



# Andean Morality: An Analysis of Values in University Education

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**ABSTRACT.** The objective of this research was to understand the characteristics and practices of Andean moral values among university students at the National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga (Peru). A descriptive, qualitative approach and a non-experimental, cross-sectional design were used, employing interviews with 10 students intentionally selected in 2024. The results revealed that values such as 'ama suwa' (do not steal), 'ama qilla' (do not be idle), and 'ama llulla' (do not lie) maintain a significant presence in the students' lives, who apply them primarily in family and community contexts. Furthermore, most practice principles such as respect, tolerance, and empathy, which are fundamental for harmonious coexistence. However, the application of these values can vary according to the circumstances, reflecting tensions between Andean traditions and the demands of modern society. Participants also highlighted the importance of the 'ayllu', promoting equality and solidarity as the basis of community life. In conclusion, Andean morality remains a relevant ethical pillar, although it faces challenges from external influences.

**Keywords:** andean morality; students; education; philosophy.

## Moral andina: un análisis de los valores en la educación universitaria

**RESUMEN.** El objetivo de esta investigación fue comprender las características y prácticas de los valores morales andinos en estudiantes universitarios de la Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (Perú). Se empleó un enfoque descriptivo, cualitativo y un diseño no experimental transversal, utilizando entrevistas a 10 estudiantes seleccionados intencionalmente en 2024. Los resultados revelaron que valores como 'ama suwa' (no robar), 'ama qilla' (no ser ocioso) y 'ama llulla' (no mentir) mantienen una presencia significativa en la vida de los estudiantes, quienes los aplican principalmente en contextos familiares y comunitarios. Además, la mayoría practica principios como respeto, tolerancia y empatía, fundamentales para la convivencia armoniosa. Sin embargo, la aplicación de estos valores puede variar según las circunstancias, reflejando tensiones entre las tradiciones andinas y las demandas de la sociedad moderna. Los participantes también destacaron la importancia del 'ayllu', promoviendo igualdad y solidaridad como base de la vida comunitaria. En conclusión, la moral andina sigue siendo un pilar ético relevante, aunque enfrenta desafíos por las influencias externas.

**Palabras clave:** moral andina; estudiantes; educación; filosofía.

## Moralidade andina: uma análise de valores no ensino universitário

**RESUMO.** O objetivo desta pesquisa foi compreender as características e práticas dos valores morais andinos entre estudantes universitários da Universidade Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (Peru). Foi utilizada uma abordagem descritiva qualitativa e um delineamento transversal não experimental, empregando entrevistas com 10 estudantes selecionados intencionalmente em 2024. Os resultados revelaram que valores como 'ama suwa' (não roubar), 'ama qilla' (não ser ocioso) e 'ama llulla' (não mentir) mantêm uma presença significativa na vida dos estudantes, que os aplicam principalmente em contextos familiares e comunitários. Além disso, a maioria pratica princípios como respeito, tolerância e empatia, que são fundamentais para a convivência harmoniosa. No entanto, a aplicação desses valores pode variar de acordo com as circunstâncias, refletindo tensões entre as tradições andinas e as demandas da sociedade moderna. Os participantes também destacaram a importância do 'ayllu', promovendo a igualdade e a solidariedade como base da vida comunitária. Em conclusão, a moral andina permanece um pilar ético relevante, embora enfrente desafios de influências externas.

**Palavras-chave:** moral andina; estudantes; educação; filosofia.

## Introduction

Andean morality, based on principles of reciprocity, complementarity, and relationality, has been a fundamental pillar in the worldview of the indigenous peoples of the Andes (Balarezo & Ricardo, 2019). This ethic not only regulates human interactions, but also establishes a deep connection between human beings and nature. In an increasingly globalized world marked by a neoliberal system that prioritizes individualism and capital, it is essential to explore how these traditional values can be recovered and applied in the educational training of young people, especially those who come from rural Andean areas (Avenida Castro & Guacaneme Pineda, 2016). These students, bearers of a rich cultural heritage, could play a key role in building a more just and equitable society, based on principles of solidarity and respect for the environment.

The study of morality and ethics is a fundamental discipline within philosophy, which allows us to reflect on the values that govern social coexistence (Ortiz Millán, 2016). Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, addresses crucial issues such as virtue, duty, happiness, and good living, proposing a deep reflection on human decisions and actions (Zuluaga Torres, 2023). In the Andean context, ethics is not limited to human interactions, but extends to the relationship with nature and the cosmos, which makes it an integral ethics, which advocates the conservation of the natural order and the balance between beings (Beauclair, 2013). This approach allows us to identify a system of values that can offer ethical alternatives to the hegemonic model that promotes the excessive exploitation of resources.

Andean morality is rooted in a cosmic order that reflects a holistic view of the world (Campovermoso et al., 2015). For the Andean man, all the elements of the universe are interconnected, and the well-being of the community depends on harmony with nature and respect for cosmic principles (Zenteno Brun, 2009). Reciprocity, as a central principle, establishes that human relationships must be of mutual benefit, not only between individuals, but also with natural elements. This principle is reflected in everyday practices such as *ayni*, *wayllunakuy*, and other forms of solidarity, which constitute a solid ethical foundation for Andean communities (Calvo, 2020). By recognizing the existence of a cosmic order, Andean ethics underscores the importance of acting responsibly, not only for personal good, but for the overall balance of the cosmos.

Today, Andean ethics offers a viable alternative to the Western ethical model, which often focuses on individualism and maximizing economic profit (Beauclair, 2013). In contrast, Andean morality promotes a collective approach, where the well-being of the individual is linked to that of the community and the environment (Yacasi Ccalluhuanca, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of climate change and the global ecological crisis, where the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources has had devastating consequences. Higher education, especially in the training of future educators, has a crucial role in the transmission and practice of these values, which could contribute to the construction of a more just and sustainable society (Santos Rego et al., 2021).

Andean ethics is also based on the dignity of the human being, understood not as an individual attribute, but as part of a cosmic whole (Terán, 2015). This conception is opposed to the anthropocentric vision of the world, which places the human being at the center of the universe, and proposes a relationship of equality and complementarity among all beings (Quintanilla Guevara et al., 2025). In this sense, Andean morality establishes a vision of justice that is not measured by individual criteria, but by collective and cosmic authenticity (Berríos-Campos, 2020). Justice, in this context, implies a harmonious and respectful coexistence with all forms of life, recognizing the interdependence between human beings, animals, plants and Pachamama.

In Andean communities, rituals and ceremonies have as their main objective reconciliation with natural forces, seeking to restore balance and reciprocity with the earth (Jara et al., 2018). The lack of reciprocity is seen as the cause of natural disasters and other calamities, which reinforces the idea that human actions have cosmic consequences (Polo Santillán, 2019). This vision of ethics as a system of meaningful relationships highlights the importance of responsibility and respect for the environment, values that are fundamental in education and that can be applied in the modern context to foster a citizenship more committed to sustainable development.

The methodological approach was descriptive, with the aim of obtaining a detailed understanding of the characteristics and properties of the knowledge and practice of Andean moral values in the population

studied. To achieve this purpose, a cross-sectional non-experimental design was used, since the research focused on analyzing the values at a single time point in the year 2024, without manipulating the study variables. This approach allowed obtaining a clear and detailed vision of the validity of Andean moral principles in the university educational context.

The research was qualitative, since it sought to understand the experiences, beliefs and practices of the students in relation to Andean morality, using the interview as a tool for data collection. The results obtained were analyzed in an interpretative way, highlighting the trends and emerging patterns in the responses, which allowed identifying the Andean values that the students recognize and apply in their daily lives.

The sample of this research was composed of 10 students from the National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga (Peru). This population was selected with the purpose of exploring in depth the perceptions and practices related to Andean values within the university context, with a particular focus on how these ethical principles are manifested in students who are being trained as future professionals. It was also approved by the ethics committee.

### Significant connection with Andean moral values

The results obtained show that most of the university students interviewed maintain a significant connection with Andean moral values, such as ama suwa (not stealing), ama qilla (not being idle) and ama llulla (not lying), which they continue to practice in their daily lives, both individually and collectively. These values are mainly manifested in the behavior and interpersonal relationships of the students, which suggests that Andean morality continues to be an important reference for them, despite the predominant influence of Western morality in their university and social environment (Figure 1).

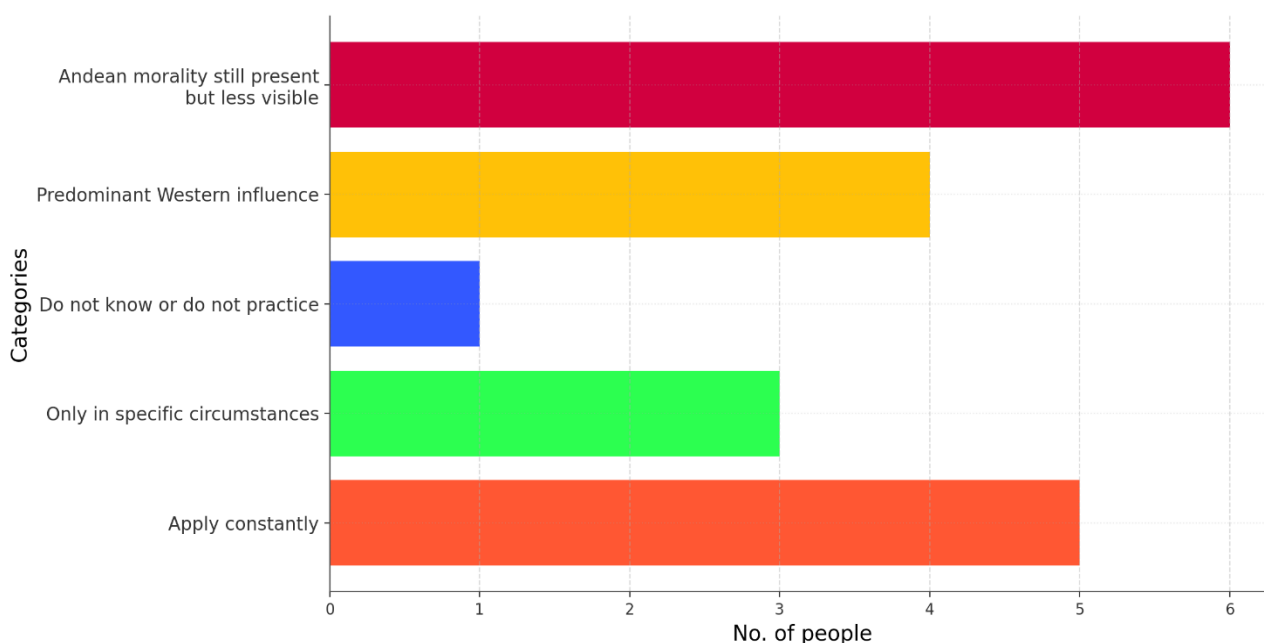


Figure 1. Practice of Andean moral values in the interviewees.

Source. Own elaboration with data from the interview.

Although a considerable part of the students claim to practice these values consistently, a smaller percentage indicated that they apply them only in certain circumstances of their lives, mainly within their family and community. This finding suggests that, although Andean morality is present in the consciousness of students, its practice may be mediated by the context and the specific situations in which they find themselves. This could reflect the tensions that students experience in trying to integrate these traditional values with the demands of contemporary society, where Western and capitalist principles have a strong presence.

A small group of students, on the other hand, indicated that they did not know or practice Andean values in their daily lives, which could be related to the assimilation of values from Western morality, especially in the context of higher education. However, despite the presence of these isolated cases, the overall results reflect that, in most cases, Andean values remain an essential component in the way students relate to their

family and social environment. This phenomenon suggests that, although Western morality is strongly rooted in society, Andean morality has not disappeared, but continues to be in force in everyday practices, although in a less visible or explicit way.

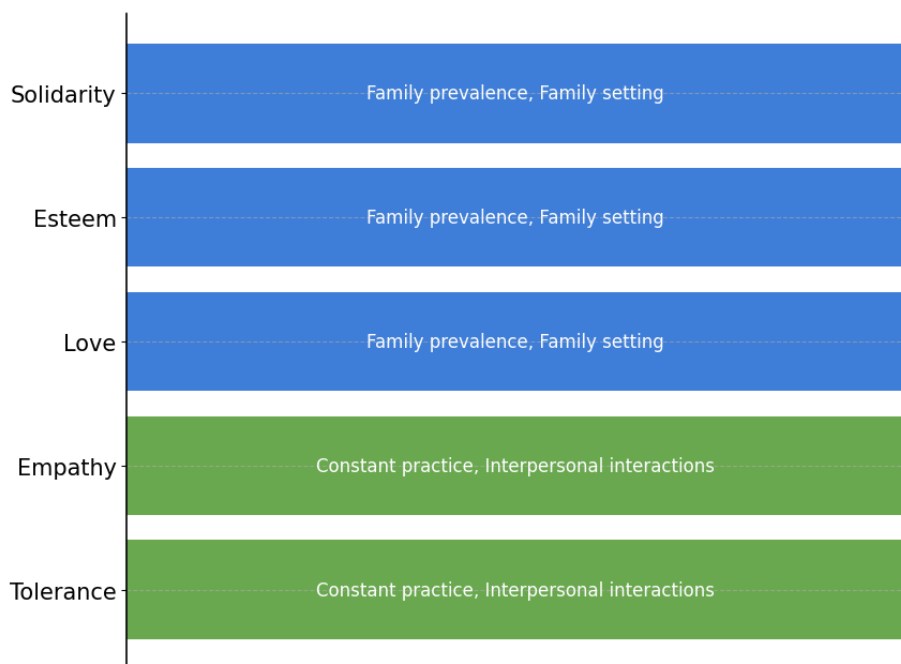
In Figure 1, the results obtained reveal that Andean moral values retain a significant presence in the lives of most of the university students interviewed. As Balarezo and Ricardo (2019) highlight, this morality based on reciprocity, complementarity, and relationality remains an important pillar in the worldview of indigenous peoples, regulating not only human interactions, but also relationships with nature.

However, some student interviewees pointed out that these values are applied only in specific contexts, such as in their families and communities, which indicates a practice mediated by the demands of contemporary society. Avendaño Castro and Guacaneme Pineda (2016) underline that this tension reflects the challenge of integrating traditional values with a neoliberal system that prioritizes individualism. In this sense, young people from rural Andean areas, as bearers of a diverse cultural heritage, could play a key role in the construction of a society that is more supportive and respectful of the environment, promoting the recovery of these ethical principles in education and social life.

Although a small group of students do not know or practice Andean values, most continue to integrate them into their daily lives, especially in their family and social relationships. This indicates that, despite the strong influence of Western morality, Andean ethical principles have not disappeared, but remain a significant, if less visible, component in daily practices. According to Ortiz Millán (2016) and Zuluaga Torres (2023), reflection on ethics and values is essential to understand social dynamics, and in the Andean case, this integral ethics transcends the human, connecting with nature and the cosmos (Beauclair, 2013). This holistic approach not only strengthens community ties, but also offers ethical alternatives to the current hegemonic model, proposing a vision of balance and respect that contrasts with the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

### Moral values in your interpersonal relationships

Figure 2 shows that a large majority of students consistently practice the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy in their interpersonal relationships, both within their family and in their community. These young people consider respect to be a fundamental principle in all spheres of their social life, and they have internalized the importance of being tolerant and empathetic towards others. According to their responses, this behavior is an integral part of their daily interaction, suggesting that the values of harmonious coexistence and mutual understanding are strongly present in their social environment.



**Figure 2.** Values practiced and their degree of application.

Source. Own elaboration with data from the interview.

However, there is also a group of students who state that the practice of these values is not always constant and depends on the circumstances of the context. This could indicate that while respect, tolerance, and empathy are important ideals for them, social pressures or personal situations can influence how they put them into practice. Despite this, none of the students claimed to practice disrespectful or intolerant behaviors, suggesting that even in more challenging situations, respect and empathy are still valued, even if their application may be more limited.

Regarding family dynamics, most students report that an atmosphere of love, esteem, and solidarity prevails in their homes, which is reflected in the cohesion of the family and the community. These values not only strengthen family ties, but also promote collective well-being, contributing to the unity of the community. Despite the fact that some mention that the practice of these values of esteem and friendship is not always constant, there is still a strong sense of unity and understanding in homes and communities, which reinforces the idea that mutual respect and solidarity are essential pillars of social life in these contexts.

In the Andean vision, mutual respect and empathy are not only individual principles, but are essential for the collective well-being and balance of the cosmos (Campohermoso et al., 2015; Zenteno Brun, 2009). This approach seems to be reflected in the responses of young people, who consider these values as fundamental for harmonious coexistence within their family and community. The constant practice of these principles in their daily interactions can be interpreted as a reflection of the importance that these students attribute to the common welfare, in line with the practices of reciprocity and solidarity that are typical of Andean communities (Calvo, 2020).

However, the fact that a group of students indicates that the application of these values is not always constant and depends on the circumstances suggests that, as in Andean teachings, the values of respect and empathy can be influenced by contextual factors. In Andean ethics, although reciprocity and respect are central principles, the complexity of human relationships is also recognized, which can be affected by external challenges or social pressures (Calvo, 2020). The practice of these values in challenging situations, although more limited, still underscores the importance of maintaining respect and empathy, reflecting an understanding of ethics as an ideal that, although not always applied perfectly, remains fundamental to the well-being of the community and the balance of the cosmic order (Zenteno Brun, 2009).

Most students' homes are dominated by an environment of love, esteem and solidarity, values that strengthen family ties and promote community cohesion. Although some point to an inconsistent practice of these principles, a strong sense of togetherness and understanding persists that underscores the importance of mutual respect and solidarity as the foundations of social life. According to Beauclair (2013) and Yacasi Ccalluhuanca (2022), this Andean ethic, focused on collective well-being and connection with the community and the environment, contrasts with the individualism of the Western model, offering an especially relevant alternative to the current ecological crises. In this context, Santos Rego et al. (2021) highlight the key role of higher education, particularly in the training of future educators, to transmit and apply these values in the construction of a more equitable and sustainable society.

## Deep connection and respect for nature

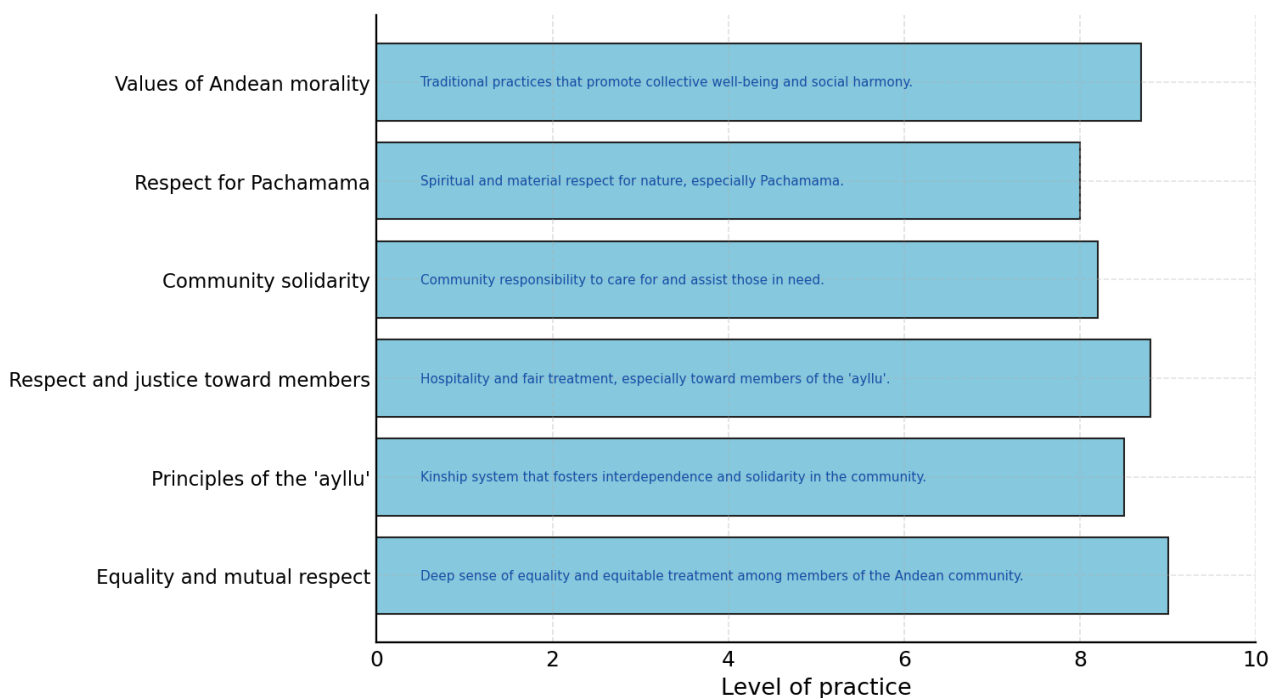
In Figure 3, the students interviewed show a deep connection and respect for nature, considering the earth as a sacred and protective entity. Most of the participants say that nature is essential for their existence, as it is seen as the source of life that provides everything necessary for human beings, from food to air and water. This perspective reveals an Andean vision of reciprocity, in which human beings are not owners of natural resources, but children of the earth, with the responsibility to protect and preserve it. Respect for mother earth is deeply rooted in her worldview, where elements such as wind, fire, earth and water are considered manifestations of her body and spirit, reinforcing the idea of the interdependence between human beings and nature.

On the other hand, although most students maintain a vision of harmony with nature, some recognize that the influence of scientific and technological rationality has modified their traditional practices, such as the 'pagapu'<sup>1</sup> or dispatch to mother earth, which some no longer perform on a regular basis. This shift reflects the tension between the traditional Andean worldview and the demands of modernity, in which the spiritual relationship with nature has been partly replaced by a more pragmatic and scientific approach. However, a feeling of respect and admiration for nature as a deity still persists, with many students indicating that in

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<sup>1</sup> It is a ritual act in which a tribute is offered to the Wamani, Pachamama or other Andean deities, through the delivery of an offering.

special situations they still resort to rituals or symbolic gestures to express their gratitude and protection towards the earth.



**Figure 3.** Andean values and principles practiced by university students.

Source. Own elaboration with data from the interview.

The students' relationship with nature is also characterized by a sense of collective responsibility. Most of the interviewees state that nature gives them everything they need, and that it is their duty to care for and protect it to ensure future well-being. The criticism of multinationals and their destructive practices towards the environment is evident, since the students recognize that the deterioration of the earth is mainly caused by the excessive exploitation of natural resources. In this context, most of the participants underline the importance of living in harmony with nature, taking care of the environment and acting consciously to avoid damage. This vision demonstrates a strong ecological awareness that connects with Andean traditions of respect and care for mother earth.

The students interviewed indicate that in Andean communities there is still a deep sense of equality and mutual respect among their members. Most students note that, in their communities, everyone is treated equally, with no one considered superior or inferior. This feeling of unity and equity is based on the conception of the 'ayllu'<sup>2</sup>, a social and kinship system that emphasizes interdependence and solidarity among its members. For students, this principle of equality is vital to maintaining social harmony, as they are all united by a common tradition, culture, territory, and family relationships. However, some mention that equality does not always extend to all aspects of community life, suggesting that in certain contexts equity may be perceived partially.

Regarding respect and justice, the students emphasize that in their communities an attitude of hospitality and friendly treatment prevails, especially towards the members of the 'ayllu'. Respecting the customs of the people is seen as a fundamental principle, and most of the interviewees emphasize the importance of treating others with justice and respect, thus reflecting a profound conception of human rights. This respect extends to both material and spiritual aspects, with the Pachamama being considered a protective figure that does not cause harm to the human being. This fair treatment not only refers to mutual respect between individuals, but also to the recognition that the community has a responsibility to care for and assist those in need, in an act of constant solidarity and cooperation.

Students who come from rural areas of Ayacucho and other areas of Andean influence are the ones who most identify with Andean morality, and their daily practices reflect the traditional values of the community.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'ayllu' refers to a social organization based on kinship ties, a common origin and collective property, closely linked to a specific territory.

These values include honesty, solidarity, and justice, with a marked difference from the individual and selfish values found in other cultures. Andean morality, which promotes collective well-being and social harmony, is still in force in the daily practices of the students, who not only respect conjugal fidelity, but also understand the importance of living in harmony and collaborating with each other. In this way, Andean morality continues to be a fundamental pillar that guides behavior and relationships in the community, reflecting a deeply interconnected vision between individuals, the community, and nature.

Andean ethics, based on the dignity of the human being as an integral part of a cosmic whole, offers a vision of justice based on collective and cosmic authenticity (Terán, 2015; Berríos-Campos, 2020). This perspective opposes the anthropocentric approach of modernity, proposing a relationship of equality and complementarity between human beings, animals, plants and Pachamama. The students interviewed reflect this vision by recognizing nature as a sacred and protective entity, an essential source of life and sustenance. Their worldview of reciprocity, where humans are not owners but children of the earth, reinforces the deep respect for the natural elements, considered manifestations of the body and spirit of mother earth. This spiritual bond underlines the interdependence between living beings and their environment, consolidating an ecological awareness based on traditional values.

However, students also identify tensions between the Andean worldview and the demands of modernity. The influence of scientific and technological rationality has led to the decline of traditional practices such as 'pagapu' or dispatch to mother earth, although in special situations many still resort to ritual gestures to express gratitude to nature. This change reflects a process of adaptation where respect for the land persists, accompanied by criticism of the destructive practices of multinationals and the excessive exploitation of natural resources. In this context, students emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature, promoting environmental protection as a collective responsibility that connects ancestral traditions with contemporary needs for sustainability and ecological justice.

The results highlight that in Andean communities there is still a strong sense of equality and mutual respect, based on the conception of the 'ayllu', a social system based on interdependence and solidarity. This principle of unity, according to the students, is essential to maintain social harmony, since all members share traditions, culture and territory. Although some mention that equity is not always applied in all aspects of community life, fair and respectful treatment remains a central value, especially towards the members of the 'ayllu'. As Jara et al. (2018) and Polo Santillán (2019) point out, this ethic of reciprocity also extends to the care of nature, where rituals seek to restore balance with Pachamama, seen as a protective figure. This approach highlights not only respect between individuals, but also collective responsibility towards the environment, offering an ethical model applicable to sustainable development in the contemporary context.

## Conclusion

Andean moral values, such as ama suwa, ama qilla, and ama llulla, continue to be a significant reference for most of the university students interviewed, who apply them both in their personal lives and in their interpersonal relationships. These values remain present in the students' consciousness, despite the growing influence of Western morality in their academic and social environment. However, it is also observed that the practice of these values can be conditioned by context, as some students apply them mainly within their family or community, reflecting the tensions they experience when trying to integrate these traditions with the demands of contemporary society.

Students consistently practice the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy, both in their family life and in their community. These young people consider these values as fundamental principles in their interpersonal relationships and have internalized them as an integral part of their daily behavior. The presence of these values in their social environment prevails ideals of harmonious coexistence and mutual understanding, which contributes to strengthening relationships within the family and the community. However, it is also observed that some students mention that the practice of these values is not always constant and depends on the context and circumstances, reflecting how social pressures and personal situations can influence their application.

They highlight the importance of equality and mutual respect in their communities, based on the concept of the 'ayllu', which promotes interdependence and solidarity. Most participants consider it essential to treat all members of the community equally, although some point out that equity does not always extend to all

aspects of community life, suggesting that perceptions of equality may be situational. This principle of equality, combined with respect for customs and hospitality, reinforces a vision of justice that extends to solidarity with those most in need, both in material and spiritual terms.

## Data availability

The data of the study are available and can be requested from this email [lucio.rojas@unsch.edu.pe](mailto:lucio.rojas@unsch.edu.pe) will be answered.

## Acknowledgements

This research was funded by Prociencia - Concytec- Peru. within the framework of the PE501096544-2025 project.

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#### Note:

Author(s) were responsible for the conception, analysis and interpretation of the data; writing and critical review of the content of the manuscript and also approval of the final version to be published.

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#### Evaluation Rounds

Three invitations; Two opinions received

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