

# Character strengths and virtues in Chinese moral education

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**Character Strengths and Virtues in Chinese Moral Education:  
Evidence from ‘the Code’ and from Primary and Secondary Schools**

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## **Character Strengths and Virtues in Chinese Moral Education: Evidence from ‘the Code’ and from Primary and Secondary Schools**

**Abstract:** This study bridges understandings of character strengths, based on McGrath and Walker’s four-factor analysis of VIA-Youth, and a key text in current Chinese moral education: The Code for Primary and Secondary Schools. We utilise two research methods, textual analysis and survey questionnaires, to garner data theoretically and empirically. Our research has three aims. First, through analysing ‘the Code’ from a VIA-Youth perspective, we identify 30 implicit character strengths, of which 11 are nominally in common with VIA-Youth. Second, we fit all the 30 strengths into the four-factor model through textual analysis. Third, we test the model by factor-analysing student self-report surveys based on the Code. Our analysis reveals that one of the six extracted factors matches the adaptation of the four-factor model while the remaining five present a mix of virtue categories. Moreover, the nine clusters that constitute the Code present a high resemblance with the structuration of the components’ matrix.

**Keywords:** Character strengths and virtues; VIA-Youth; McGrath and Walker’s four-factor model; Chinese moral education; the Chinese-policy ‘Code’

### **Introduction**

We are witnessing a retrieval of character-and-virtue research in psychology (McGrath, 2015; 2019; Ng & Tay, 2020; Fowers, Carroll, Leonhardt, & Cokelet, 2020; McGrath & Brown, 2020; Wright, Warren, & Snow, 2021). This retrieval, often referred to as a new ‘science of virtue’ (Fowers et al., 2020; McGrath & Brown, 2020), has been spurred on by the advent of positive psychology in general and in particular its

research into universal character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; McGrath, 2015; 2019). Defying historic anti-virtue catechisms in psychology (Allport, 1937; Kohlberg, 1981), positive psychologists have conducted extensive research into the role of good character in the flourishing life (Seligman, 2011). Inspired in part by historical forms of virtue ethics (esp. Aristotle, 1985) and their contemporary educational incarnation as character education (Kristjánsson, 2015), in part by classroom applications of positive psychology itself *qua* ‘positive education’ (Seligman et al., 2009), the new ‘science of virtue’ has significant moral developmental and educational ramifications.

The concept of character strengths is perceived as central to character education in the Western education literature. According to the VIA Institute on Character (2020), character strengths can be defined as ‘the positive parts of your personality that impact how you think, feel and behave’. In other words, ‘character strengths are personal characteristics that have an admirable social quality, and are often morally valued’ (McGrath & Walker, 2016, p. 401). Derived from textual analysis of various historic and contemporary virtue writings and moral codes, positive psychologists originally identified 24 character strengths, ordered under six umbrella virtues and seen as practical applications of those virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The strengths are typically measured through the VIA-Adult self-report instrument. The VIA-Youth instrument, developed by Park and Peterson (2006), is a variation of the VIA measure and more relevant to character development among young people. It stands out by striving to provide an objectively derived, comprehensive perspective on what constitutes good character, with special attention given to youth (McGrath, 2016).

To turn to the present research context, whilst ‘character strength’ is not a common term within the field of Chinese moral education, there is growing awareness

of and advocacy for blending psychological elements into moral education in schools. Character education has even been suggested as the next way forward for Chinese moral education (Ding, 2005). Yet discussions of character strengths remain largely confined to their psychometric characteristics (e.g. Duan et al., 2014; Meng & Guan, 2009), with those strengths often being perceived as a separate category from the socio-political or ethical basis of moral education. Meanwhile, there is emerging independent interest in exploring character education, moral education and civic education (e.g. Wang, Wang, & Gao, 2017), which potentially synthesises those three strands. It must not be forgotten here that a form of ‘virtue-rooted character education’ based on Confucian virtue ethics has had a long-standing influence over generations and is central to Chinese culture (De Mente, 2009). Confucian virtue ethics is frequently compared with or linked to Aristotelian virtue ethics (Yu, 2007), as well as character education (Slote, 2016), and is seen as a re-emerging trend in China.

Interest in positive psychology in China and recent developments towards Confucian or modern forms of character education notwithstanding, it must be acknowledged that the concept of character strengths does not yet have the pride of place in Chinese educational policies and practices that we see in some Western countries. However, this does not mean that official Chinese moral education is somehow antithetical to the cultivation of good character. Quite the contrary, a series of policy requirements for cultivating good character and virtues among students exist within the moral-education goals set by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (hereafter: MOEPRC), and we draw on those in what follows.

The VIA-strengths have been scientifically identified a set of as universal and global character qualities through large-scale studies over the years (e.g. Peterson & Seligman, 2004; McGrath, 2015). However, because of the common division of

psychological and moral discourses in Chinese moral education, alluded to above, one cannot expect to find the term ‘character strengths’ (in Chinese ‘品格优势’) referred to explicitly in official documents on moral education. We argue below that such character strengths are nonetheless implicit in one of the key Chinese moral-education policy documents, namely, the Code for Primary and Secondary School Students (hereafter: ‘the Code’) (MOEPRC, 2015).

The present study aims to approach the Code from a character-and-virtue perspective to reveal some of its ‘hidden’ character strengths, which have not previously been explored theoretically or empirically. Our study is guided by three main research questions: (1) What are the character strengths implicit in the Code? (2) What are the similarities and differences of those character strengths to those identified in VIA-Youth, and how would they fit theoretically into McGrath and Walker’s (2016) taxonomy of four main categories of VIA-Youth strengths? Finally, (3) if we factor-analyse self-reports based on the Code, do the extracted factors bear any resemblance to McGrath and Walker’s four-factor model?

Although models of character strengths, such as McGrath and Walker’s, carry independent academic interest of their own and may motivate research for purely theoretical reasons, our aim is more practical. Given that an emerging research tide seems to be turning in Chinese moral education to characterological considerations, inspired by the recent buzz surrounding character education in the West (e.g. Jubilee Centre, 2017), we are interested in the resources already implicit in moral-educational practices and policies in China. We believe those can potentially be drawn upon and extended – rather than simply replicating and reproducing Western ideas and severing the ties to time-honoured local educational traditions.

## Literature Review: The Four-Factor Model and the Chinese Code

The introduction of the VIA-classification of strengths and virtues by Peterson and Seligman (2004) is regarded as one of the most important contributions to the development of a structural model of character. As previously mentioned, the strengths are ordered under six overarching virtues, which are perceived as ‘general principles of socially or morally desirable functioning as demonstrated by their common mention in works of moral philosophy and religion’, and shown empirically to be cross-culturally applicable (McGrath & Walker, 2016; cf. McGrath, 2015). Those six virtues are: Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Influenced by Peterson and Seligman (2004), a number of attempts have been made to confirm this theoretical (and originally textually derived) structure empirically. The problem is that a varied number of factors have been elicited but none of those studies has identified a six-factor structure. For example, we have been presented with a five-factor model (McGrath, 2014; Ruch et al., 2010; Singh & Choubisa, 2010), a four-factor model (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010), a three-factor model (McGrath, 2015; Khumalo et al., 2008), or a two-factor model (Park & Peterson, 2010), and interestingly, Macdonald, Bore, and Munro (2008) identified both a one-factor and a four-factor model based on the 24 character strengths. It is worth noting that all of these sample cohorts comprised adults.

Among those researchers, McGrath stands out as the one who has published most extensively in this area (e.g. 2015). Based on over a million self-reports, he has identified a three-factor virtue model, featuring Caring (renamed as Other-Directed Virtue), Inquisitiveness and Self-Control in the adult data, but when analysing the VIA Youth data, his findings revealed a fourth factor, termed Vitality (McGrath & Walker, 2016), as we explain in more detail presently.

The present study utilises the four-factor model (McGrath & Walker, 2016) as a theoretical framework for three reasons. First, their study is the largest to date examining the factor structure of the VIA-classification in teens (aged 10-17), based on the VIA-Youth measure (N = 23,850), and the first to evaluate measurement invariance and use multiple measurement methods. Second, their model is built upon McGrath's (2015) extensive VIA-research on character strengths in 75 nations, and the four-factor model is consistent with the previous three-virtue model, in general, with the addition of one extra virtue, Vitality. Third, this model can be viewed as an update and extension of the VIA-related work done by experts and authorities in the field of positive psychological character development, such as Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2006). As Lapsley and Narvaez (2006) highlight, the one key factor that has hindered efforts to develop a comprehensive model of character development in youth is the lack of a coherent theory of psycho-moral development – leading to multiple, incompatible interpretations about the key elements and structure of character. McGrath's work imposes rigorous order on the theoretical chaos in this research area.

The four-factor model (McGrath & Walker, 2016) that we utilise in the present study contains four factors or virtue groups: Inquisitiveness, Self-Control, Vitality, and Other-Directed Virtue. Inquisitiveness refers to intellectual explorations; Self-Control is associated with behavioural control; interpersonal or other-directed issues called Other-Directed are about caring for others; and in addition, Vitality refers to a virtue encompassing a general sense of (often emotionally laden) engagement in the world. It functions as a developmentally conditioned outgrowth (or, perhaps better put, a developmental precursor) of the virtue of other-directed caring. In older cohorts, Vitality and Other-Directedness become integrated into a single umbrella virtue of



Caring (McGrath, 2015). The results of the factor analysis of the 24 strengths in the VIA-Youth sample can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*The Four-Factor Model of VIA Youth (McGrath & Walker, 2016)*

| Virtues         | Character strengths  |
|-----------------|--|
| Vitality        | Zest, hope, humour, leadership, bravery, perspective, social intelligence, spirituality, love, gratitude, teamwork |
| Other-directed  | Forgiveness, kindness, modesty   |
| Self-control    | Prudence, honesty, perseverance, judgement, self-regulation, fairness  |
| Inquisitiveness | Appreciation of beauty, creativity, curiosity, love of learning  |

This four-factor model may create the impression of being less well attuned to standard, historically motivated, typologies of character strengths and virtues than the three-factor model drawn from adult VIA self-reports (McGrath, 2015), with ‘Vitality’ being the odd factor out. A major theoretical advantage of the three-factor model is that it happens to fit neatly with the standard Aristotelian distinction between moral, intellectual, and performative virtues (see e.g. Jubilee Centre, 2017; notably though with the omission of *phronesis* as a meta-virtuous moral integrator,<sup>1</sup> see Kristjánsson, 2013). While the four-factor model seems at first sight to muddy the conceptual waters, that impression may be illusory. Firstly, in terms of historical precedents, the four-factor model bears a striking resemblance to the Platonic taxonomy of four cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage). Indeed, one of those virtues, courage, was seen by the ancient Greeks to reside in the chest and was often referred to by the generic

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<sup>1</sup> McGrath and Brown (2020) suggest that the role Aristotelian character educators ascribe to *phronesis* can be played collectively by three of the 24 VIA character strengths: *prudence* (for the emotional regulative function), *judgment* (for the constitutive function), and *perspective* (for the integrative function).

name *thumos*, which can be felicitously rendered into modern English as ‘Vitality’ (Kristjánsson, 2013).

Secondly, even for those character theorists who prefer to remain wedded to an Aristotelian or neo-Aristotelian system (Kristjánsson, 2015; Fowers et al., 2020), it must be borne in mind that, for Aristotle, all virtues are context-dependent and differ with respect to personal constitution, social standing, and (most importantly, for present purposes) developmental level. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle unambiguously refers to some character traits (*hexeis*) that virtuous adults should ideally possess but do come more easily to young people for reasons of developmental psychology. The young are thus typically *open-minded* and *optimistic*, as they have not yet ‘seen much wickedness’. They *trust* others readily ‘because of not yet having been much deceived’. They are also more *courageous* and *guileless* than the old are, and have more exalted notions, not having yet been ‘worn down by life’ (2007, pp. 149–150). Given the unique developmental level of youth, which Aristotle singles out, with the Vitality-matching traits of courage and guilelessness as two of the main characteristics, there is no reason to think that a four-factor model for the relevant age group is necessarily anti-Aristotelian or, more generally, out of sync with Western theoretical taxonomies of character traits.

### Western Character Education and Chinese Moral Education

Unlike British or US moral education, which has recently incorporated a strong emphasis on the development of personal strengths of character, Chinese moral education has some distinct characteristics that may seem alien to standard (Western) assumptions of character development. First, in China, ‘moral education’ is often being perceived as a very inclusive concept, encompassing ideological-political education and social values/norms as well the cultivation of moral sentiments, with the latter often

being seen as too vague or broad an ideal to grasp (Tan, 2019). Second, unlike Western character education, which has a strong philosophical base such as in neo-Aristotelian character education (Kristjánsson, 2015) and aims for a rapprochement with state-of-the-art theories of psychological development (Fowers et al., 2020), Chinese moral education may appear to be strangely ‘a-theoretical’ to some Western readers. Insofar as an underlying ‘theory’ can be identified, it is largely Marxist social/philosophical theory, rather than moral philosophy or moral psychology, that appears as a distinct underpinning of Chinese moral education. What typically happens in China is that the government periodically publishes policy documents, for example, the Guide to Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (hereafter: ‘the Guide’), issued by the Ministry of Education (MOEPRC, 2017), to provide guidance for enhancing and improving moral education. Those documents have a strong policy base but may be under-specified academically or theoretically. Third, as a consequence, Chinese moral education has a history of ongoing ‘reforms’ via a top-down policy-led approach rather than a bottom-up approach (Huo & Xie, 2020).

Despite China’s unique history and culture, and its fairly ‘unusual’ stance on moral education as it may be perceived by Western readers, there is no doubt that there are common character traits shared by people all over the world (McGrath, 2015): ‘Classic thinkers, like Confucius and Aristotle, have reflected in depth upon the questions central to both of these fields; i.e. what kind of person do we want our children to be and how can we educate them to be that way?’ (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 496). It would be an exaggeration to claim that discourses on moral education in China have been immune from such universal considerations. The above-mentioned differences aside, therefore, we can identify at least three common themes between current discourses on Western character education and Chinese moral education.

First, both Western character education and Chinese moral education are meant to permeate all subjects, wider school activities, and the whole school ethos (Jubilee Centre, 2017) – rather than being confined to a discrete class in the timetable – helping students internalise a common morality that enables them to know the good, appreciate the good, and do the good. Second, both forms emphasise the importance of parent-teacher partnerships, witness the work by Berkowitz (2005) in the USA and Harrison, Dineen, and Moller (2018) in the UK; the same emphasis is found in the Guide (MOEPRC, 2017) for Chinese moral education. Third, both forms foreground the role of moral development for not only individual but also societal flourishing. Neo-Aristotelians in the West are famously concerned with ridding character education of an individualist bias (Kristjánsson, 2015), and moral education in China is very much geared towards building a prosperous nation, bred in both Confucian and Marxist traditions. More controversially, however, we identify a fourth area of overlap. Although character strengths are not formally foregrounded in Chinese moral education – with direct references to Aristotle, positive psychology and even Confucius conspicuously missing – the moral-educational ‘aspirations’ laid out in the Guide and the Code are apparently teeming with implicit references to such strengths, at least if read through a characterological research lens.

### [The Guide, the Code and Chinese Moral Education](#)

Given the importance of governmental edicts and policies for Chinese moral education, it is worth introducing the Guide issued by the MOEPRC in 2017. This is the latest normative document to implement the fundamental task of ‘*lide shuren*’ (in Chinese ‘立德树人’), which might be translated as ‘develop people by cultivating character virtues’, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of moral-education practices and to direct such education in Primary and Secondary Schools in mainland China.

The Guide purports to guide and educate students by implementing the Code, which was revised and reissued by the MOEPRC in 2015. The history of the Code can be traced back to 1981, through several revisions across moral-educational reforms, collocating several generations of Chinese moral experts' wisdom and vision. The Code comprises an encompassing set of ethical injunctions that have been developed over decades and can be viewed as an integrated framework of aspirational rules and character virtues for Chinese moral education.

According to the Guide, the Code is used to comprehensively refine students' behavioural standards as a way of facilitating moral education in Primary and Secondary Schools (MOEPRC, 2017).<sup>2</sup> It is considered comprehensive in that it reflects the ethos of 'five educational aspects': moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and work-related (e.g. to do housework at home, participate in tree planting for the community). Moreover, the Code contains nine item clusters and 35 items/aspirations, which are closely related to students' everyday life contexts, including settings in class, at home, in the wider community, etc. In addition, it includes consideration of others, such as parents, teachers, fellow students, the community, the country, the environment, as well as self-regulation ordinances. Overall, the Code demonstrates multiple components of moral education, such as moral cognition, emotion, behaviour, and traits; and although it does not explicitly posit a set of character strengths and virtues such as in VIA-Youth, it has specific character strengths and virtues embedded within it.

Existing research in character education is commonly conducted in a Western context while Chinese moral education is typically researched from an indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> While aspirations in the Code are often framed in terms of *behavioural* standards, it would be misleading to understand those aspirations simply in terms of instrumentalist behavioural control, and hence antagonistic to the traditional aspirations of character education of cultivating intrinsically valued modes of *being* (as distinct from *doing*). What the Code aims for is as much attitudinal change and character development as it is change towards simply more 'prosocial behaviour'.

perspective (Huo & Xie, 2020). Little attention has been given to exploring academic bridges between the two territories: for example, approaching Chinese moral education as presented by the Code from a character-strengths-and-virtues perspective, or vice versa. We aim to begin to ameliorate this lacuna by implementing the three research aims stated at the end of the Introduction section.

## Research Methods

We utilised mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods to address our research aims. We first translated the Code from Chinese into English, carefully reading and conceptualising each item within the given cultural context; second, we familiarised ourselves with each of the 24 character strengths based on their descriptions from the official VIA website (VIA Institute, 2020). Through back-and-forth comparisons and contrasts, we extracted 30 character strengths from the 35 items/aspirations in the Code, of which 11 (in bold in Table 2) coincided nominally with VIA strengths.<sup>3</sup> Third, after this original mapping exercise, we familiarised ourselves with the four factors that McGrath and Walker (2016) extracted from the VIA-Youth samples: their overall characterisations and the strengths which fall into each one. We then specified the remaining (30 minus 11) strengths from the Code as falling into one of the four categories, depending on semantic similarities with strengths already placed there in McGrath and Walker's model. Three of the four authors did this subsequent mapping exercise independently to guarantee interrater reliability. The first author initially extracted the items following the thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clark, 2006), and then sent it to the second and third authors to review. Fleiss' kappa was run to determine the agreement between the three authors and it showed a high interrater

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<sup>3</sup> In three cases, we found it necessary to categorise an item with the names of two strengths. In eight cases, the same character strength reappeared (in brackets in Table 2), but we only count it once.

agreement  $\kappa=.873$  (95% CI, .869 to .877),  $p < .0005$ . In the few cases where discrepancies emerged, those were discussed until a consensus was reached.

We are aware of the essential contestedness of this mapping exercise (mimicking factor analysis with textual analysis). However, we deemed it a necessary step for the final stage in our research, which was to design a self-report measure based on the Code and factor-analyse the responses from there (see below). Reconceptualising all the aspirations in the Code as character strengths requires certain capacities: 1) Familiarity with the VIA character strengths so as to develop a sharp sense for detecting the character traits implicit in the Code; 2) a good understanding of the Chinese cultural context and the meaning of the Code items, so that the researchers can extract the character traits accurately; and 3) a cross-cultural understanding of moral virtues so as to categorise the character strengths into suitable categories based on the specifications of the four-factor model (McGrath & Walker, 2016).

### The Instrument

The second research method involved the actual design and administration of a survey. We used the Code as a blueprint to design the main section of a self-assessment survey, which contained the 35 items (a copy of the instrument is in Appendix 1). We asked three cohorts of students: low-grade (age 9), middle and senior grade (age 12) from Primary School, and Junior High school grade three students (age 15), referred as Cohorts 1, 2 and 3, to fill in the self-assessment survey based on a five-point Likert scale to self-report on their competence with respect to the 35 aspirations in the Code. We administered the survey among these three cohorts in six schools located in Beijing and obtained 695 valid self-assessment questionnaires. The sample of schools was purposefully selected. All the schools which took part were members of the Beijing Institute of Schools for Moral Education. The selection tried to mimic the Chinese

social composition, representing a balanced mix of urban and sub-urban areas. The questionnaires were first given to the vice-principals in charge of moral education in the six schools selected for the study so they could familiarise themselves with the questionnaire and research objectives. Then, the vice-principals distributed the questionnaire among the teachers in charge of the three cohorts of students. The questionnaires were completed in class voluntarily. Prior to their distribution, a brief introduction was given, stressing that there were no right or wrong answers so respondents could answer according to what they truly believed about themselves. The data were collected at the end of the summer school year 2019. The questionnaire showed a strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ) and face validity, supported by the experience of the team working on its design. Given the scope of the items listed in the questionnaire, covering several strengths and virtues, it can also be argued that it has a reasonable content validity. A table with the results of the survey is in Appendix 2.

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to test the correspondence between the 695 survey responses and our adaptation of the four-factor model (presented in Table 2). The rationale behind this was to group the 35 items of the Code into a smaller number of underlying factors and test if those factors can be categorised according to our adaptation of the McGrath and Walker (2016) model. To carry out the analysis, we used SPSS version 22.0. We used Principal Components as the method of extraction based on the objective of the analysis, to reduce the number of items rather than trying to explain the data (Alavi et al., 2020), and to evaluate if the solution obtained mimicked the adaptation of the McGrath and Walker model. Regarding the rotation method, an orthogonal rotation was used due to its simple and parsimonious solution (Kim & Muller, 1978). The study was conducted in accordance with the university's and school's research ethics.



## Findings

### Categorising the Code with Respect to VIA-Youth

After categorising the Code in the way described above, we found 30 character strengths implicit in the Code (see Table 2 and Footnote 1 above).

**Table 2.**

*Character Aspirations/Strengths Based on the Code for Primary and Secondary School Students (2015)*

| The Code's Item clusters                                    | The Code's Items   | Extracted Character Strengths  | Virtues   |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1.Loving the nation, the party and the people               | A1. Understand the Party history and the national conditions<br>A2. Cherish the honour of the country<br>A3. Love the nation, love the people, love the Communist Party of China | A1.Awareness (national awareness)<br>A2. Loyalty<br>A3.Patriotism  | Vitality<br><br>Vitality<br>Vitality                              |
| 2.Eagerness to learn and willingness to study               | A4. Listen attentively in class<br>A5. Express opinions actively<br>A6. Willing to explore science<br>A7. Form the habit of reading  | A4. <b>Love of learning</b><br>A5. <b>Bravery</b><br>A6. <b>Curiosity</b><br>A7.(Love of learning)           | Inquisitiveness<br>Vitality<br>Inquisitiveness<br>Inquisitiveness |
| 3.Industriousness and dedication                            | A8. Do your own work by yourself<br>A9. Take the initiative to share housework<br>A10. Participate in labour practice<br>A11. Be enthusiastic about voluntary service            | A8. Industriousness<br>A9. Diligence<br>A10. Dedication<br>A11.Service                                       | Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Other-directed<br>Other-directed  |
| 4.Being polite, law-abiding and virtuous                    | A12. Abide by the national law and school discipline<br>A13. Line up consciously and politely<br>A14. Maintain public health and hygiene<br>A15. Protect public property         | A12. <b>Self-regulation</b><br>A13. <b>Fairness</b><br>A14 Citizenship<br>A15. (Citizenship )                | Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Other-directed<br>Other-directed  |
| 5.Filial piety, respect for teachers and kindness to others | A16.Filial to parents, respect teachers<br>A17.Love the collective and help fellow students  | A16.Filial piety & Respect<br>A17. <b>Love &amp; Kindness</b><br>A18.Open-mindedness<br>A19. <b>Teamwork</b> | Vitality<br>Other-directed<br>Inquisitiveness<br>Vitality         |

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | A18. Accept criticism modestly<br>A19. Learn to cooperate  |   |  |
| 6. Honesty, trustworthiness and responsibility   | A20. Keep consistency between words and deeds<br>A21. Do not lie or cheat<br>A22. Return borrowed items in time<br>A23. Correct mistakes as soon as you realise them                                 | A20. <b>Honesty &amp; Integrity</b><br>A21. Trustworthiness<br>A22. Responsibility<br>A23. (Responsibility) | Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Self-control |
| 7. Self-improvement, self-discipline and fitness | A24. Do physical exercise<br>A25. Be optimistic and cheerful<br>A26. No smoking, no drinking<br>A27. Be civilised in using the internet in a green and healthy way                                   | A24. (Self-regulation)<br>A25. Optimism<br>A26. (Self-regulation)<br>A27. (Self-regulation)                 | Self-control<br>Vitality<br>Self-control<br>Self-control     |
| 8. Cherishing life and ensuring safety           | A28. Stop at the red light and go at the green light<br>A29. Do not play with fire and avoid drowning<br>A30. Know how to self-protect and ask for help<br>A31. Stay away from drugs                 | A28. Law-abidingness<br>A29. <b>Prudence</b><br>A30. Cherishing life<br>A31. (Cherishing life)              | Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Self-control<br>Self-control |
| 9. Thrift, saving and protecting home            | A32. Do not compete in eating, drinking and wearing<br>A33. Cherish flowers, plants and trees<br>A34. Save food, water and electricity<br>A35. Live a low-carbon and environmentally protective life | A32. <b>Modesty (humility)</b><br>A33. Environmental concern<br>A34. Thrift<br>A35. (Environmental concern) | Other-directed<br>Vitality<br><br>Self-control<br>Vitality   |

*Note.* Character strength in bold are shared with the VIA; character strengths within brackets are repeated.

As already mentioned, through this mapping exercise, we identified 11 character strengths as nominally common between the ones extracted from the Code and McGrath and Walker's (2016) rendering of VIA-Youth. Those are: love of learning, bravery, curiosity, self-regulation, fairness, love and kindness, teamwork, honesty, prudence, and modesty. Compared with VIA-Youth, 13 character strengths are left out in the Code:

appreciation of beauty, creativity, forgiveness, gratitude, hope, humour, judgement, leadership, perseverance, perspective, sense of meaning, social intelligence, zest.

There are 19 character strengths not included in VIA-Youth but implicit in the Code, although some of them are mentioned as sub-categories of VIA-strengths; for example, citizenship and loyalty are considered in the same group as teamwork, based on Peterson and Seligman (2004). However, we decided to keep them as they are here as these items are extracted from different contexts and, hence, the character strengths represented may be different. In this way, we made sure that the extracted character strengths were directly based on the context of the Code, to demonstrate more accuracy and richness. Those 19 are: patriotism, awareness, filial piety and respect, loyalty, dedication, service, citizenship, environmental concern, open-mindedness, optimism, integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility, law-abidingness, cherishing life, industriousness, diligence, thrift.<sup>4</sup>

We chose to follow McGrath and Walker (2016) and categorised the 30 strengths into four virtue groups, based on semantic similarities, to fit them into the existing four factors, as Table 3 shows. We explained the rationale for this and the method of operation in the Methods section above. We do not claim that our classification represents the ‘universal truth’ of how these character virtues might be divided into categories; however, our classification offers a lens on how character strengths are being perceived qualitatively from a Chinese perspective.

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<sup>4</sup> It is beyond the remit of the current article to assess the extent to which different moral theories would condone those 19 aspirations in the Code or to what extent we, as authors, happen to agree with them as discrete ‘moral-educational’ aspirations. At the present juncture, we simply make the modest claim that although some of the aspirations go beyond what Western theories would normally encourage (e.g. the strong focus on patriotism), or involve a permissive understanding of ‘the moral’, it would require a very unsympathetic reading to argue that any of the aspirations are blatantly counter-moral either in terms of method or substance (see further in Huo & Xie, 2020).

**Table 3.***The Code-Based Chinese Character Strengths Classified in Accordance with the Four-Factor Model*

| Virtues         | Character strengths  |
|-----------------|--|
| Vitality        | Patriotism<br>Awareness<br>Loyalty<br>Bravery<br>Filial Piety & Respect<br>Teamwork<br>Environmental Concern* <sup>5</sup>   |
| Other-Directed  | Dedication<br>Service<br>Citizenship*<br>Love & Kindness<br>Modesty  |
| Inquisitiveness | Love of learning*<br>Curiosity<br>Open-mindedness<br>Optimism  |
| Self-control    | Industriousness<br>Diligence<br>Self-regulation***<br>Fairness<br>Honesty & Integrity<br>Trustworthiness<br>Responsibility*<br>Law-abidingness<br>Prudence<br>Cherishing life*<br>Thrift |

### The Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Before conducting the EFA, we ran two statistical tests to assess the appropriateness of our survey data. Firstly, the Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure (KMO) index was= 0.951, indicating a high degree of homogeneity among variables. Secondly, the significance of the Bartlett's spherical test was= 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05), so we rejected the null hypothesis that our correlation matrix was an identity matrix and concluded that the survey data were fit for purpose.

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<sup>5</sup> The sign \* means the character strength was repeated once, and \*\*\* means it was repeated three times in the Code-based items.

We used Principal Components as the method of extraction and the minimum communality obtained was .472 (item A21), which is relatively low but still acceptable according to the literature (Osborne, Costello, & Kellow, 2008; Child, 2006). All the communalities can be found in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Communalities extracted per item*

| Communalities |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Items         | Extraction |
| A1            | 0.708      |
| A2            | 0.75       |
| A3            | 0.623      |
| A4            | 0.655      |
| A5            | 0.716      |
| A6            | 0.56       |
| A7            | 0.485      |
| A8            | 0.573      |
| A9            | 0.67       |
| A10           | 0.619      |
| A11           | 0.633      |
| A12           | 0.613      |
| A13           | 0.572      |
| A14           | 0.627      |
| A15           | 0.702      |
| A16           | 0.667      |
| A17           | 0.638      |
| A18           | 0.577      |
| A19           | 0.525      |
| A20           | 0.577      |
| A21           | 0.472      |
| A22           | 0.577      |
| A23           | 0.584      |
| A24           | 0.554      |
| A25           | 0.618      |
| A26           | 0.699      |
| A27           | 0.627      |
| A28           | 0.6        |
| A29           | 0.607      |
| A30           | 0.503      |
| A31           | 0.645      |

|     |       |
|-----|-------|
| A32 | 0.534 |
| A33 | 0.528 |
| A34 | 0.641 |
| A35 | 0.554 |

*Note. Extraction method: Principal components analysis*

Then, according to Kaiser's stopping rule (Brown, 2009), we decided to retain all the components where the eigen values were higher than 1. Overall, the six components retained accounted for 60.1% of the total variance. The first eight

**Table 5**

*Total Variance Explained*

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues |               |              | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|           | Total               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                             | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1         | 14.380              | 41.087        | 41.087       | 14.380                              | 41.087        | 41.087       | 5.142                             | 14.692        | 14.692       |
| 2         | 2.136               | 6.101         | 47.188       | 2.136                               | 6.101         | 47.188       | 3.867                             | 11.050        | 25.742       |
| 3         | 1.409               | 4.025         | 51.213       | 1.409                               | 4.025         | 51.213       | 3.636                             | 10.387        | 36.129       |
| 4         | 1.159               | 3.313         | 54.526       | 1.159                               | 3.313         | 54.526       | 3.463                             | 9.894         | 46.023       |
| 5         | 1.106               | 3.159         | 57.685       | 1.106                               | 3.159         | 57.685       | 2.844                             | 8.126         | 54.149       |
| 6         | 1.044               | 2.983         | 60.668       | 1.044                               | 2.983         | 60.668       | 2.282                             | 6.519         | 60.668       |
| 7         | 0.942               | 2.690         | 63.358       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 8         | 0.868               | 2.480         | 65.837       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |

components and their eigenvalues can be found in Table 5.

Finally, we performed an orthogonal rotation (Varimax) to assess the intercorrelations among the variables and how they load into each one of the six factors. The loadings can be seen in Table 6.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> To have a cleaner image of how the variables loaded into the six factors, all loadings below .4 were discarded.

**Table 6***Strengths/Virtues, Components' Matrix and Cluster Composition*

| Items | Extracted Character strengths | Virtues         | Cluster | Components |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|       |                               |                 |         | 1          | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    |
| A1    | Awareness (national)          | Vitality        | 1       |            |      |      |      |      | .643 |
| A2    | Loyalty                       | Vitality        | 1       |            |      |      |      |      | .772 |
| A3    | Patriotism                    | Vitality        | 1       | .436       |      |      |      |      | .532 |
| A4    | Love of learning              | Inquisitiveness | 2       | .447       |      |      |      | .558 |      |
| A5    | Bravery                       | Vitality        | 2       |            |      |      |      | .675 |      |
| A6    | Curiosity                     | Inquisitiveness | 2       |            |      |      |      | .664 |      |
| A7    | Love of learning              | Inquisitiveness | 2       |            |      |      |      | .446 |      |
| A8    | Industriousness               | Self-control    | 3       | .457       |      | .495 |      |      |      |
| A9    | Diligence                     | Self-control    | 3       |            |      | .674 |      |      |      |
| A10   | Dedication                    | Other-directed  | 3       |            |      | .683 |      |      |      |
| A11   | Service                       | Other-directed  | 3       |            |      | .642 |      |      |      |
| A12   | Self-regulation               | Self-control    | 4       | .550       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A13   | Fairness                      | Self-control    | 4       | .528       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A14   | Citizenship                   | Other-directed  | 4       | .505       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A15   | Citizenship                   | Other-directed  | 4       | .595       |      |      | .459 |      |      |
| A16   | Filial piety & Respect        | Vitality        | 5       | .697       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A17   | Love & Kindness               | Other-directed  | 5       | .661       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A18   | Open-mindedness               | Inquisitiveness | 5       | .618       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A19   | Teamwork                      | Vitality        | 5       | .431       |      | .414 |      |      |      |
| A20   | Honesty & Integrity           | Self-control    | 6       | .556       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A21   | Trustworthiness               | Self-control    | 6       | .529       |      |      |      |      |      |
| A22   | Responsibility                | Self-control    | 6       |            |      |      | .546 |      |      |
| A23   | Responsibility                | Self-control    | 6       | .456       |      |      | .468 |      |      |
| A24   | Self-regulation               | Self-control    | 7       |            |      | .432 | .416 |      |      |
| A25   | Optimism                      | Vitality        | 7       |            |      |      |      | .539 |      |
| A26   | Self-regulation               | Self-control    | 7       |            |      |      | .720 |      |      |
| A27   | Self-regulation               | Self-control    | 7       |            |      |      | .688 |      |      |
| A28   | Law-abidingness               | Self-control    | 8       |            | .559 |      | .430 |      |      |
| A29   | Prudence                      | Self-control    | 8       |            | .539 |      | .489 |      |      |
| A30   | Cherishing life               | Self-control    | 8       |            |      | .481 |      |      |      |
| A31   | Cherishing life               | Self-control    | 8       |            | .632 |      |      |      |      |
| A32   | Modesty (humility)            | Other-directed  | 9       |            | .674 |      |      |      |      |
| A33   | Environmental concern         | Vitality        | 9       |            | .611 |      |      |      |      |
| A34   | Thrift                        | Self-control    | 9       |            | .627 |      |      |      |      |

|     |                       |          |   |  |      |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|--|------|--|--|--|--|
| A35 | Environmental concern | Vitality | 9 |  | .613 |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|--|------|--|--|--|--|

*Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis*

*Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.*

*Rotation converged in 10 iterations.*

As can be seen in Table 6, nine out of the 35 items have significant (above .4) cross-loadings across components. This might occur due to the plural nature of the items that correlate with more than one component. Comparing the Code's item clusters (seen in Table 2) with the six components' matrix gives us a notion of how the clusters are empirically mapped out. While not perfect, there is strong resemblance, as seen in the fourth column of Table 6: one cluster is independently represented in the components matrix (cluster 9), five are represented plus one cross-loading for another item (clusters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), three clusters are a mix of two components plus one cross-loading (clusters 6 and 7) and the remaining cluster is a mix of two components plus two cross-loadings (cluster 8).<sup>7</sup> Looking into the composition of the factors with the highest loadings, cluster one has one item with a loading of .772 (item 2: loyalty) and another with a loading of .643 (item 1: national awareness), depicting a sense of national pride or patriotism. Cluster three on the other hand has three items with loadings above .640 (item 11 - service: .642; item 10 - dedication: .683; item 9-diligence: .674) and all of them fit relatively well with the McGrath and Walker (2016) categorisation of other-directed virtue. Cluster seven, despite having a mix of components and a cross loading, has two items with some of the highest loadings (item 26 - self regulation: .720; item 27 - self-regulation: .688). Finally, cluster 9, despite not

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<sup>7</sup> Although we happened to identify a six-factor structure, these factors do not correspond to the original six overarching virtues forming the basis of the VIA-system and hence do not offer a confirmation of the original VIA six-factor categorisation.



having any item with a loading above .674, is the most consistent of the sample and their four items have loadings above .610 (item 32 – modesty: .674; item 33 – environmental concern: .611; item 34 – thrift: .627; item 35 – environmental concern: .613) reflecting a feeling of care and consciousness for the environment.

Looking at the components' configuration, one of the six perfectly matches one of the factors adapted from the McGrath and Walker's model (Component 6 = 3 Vitality strengths) whereas two components are a mix of two factors (Component 4 = 7 Self-control strengths plus 1 Other-directed strength; Component 5 = 3 Inquisitiveness strengths plus 2 Vitality strengths), two components are a mix of three factors (Component 2 = 4 Self-control strengths plus 2 Vitality strengths and 1 Other-directed strength; Component 3 = 4 Self-control strengths plus 2 Other-directed strengths and 1 Vitality strength). Finally, one component is a mix of four factors (Component 1 = 6 Self-control strengths plus 2 Inquisitiveness strengths plus 3 Other-directed strengths and 3 Vitality strengths).

## Discussion

To assess the association between the Chinese Code for moral education and VIA-Youth we arranged the 35 items/aspirations from the Code into the four-factor grid, based on its semantic categorisations of the relevant character virtues. Then we explored empirically whether the Code-based 'strengths' would behave similarly to the VIA-Youth strengths. Through conducting an exploratory factor analysis, six factors emerged. Comparing the findings from the two methods, we see that, firstly, the nine clusters that constitute the Code present a high resemblance with the empirical structuration of the components' matrix. We consider this finding more unexpected than the fact that the Code-derived factors did not correspond perfectly with the four-factor

model, because – as already indicated – the nine clusters in the Code are presented without explicit theoretical or empirical justificatory evidence.<sup>8</sup> To put it bluntly, they are derived from policy dictates rather than academic inquiry. This unexpected correspondence might be caused by the naturalisation (internalisation) of the clusters' structures by the survey respondents as independent units; that is, being taught as independent clusters might facilitate a certain developmental tendency to embrace them, or depart from them, holistically, at least as evidenced by self-reports. In any case, although the cluster-component match is not exactly the same, there is a visible pattern in which the items within each cluster share moral attributes that differentiate them. The latter allows us to suggest that the Code as a policy instrument works organically and may be composed by different and distinguishable moral attributes.

Secondly, we found that one of the extracted factors (out of six) matches our adaptation of the four-factor model (component 6) whereas the remaining five present a mix of different virtues. Component one is structured as a mix of the four attributes and so it can be seen as an overall representation of the Code's virtues. Regarding the two components composed by two virtues (components 4 and 5), despite not being 'pure', they do not share the same virtues (component 4 is a mix of Self-control and Other-directed and component 5 is a mix of Vitality and Inquisitiveness). Finally, the two components with three virtues (components 2 and 3) present a fairly similar internal structure and a fuzzy composition.

Overall, the exploratory factor analysis showed a cohesive internal composition and high communalities among the 35 items of the Code. Moreover, and despite not being perfect, our adaptation of the McGrath and Walker's model to the Chinese

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<sup>8</sup> The authors of the Code might have conducted some theoretical or empirical research to ground the nine clusters in the Code, although such explanations are not available to the public. If that is the case, our finding is perhaps not as 'unexpected' as it seems to us in default of any published evidence.

context suggests that there is some level of consistency with respect to virtue categorisation between the Code and VIA-Youth.

This exercise has confirmed our belief that comparisons of the Code to McGrath and Walker's (2016) VIA-Youth model constitute a fruitful area for further exploration. We suggest that future research could be devoted to assessing if there is a change within the components' composition as cohorts advance in age or as controlled by demographics such as gender. Another area worth exploring is how the Code clusters themselves can be empirically tested and categorised and if they are really encapsulating a set of distinguishable moral traits – or just traits that develop holistically because of being taught together as units.

## Conclusion

The importance of character strengths is taken for granted in the current character-education literature in the West. In China, such strengths are still a marginal concern in the mainstream moral-education literature (despite China's Confucian heritage) and when discussed, they are more often considered the privileged province of positive psychology rather than as belonging to moral education. In other words, while 'positive education' in the West is typically seen to bridge the gap between psychological and moral development (Seligman et al., 2009), in China 'positive education' is typically considered psycho-personal rather than socio-moral.

We have tried to show in this article that, despite superficial dissimilarities between these discourses, character strengths are still implicit in the main policy document guiding moral-education practice in China, although they are dressed up there as aspirations, behavioural standards, or rules rather than character qualities. In other

words, character virtues are not necessarily less important in China; they are only conceptualised and formulated differently from the West.

To align the Chinese academic discourse better with recent developments in character education, we recommend that: 1) Chinese moral education embrace the notion of character strengths more directly in its official policy-driven system; 2) the language of character strengths and virtues be expressed explicitly, so that a list of character virtues can be identified by each school and prioritised in its moral-education initiatives and practice, based on the school's relevant circumstances, history, and resources; 3) character virtues be seen as central to the school and classroom mission, in order to promote positive relationships between all stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students, fostering the internalisation of positive character virtues through intrinsic motivational strategies, modelling character by adults (Berkowitz & Bier, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2015), and familiarising the young with the language of virtue *qua* virtue literacy (Vasalou, 2012).

Although some character virtues required in the Chinese context might be different from those championed in a Western culture (Xing & Keung, 2014), our study found various overlapping character strengths between the main Chinese moral-education policy document (the Code) and the internationally validated measure of character strengths in young people (VIA-Youth). The Chinese character strengths can, fairly uncontroversially, in our view, be interpreted and categorised in a similar manner to VIA-Youth. Future research would ideally apply the VIA-Youth measure and our Code self-report instrument to the same cohort of students and then follow the research avenues suggested in the Discussion above.

Stereotypically, educationists are often too quick to fasten on differences between moral education according to Chinese understandings and moral education as

conceptualised and practised in the West. We conclude that it is time to re-position our research perspectives, to look for similarities between Western and Chinese approaches and bridge the existing theory-and-practice gap. The 2020 pandemic around the world should have reminded us of the fact that humankind comprises a single species and that we are facing the same existential and moral challenges wherever we may live, calling for the same character qualities for amelioration. We encourage looking for a common ground and establishing academic bridges between theorists and practitioners engaged in the effort to develop young people with good character both in the West and East.

### Data Availability Statement

The data are available from the Center for Youth Moral Education, Tsinghua University.

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### Disclosure Statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix 1.

### *The Instrument*

Please evaluate yourself according to the Code for Primary and Secondary School Students

(revised in 2015) (Please tick)

| Code contents (2015)  | Describes me | Somewhat describes me | Not sure | Somewhat does not describe me | Does not describe me |
|---|--------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Understand the Party history and the national conditions            |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Cherish the honour of the country                                   |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Love the nation, love the people, love the Communist Party of China |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Listen attentively in class   |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Express opinions actively   |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Willing to explore science  |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Form the habit of reading   |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Do your own work by yourself  |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Take the initiative to share housework                              |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Participate in labour practice                                      |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Be enthusiastic about voluntary service                             |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Abide by the national law and school discipline                     |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Line up consciously and politely                                    |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Maintain public health and hygiene                                  |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Protect public property   |              |                       |          |                               |                      |
| Filial to parents, respect  |              |                       |          |                               |                      |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| teachers  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Love the collective and help fellow students              |  |  |  |  |  |
| Accept criticism modestly                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learn to cooperate  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Keep consistency between words and deeds                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do not lie or cheat                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
| Return borrowed items in time                             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Correct mistakes as soon as you realise them              |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do physical exercise                                      |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be optimistic and cheerful                                |  |  |  |  |  |
| No smoking, no drinking                                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be civilized in using internet in a green and healthy way |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stop at the red light and go at the green light           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do not play with fire and avoid drowning                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Know how to self-protect and ask for help                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stay away from drugs                                      |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do not compete on eating, drinking and wearing            |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cherish flowers, plants and trees                         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Save food, water and electricity                          |  |  |  |  |  |
| Live a low-carbon and environmentally protecting life     |  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix 2.

*Questionnaire results*

| Items   | N   | Mean  | Std deviation | Variance |
|---|-----|-------|---------------|----------|
| 1. understand the Party history and the national conditions             | 671 | 4,385 | ,8148         | ,664     |
| 2. cherish the honour of the country                                    | 669 | 4,586 | ,7344         | ,539     |
| 3. love the nation, love the people, love the Communist Party of China. | 664 | 4,715 | ,6277         | ,394     |
| 4. listen attentively in class  | 672 | 4,546 | ,7310         | ,534     |
| 5. express opinions actively  | 671 | 4,335 | ,9601         | ,922     |
| 6. willing to explore science   | 668 | 4,478 | ,8542         | ,730     |
| 7. form the habit of reading  | 669 | 4,572 | ,7658         | ,586     |
| 8. do your own work by yourself   | 671 | 4,565 | ,7793         | ,607     |
| 9. take the initiative to share housework                               | 673 | 4,475 | ,8362         | ,699     |
| 10. participate in labour practice                                      | 669 | 4,553 | ,7885         | ,622     |
| 11. be enthusiastic about voluntary service                             | 668 | 4,350 | ,9500         | ,903     |
| 12. abide by the national law and school discipline                     | 670 | 4,664 | ,6735         | ,454     |
| 13. line up consciously and politely                                    | 670 | 4,721 | ,5899         | ,348     |
| 14. maintain public health and hygiene                                  | 669 | 4,734 | ,5850         | ,342     |
| 15. protect public property   | 670 | 4,752 | ,5849         | ,342     |
| 16. filial to parents, respect teachers                                 | 670 | 4,713 | ,5901         | ,348     |
| 17. love the collective and help fellow students                        | 669 | 4,682 | ,6301         | ,397     |
| 18. accept criticism modestly   | 670 | 4,584 | ,6838         | ,468     |
| 19. learn to cooperate  | 666 | 4,596 | ,7258         | ,527     |
| 20. keep consistency between words and deeds,                           | 671 | 4,595 | ,6865         | ,471     |
| 21 don't lie or cheat   | 671 | 4,641 | ,6629         | ,439     |
| 22. return borrowed items in time                                       | 670 | 4,757 | ,5149         | ,265     |

|   |     |       |       |      |
|---|-----|-------|-------|------|
| 23. correct mistakes as soon as you know them                 | 672 | 4,679 | ,6232 | ,388 |
| 24. do physical exercise                                      | 668 | 4,496 | ,8527 | ,727 |
| 25. be optimistic and cheerful                                | 672 | 4,698 | ,6859 | ,470 |
| 26. no smoking, no drinking                                   | 670 | 4,818 | ,5962 | ,355 |
| 27. be civilized in using internet in a green and healthy way | 672 | 4,766 | ,5985 | ,358 |
| 28. stop at the red light and go at the green light           | 671 | 4,805 | ,5289 | ,280 |
| 29. don't play with fire and avoid drowning                   | 670 | 4,806 | ,5505 | ,303 |
| 30. know how to ask for help                                  | 672 | 4,665 | ,6502 | ,423 |
| 31. stay away from drugs                                      | 669 | 4,897 | ,3981 | ,159 |
| 32. do not compete on eating, drinking and wearing            | 670 | 4,755 | ,5707 | ,326 |
| 33. cherish flowers, plants and trees                         | 669 | 4,773 | ,5519 | ,305 |
| 34. saving food, water and electricity                        | 671 | 4,697 | ,6343 | ,402 |
| 35. live a low-carbon and environmentally protective life     | 671 | 4,683 | ,6662 | ,444 |