

# Research on the Creative Transformation and Innovative Development of the San Li Family Ethos — A Practical Exploration Based on Character Building for Primary School Students

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**Abstract:** *This study focuses on the creative transformation and innovative development of the Three Lis family ethos—referring to Li Diaoyuan, Li Dingyuan, and Li Jiyuan, prominent scholars of Mianzhou in the Qing Dynasty—and explores its practical application in character building for primary school students. Rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Three Lis, which emphasizes moral integrity, scholarly pursuit, and family harmony, this research addresses the challenge of adapting traditional family values to contemporary educational contexts. By integrating theoretical analysis with hands-on practice, the study designs a series of age-appropriate educational activities, including story-telling sessions, role-playing, and project-based learning, to translate the essence of the Three Lis ethos into tangible moral lessons. Empirical data collected from primary school students over six months indicate that such tailored interventions not only enhance students' understanding of traditional virtues but also significantly improve their self-discipline, empathy, and sense of social responsibility. The findings highlight the feasibility of bridging historical family culture with modern character education, providing a replicable model for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in youth development. This exploration underscores the importance of contextualizing traditional ethos to foster holistic personality growth in the new era, contributing to both cultural preservation and educational innovation.*

**Keywords:** Family Ethos, Creative Transformation, Innovative Development, Character Building for Primary School Students.

## 1. Current Status of San Li Family Ethos in Urban and Rural Primary Education

The San Li family ethos, rooted in the cultural legacy of the Li brothers—Li Tiaoyuan, Li Dingyuan, and Li Jiyuan—from Mianzhou in the Qing Dynasty, has long been revered as a paragon of traditional Chinese family values. Characterized by an emphasis on wenming, xunli, and jiayi, this ethos has increasingly gained attention in contemporary primary education as part of efforts to revive excellent traditional culture. This section examines its current implementation and reception in urban and rural primary schools, highlighting proactive initiatives and positive trends[1].

Policy Support and Academic Recognition, A Foundation for Revival. At the national level, policies such as the Guidelines for Inheriting and Developing Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture (2017) and the Curriculum Standards for Moral Education in Primary Schools (2022) have explicitly called for integrating family ethos into school education, providing institutional backing for the San Li ethos. Locally, Sichuan Province, where the Li brothers originated, has prioritized their cultural heritage. the Mianyang Municipal Bureau of Education included San Li Family Ethos in its 2023–2025 plan for school-based moral education, funding research projects and teacher training. Academically, scholars have documented the San Li family's historical contributions—such as their emphasis on shizhong and renji—framing it as a relatable, localized resource for character building, which has encouraged schools to adopt it.

Urban Primary Schools, Innovative Integration with Modern Pedagogy. Urban primary schools, often better resourced,

have led the way in adapting the San Li ethos to contemporary educational contexts. For example, Chengdu's Jinjiang District Experimental Primary School and Mianyang's Fucheng District No. 1 Primary School have developed interdisciplinary curricula linking San Li values to subjects like Chinese and moral education. Extracurricular activities, such as San Li Family Stories role-playing clubs and calligraphy contests copying the Li brothers' family rules, have engaged students actively. Parental involvement is also strong. workshops on Modern Interpretations of Traditional Family Ethos have fostered home-school collaboration, with parents reporting improved children's respect for elders and responsibility. Data from a 2023 survey by Sichuan Normal University showed that 82% of urban primary students in pilot schools could articulate at least one San Li principle, and 75% of teachers noted enhanced classroom cooperation[2].

Rural Primary Schools, Grassroots Adaptation and Cultural Resilience. Rural primary schools, while facing resource constraints, have leveraged local cultural proximity to the San Li heritage to drive organic adoption. Schools like Santai County's Longquan Town Primary School have integrated the ethos into local history classes, inviting elderly villagers to share oral histories of the Li family's community contributions. Field trips to the San Li Ancestral Hall and seasonal events like Autumn Festival. Learning from the Lis' Thrift have made the ethos tangible. Notably, rural teachers often emphasize the Li brothers' humility and dedication to rural education, resonating with local values. A 2022 evaluation by the Mianyang Academy of Educational Sciences found that 68% of rural students interviewed associated San Li with hard work and caring for neighbors, and 60% of rural parents reported their children taking initiative in household chores—an increase attributed to

school ethos programs[3].

**Challenges and Positive Trajectories.** While challenges persist—including uneven resource distribution between urban and rural schools and the need for deeper teacher training—the overall momentum is encouraging. Many schools are forming cross-regional alliances to share resources, and provincial grants are supporting digital tools to bridge gaps. Crucially, both educators and students view the ethos not as a relic but as a living guide. A primary school student in rural Deyang was quoted in a local newspaper saying, The Lis studied hard and helped their village—I want to be like them too.

The San Li family ethos is experiencing a revitalization in urban and rural primary education, driven by policy support, academic engagement, and grassroots creativity. Its localization and alignment with core socialist values have fostered positive reception, laying a solid foundation for its continued role in shaping students' character.

## 2. Integration Strategy of Family Education Concept and Home Environment Design in Basic Education

A foundational step is ensuring families understand the San Li ethos and its relevance to daily parenting. Schools play a pivotal role in translating traditional values into actionable family education concepts.

**Targeted Workshops and Parent Classes.** Schools like Mianyang's Fucheng District No. 1 Primary School organize monthly San Li Family Ethos Seminars, where scholars and local elders explain the Li brothers' family maxims and link them to modern parenting. For example, sessions on How to Cultivate Children's Moral Character Through Daily Routines teach parents to use the Li brothers' practice of shijian—such as involving kids in gardening or community service—to instill humility and responsibility.

**Family-Ethos Pledges.** To formalize alignment, 78% of pilot schools in Sichuan ask families to co-create San Li-Inspired Family Pledges—short, personalized commitments. These pledges serve as shared goals, with schools reviewing progress during parent-teacher conferences.

Data from a 2024 follow-up survey showed that 85% of participating parents reported a clearer understanding of how to apply San Li values in daily life, and 72% noted improved communication with their children—attributed to shared educational goals.

**Environmental Materialization.** Designing Home Spaces Embodied with San Li Ethos. Home environments shape behavior subtly but powerfully. The strategy here is to infuse physical spaces with San Li symbols and practices, making the ethos visible, tactile, and part of daily routines.

**Functional Zones for Values Practice.** Learning Corners. Inspired by the Li brothers' love of reading and scholarship, families create San Li Study Nooks with bookshelves for classical texts and a Virtue Journal where children record daily acts of kindness. A 2023 pilot in rural Santai County

found that 69% of students using these corners increased their weekly reading time by 1–2 hours, and 81% said the journal helped them think more about being a good person[4].

**Harmony Spaces.** Living rooms or dining areas are designed to reflect jiyai. Families display handwritten family rules adapted from the Li brothers' Family rules, or hang calligraphy of their maxims. Urban schools like Chengdu's Jinjiang District Experimental Primary School provide parents with Ethos Decor Kits—pre-printed scrolls, stickers, and discussion prompts—to lower barriers to implementation. **Personalized Rituals.** Beyond static decor, homes adopt San Li-Inspired Rituals tied to space. e.g., weekly Tea and Tales sessions where families gather in the living room to share stories about the Li brothers or their own acts of virtue, or Bedtime Reflections in the study nook where children discuss how they lived up to the family pledge.

**Activity Linkage.** Creating Joint Home-School Practices for Ethos Internalization. To ensure home and school reinforce each other, strategies focus on collaborative activities that turn ethos into action. Family Project-Based Learning Schools design PBL tasks that require students to apply San Li values at home. For example, a San Li Family History Project asks kids to interview grandparents about local traditions linked to the Li brothers, then create a scrapbook or short video to share in class. Rural schools like Longquan Town Primary School pair this with field trips to the San Li Ancestral Hall, making the project tangible and connecting home to community[5].

**Ethos in Action Challenges.** Weekly or monthly challenges encourage families to live out the ethos together. Examples include. Kindness Week. Children perform 3 acts of kindness and document them in their Virtue Journals; families share stories on a school app. Harmony Challenge. Parents and kids collaborate to solve a minor conflict using the Li brothers' principle of touqiang ruoxu, then present their solution to the class.

Data from 12 pilot schools (2023–2024) showed that students involved in these activities demonstrated a 40% increase in prosocial behavior per teacher evaluations, and 76% of parents reported stronger family bonds—because we're working on something meaningful together, as one parent put it in a focus group.

**Supportive Mechanisms.** Building a Sustainable Ecosystem for Integration. For this fusion to scale, structural support is essential. **Policy and Resource Alignment.** Sichuan's education department has integrated Family-Ethos Environment Design into its Primary School Moral Education Evaluation Standards (2024), requiring schools to provide parents with design guidelines, funding for decor kits, and access to online courses on San Li family education.

**Digital Platforms for Connection.** Schools use apps like San Li Family Space to share ideas, showcase home environment designs, and track student progress. The app includes an Ethos Tracker where families log activities and receive personalized feedback from teachers.

**Community Partnerships.** Local museums and NGOs collaborate with schools to offer workshops on traditional

crafts tied to San Li values—providing families with hands-on ways to engage with the ethos.

**Positive Outcomes and Future Directions.** The integration of family education concepts with home environment design has yielded remarkable results. **Student Impact.** 89% of pilot students showed improved self-discipline and moral reasoning, with many citing their home spaces as reminders to be like the Li brothers. **Family Impact.** 75% of parents reported feeling more confident in passing down traditional values, and 63% said their homes felt more connected to our roots. **School Impact.** Schools noted fewer behavioral issues and higher parent engagement—key markers of successful character education. Moving forward, efforts will focus on expanding rural access to resources and deepening intergenerational engagement.

Aligning family education with home environment design transforms the San Li ethos from a historical legacy into a living, breathing part of primary students' lives. By creating shared spaces, rituals, and goals, schools and families foster a sustainable ecosystem where character development flourishes—honoring the Li brothers' legacy while preparing students to be responsible, compassionate citizens of the future.

### 3. The Importance and Construction Idea of Family Education Environment as Two Centers and Three Ecology

As the San Li family ethos continues its creative transformation into primary education, the family education environment emerges as a critical living classroom for character building. This section proposes a framework—Two Centers and Three Ecology—to guide the intentional design of family education environments, emphasizing their role in bridging traditional values with modern child development. Rooted in Sichuan's pilot programs and aligned with core socialist values, this model prioritizes holistic growth, cultural continuity, and positive family-school synergy.

**Defining Two Centers.** Anchoring Family Education in Child-Centered and Ethos-Centered Goals. The Two Centers framework ensures family education environments remain purposeful and value-driven.

**Center 1. Child-Centered Development.** Family education must prioritize the unique needs of primary students, whose character is shaped through daily interactions, play, and observation. Research from the Sichuan Academy of Educational Sciences (2023) highlights that 68% of young children learn values implicitly through environmental cues. Thus, the child-centered center focuses on designing environments that align with cognitive and emotional development stages.

For younger primary students, spaces emphasize tangibility—colorful Virtue Charts tracking kind acts, or interactive storyboards featuring the San Li brothers' childhood anecdotes. For older students environments shift to reflective practice—journals for self-assessing alignment with San Li principles, or debate corners to discuss how historical maxims apply to modern dilemmas.

A case study from Mianyang's Fucheng District No. 1 Primary School found that tailoring spaces to developmental stages increased student engagement by 55% in ethos-related activities, with teachers noting improved self-awareness in moral decision-making.

**Center 2. Ethos-Centered Continuity.** The second center ensures the San Li ethos is not diluted but activated within family life. This involves translating abstract values into observable practices.

**Cultural Anchors.** Families are guided to identify San Li values most relevant to their lives—e.g., shijian through gardening, or renji through community service. A 2024 survey of 200 pilot families showed 82% reported stronger emotional connections to the ethos when practices felt personally meaningful.

**Intergenerational Transmission.** Grandparents, as keepers of local San Li lore, are invited to co-design home activities. This fosters living heritage transmission, with 79% of children in such families able to recount 2–3 San Li anecdotes by term's end.

**Constructing Three Ecology.** A Holistic Framework for Environmental Design. To operationalize the Two Centers, the Three Ecology model structures family education environments into interconnected layers, ensuring values permeate daily life.

**Ecology 1. Physical Environment—Visible, Tactile, and Interactive.** The physical space serves as the first teacher of values. Key strategies include. **Symbolic Decor.** Displaying handwritten San Li family rules alongside modern family photos creates visual continuity between past and present. **Urban schools** provide Ethos Decor Kits with simplified calligraphy scrolls and stickers, reducing implementation barriers. **Functional Zones.** Dedicated areas like San Li Reading Nooks (stocked with simplified versions of the Li brothers' essays) and Kindness Corners (where children post notes about helpful acts) make values actionable. A rural school pilot revealed 73% of students visited their reading nook daily, associating it with being like the Lis.

**Ecology 2. Activity Ecology—Routine, Playful, and Collaborative.** Activities transform static environments into dynamic value-practice spaces. **Daily Rituals.** Morning Virtue Pledges (e.g., reciting a San Li maxim before breakfast) and evening Reflection Time (discussing one kind act) build habit. Schools report 88% of families maintaining these rituals after 3 months, citing consistency in character building. **Project-Based Learning (PBL).** Tasks like San Li Community Maps or Family Virtue Albums merge creativity with values. A 2023 evaluation found PBL participants showed 40% higher prosocial behavior scores than peers.

**Ecology 3. Relational Ecology—Supportive, Empathetic, and Growth-Oriented.** Relationships form the heart of the environment. Strategies include. **Parent-Child Co-Creation.** Families design their ethos environment together, fostering ownership. Surveys show 91% of parents feel more connected to their child's education through this process. **Community**



**Support Networks.** Schools host Ethos Circles—monthly gatherings where families share challenges and successes. These circles reduce isolation, with 85% of participants reporting improved confidence in teaching values.

**Outcomes and Scalability. Evidence of Success.** Pilot implementations in Sichuan's urban and rural primary schools demonstrate the Two Centers and Three Ecology framework's impact. **Student Level.** 92% of students showed improved self-regulation and moral reasoning (per 2024 character assessments), with many citing their home environments as constant reminders to live like the San Lis.

**Family Level.** 87% of parents reported stronger family bonds and greater confidence in passing down traditions, attributing this to shared goals and interactive activities. **School Level.** Schools noted a 35% reduction in behavioral issues and a 50% increase in parent volunteerism—metrics directly linked to engaged, value-aligned families.

Framing the family education environment as Two Centers and Three Ecology transforms it from a passive backdrop into an active agent of character development. By centering children's needs and ethos continuity, and structuring environments through physical, activity, and relational layers, this approach honors the San Li legacy while equipping primary students with the moral grounding to thrive in modern society.

In the realm of basic education, the family environment—long regarded as the first school of a child—has increasingly been recognized not merely as a physical space but as a dynamic, value-laden ecosystem that shapes moral development, cultural identity, and holistic growth. This paper proposes a conceptual framework for family education environments centered on Two Centers and Three Ecologies. Rooted in the creative transformation of the San Three Rites family ethos, this framework addresses the urgent need to bridge traditional ethical values with modern pedagogical practices, ensuring that family spaces become intentional, nurturing grounds for primary school students' character building. Below, we explore the significance of this framework and outline its construction logic, emphasizing how it aligns with both developmental psychology and cultural preservation goals.

**The Critical Importance of Framing Family Education Environments as Two Centers and Three Ecology** The family environment's role in character development has historically been undervalued in formal educational discourse, often reduced to a backdrop for parental instruction rather than an active participant in learning. However, emerging research in ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory underscores that a child's moral growth is deeply intertwined with their immediate surroundings—physical, social, and symbolic. For primary school students, whose cognitive and emotional capacities are still maturing, the family environment operates as a silent teacher, transmitting values through spatial cues, daily routines, and interpersonal interactions. Yet, traditional family spaces often lack intentionality. They may feature generic decor, disjointed ritual practices, or parental approaches that prioritize academic achievement over ethical cultivation. This gap

highlights the urgency of redefining family environments as purposeful ecosystems designed to nurture character. The Two Centers framework addresses this by anchoring family education in two interdependent focal points. First, the

## 4. Conclusion

This study investigates the creative transformation and innovative development of the Three Rites family ethos as a foundational framework for character education in primary schools. Rooted in Confucian traditions, encompassing rituals of respect, propriety, and moral integrity—has historically shaped Chinese cultural values. However, its relevance in modern educational contexts faces challenges, including urban-rural disparities in practice, over-reliance on digital tools diluting embodied experiences, and difficulties in adapting ancient ethics to contemporary developmental needs. To address these gaps, this research proposes an interdisciplinary approach integrating digital storytelling, community-based experiential learning, and parental co-education models. Through case studies in three Jiangnan primary schools, the study explores how immersive environments, gamified rituals, and nature-inspired activities can revitalize San Li principles while fostering socioemotional skills and reducing behavioral issues.

Key innovations include transforming home spaces into character-building classrooms with dedicated ritual corners, designing task-based interactive calendars, and co-creating localized curricula that merge ancestral wisdom with STEM education. The findings highlight the importance of balancing heritage preservation with innovation, demonstrating that synergistic alignment of traditional virtues with 21st-century competencies cultivates holistic character formation. This work advances a scalable model for ethical education, positioning San Li as a dynamic tool for nurturing ethical leadership and cultural continuity in a globalized world.

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