepting Moral Responsibility			
S9,S11	Repairing Damaged Relationships			
S5,S6, S13,S15	Seeking self-correction	Moral Reasoning	Values - Guided Moral Decisions	Students demonstrated moral reasoning by reflecting on consequences, prioritizing what is right over convenience, and standing firm on their principles.
S2, S3, S4, S8, S12	Choosing what is right over what is easy			
S1, S9, S11	Thinking before making decisions			
S7, S10, S14	Standing by personal principles			
S1,S5,S6, S9,	Taking responsibility	Life Direction and	Responsible Life	Students learned

S10,S11, S13,S15	for personal actions	Respon sibility	Choice s	to balance freedom with respons ibility toward family, decision s, and future goals.	gi biyaan ming papa kay namatay, then na discover nako nga mo biya jud ang tanan so gi dawat nalang ug hinay-hinay kay nahitabo naman sab, then bisag unsaon di naman mabalik ang tanan kay humana man so nag koan ko nga dapat maging strong, kay dili sa tanan panahon naa kay ka uban sa imong kinabuhi so dapat kabalo nako mo handle sa akung kaugalingon ug dapat makaya jud nako kay dili sa tanan panahon naa kay kauban. Mao bitaw tong sa atong klase Sir nga perte nakong hilak kay na feel jud nako Sir nga dili ko alone ug kaya nako mopadayon.
S4,S7,S8 ,S14	Balanci ng person al freedo m with family duties				
S2,S3,S1 2	Prioritiz ing educati on and future goal				
S5,S13,1 4,15	Feeling respect ed by others	Relation al Growth	Strengt hened Interpe rsonal Relatio nships	By practici ng empath y and respect, student s built stronger relation ships and valued others' dignity.	The most painful experience in my life was when my father left us because he passed away. After that, I realized that everyone eventually leaves, so I slowly learned to accept it since it had already happened. No matter what I do, I cannot bring back the past because everything is over. That is why I told myself that I need to be strong, because not all the time someone will stay by your side. I must learn how to handle myself and be able to endure things on my own.
S3,S7,S1 1	Valuing one's self- worth				
S6,S8,S1 5	Showin g empath y and active listenin g				That is why during our class, Sir, I cried so much because I truly felt that I was not alone and that I am capable of moving forward.

Theme 1: Personal Self-Development

Personal self-development describes how Grade 10 students understand Makatao values and apply them in their personal lives. It shows their growing awareness of their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and actions, and how they try to align these with values like respect, empathy, and responsibility. Through reflection, they recognize how these values influence their behaviour, decisions, and overall personal growth.

This theme is supported by Garcia and Bual (2022), who found that students' awareness of DepEd core values, including Makatao, is significantly related to how they practice these values in their daily lives. Their study showed that when learners clearly understand values such as respect, empathy, and responsibility, they are more likely to apply them in their behavior and decision-making. This supports the present finding that personal self-development emerges as students internalize Makatao values and allow these to influence their actions and personal growth, which corresponds with Participant 11 statement.

Ang pinaka sakit nga nahitabo sa akung kinabuhi kay katong

This reflection shows that the student became more aware of the importance of education in shaping their future. Thinking about their parents' sacrifices gave them a stronger sense of responsibility and motivation to persevere. It also shows how self-reflection can build determination and encourage a learner not to give up on their dreams.

In exploring how self-awareness contributes to student growth, scholars have underscored its impact on values formation and personal development. Thaintheerasombat and Chookhampaeng (2022) found that building self-awareness in high school students fosters values such as responsibility, perseverance, and commitment to personal goals, guiding them toward positive decision-making. This supports the present reflection, where the student's responsibility and determination were shaped by strong educational and family values, which can also be seen in Participant 3.

Sa atoo kadtung time na nasuko ko sakong mama, broken fam ko so that time grabe nakong kasuko sa

iya gina basol nako siya tungod sa nahitabo sakong kinabuhi ug nganong nabroken fam mi dili nako siya gina contact ana nga time kay diko ganahan nasa 3 years siguro to na wala ming storya storya pero after ana nakasuko Gimingaw ko niya pero naa koy pride mao to na naaabtag 3 years so didtu nakoo napagawas sa heart to heart sharing about ana so human atu na kuan nako na human siya sa tanan ani na realize nako na mama gihapon nako siya bisag bali balihon pa ang kalibutan mama gyod nako siya, siya gihapon ang inahan nga nag utong nato ug nagpakatawo nato ug hinongdan maong naa ko ani nga kalibutan. Karon okay nami gaan kaayu sa feeling na wala nakay pag dumot sa isa ka tao, mas naging open ko ni mama, mas masinabtanun ko sa iyaha ug mas akong gi cherish ang moment nga wala nako gibuhat sa una.

There was a time when I was very angry with my mother. I come from a broken family, and I blamed her for what happened and for why our family fell apart. Because of my anger, I stopped talking to her. We did not communicate for about three years. Even though I was angry, I still missed her. But I was too proud to reach out, so we remained distant. During our heart-to-heart sharing in class, I was finally able to express everything I had been keeping inside. After sharing my feelings, I realized that no matter what happens, she is still my mother. She is the one who carried me, gave birth to me, and brought me into this world. Now, we are okay. It feels light and peaceful not to hold anger anymore. I am more open with her now, more understanding, and I truly value the time I have with her, something I did not do before.

The participant's experience highlights how self-reflection after a painful family situation led to forgiveness, understanding, and renewed respect for a parent. Releasing anger and pride created space for healing and reconciliation. This shows personal growth, as perspectives, behaviour, and relationships improved through maturity and reflection.

A study on the role of self-compassion in student development has shown how forgiveness can lead to emotional healing and stronger relationships. In this regard, Wibowo and Naini (2021) noted that self-compassion and forgiveness among high school students are strongly connected to emotional healing and improved relationships, as releasing anger and pride opens the way for understanding and respect. This supports the present findings, where the participant's maturity and personal growth were evident in their ability to forgive, reconcile, and renew respect for a parent after a painful family situation. This outcome was further demonstrated in Participant 15.

Pero kadto na time naka muni-muni ko sa kinabuhi nko na kung dili ko mo eskwela Kay ingon ani ra gyod ko dili ko mo asenso. Naghuna huna gyod ko nga dapat mo Eskwela sa gyod ko, mo agi sa gyod ko ug hirap at pawis . gi ingnan gyod nko akong self na maglaban ta para sa atong goal. Gi kuan gyod nako sa reflection nako na laban ta self Kay para naay pulos ang pagpa eskwela nila mama ug papa sa akoo Kay kung sa tinood lang dili ko makabayad sa ilahang ka hago. Maong ni ingon gyod ko sa kaugalingon nko na self sugod karon dili gyod ta mo undang hangtod makuha na nato atong pangandoy, hangtod karon kay naka padayun gyod ko.

There was a time when I deeply reflected on my life. I realized that if I stop studying, nothing will change and I will not succeed. I really thought to myself that I need to continue my studies and go through hard work and sacrifices. I told myself, "Let's fight for our goals." In my reflection, I reminded myself to stay strong and keep going so that my parents' sacrifices in sending me to school will not be wasted. Honestly, I feel that I can never repay all their hard work. That is why I promised myself that starting now, I will not give up until I reach my dreams.

Until now, I am still continuing and doing my best to move forward.

This excerpt shows that the student's reflection became a moment of realization about the importance of continuing their education. By thinking deeply about their situation and their parents' sacrifices, the learner felt motivated to work harder and not give up. It highlights how personal reflection can strengthen determination and inspire a student to keep pursuing their goals despite challenges.

Research on the influence of self-awareness in student development shows that it strengthens confidence and resilience. Building on this, Siswanto et al. (2024) examined how self-awareness contributes to academic growth among secondary students. They found that when learners recognize their strengths and limitations, they develop greater self-worth and determination, motivating them to continue their studies and pursue long-term goals despite challenges.

Theme 2: Conscience-Driven Moral Growth

Conscience-driven moral growth highlights how Grade 10 students develop a deeper awareness of right and wrong through their experiences. It is reflected in feelings of remorse, recognition of mistakes, and the willingness to take responsibility for one's actions. This inner awareness influences their personal lives by guiding them to correct their behaviour, seek forgiveness, and act with greater responsibility.

In the study on moral development, Malti et al. (2021) emphasized that adolescence is a critical stage in which moral emotions such as guilt, empathy, and remorse play a central role in shaping behaviour. They found that these emotions guide young people to recognize their mistakes, seek forgiveness, and take responsibility for their actions. In the same way, the present findings show that students' conscience-driven moral growth is expressed through their awareness of right and wrong, which influences how they respond to their mistakes and act more responsibly in their personal lives, which corresponds with Participant 3 statement.

Katung time na nag uyab uyab ko niya kay dugay kaayu nako siya na bulagan wako na minaw sa mga tambag sa ako nga naka ayu diay sa ako ug wala koy uyab mo skwela kay sugod atong nag uyab uyab ko nag ubos og ayo akong grado niya gikasab-an kong sir, sa akong parent sab human atu wala na silay salig sako bug atgihapon Sako to na moment Kay tana Wala nako to gibuhad tana naminaw ko sa ilang tambag naa pa unta silay salig sako karon nakunsinsya ko atu nga

time kay grabi nakog pag baliwala satong mga parents.

At that time, I was in a relationship, and it took me a long time before I decided to break up with him. I did not listen to the advice of the people who cared about me and told me to focus on my studies instead of having a boyfriend. Because of that relationship, my grades dropped a lot, and I was scolded by my teacher and my parents. After that, they lost their trust in me, and until now I still regret what I did because I wish I had listened to them. I felt very guilty at that time because I realized I had ignored my parents' advice.

This statement shows that the student experienced moral remorse after realizing the negative effects of her decisions. Her feelings of guilt and regret reflect an inner awareness that she had ignored her parents' advice and responsibilities. This experience helped her recognize her mistakes and encouraged her to grow by making better choices in the future.

Students often experience guilt and remorse when realizing the negative effects of their decisions, and these emotions are vital for moral growth. Huang (2024) found that such feelings help adolescents acknowledge mistakes, strengthen responsibility, and encourage better choices, supporting the view that guilt and regret guide responsible decision-making and personal growth. This supports Participant 5, whose remorse after dishonest behavior fostered an inner awareness that led to more responsible choices.

Ang dili jud nako malimtan kay kadtong nangawat ko ug 20 pesos sa akong mama tong 8 years old komaong nabuhad ko to kay naa koy gusto paliton nga makaon then mao toy first time nako nanguha ug money kay mama, wapa jud koy boot kaayo ato kay lagi bata pakog pang huna huna. Nahibal an bitaw na ni papa basta gibunalan ko ug maayo, unya mao to nidagan ko unya kay maapasan man jud ko ni papa sege siyag bunal sege pod ko ug sagang unya ang gibunal sa akoo binugha unya ang binugha naka igo sa akong kumingking sa kamot mao to nisyagit ko ug maayo unya wako kabalo nga nabali na deay akong kumingking. Grabe kasuko sa akong tita

pagkakita niya nganong ge in ato ko ni papa pag bunal ngano daw halos nako patyon. mao to tungod ato mahadlok na jud ko manguha ug kwarta ni mama ni bisan kinsa kay dili nako gusto ato mobalik nga sitwasyon murag until now nagpabilin jud ko nga leksyon sa akooa.

One thing I can never forget was when I stole 20 pesos from my mother when I was eight years old. I did it because I wanted to buy food, and I was still young and not thinking properly. My father found out and punished me, and during that time my little finger was accidentally broken. After that incident, I became very scared to take money from my mother or from anyone else because I did not want that to happen again. Until now, that experience remains a strong lesson for me.

This statement shows a clear recollection of a past wrongdoing that had a significant impact. The experience highlighted the consequences of dishonest actions and served as a lasting lesson. The continued reflection on the incident reflects moral awareness and growth shaped by conscience.

Research on adolescent moral development highlights the importance of guilt and shame in shaping responsible behavior. In line with this, Schön and Daseking (2025) found that adolescents who often feel guilt and shame are less likely to repeat wrong actions. These findings support the present interpretation that reflecting on past dishonest behavior strengthens moral awareness and encourages more responsible choices as shown through Participant 14 lived experience.

Sir, ang dili jud nako malimtan nga gibuhay nako Sir nga nakonsensiya jud ko pag ayo katong nabagsak ko, first time baya nako mabagsak Sir, tungod kay nagtoon ko ug binugoy, wala nako nag himo ug project kung mag himo basta nalang makapasa, dili na gane kaayo ko mo oral, na konseniya ko ato sir kay gipatawag man to si mama unya paghuman ato ug istorya nila sa akong adviser,

nalooy ko ni mama kay nakita nako siya pagawas na sa gate kanang nagool, na tiwasan pa jud nimo Sir katong didto ta sa ila Maam Haidy nga boarding house nga imo pod ko gitambagan, naulaw ko ato ug samot, nakonsensiya ko nga si mama niundang ug adto sa uma kay nag bantay ug bata nila Maam para naa me pang baon unya ang ending kay nabagsak rako, wala man jud mag expect si mama nga mabagsak ko kay kabalo siya nga kabalo ko, pero ako manang gibaliwala, wala lagi koy boot Sir, pero karon Sir maningkamot naman ko mobawi ko kay lisod Sir nga nag enjoy enjoy rako unya akong mama ug papa grabeg panarbaho.

Sir, what I cannot forget and truly regret was when I failed a subject for the first time. It happened because I was not serious about my studies I did not complete my projects properly and only submitted work just to pass, and I rarely recited in class. I felt guilty when my mother was called to school, and I felt sad seeing her walk out of the gate looking disappointed. I realized that my mother stopped working in the farm to earn money for my allowance, yet I still failed. Now, I am trying my best to improve because I know it is not right for me to enjoy myself while my parents work so hard.

This statement shows deep regret and awareness of personal responsibility after experiencing failure. The student recognized how irresponsible actions affected not only academic performance but also the sacrifices of a parent. This realization influenced personal growth, leading to a stronger commitment to improve and act more responsibly.

Research on the moral values of adolescent students highlights the importance of developing moral awareness. In this regard, Bombacha (2025) found that adolescents who cultivate moral consciousness are more likely to understand the impact of their actions and take responsibility for them. This supports the participant's realization that irresponsible behavior affected both academic performance and a parent's sacrifices, showing how learning responsibility encourages better behavior and personal growth.

Theme 3: Values-Guided Moral Decisions

Values-guided moral decisions describe how students

use moral reasoning to guide their choices in difficult situations. It reflects their ability to think carefully before acting, choose what is right over what is easy, and correct themselves when they recognize mistakes. Through this process, their personal values shape their decisions and strengthen their commitment to act according to their principles in everyday life.

Studies on adolescent moral development emphasize that values function as internal standards that guide behavior. According to Bebeau and Thoma (2021), adolescents who develop strong moral reasoning are more capable of making principled decisions even in challenging situations. Their findings further suggest that reflecting on values promotes ethical consistency, which supports the pattern observed in Participant 5 excerpt

Studies on adolescent development show that self-understanding plays an important role in shaping identity and emotions. Harter (2021) explained that adolescence is a period when learners begin to know themselves better through reflection on their feelings and experiences. This supports the experience shared by Participant 2, where students demonstrated increased awareness of their emotions, self-worth, and personal direction.

“Na realize nako nga dili diay ko permi ipa-ubos akong self , dapat confident ko sa akong kaugalingon.” (P2)

“I realized that I should not always put myself down; I need to be confident in myself.”

The reflection showed a clearer understanding of self. As the student looked back on personal experiences, recognition of personal worth slowly replaced self-doubt. This awareness helped build confidence and allowed the learner to view oneself more positively in daily situations.

Through reflection, students often gain deeper understanding of who they are. In the same way, Marsh and Martin (2021) noted that reflective thinking supports the development of a healthier self-view. This helps explain why the learner showed improved confidence and emotional balance, which corresponds with Participant 1 statement.

“Na realize nako nga dili diay maayo magpadala pirmi sa akong gibati.” (P1)

“I realized that it is not good to always be carried away by my emotions.”

This response highlights growing emotional awareness. The learner recognized how strong emotions influenced behavior and decision-making. Through reflection, the student became more conscious of emotional reactions, supporting better self-control and wiser personal choices.

Gross (2021) emphasized that emotional awareness is a key component of emotion regulation among adolescents. The study noted that recognizing emotions before acting enables learners to manage reactions effectively, which aligns with Participant 15 realization about not being controlled by emotions.

“Giingnan nako akong kaugalingon nga laban lang para naay pulos akong kinabuhi.” (P15)

“I told myself to keep fighting so that my life would have meaning.”

Personal reflection served as a source of motivation for the learner. Encouraging oneself helped the student confront emotional struggles and maintain hope. This mindset strengthened resilience and reinforced a sense of personal purpose, supporting persistence despite difficulties.

Research on adolescent motivation and meaning-making supports this process. Benabou and Tirole (2022) explained that personal beliefs, self-motivation, and perceived purpose contribute to resilience and perseverance. This helps explain the learner’s determination to continue striving in life.

Insights drawn from this theme show that the Makatao values helped Grade 10 students develop deeper understanding of themselves. Their responses revealed greater awareness of emotions, personal strengths, and weaknesses as influenced by reflection on human dignity and self-worth. These experiences supported confidence, emotional balance, and positive changes in their personal life.

Theme 2: Conscience-Driven Reflection

Conscience reflects students’ awareness of right and wrong as shaped by personal experiences. Their accounts show how feelings of guilt, regret, and reflection guided their behavior. Through these moments, students became more mindful of the consequences of their actions. This awareness helped them develop responsibility and moral sensitivity in their personal lives.

Studies on adolescent moral development emphasize that conscience becomes more active when learners emotionally process their mistakes. Krettenauer (2021) explained that moral emotions such as guilt and regret help adolescents evaluate their behavior and internalize moral standards. Reflecting on wrongdoing, according to the study, strengthens responsibility and ethical awareness, as shown through Participant 6 lived experience.

“Bug-at kaayo sa akong dughan kay nakasala ko ug dili nako malimtan.”

“It was very heavy in my heart because I did something wrong and I could not forget it.”

The response reflects intense emotional discomfort following wrongdoing. The heaviness described by the learner suggests inner conflict and moral distress. This experience indicates that conscience remained active, prompting continuous reflection on personal actions and reinforcing awareness of moral responsibility.

Tracy and Robins (2021) explained that guilt creates emotional tension that motivates individuals to examine their behavior and recognize moral failure. Their findings help clarify why the learner continued to experience emotional heaviness after committing a wrong act, which corresponds with Participant 9 statement.

“Balik-balik gyud siya sa akong huna-huna kay naka pasakit ko.”

“It kept returning to my mind because I hurt someone.”

The learner's response reveals lingering moral uneasiness after causing harm to another person. The repeated return of the incident in the learner's thoughts suggests difficulty in attaining inner peace. This persistent reflection indicates an active conscience that heightened awareness of the emotional impact of one's actions on others.

Moral understanding often develops as adolescents reflect on the impact of their actions. Through this process, they become more aware of how their behavior affects others. In line with this, Hoffmann (2022) emphasized that recalling harmful actions strengthens sensitivity to others' feelings, which explains the learner's continued reflection after causing harm, as clarified by Participant 14 statement.

"Naka realize ko nga dapat mangayo ko ug pasaylo."

"I realized that I needed to ask for forgiveness."

The response reflects moral growth and accountability. Recognizing the need to ask for forgiveness shows acceptance of wrongdoing and willingness to correct behaviour. This realization demonstrates that conscience guided the learner toward moral repair and emotional resolution.

Moral growth among adolescents is often reflected in how they respond to their mistakes. Frick and Gläser-Zikuda (2023) explained that acknowledging mistakes and seeking forgiveness represent higher levels of moral responsibility among adolescents. Their study emphasized that corrective actions help restore inner balance and strengthen ethical development, which supports the learner's decision to apologize.

Results from this theme reveal that Makatao values influenced the personal life of Grade 10 students by strengthening their sense of conscience. Their responses indicated that feelings of guilt and reflection helped them recognize mistakes and understand the impact of their actions. These experiences encouraged responsibility, moral awareness, and efforts to correct wrongdoing in daily life.

Theme 3: Values-Guided Life Choices

Values-guided life choices reflect students' ability to apply moral principles in real-life situations. Their experiences show that decisions were anchored on what they believed to be morally right rather than what was easiest or most convenient. Through reflection, students demonstrated courage, self-respect, and ethical reasoning. This process influenced their behaviour and guided their actions in daily life.

In this regard, Avilés-Reyes et al. (2023) emphasized that adolescents who apply moral judgment in decision-making are more capable of choosing what is morally right rather than what is easiest or most convenient. This aligns with the participant's realization that personal values guide choices, especially when correcting mistakes and committing to responsible behavior in everyday life. Their findings indicate that values-based reflection strengthens ethical consistency, which supports the pattern observed in Participant 6's excerpt.

Katong time nga ga panundog ko sa akong seatmate unya lipay pako ato sa pinaka una pero na realize nako nga dili to maayo kay dapat wala ko ato nanundog ug mao to nag long quiz na pod me ato, niingon ko sa akong self nga kung unsa ra jud akong makaya kay na realize nako grabe nila ug toon tapos ako nag pasayon ra, na guilty na jud ko , isa pa na realize pod nako nga ako raman gihapon ang looy kay ako ra gihapon ang walay natun-an aky para sa akoa every tao deserve man magtarong ug mag sipag kay dili sa tanang panahon msakasundog ka sa imong katapad ug dili sa tanang panahon nga gasalig raka sa imong pamilya o mga tao nga nagpalibot sa imoha maong deserve mag bag - o sa mga tao nga nakasala. Maong karon gapaningkamot na jud ko dili pareha sa una nga ceg panundog. There was a time when I copied from my seatmate during a quiz, and at first I felt happy about it. However, I later realized that what I did was wrong and that I should not have copied. When we had another long quiz, I told myself that I would only rely on what I truly knew because I realized that my classmates studied hard while I was just taking shortcuts. I felt very guilty, and I also understood that I was the one who would suffer in the end because I was not learning anything. For me, everyone deserves to work hard and do their best because you cannot always copy from others or depend on your family and the people around you. That is why I believe people who make mistakes should change, and now I am trying my best not to repeat what I used to do.

This reflection shows that the learner developed moral awareness after recognizing that copying was dishonest and unfair to both self and others. The feeling of guilt indicates the presence of conscience, which led the student to evaluate the consequences of relying on shortcuts instead of personal effort. The experience demonstrates personal growth, as the students chose to change their behaviour, value hard work, and take responsibility for their own learning.

Experiencing moral challenges plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' sense of right and wrong. In this context, Mekrisuh (2025) emphasized that adolescents who face moral challenges develop conscience and moral awareness that guide their evaluation of what is right and wrong. This is evident in the present findings, where copying was recognized as dishonest and feelings of guilt prompted reflection on the value of personal effort. The findings suggest that moral awareness supports personal growth by encouraging responsibility and positive behavioral change, which is also observed in the statement of Participant 4.

Kung katung gipa pili ko saakung parents sa duha sa education ba o maminyo nalang kay nag uyab-uyab naman ko ato pero para nako mas importante ang education so gipili nako kung unsay saktong kung unsay maayo nako naminaw ko sa akung parents bisag kabalo ko nga masakitan ko, bisag isa sa kanila naa koy e let go pero mas gipili gyud nako ang education kay diko ganahan nga mag basol ko sa ulahi ug diko ganahan ma dissapoint ang akung parents disab ko ganahan nga wa koy mahimo para sa akung future nga wakoy ma sukli sa ilaha, sa ilahang gipang hatag nako. There was a time when my parents asked me to choose between continuing my education or getting married because I was already in a relationship. For me, education was more important, so I chose what was right and what would be best for my future. I listened to my parents even though I knew it would hurt to let go of someone who was already part of my life. I chose education because I did not want to regret my decision in the future, and I did not want to disappoint my parents. I also did not want to end up with nothing to offer for my future and no way to repay my parents for everything they have given me.

This reflection shows that the learner carefully thought about the situation before making a decision, demonstrating moral reasoning. The choice to prioritize

education was clearly guided by values such as respect for parents, responsibility, and gratitude. This indicates that the learner's decision was not based on emotion alone but was shaped by deeply held values and a desire for a better future.

Moral awareness helps students make better decisions and shape their future. Building on this idea, Masudi (2024) explained that students who develop moral awareness are more likely to make right choices based on their values. This can be seen in the learner's reflection, where respect for parents, responsibility, and gratitude guided the decision to continue studying and work toward a better future, as articulated by Participant 7.

Usa ka time ato, nakita nako nga gibully ang akong classmate si Viallaine Sir bha tungod sa iyang hitsura, daghan baya kaaayo siyag bugas Sir unya dagkoay pa jud, Ang uban nakong barkada miingon nga ayaw nalang apil kay dili man nato problema. Tinuod, mas sayon unta nga magpakahilom lang aron dili ko maapil. Pero sa sulod nako, kabalo ko nga sayop ang magtanaw lang ko ug maghilom hilom. Mao nga akong giingnan ang bully nga undang na, ug akong gi-comfort si Via. Sa sinugdanan, nahadlok ko, pero nagpasalamat rapod ko ato Sir kay si Via nagka amigo mi ato, nafeel nako , nakaingon ko nga kaya man deay nako no may ra jud ug tungod ato nga paghitabo mas ni level up akong paglantaw sa akong kaugalingon mao nay gi ingon Sir ba nga , "Be a Buddy, not a Bully." There was a time when I saw my classmate, Viallaine, being bullied because of her appearance. She had severe acne, and some of my friends told me not to get involved because it was not our problem. It would have been easier to stay silent so I would not be dragged into the situation. However, deep inside, I knew it was wrong to just watch and stay quiet. So I told the bully to stop and comforted Viallaine instead. At first, I was afraid, but later I felt thankful because we became friends. I realized that I was capable of standing up for someone, and that experience improved how I saw myself. That is what you mean, Sir, "Be a Buddy, not a Bully."

The excerpt describes a situation where the learner had to choose between keeping quiet or standing up against bullying. Although there was fear and pressure from friends, the student listened to their conscience and decided to do what was right. That choice not only helped a classmate but also gave the learner a stronger sense of confidence in doing what is right.

This experience is supported by existing research, particularly studies that examine how moral values influence adolescents' responses to bullying. Jin et al. (2024) explained that values like conscience and empathy influence adolescents to defend victims of bullying, even when they feel afraid or pressured by peers. This supports the learner's reflection, where listening to conscience led to standing up against bullying and helping a classmate. Their findings show that strong moral values help adolescents act bravely and choose to do what is right even in difficult situations.

Theme 4: Responsible Life Choices

Responsible life choices are shown when learners take ownership of their actions and think carefully about their responsibilities. This can be seen in how they balance personal freedom with family duties and give importance to their education and goals. Such decisions reflect a growing sense of direction and commitment in managing their own lives.

Research on adolescent development supports this perspective. Pathak (2024) explained that when young people are guided by strong values, they are more likely to think carefully before making decisions and take responsibility for their actions. This affirms the students' view that makatao values directly influence how they handle responsibilities, relationships, and personal goals in their daily lives, which aligns with the response of Participant 9.

Kadtung time nga nag sukol sukol ko sa ako ang Mama bisag kabalo ko nga mali ko nag sukol sukol gihapon ko. akoa siyang gi tubag tubag unya nasakitan ko kay kabalo ko nga nasakitan to si Mama Sa akoa kay nag sukol sukol ko sa iyaha, pero gibasulan to nako ug nag sorry ko sa kong mama kay wala ko nag huna huna sa ako ang mali kay gusto nako nga tama ko pirme, pero, mali gihapon ko kay nag sukol man ko unya na realize nako nga dapat timbang timbangun nimo imuhang batasan ug dapat mag huna huna Sa adisir mag buhat ug mali, kay mag basol ra gihapon ko sa ulahi. Mao nang karon controlado na nako akong kaugalingon labi na ning akong pagtubag tubag ni mama kay unsaon nalang ug atakehon

akong mama unsaon nalang wala nakoy Mama.

There was a time when I talked back to my mother even though I knew I was wrong. I answered her disrespectfully, and later I felt hurt because I knew I had hurt her feelings. I regretted what I did and apologized to her because I realized that I did not think about my mistake, I only wanted to prove that I was right. However, I was still wrong because I talked back to her. I realized that I need to control my behavior and think first before doing something wrong, because I would only regret it later. That is why I now try to control myself, especially when responding to my mother, because I cannot imagine what would happen if something bad happened to her and I no longer had a mother.

The excerpt highlights the learner's awareness of the consequences of speaking disrespectfully and the emotional impact it caused. Feelings of regret led to reflection on the importance of self-control and careful thinking before responding. The experience demonstrates growth in maturity, shown through a stronger commitment to respectful behavior and thoughtful actions.

Related research further explains this development. Watson et al. (2023) noted that when adolescents accept responsibility for their actions, they become better at managing their emotions and behavior. This supports the reflection, as acknowledging the mistake and offering an apology demonstrate accountability and more careful decision-making in everyday situations, which is strongly reflected in Participant 8 response.

Sa una Sir perte jud ko kalaagan pero na toy time nga gihagad ko sa akong amigo nga molaag me, akong nahuna huna an unya lakaw ko akong mabiyaan ang akong manghud and wala syay uban tas maka suk an pud ko ni Mama maong gipili nako nga dili mo lakaw para naay kauban akong manghud kay kung maunsa siya maka suk an sab ko. Pag abot sa balay ni hisgot akong mgahud nila Mama ug Papa nga wala daw ko nilaag bisan unsaon ug hagad sa akong mga amigo mao tong gidool ko sa akong Papa ug gihapowap akong buhok ug bukton. ug tungod bitaw ato Sir nalipay ko Sir kay

first time to gibuhath ni Papa sa akoo wala man siyay giingon pero na feel nako nga nalipay siya sa kong gibuhath. Mao nang mas gihatagad nako nag value Sir labi nang ila kong tagaan ug task ako jud ginabuhath kay kabalo ko malipay sila Mama ug Papa ug tungod pod ana Sir mas naa mi bonding akong manghud dili pareha sa una.

Before, Sir, I used to go out a lot. There was a time when my friend invited me to hang out, but I thought about how I would leave my younger sibling alone with no one to stay with, and I might also get scolded by my mother. So I decided not to go out and stayed home instead, so my sibling would have someone to be with, because if something happened, I would also be blamed. When I got home, my sibling told our parents that I did not go out even though my friends kept inviting me. My father then approached me and gently patted my hair and arm. Because of that, I felt very happy; it was the first time my father had done that to me. He did not say anything, but I felt that he was proud of what I did. Since then, I have given more importance to my responsibilities, especially when my parents assign me tasks, I make sure to do them because I know it makes them happy. Because of that experience, my younger sibling and I also became closer compared to before.

This reflection shows that the learner chose responsibility over personal enjoyment by prioritizing family over peer invitation. The decision reflects values such as responsibility, obedience, and care for younger siblings. The positive response from the father strengthened the learner's commitment to fulfilling responsibilities and deepened family relationships.

The decision reflects values such as responsibility, obedience, and care for younger siblings. This aligns with Ruiz and Yabut (2024), who explained that adolescents' well-being is strengthened when they exercise autonomy in

making responsible choices and develop a stronger sense of identity through fulfilling meaningful roles within the family, which explains in Participant 12 experience.

Naka experience ko Sir nga nag-away mi ni Joel kay kato laging dili ko mooban sa iyaha mangrang rang, wala daw koy klaro kasabot pero ako man siyang ge explainan nga dili ko mangrang rang kay dili ko gusto maka absent mao to nasuko siya sa akoo, pero pagkahapon ato, nangayo napod kog sorry nga wala ko niuban sa iyaha, iya man pod nasabtan akong desisyon Sir. Tungod ato nga experience nako na relaize nako bha nga free ta mopili sa atong buhaton pero mas pilion nato ang mga butang nga naay pulos. Na realize pod nako nga dapat barogan jud nimo imong desisyon basta tama lang jud ka.

There was a time when Joel and I had a misunderstanding because I refused to join him in skipping class. He thought I was being unreasonable, but I told him I did not want to skip because I did not want to be absent. At first, he was upset, but later that day I apologized for not going with him, and he understood my choice. From that experience, I learned that we are free to choose what we do, but we should choose what is right and helpful for us. I also realized that we need to stand by our decisions if we know they are right.

This reflection shows that the learner chose to do the right thing despite peer pressure. The decision to attend class instead of skipping demonstrates responsibility and firmness in standing by what is right. The experience reflects personal growth, as actions were guided by values and sound judgment.

Building on this personal experience, Fadare et al. (2023) explained that adolescents who resist peer group pressure are more likely to remain responsible and consistent in their academic commitments. This supports the learner's view that values such as responsibility and sound judgment influence personal life by strengthening decision-making and encouraging responsible choices

Theme 5: Strengthened Interpersonal Relationships

Strengthened interpersonal relationships reflect the positive growth of connections grounded in respect, empathy, and mutual understanding. These relationships are characterized by trust, active listening, and recognition of one's

own worth and the dignity of others, leading to deeper and more meaningful bonds. Through these values, interactions become more supportive and constructive in both personal and social contexts.

Research on adolescent social development further highlights the importance of these relational values. In support of this, Banks and Smyth (2021) emphasized that respect and positive relationships enhance student engagement and social development. Their findings show that when students feel valued, trust and empathy increase, resulting in healthier and more supportive connections, which corresponds with Participant 5 statement.

Naa jud koy nindot nga experience ane Sir, Kadlong time nga ge respeto ko, na feel jud nako nga worth it ko ato nga time kay ang story ane kay akoy nag lead sa group. Dugay naman ko naga leader pero kato jud nga time makaingon jud ko nga ge respeto ko sa akong mga member kay kadto man jud naay mga activity then nag instruct ko sa ilaha unsay mga buhaton or unsa ang mga gamiton ana nga activity then kadto naminaw jud sila sa akoa like focus jud sila nako ug nakig cooperate sila sa akoa kay sa mga niaging activity gahi kaayo sila ug ulo like makaingon kag kalami mo surrender sa inyo oie, pero padayon gihapon japon ko hangtod nga na realize nila nga worth it tanan pod namo kahago. ug tungod ani nga experience mas gi value nako ug maayo ang respeto bisan kinsa paka.

I had a meaningful experience, Sir. There was a time when I truly felt respected, and it made me feel that I was worth something. The story is that I was the leader of our group. I have been a leader for a long time, but that time was different because I could really say that my members respected me. We had an activity, and I was giving instructions about what to do and what materials to use. They really listened to me, they were focused and cooperated well. In our previous activities, they were very hard-headed,

and there were moments when I felt like giving up on them. But I continued leading and did not surrender. Eventually, they realized that all our hard work was worth it. Because of this experience, I learned to value respect more deeply, no matter who the person is.

The experience shows that being respected by group members helped build confidence and a stronger sense of self-worth. It also improved relationships within the group, as members began to listen, cooperate, and work together more effectively. Through this shared effort and mutual respect, stronger and more positive interpersonal relationships were formed

In support of this observation, Achasa and Luzano (2023) found that students who consistently practiced good manners and values, such as courtesy, respect, and cooperation, developed more positive interpersonal relationships. Their study revealed that these values foster group harmony, mutual support, and stronger peer connections, ultimately enhancing students' confidence and self-worth. This reinforces the idea that respect and cooperation are essential in building stronger and more positive relationships among students, which explains in Participant 11 experience.

Na feel jud nako nga naminaw sila sa akong mga pagbati, mga explanation nako bisan ug balik balik grabe sila makapaminaw sa akoa, labi natong pag share nako nga gusto nako maghikog, didto ko naka feel Sir nga naa man deay koy mga classmate nga andam sa akoa maminaw. Kabalo ka ato Sir tungod ato nga experience dako kaayog impact sa akoa nga mas nagtarong ko sa akong kinabuhi kay na feel nako nga wala ko nag inusara, ug tungod ato nga experience mas ako na gi value ang feeling sa matag usa. ug mas open na pod ko sa akong family karon Sir. I truly felt that they were listening to my feelings and explanations, even when I repeated myself. Especially when I shared that I had thoughts of ending my life, I realized that I had classmates who were willing to listen to me. Because of that experience, it had a great impact on me, I became more serious about my life because I felt that I was not alone, I learned to value the feelings of others more, and I became more open with my family.

This reflection shows that feeling genuinely listened to, especially during a vulnerable moment, reduced isolation and strengthened a sense of belonging. The experience led to positive personal growth, including greater responsibility for life, deeper empathy for others, and improved openness within the family.

In line with this experience, Diez et al. (2025) found

that when students practiced respect, empathy, and community, they felt less isolated and developed a stronger sense of belonging. These values also increased responsibility, empathy, and openness with family and peers. The findings highlight that respectful listening and shared values strengthen relationships and support personal growth, supporting the overall pattern observed in Participant 8 viewpoint.

Katong time nga naa ko sa skwelahan nakita nila nga sad ko nakita sa akong mga barkada and ila kung gi comfort ug grabe nakong hilak ato kay nalipay ko gyud kaayo ko and na feel gyud nako nga importante ko that time and nakat unan nako nga mas importante gyud ang magrespect para daghan pud mag respeto sa imo kay para sa ako nindot gyud kaayu mag respeto kay nindot pud sa feeling Ang respetohon ug paminawon ka. mao nang karon isa pod ko nga naga tambag ug naga comfort pod sa uban labi nas akong mga barkada.

At that time, when I was at school, my friends noticed that I was sad and they comforted me. I cried a lot because I felt very happy and deeply touched, and in that moment, I truly felt that I was important. I learned that giving respect is very important because when you respect others, they will also respect you. For me, it feels good to show respect, and it also feels good to be respected and listened to. That is why now, I also give advice and comfort to others, especially my friends.

This reflection shows that being comforted by friends strengthened the student's sense of worth and belonging. Experiencing respect and emotional support helped the student realize the value of mutual respect in relationships. As a result, the student developed empathy and became more willing to offer advice and comfort to others.

Consistent with this finding, Vargas-Madriz and Konishi (2021) found that emotional support and positive peer relationships strengthen students' sense of belonging and connectedness in school. When students feel supported and valued by their peers, they are more likely to feel

accepted and engaged, which contributes to healthier personal and social development. These findings highlight that peer support plays a vital role in fostering self-worth, belongingness, and positive interpersonal relationships among students.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Makatao values play a significant role in shaping the personal and moral lives of Grade 10 students. Through lived experiences and reflections, students demonstrated how these values influenced their self-awareness, moral judgment, decision-making, relationships, and sense of responsibility.

First, personal self-development emerged as students became more aware of their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and life goals. Reflection helped them develop resilience, self-worth, determination, and motivation to persevere in their education despite personal and family challenges.

Second, conscience-driven moral growth was evident as students expressed guilt, regret, and remorse over past mistakes. These moral emotions guided them toward responsibility, accountability, forgiveness, and efforts to correct their behavior, indicating a strengthened sense of right and wrong.

Third, values-guided moral decisions showed that students increasingly relied on internalized values when making difficult choices. They demonstrated moral reasoning by choosing what is right over what is easy, resisting peer pressure, standing against bullying, and prioritizing education and integrity.

Fourth, responsible life choices reflected students' growing maturity in managing their actions, responsibilities, and relationships. Decisions were guided by respect for parents, care for family members, and commitment to personal goals, highlighting the role of Makatao values in responsible behavior.

Finally, strengthened interpersonal

relationships were developed through respect, empathy, and emotional support. Feeling listened to, valued, and understood enhanced students' confidence, sense of belonging, and willingness to extend care and respect to others.

Overall, the findings affirm that Makatao values contribute meaningfully to holistic student development, fostering moral awareness, emotional growth, responsible decision-making, and positive relationships. These values serve as a strong foundation for shaping students into compassionate, responsible, and value-driven individuals in both personal and social contexts. Students may be encouraged to practice regular self-reflection and apply Makatao values in their daily interactions to strengthen self-awareness, responsibility, and respect for others. Teachers may integrate Makatao values into lessons and classroom activities to support students' moral development and emotional growth. School leaders may promote a school culture that values dignity, empathy, and accountability through supportive programs and policies. Future researchers may further examine Makatao values using varied research designs, contexts, and populations to deepen understanding of their impact on students' personal and moral development.

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