



Moral Judgement of Elementary School Students in Sikkim

Mr. Uday Modak

Assistant Professor, Bhavan's Tripura College of Teacher Education (BTCTE), Narasingarh, Agartala, Tripura
udaymodak8116@gmail.com

Abstract: *The word moral comes from the Latin word 'Mors', which means custom or practice or a way of accomplishing things. Therefore, it has come to mean 'belonging to manners and conduct of men' or 'pertaining to right and wrong, good in conduct'. Morality is the conformity to the moral code of social group. It is the internalization of a set of values, virtues, and ideas sanctioned by the society which becomes an integral part of the individual self through the process of development. It is considered a sum total of an individual's way of behaving which is judged in terms of ethical rightness or wrongness. Hence the ability to make moral judgement plays an important facet of the total development of the child. Moral judgement involves the cognitive capacity and insight to see the relationship between the abstract principle and concrete cases and judge the situations as right or wrong, keeping in view the knowledge of moral standards.*

The theory which most directly inspired the research on moral judgement has been that of Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget(1928, 1932) who endeavoured to interpret the child's concept of moral rules. He attempted to test children's moral judgement towards intentional and unintentional wrong-doing and described six types of moral thoughts which appeared in children of different age groups. More recently, studies on moral judgement have been conducted by Kohlberg(1968), in which he asked the children to judge the morality of conduct as described in the stories.

Keywords: *Moral, Moral Judgement, Morality, Values.*

1.0 Introduction:

Different Educational Commissions and committees in our country have expressed their deep concern over the declining values in human activities and emphasized on providing value-oriented education. The National Policy on Education-1986 has categorically stated "The growing concern over erosion of essential values has brought to focus the need for readjustment in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of moral and social values". The Education Commission of 1964-66 has noted, "A serious defect in the school curriculum is the absence of provision for education in social, moral and spiritual values. In the life of the majority of Indians, religion is a great motivating force and is intimately bound up with the formation of character and inculcation of ethical values. A national system of education related to life needs and aspirations of the people cannot afford to ignore this purposeful force". Thus concerns are being expressed to inculcate right moral values in our present generation.

1.1 Review of Related Literature:

Tirri (1993) in her investigation on the moral concerns and orientations of 6th grade (N =100) and 9th grade (N =94) Finnish boys and girls students found that boys and girls differ in their main moral orientations in solving moral conflicts. The girls were shown to be more care oriented and emphatic. The girls differed from the boys in their reflection on the meanings of the conflicts in a broader context of life.

Baek (2002) conducted a study to find the moral reasoning of the students as influenced by their age and culture. A total of 128 Korean and British children aged 7-16 years were interviewed individually using Kohlberg's moral dilemmas from Form A. The study concluded with the passing of age, the children were able to take moral decision in a mature manner but for culture, it was concluded that Kohlberg's system could be used to examine British children's general moral stage but was insufficient to understand fully Korean children's moral reasoning.

Edwards (2006) carried out an investigation to ascertain how seven hundred children aged seven to fifteen (half boys and half girls), acquired the ability to define certain moral concepts, how they decided on whether an action was right or wrong, and what influenced the acquisition process. The samples claimed that their regular participation in church with family members had been a major influence in acquiring moral concepts.

Farhat (2008) with the purpose to study the moral reasoning of 10-11 year old Nigerian children (n=37), employed the Socio-moral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF; Gibbs, Basinger & Fuller, 1992). The results indicated that the Nigerian children scored significantly lower on the SRM-SF. The Nigerian 'moral atmosphere' was suggested as the cause of this result due a greater reliance on unquestioning obedience to religious principles or external authority.

Mohanty (2008) focused on development of moral judgement in elementary school children in relation to their home environment, socio-economic status of family and levels of intelligence. The study found a significant difference in moral judgement of children in relation to gender, type of school (religious/non-religious), and home environment. In terms of intelligence variable with development of moral judgment, a high positive relationship was found.

Gupta and Puja (2010) carried out an investigation to study the moral judgment ability of pre-adolescents (9-11 years) of public school of Yamunanager, Haryana. Their sample consisted of 200 children, 100 of which were in the age group of 8 -9 years and 100 in the age group of 10-11 years. Sex ratio was also maintained. Results revealed a significant difference in the moral judgment ability between two groups with older children (10-11 years) scoring higher than younger ones (8-9 years). The results suggested that maturity is a necessary (through not sufficient) condition for development of moral judgment ability. Gender showed a negligible impact on moral judgment ability of the child.

Kaloom et al. (2012) conducted a study with the main objectives to investigate the moral reasoning of adolescent boys and girls with reference to responsibility orientation versus justice orientation and to compare the frequency of adolescent boys and girls with right orientation and responsibility orientation. The sample of study consisted of 40 boys and 40 girls selected applying random sampling technique. The scale developed by Baker and Role (2002) was used. The main conclusions of the study were that adolescent girls found to be more care oriented than boys, however, they were found to be equal on justice oriented. It was also inferred that religion is the most important factor which influence the moral judgment and justice oriented approach of boys and girls.

1.2 Major Findings of the Reviews:

- Religion has been found to be a major influence on the moral decision of the children.

- With regard to gender difference, it was found that girls are more care oriented than boys who are more justice oriented.
- The girls differed from the boys in their reflection on the meanings of the conflicts in a broader context of life.
- Type of school (run by religious/non-religious organisations) also influenced the moral judgement ability of the students.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

UNESCO report (1972), the International Commission on the Development of Education, rightly named its report as “Learning to be” which shows worldwide efforts or revival of the interest in a kind of education leading “to be” – to be a better person. In ancient India, the concept of Education was “*Sa-vidya-ya-vimuktaya*” means learning or education is that which liberates or makes the person to be liberated. Thus emphasizes on “to be” or ‘to be a liberated person’. Unfortunately in modern age, education got influenced by materialistic and outward ideas, resulting into degeneration of age old good values. This calls for the immediate need for understanding how moral development of the children takes place so that accordingly appropriate value education can be provided and help them become ‘liberated persons’.

There is a necessity of inculcating values in young learners and consolidating them through curricula and school practices. The ‘National Curriculum Framework for School Education’(NCF), brought out by NCERT in 2000 & 2005 respectively, have put considerable emphasis on value development through education throughout the schooling years right from elementary stage to higher secondary stage.

The children at elementary stage are most receptive. This is the crucial period when ability to make right judgment can be inculcated in them by schools, teachers and most importantly parents and this fact emphasizes the need for studying the moral decision making ability of the children. A synoptic review of the above mentioned studies such as by Tirri (1993) Edwards (2006), Farhat (2008), Mohanty (2008) Gupta and Puja, (2010), Kalsoom et al. (2012), revealed that gender, type of school and religious affiliation influence the moral decision abilities of the children. Hence, the investigator in the present study aims to explore moral judgement ability of elementary school students through the following research questions:

- Are students of Sikkim at elementary level able to make moral judgement adequately?
- Is there any difference in ability of moral judgement due to gender, type of school and religious affiliation variations?

In order to find answers to the above questions the present study is being undertaken and will be entitled as below:

1.4 Statement of the Problem:

‘Moral Judgement of Elementary School Students in Sikkim’.

1.5 Objectives of the Study:

- To study the moral judgement of elementary school students of Sikkim and categorize them under differential levels of ability to make moral decisions.
- To find significant difference in the moral judgement of elementary school students of Sikkim in relation to gender, and type of management variations.

1.6 Statement of Hypotheses:

HO1:The scores of elementary school students of Sikkim on Moral judgement will not be normally distributed.

HO2: There will be no statistically significant difference in the ability of moral judgement of elementary school students in relation to gender variation.

HO3: There will be no statistically significant difference in the ability of moral judgement of elementary school students in relation to type of school management variation.

1.7 Operational definition of the Terms used:

Moral Judgement: Moral judgement here refers to the ability to evaluate the situations and moral issues as right or wrong keeping in view the knowledge of moral standards based on the following fourteen cardinal values prevalent in Indian culture- 'ahimsa, duty, respect, betrayal of faith, purity, forgiveness, greed, anger, virtue, lie, revenge, stealing, truth and sin.'(Sinha and verma, 2005)

Elementary School Students:Elementary school students here refer to the children studying in class VI to VIII from the four schools in Sikkim.

Type of School Management: It refers to the general schools being run by govt. and other schools being managed by some religious groups.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study:

The study will be delimited to finding moral judgment ability of one hundred students from only four schools of Gangtok, Sikkim due to time constraint.

2.0 Methodology and Procedure:

2.1 Research Design:

The present study aims to investigate moral judgement of elementary school students. It will be a descriptive study using survey design.

2.2 Sample:

The population of the study will include all the students of classes VI to VIII studying in different schools of Gangtok town of Sikkim. A sample of 100 students will be selected out of this total population using random sampling technique.

2.3 Tool to be used:

Moral Judgement Test (Late Durganand Sinha and Dr. Meera Verma, 2005): The test is developed by Sinha and Verma (2005) and standardized on Indian sample. This test has been constructed on the model of a general intelligence test in which items on reasoning, discrimination, analogies and best moral answer have been included. It is a self-administering test which consists of fifty items on which the child has to take moral decisions, group moral contexts in the statements, work out the relationships between words with moral connotations, evaluate a given piece of action, use logical reasoning in moral problems and select the appropriate definitions of moral values. The split half reliability for the test by applying Spearman-Brown formula was found to be .93. .

2.4 Techniques of Data-Analysis:

Data will be collected using questionnaire tool. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be adopted for the interpretation of the scores in relation to the objectives stated and hypotheses formulated.

2.5 Procedure:

- Problem will be selected.
- Related reviews from previous studies will be collected.
- Sample will be selected using appropriate sampling techniques.
- Tool will be administered on the sample and data will be collected.
- Scoring as per manual will be done and a data sheet will be prepared.
- Data will be organized in tables and graphs.
- Appropriate statistical analysis as per objectives and hypotheses will be adopted.
- Interpretation and discussion of the findings will be done in the light of previous studies.
- Results of the study will be reported with implications for teachers, educationists, policy planners. Recommendations for further study for future researchers will also be given at the end.

3.0 Results and Discussions:

The data will be organised and analysis will be done using appropriate statistical techniques mentioned below. Major findings will be stated as per the objectives and hypotheses formulated for the study. Interpretation of the findings will be done. The study results will be discussed in the context of previous studies done by other researchers.

3.1 Data Organisation

The data collected will be scored and organised in tables, and figures according to variables considered for the study.

3.2 Statistical Analysis:

Both descriptive and inferential measures would be adopted as per objectives stated and hypotheses formulated. Descriptive measures of central tendency, measures of variation and percentile scores will be calculated for each variable. 't' test would be done to find the significant differences if any in relation to gender and type of school variations.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion:

At the end, summary and conclusions of the results will be made. Recommendations and implications suggesting future action as a result of the present study will be given. It may be said that above discussion "Moral Judgement of Elementary School students in Sikkim"-is meaningful and significant.

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