
"A Study on Moral Judgement Ability of Pre-adolescent Children (9-11 Year) of Public Schools."



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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to study the moral judgment ability of pre-adolescent (9-11 years) of public school of Yamunanagar.

Moral judgment involves a cognitive capacity to define situation in terms of right and duties. Pre-adolescent can see themselves better from other people's view and thus develop awareness for moral issues. The 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. Moral judgment was measured by Moral judgment Test developed by Meera Verma and Durga Nand Sinha. 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), suggesting that maturity is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for development of moral judgment ability. Various antecedent conditions to morality were also studied among which mothers' and fathers' education was found to have a paramount effect on children's moral judgment. But gender shows a negligible impact on moral judgment ability of the child.

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental question that remains the starting point for any consideration of morality is: What is the meaning of morality? It is generally agreed that morality implies a capacity to;

- (a) distinguish right from wrong -
- (b) act on these distinctions
- (c) experience pride in virtuous conduct

and guilt and shame over acts that violate one's standards.

Thus, morality which is defined as the sum total of an individual's way of behaving that is judged through person's ethical rightness or wrongness refers to how human beings come to resolve discrepancies between their self-centered egoistic needs and obligations to act in favor

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The ability to make moral judgment play and important role in the development of morality. Moral judgment involves a cognitive capacity to define situation in terms of rights and duties. It is the ability to evaluate the situations and moral issues as right or wrong keeping in view the knowledge of moral standards.

Developmental theorizing and research have centered on the 3 moral components:

- An affective, or emotional, component that consists of the feelings (guilt,

concern for other feelings) that surround right or wrong actions and that motivate moral thoughts and actions.

- A cognitive component that centers on the way we conceptualize right and wrong and make decisions about how to behave.
- A behavioral component that reflects how we actually behave when we experience the temptation to lie, cheater or violate other moral rules.

1.2 The Cognitive Component of Moral Development:

S. No.	Character Dimension	Sample traits
1	Principle - Idealistic	Clear values, concerned about doing right, highly development conscience, law abiding.
2	Dependable - loyal	Responsible, loyal, reliable faithful, honorable.
3.	Has integrity	Consistent, rational, hard working.
4.	Caring-Trustworthy	Honest, trustful, sincere, kind, considerate.
5.	Fair	Virtuous, fair, just.
6.	Confident	Strong, self assured self confident.

Cognitive develop mentalists study morality by examining the development of moral reasoning that children display when deciding whether various acts are right or wrong. According to cognitive theorists, both cognitive growth social experiences help children to develop progressively richer understandings of the meaning of rules, laws and interpersonal obligations. As children acquire these new understandings, they are said to progress through an invariant sequence of moral stages, each of which evolves from and replaces its predecessor

and represents a more advanced or mature perspective on moral issues.

Piagetian Concept of Moral Judgment:

Piaget formulated a stage theory of moral development that includes a pre moral period and two moral stages.

The Pre-moral Period:

According to Piaget, preschool children show little concern for awareness of rules. They seem to make up their own rules.

1) Heteronomous Morality:

Between the ages of 5 and 10, the child develops a strong respect for rules as they enter Piaget's stage of Heteronomous Morality (Heteronomous means under the rule of another). Children now believe that rules are laid down by powerful authority figures such as God, the police, or their parents and they think that these regulations are sacred and unalterable. Heteronomous children think of rules as moral absolutes.

2) Autonomous Morality :

By age 10 or 11, most children have reached Piaget's second moral stage i.e. autonomous morality. These children now realize that social rules are arbitrary agreements that can be challenged and even changed with the consent of the people they govern.

But is moral reasoning fully developed by age 10 to 11, as Piaget had assumed? Lawrence Kohlberg Certainly didn't think so.

1.3 Kohlberg's View on Moral Judgment:

Kohlberg has refined and extended Piaget's theory. He discovered that moral development extends for beyond Piaget's autonomous stage, becoming increasingly complex throughout adolescence and into young adulthood. Like Piaget, Kohlberg assumes that each succeeding stage evolves from and replaces its predecessor; once the individual has attained a higher stage of moral reasoning, he or she should never regress to earlier stages.

The basic themes and defining characteristics of Kohlberg's 3 moral levels and six stages are as follows -

Level 1:-Pre-conventional Morality:

Rules are truly external to the self rather than internalized. The child conforms to rules imposed by authority figures to avoid punishment or obtain personal rewards. Morality is self - serving: what is right is what one can get away with or what is personally satisfying.

Stage 1: Punishment - and - Obedience Orientation:

The goodness or badness of an act depends on its consequences. The child obeys authorities to avoid punishment. The greater the harm done or the more severe the punishment, the more, "bad" the act is.

Stage 2: Naïve Hedonism:

A person at this stage conforms to rules in order to gain rewards or satisfies personal objectives.

Level 2: Conventional Morality: -

The individual now strives to obey rules and social norms in order to win other's approval or to maintain social order. Social praise and the avoidance of blame have now replaced tangible rewards and punishments as motivators of ethical conduct.

Stage 1:"Good Boy" or "Good Girl" Orientation

Moral is behaviors that which please, helps or is approved of by other.

People are often judged by their intentions.

Stage 4: Social - Order - Maintaining Morality

At this stage, the individual considers the perspectives of the generalized other that is, the will of society as reflected in law. Now what is right is what confirms to the rules of legal authority.

Level 3: Post conventional (or Principled) Morality

A person at this highest level of moral reasoning defines right and wrong in terms of broad principles of justice that could conflict with written laws or with the dictates of authority figures.

Stage 1: At this stage the individual views laws as instruments for expressing the will of the majority and furthering human welfare. Laws that are impartially applied are viewed as social contracts that one has obligation to follow but imposed laws that compromise human rights are considered unjust and worthy of challenge.

Stage 2: Morality of Individual Principles of Conscience:

At this highest moral stage, the individual defines right and wrong on the basis of self-chosen ethical principles of his or her own conscience. They are abstract moral guidelines or principles of universal justice.

1.4 IMPACT OF PARENTING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL JUDGEMENT ABILITY:

The child gets the first idea of right and wrong from his parents. There is also an important cognitive component to parents' interaction with their children that may facilitate children's moral development, Parents are centrally important by virtue of their concern with their affective relationship with their child, and their ability to provide the types of interactions that facilitate moral Judgment.

Moral Judgment is generally affected by disciplinary techniques that parents actually use. Three major approaches are: -

- (1) Love withdrawal: A form of discipline in which an adult withhold attention, affection, or approval in order to modify or control a child's behavior.
- (2) Power Assertion: A form of discipline which an adult relies on his or her superior power to modify or control a child's behavior.
- (3). Induction: Explaining why a behavior is wrong and should be changed by emphasizing how it affects other people, often suggesting how the child might repair any harm done.

Parents with inductive discipline are more effective for various reasons. First, it provides children with cognitive standard (or rationales) to evaluate their conduct. Second, this form of discipline helps children to sympathy with children and allows parents to talk about such moral affects as pride, guilt and shame.

So induction may be an effective method

of moral socialization because it calls attention to the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of morality.

An approval of studies reveals that the ability of moral Judgment passes through a developmental phase which follows a progressive increase for judging in terms of internal purposes, norms and value. This occurs in predictable stages related to stages in intellectual development. As children's ability to perceive change, they move into a higher level of moral development.

In view of the above, the present study has been planned with the objective to study the impact of age difference, gender, parents education for learning moral Judgment ability.

1.5 MORAL JUDGEMENT IN PRE-ADOLESCENCE PERIOD:

Every child goes through an invariant series of stages of growth and development. The development at theorists maintained that children do not make sound moral judgment unit which, shed egocentric thinking and attain a certain level of maturity.

Pre-adolescence stage is the period of middle years broadly from 8-12 years, constitutes a period in which important development takes place moral behavior. A sense of reciprocity and equality appears. With growing social awareness appears a sense of justice.

Because the pre-adolescence are less e go-centric than younger children they can see

themselves better from other people's view points and are more sensitive to what others think of then.

A child in late childhood years adopts a very concrete perspective on moral issues. To reach the stage of moral reasoning and become concerned about living up to the standards of morality, he must be capable of taking other people's perspective. As the children at this stage are able to think logically and rationally, they can easily take up the other person's perspective

1.6 OBJECTIVES:

Bearing in mind all the points discussed, the present study focuses on the following objectives:

- i) To study the moral judgment of respondents.
- ii) To study the impact of age on moral judgment.
- iii) To study the effect of gender on moral judgment.
- iv) To study the effect of parents' education on moral judgment.

1.7 HYPOTHESES:

- i) There will be a significant difference in moral judgment ability of 9-10 years and 10-11 years age groups.
- ii) There will be no significant difference in moral judgment of boys and girls.
- iii) There will be a significant difference in moral judgment ability regarding parents' education.

1.8 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Nature of Sample:-

The sample for the study consisted of 200 students in the age group 8-11 years. The sample further comprised of 100 children in 8-9 years age group and 100 in 10-11 years age group. The ratio between boys and girls was also maintained in each

category i.e. 50 boys and 50 girls in each age group.

Research Design:

When more than one independent variable is included in a study, a factorial design is necessary. By using 2 x 2 factorial design the researcher has studied the significant impact of gender and age.

Total No. of Respondents

1.9 TOOLS USED:

General- Information Performa:

A General Information Performa was prepared to gather general information about the respondent. For this, various variables were studied and the following variables were selected in the final Performa.

Measurement of Moral Judgment:

For measuring moral judgment ability, a standardized test developed by Meera Verma and Durganand Sinha(1967) was used. The moral judgment was taken and dependent variable which is assessed by "Moral Judgment Test". The test has been constructed for children of 6-11 years of age.

Table - 2
General Information Performa

1.	Age	Age refers to appropriate age of respondents in years at the time of data collection. For the present study two age groups were taken i.e. 8 -9 years age group and 10-11 years age group.
2.	Gender	Gender refers to the sex of respondent i.e. male of female.
3.	Educational Status of parents	It refers to appropriate qualification of respondent's parents i.e. below graduate, graduate, above graduate or belonging to some professional group.
4.	SES	Socio-economic status here, refers to income level of the respondent' s families i.e. high income group, middle income group and low income group.

It has 50 items (Appendix-ii) under six categories as given below:

1.10 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Age Group	N	FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION FOR SELECTED VARIABLES
8-9 Years	100	For the mother's education category the tables were reversed as 42 mothers of the older age group were below graduates and only 38 were graduates and 20 were post-graduates, while 44 mothers of the younger age bracket were graduates, 24 were post-
10-11 Years	100	
(i) Discrimination:		
(ii) Incomplete Sentences:		
(iii) Analogies:		
(iv) Best Moral Answer:		
(v) Moral Reasoning:		
(vi) Definition:		

Table-3 indicates that there was an equal distribution of respondents in both 8-9 years and 10-11 years age groups i.e.100 in each age group.

Frequency Distribution of Respondents according to their Age.

Table-4 indicates that equal proportion of boys and girls, in each category was maintained through out the study. In both age groups there were 50 boys and 50 girls

Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their Sex

Table-5 indicates that father of 10-11 year olds were better educated than the father of 8-9 year olds as majority of them were graduates (42) or post-graduated (28). Whereas only 38 fathers of 8-9 year olds were graduates and 40 of these were below graduates.

Educational Status	Father		Mother	
	8-9 yrs. Children	10-11 yrs Children	8-9 Children	10-11 yrs. Children
Below Graduate	40	30	32	42
Graduate	38	42	44	38
Post Graduate	22	28	24	20

Frequency Distribution of Respondent According to their parents' Education.

graduates and only 32 were below graduates.

For the mothers' education category the table were reversed as 42 mothers of the older age group were below graduates and only 38 were graduates and 20 were post-graduates, while 44 mothers of the younger age bracket were graduates, 24 were post-graduates and only 32 were below graduates.

MORAL JUDGEMENT OF RESPONDENTS:

The moral judgment of the respondent was assessed by 'moral judgments Test', Scores for moral judgment were calculated. Mean, standard deviation and z score and chi-square values were calculated in the view of the finding and the results were interpreted

A close perusal of Table-6 reveals that maximum subjects in the age group 10-11 years (56) fall under 'average' category while in the age group 8-9 years 39 respondents were under 'average' category. This indicates

Table-6 Frequency Distribution of respondents according to their moral judgment ability.

Age Group	Very High Ability	High Ability	Average Ability	Low Ability	Very Low Ability	Total
8-9 years	18	17	39	11	15	100
10-11 years	8	17	56	9	10	100
Total	26	34	95	20	25	200

that more number of older children i.e. 10-11 years old had the average ability to make moral judgment as compared to younger children i.e. 8-9 years old.

There were 18 subjects of 8-9 years age group in "Very High Ability" category where as there were only 8 subjects of 10-11 years age group in this category. In the 'High Ability' category the number of subjects from both age groups was similar. In 'Low Ability' category also, the number of subjects from 2 age groups was again almost similar.

Thus although the number in the very high ability is slightly higher for the younger age group; the majority of respondents lie in the average category, where the older age group predominated.

It is clear from Table-7 that mean score of respondents in the 10-11 years age group was higher than the mean scores of respondents in the younger age group 8-9 years. Also the value of Z was significant.

Age Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z Score
8-9 years boys	24.8	5.2	5.15*
10-11 years boys	31.8	8.0	
8-9 years girls	27.8	8.8	2.04*
10-11 years girls	30.7	5.8	

*Statistically significant at .01 and .05 probability level.

In agreement with the above finding Gibbs et.al. (1982) reveals the fact from a study that maturity of moral reasoning is strongly related to age. A combined data from a cross-sectional study reveals that age is correlated with moral maturity at .72.

Also, Kohlberg (1976) concluded that pre-conventional morality is the characteristics of most children until about age 9, and that most adolescents and adults are at the level of conventional morality.

Higher moral judgment ability of subjects in the age group 10-11 years, who are almost on the threshold of adolescence, can be accounted to their ability to think

rationally and understand other person's perspective which comes with increase in age. As children begin to interact with other people and their social sphere broadens, they come to know that other may have different view point from theirs. They start judging a situation in a rational way and become able to consider consequences and intentions simultaneously when judging the morality of an act.

In case of 8-9 years age bracket the computed value of Z is greater than 1.96 but Levels than 2.58, so, it is significant at 5% level of significance but insignificant at 1% level of significance.

**Table No. 3:
Comparison of Mean Scores of Boys and Girls over their Moral Judgment.**

Age Group	Subject	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z Score
8-9 years	Boys	27.8	5.2	2.06 *
	Girls	30.7	8.8	
10-11 years	Boys	31.8	2.7	.45
	Girls	30.7	13.3	

***Significant at .05 level of significance.**

It is inferred from Table-8 that the mean scores for girls was slightly higher than the mean scores for boys at both the age levels but the value of z was significant which indicates that there is no significant difference between moral judgment of boys and girls.

In line, Walker (1984) found no consistent gender differences in the stages at

which people were scored when responding to Kohlberg's dilemmas. Rather he believed that the moral reasoning of males and females is more similar than different.

In contrast research has found that females and males moral reasoning often centers on different concerns and issues. While females often articulate a care perspective and males a gender perspective,

the gender difference is not absolute and the 2 orientations are not mutually exclusive (Yons1990).

Thus, these general patterns may be the result of the different ways in which males and females are socialized in our society. A woman is taught since childhood to value

compassion toward others and social obligations and a man to value his freedom to make choices.

Table-9 reveals that value of chi square was significant. Father's educational status has significant effect on moral judgment of his children.

**Table.9:
Effect of Father's Education on Moral Judgment**

Father's educational status	Very High ability	High ability	Average ability	Low ability	Very low ability	Total
Below Graduate	7	10	35	11	19	82
Graduate	18	18	40	6	4	86
Post Graduate	1	6	20	3	2	32
Total	26	34	95	20	25	200

$\chi^2 (8 \text{ d.f.}) = 24.9$ (Significant at .05 and .01 probability level).

From the above results it can be concluded that although fathers spend less time with their children but they do influence and enhance mature moral judgment or bring out self controlled behavior in children.

In line, Speicher (1994) compared family patterns of moral reasoning and found that

father's moral judgment and education were the strongest predictors of both sons' and daughters' moral reasoning.

Value of chi square in Table-10 indicates that educational status of mother had a significant impart on moral judgment of respondents.

Table.10:
Effect of Mother's Education on Moral Judgment

χ^2 (8 d.f.) = 41.4 (statistically significant at .05 probability level and .0).

According to Kohlberg, parents do not play a crucial role in moral development of children but the cognitive structuring involved in parental discipline does affect both moral judgments and moral behavior. When parents use consistent disciplinary techniques that involve reasoning and explanation (Aranfreed, 1976; Parke; 1977) and initiate discussions of the feelings of others, more mature moral judgments occur.

Mother seems to play a more important role than father in the moral development of children, may be because mothers seek information about their children's feelings and the interpretation of their transgressions before punishing the child. There is more communication between mother and child about discipline.

Thus educated mother are more likely to use induction techniques. Also mother may be a model of sensitivity and concern with the perceptions and feelings of other, for her

child.

1.11 MAJOR FINDINGS:

Major findings of the present study are summarized as follows:-

- i). A significant difference was found in moral judgment level in the two age groups; with older children (10-11 scoring higher than the younger ones (8-9 years).
- ii). Insignificant gender difference was observed in the moral judgment of respondents.
- iii). Father's educational status was found to have significant effect on moral judgment of the child
- iv). Mother's education status was found to have a significant impact on moral judgment of the child.

1.12 CONCLUSION:

It was concluded from the research findings that cognitive maturity is closely related to mature moral judgment. This is not surprising as a high level of abstract thinking is required in the development of evaluation of intent, rational ethical standards and sensitivity to the roles, perceptions and feelings of others.

Also, definite shifts in moral judgment occur with increase in chronological age, as older subjects were found higher in moral judgment.

Further, certain antecedent conditions like sex, father's education showed negligible impact on moral judgment but mother's education was found to be of paramount importance.

1.13 Educational implication:

The present study helps the parents and teachers to understand when a child can make sound moral judgment. Thus curriculum and methodology can be modified accordingly, giving them information on moral issues and teaching them moral lessons according to their age.

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