

## Effect of Religious Education on Moral Development of Adolescents with Hearing Impairment

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is a dynamic process of all areas of human development. Throughout the history, morality has been interconnected with education. Morality refers to the way people choose to live their lives according to a set of guidelines or principles that govern their decisions about right versus wrong and good versus evil. The main purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effect of religious education on the moral development of adolescents with hearing impairment. The population of the study consisted of all students with hearing impairment (12-17 years old) studying in public and private schools for students with hearing impairment situated in Lahore city. The conveniently selected sample of study comprised 10 adolescents with hearing impairment (boys=5, girls=5) studying in grade 6-10 with age ranging between 12-17 years. Data were collected by using the Moral Development Interview Inventory. Findings were reported and recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Religious education, moral development, adolescents with hearing impairment

### INTRODUCTION

Developmental psychologists have been deeply interested in inculcating moral principles and ethics in children and youth for the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Morality plays a vital role in the character building of a person. Puka (2005) expounds that development of morality takes place in human beings as physical organs, mental capabilities and social interactions develop.

Timm, (2000) argued that morality is the code of behavior exhibited by an individual within a group. It incorporates the major features of a person, his ideas, dealings and many other facets of his actions. Morality is to live in a society with cooperating manner. Vess (2003) propounded that “moral “socialization” or “training,” is the most important task of ‘cherishing in children those virtues and deeds that transform them into virtuous persons’. Though it is difficult to have a distinction between rights and wrong, it is indispensable to introduce moral education in schools so that students may become human beings with strong character. Not only syllabi should include these values and virtues but complete hidden culture of schools should leave a long lasting effect on students’ personality. It is wrong to say that schools cannot perform this task but it is a proven fact that they have great influence on students.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1975) presents an excellent summary of his cognitive-developmental moral stage theory (3 levels and 6 stages) where moral dilemmas were used to research this topic and could be used to raise moral reasoning. His most innovative and ardent universal ethical principle stage (Stage 6) comprised allowing personal conscience and cognitively refined abstract principles to guide moral behavior which is not always matching with moral reasoning. It offers us a clue that other internal procedures and external contextual issues might be at work. Kohlberg suggested that in childhood moral reasoning was situational and based upon rewards and punishments while later a justice and legal stress was found based upon a more mature cognitive skills and an internalized moral standard.

Kohlberg theory can better be understood through focusing on dilemmas that involve a moral choice: “choosing between two (or more) of these values as they conflict in concrete situations of choice” (1975, p.672). His argument appears to be that such events in life are widespread, tension producing, and critical benchmarks in living healthy lives. Kohlberg (1975) suggested that his cognitive developmental approach was not indoctrinative and that changes could occur in reasoning rather than beliefs. He also contrasted his view with values clarification approaches that offer students no “right” answers. Links between moral development and participating in a democracy as originating from Dewey’s earlier work and the influence of Piaget on Kohlberg’s theory are both well documented.

Moral development in adolescence has achieved maturity as an area of research (Hart & Carlo, 2005). Adolescence can be especially formative in religious development. As adolescents search for their identity they begin to wonder if there really is a higher spiritual being or whether they have been believing what their parents & society imprinted in their mind (DeWitt, 2002).

Morality is at the heart of all religion, and, as we have argued, one important reason for studying religion is to acquire some sense of the answers that have been given to the fundamental existential questions of life. Religion itself, in terms of theology or religious teachings, appears to have very little influence on attitudes towards moral issues related to corruption, with socialization being a much more significant factor in determining individuals’ attitudes towards corruption. Moral development of children is refined and shaped by religious education.

Bronte (1977) argues that morality and religion are inseparable. Fagan, Gerald & William (1996) “describe the relationship of morality with religion as its followers have strong family units, they have stable marriage bonds; they move out poverty easily; have sound moral judgment; face a few social problems; enjoy good mental and physical health with heightened self-esteem and are less attracted towards alcoholism and drug addiction.”

Many studies have been conducted to see the effect of religious education on the moral development of children and adolescents who are without any disability, disorder or handicap. Persons with disabilities have always been a very important and challenging segment of any society. They pass through same developmental stages as do persons without disabilities. The only difference lies with the pace and level of development due to their specific disability. People with hearing impairment develop normally in physical, mental, moral, social and emotional domains except speech and language which gets delayed due to their impaired hearing. Religious education is imparted to them in schools and at homes as

well. The researchers were highly interested in investigating the level of moral development in students with hearing impairment which instigated the present study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of study were as follows:

1. To explore the effect of religious education on the moral development of adolescents with hearing impairment.
2. To investigate the difference of moral development between boys and girls between 12 to 17 years.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The population of this qualitative study consisted of all students with hearing impairment (12-17 years old) studying in public and private schools for students with hearing impairment of Lahore city. A sample of ten students with hearing impairment (boys= 5, girls=5) was conveniently selected from Shalimar Special Education Centre presently known as National Special Education Centre, Johar Town, Lahore. Due to the rigorous nature of qualitative research, data were collected from the students of only one special education centre. Moral Development Interview Inventory (Khanum, 2008) was adopted. A copy of the instrument and written consent of the researcher to utilize it for the study was obtained. Curriculum of Islamiyat for students with hearing impairment from class 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> was obtained from Directorate of Special Education, Lahore.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researchers personally visited National Special Education Centre, Johar Town, Lahore. The principal of the centre was informed about the purpose of visit. The researchers requested for the provision of subjects and a spacious place. The principal along with senior staff members extended full cooperation in selecting the subjects of study and making arrangements for data collection. All the deaf participants were narrated one of the dilemmas in sign language by one of the researchers who was proficient in use of sign language. After getting confident of subjects' understanding of dilemma, all of them were interviewed. Each subject was asked twelve questions in sign language concerning the dilemma narrated earlier. Probing and prompting questions were also asked to get the correct answer. To avoid prompting and influence of other participants of study, each participant was interviewed alone. Other researchers were busy in transcribing the responses of the deaf students. The students' responses were transcribed in written form for later analysis. It took approximately half an hour to interview one participant.

#### **Description of Dilemma**

The following dilemma was narrated to students with hearing impairment in sign language:

“Qasim was a gentle young man. One day robbers intruded his house and looted all valuables. The robbers also wounded his father when he showed resistance. The robbers stayed at Qasim's house for many hours, so their faces remained in the minds of house keepers. One day, Qasim was going somewhere in his car. All of a sudden, a collision between a car and a motor cycle took place. The motor cycle rider got seriously injured.

Qasim stopped his car and picked the wounded person up for the sake of help. As Qasim looked at his face, he recognized him at once. He was one of the robbers who had committed robbery at Qasim's home and had injured his father. The condition of the wounded person was so critical that he would have died if he had not been taken to hospital. What should Qasim have to do?"

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following were the limitations of study:

1. The whole story was narrated in sign language which may affect the comprehension of the participants. Video of the story must have been used.
2. The sample of study comprised only ten participants from only one institution. Therefore, findings may not be generalized on a large population.

### **INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

**Statement No.1:** Qasim should not help the robber as he had injured his father during a robbery a few days back.

In response to the statement number (1) nine out of ten students responded that Allah doesn't like to leave any body in pain. So Qasim should take the thief to hospital. According to Kohlberg's final level of moral development, reasoning is based upon universal ethical principles and abstract reasoning. At this stage, individuals follow these internalized principles of justice, even if they conflict with laws and rules. As students are favoring the robber on the basis of ethical obligation they are at the stage of universal principles which is 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level three. One student replied that Qasim should not help robber. The thief must be punished as a result of his deeds. This reasoning puts the students in 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level 1 that is Individualism and Exchange.

**Statement No. 2:** Qasim should take him to hospital because robber is a human being and to save the life of a human being is a great virtue.

In response to this statement, nine out of ten students responded in affirmation. They all replied that Qasim should take the thief to hospital just for Allah. As Allah will be happy if Qasim will help an injured human being, ignoring whatever he has done. This is high level of abstract thinking. This reasoning puts the students in the stage of universal principle which is 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level 3. One student replied that Qasim should not take the thief to hospital as thief must be punished as a result of his deeds. This reasoning puts the students in to 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level one that is Individualism and Exchange.

**Statement No. 3:** Robbers are dangerous to others so they should be killed.

One student favored this statement. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of moral development, children account for individual points of view and judge actions based on how they serve for the ease or pain of others. As thief is dangerous to others so one student recommended to kill him. The other nine students argue to save his life and educate him so that he will become good. A few of them said that the thief should not be killed but leave this matter to Allah' justice. This is an abstract level of thinking which categorize these students at the stage of universal principle, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of post conventional level.

**Statement No. 4:** Qasim should save robber's life but inform police at the same time so that he may face the music.

All of the students were of the view that he should be handed over to police. They reasoned that as a human being Qasim should save thief's life. This is the orientation of universal principles on the basis of abstract thinking. So they all are at the 2nd stage of post conventional level.

**Statement No. 5:** The robber is a criminal. He does not deserve any mercy. Qasim should leave him to die.

Nine students answered in negation. they talked about Allah's pleasure as He is the creator of all creatures. They replied that Allah will become angry if we will leave him to die. This reasoning put them in "universal principle" stage of post conventional level. One of the students responded that the robber should be left to die as he is a criminal. He does not deserve any mercy. This response reflected student's reasoning, which is at the stage of "Individualism and Exchange", the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of pre conventional level.

**Statement No. 6:** Qasim should forgive robber and save his life. In this way, the robber may be transformed to a noble person.

This is a higher level of abstract reasoning to think good as a result of doing good. This reasoning puts students in "universal principle" stage of post conventional level. Nine out of ten students replied in affirmation in response to this statement. One student who was at the stage of "Individualism and Exchange", the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of pre conventional level, did not support the idea of forgiving robber as robbers are bad people and do not deserve any mercy.

**Statement No. 7:** It is a great virtue to behave gently with one's enemy. Qasim should save robber's life.

Nine students said yes. They referred to Allah to support this statement which shows their level of reasoning at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of post conventional level. One student did not favor this statement as he said that robbers can't be good. They keep on harming others so it is not a virtue to behave gently with them. His reasoning is at the stage of "Individualism and Exchange", the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of pre-conventional level.

**Statement No. 8:** The robber has been punished by God. Qasim should take him to hospital.

Nine students said yes, as God has punished the robber. Qasim should take him to hospital. Once again they showed high level of abstract reasoning of being punished by Allah for bad deeds. These responses set them at "universal principle stage which is 6<sup>th</sup> stage of level three. One student replied that Qasim should not help the robber. He must be punished as a result of his deeds. This reasoning puts the students in to 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level one that is Individualism and Exchange.

**Statement No. 9:** If robber would have not been helped, the difference between good and evil will be finished.

Nine students said yes, they referred to as the "good boy-good girl" orientation. This stage of moral development focuses on living up to social expectations and roles. There is an emphasis on conformity, being "nice," and consideration of making difference between good

and bad. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of conventional level. One student responded not to help the robber. He is at 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of level one that is Individualism and Exchange.

**Statement No. 10:** Irrespective of robber being a criminal, Qasim should save his life.

This statement demands high level of abstract reasoning, as it contains universal ethical principle of humanity. Nine students showed this level of reasoning by their responses. It shows the development of post conventional level among them. But one student rejected this statement and argued that robber's life should not be saved because he was a criminal and did not deserve sympathy. The reasoning shows that he is at stage one of pre conventional level.

**Statement No. 11:** Being human beings, we should save life of one another. So Qasim should save life of robber.

This statement again demands high level of abstract reasoning, as it also contains universal ethical principle of humanity of saving life of robber being a human being. Again the nine students showed this level of reasoning by their responses to the statement. It means that they are at post conventional level of moral development. Whereas one student rejected this statement and insisted on not saving robber's life even as human being because he was not a good person and he used to hurt other human beings. It reflects that he was at stage one of pre conventional level.

**Statement No. 12:** The life of robber should not be saved because he has been bothering others.

Most students (nine out of ten) did not support this statement. Their responses reached the level of universal ethical stage. They suggested leaving his matter to Allah. They said that God will do justice. Qasim's good deeds may transform the robber into a noble person. On the other hand, remaining one supported the statement by saying that he had not done good so he must bear consequences. This response showed his moral reasoning at 1<sup>st</sup> stage of pre-conventional level.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

In response to the question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 majority of the students' responses occurred at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of pre conventional level that is called "universal principle" stage of Kohlberg theory. Only one student was on first stage of pre-conventional stage. All of her responses were categorized as "Individualism and Exchange" and "obedience and punishment" stage. In response to the question 9 most of the students' responses were they referred to as the "good boy-good girl" orientation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of study conform to the notion of Ahmed, (2007) & Ansari, (2007) they advocate that Islam refines and purifies both intrinsic and extrinsic behaviour of man within a self-sufficing orbit of culture and a social system of well-defined features. It holds the principles of morality towards the Creator of man as well as his fellow beings. It offers a complete coordination of the spiritual and material aspects of human life. It lays down a practical code and demands righteousness well within the realm of practicability. It promotes every thought and action the best for human survival and peace.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on the basis of study:

1. Further researches should be conducted to see the level of moral development of children and adults with hearing impairment.
2. The level of moral development in other disabilities should also be checked.
3. The patterns of moral grooming employed by teachers of National Special Education Centre, Johar Town, Lahore should be investigated through further studies.
4. More dilemmas should be used in further studies.

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