

# Moral judgment of adolescents in relation to emotional intelligence

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Moral judgment of adolescents and its relation to emotional intelligence was studied on a sample of 72 adolescents of 13 to 16 years studying in 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards of Government and private schools from urban area and government schools from rural area of Dharwad taluk of Karnataka. Moral judgment was measured with Gupta (2010) moral judgment test (MJT) and Bar-On and Parker's (2000), Emotional quotient inventory- youth version (Bar-On EQ-i: YV) was used to assess the emotional intelligence. Chi-square was used for testing the association between levels of moral judgment and emotional intelligence as well as by age and gender. The results revealed a positive and significant association between level of moral judgment and emotional intelligence. However, age and gender was not associated with level of moral judgment and emotional intelligence.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Adolescents, Moral judgment, Emotional intelligence

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Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood which brings many changes in them. The changes are due to maturation and the demands placed by the culture in which one lives, their social concepts and their manipulations that give rise to new logic of moral judgments. As the child grows like other dimensions of development, moral development progresses gradually which help them to distinguish right from wrong. Cognitive enhancements are not only in the area of general intelligence but also in the area of moral and emotional intelligence.

The moral development of children in today's society has become more and more challenging. Today's parents and children live in a society which makes it hard to

discern between what is right and wrong, moral or corrupt. Virtues like honesty, truthfulness, obedience and respect for elders are not regarded well. Children are engaged in acts of cheating, lying and bullying and focus more focus on self gains, academics, disregarding the intangible values and virtues which has been the major concern of parents, teachers, educators or significant adults. There seems to be a decline in standards of behaviour, attitudes and quality of relationships in the present generation.

Among all behavioural psychologists, Skinner (1990), view of the origins and development of morality states that the mind of new born is a so-called blank slate, where direct experiences and the consequences

they beget are the sole sources of all learning, morals and otherwise. Children learn about moral values from how parents talk about rules and the consequences of violating them, but they learn even more when parents talk about people's feelings and how those feelings are affected by the child's conduct (Killen and Smetana, 2006). The emotional growth and the self-regulating emotions of guilt and shame and other oriented emotions like empathy are powerful catalysts for moral understanding as well as self understanding. Thus, conscience development is closely tied to children's experience in close relationships, their developing psychological understanding and their emerging self-awareness as morally responsible individuals (Killen and Smetana, 2006). The relationship between emotional intelligence and moral development may be positive or negative, a person could use her/his emotional skills to achieve socially undesirable goal as well as desirable ones (Salovey and Pizarro, 2003). It is hypothesized that people who are high in emotional intelligence will display appropriate moral behaviour across life situation. With this view it was aimed to examine the inter relation of moral development and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

### Research design :

A correlation research design was employed to know the relation between moral judgment and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

### Population and sample :

Adolescents studying in 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Government and private schools from urban area and government schools from rural area (as there were more government schools and only two private schools in rural area) of Dharwad taluk, Karnataka formed the population. Schools which were within a distance of 10 to 12 km from the research centre were considered. About ten per cent of school's (four school from urban area with two each from private and government and two government school from rural area) in Dharwad taluk were selected for the study and from each standard (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>) two boys and two girls were randomly selected for the study. The sample constituted 72 adolescents studying in 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standard where 24 were from rural and 48 were from urban area of Dharwad taluk of

Karnataka.

### Tools used for the study :

- Moral judgment test (MJT) developed by Gupta, (2010) was employed to know the moral judgment ability of children. The MJT is a self reporting questionnaire to assess the judgment ability of adolescents based on their moral value. The test consists of twenty stories (followed by questions with alternative answers) that have been reorganized according to the Indian context on the basis of moral values. There are five components viz., Immanent justice, Moral realism, Retributive vs. restitutive, Efficacy of severe punishment and Communicable responsibility. The scores of the five dimensions are summated to obtain the total score which ranges from 39-123.
- Baron-on emotional quotient inventory- youth version (Bar-On EQ-i: YV) developed by Bar-On and Parker (2000) was used to measure the emotional intelligence of adolescents. It consists of 60 items a four point likert scale with a score of 1 to 4 very seldom, seldom, often very often. There are six components which are summated to obtain emotional intelligence.

### Intrapersonal scale (A) :

The intrapersonal component of emotional intelligence emphasizes self awareness and self expression. It includes following five subscales.

- Emotional self awareness involves the awareness and understanding of one's own emotions.
- Self regard involves the understanding, acceptance and respect of the self.
- Self actualization refers to the ability to strive for personal goals and actualize one's potentials.
- Assertiveness is the ability to effectively express and defend one's beliefs and thoughts.
- Independence is the ability of being self directed and self controlled.
- It has 6 items. The total raw score ranges form 0-24.

### Interpersonal scale (B) :

The interpersonal component of emotional

intelligence is social awareness and interpersonal interactions. It includes following subscales :

- Empathy is the ability to be aware of and understand how others feel.
- Social responsibility is the ability of being a co-operative, constructive and responsible member of the society.
- Interpersonal relationships refer to the ability to establish pleasant relationships and healthy interaction with others.
- It consists of 12 items. The total raw score ranges from 0-48.

#### *Stress management scale (C) :*

This component of EI involves managing and regulating emotions and includes two sub-scales.

- Stress tolerance is the ability to withstand the difficult conditions and unpleasant events by constructively managing emotions.
- Impulse control is the ability to resist or delay a desire, a drive or a temptation by controlling one's emotion.
- It also has 12 items. Raw score ranges from 0-48.

#### *Adaptability scale (D) :*

This component of EI model is concerned with the ability to adjust with the change and cope with the problems that come with the change. It includes following sub-scales :

- Reality testing means the ability to objectively judge the external reality and the internal feelings.
- Flexibility is the ability to adapt one's thoughts and emotions according to the changing situations and adjust in new situations.
- Problem solving refers to the ability to identify the problem and to put forward an effective solution.
- It has 10 items and the raw score ranges from 0-40.

#### *Good mood scale (E) :*

This component of emotional intelligence includes the competencies related to self motivation. It includes two sub-scales:

- Happiness refers to the satisfaction with one's life, and the ability to express positive feelings

and enjoy life.

- Optimism is the ability to think positively, to keep in view the bright side of the life and remain hopeful in the face of difficulties and negative feelings
- It has got 14 items. Raw score ranges from 0-56. It is then converted to scale score and is classified as high, medium and low.

Total emotional intelligence (F)- it is calculated by using the formula :

$$A/6+B/12+C/12+D/10= F$$

The computed score was converted to scaled score and classified as high, medium and low. Based on total scores children are categorized into three categories, high (>110), medium (90-110), low (<90) level of emotional intelligence.

#### **Statistical analysis :**

- Frequency and percentage were used to describe the level of moral judgment and emotional intelligence of adolescents.
- Chi- Square a non parametric test was used to know the association between moral judgment and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

#### **Correlation :**

Karl Pearson's correlation co-efficient analysis was carried out to assess the degree of relationship between moral judgment and emotional intelligence, age.

### **■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The percentage distribution of a adolescents by levels of moral judgment is presented in Table 1. It is fortunate to know that none of the children fell in low level of moral judgment. Majority of children (86.1%) fell in moderate level followed by 13.9 per cent in high level of moral judgment.

Table 1a represents the association between gender and moral judgment of adolescents. Majority of boys (80.6%) showed moderate level followed by high level (19.4%) of moral judgment. Among girl's highest (19.7%) proportion had high level while (8.3%) had average level of moral judgment. Fortunately none of the boys and girls were in low level. However, Chi-square analysis showed non-significant association between gender and moral judgment. The investigation is in line

with Louis and Emerson, 2011; Gupta and Puja, 2011; Laddu and Kapadia, 2007 and Baqutayan, 2011 who found that children of either gender had good moral judgment skills probably contributed by their parental involvement, peer relationships, effective conflict resolution strategies and also social competence.

The association between age and moral judgment is displayed in Table 1b. It was observed that 85.4 per cent of children in age range of 13 to 14 years had moderate level of moral judgment followed by high level (14.6). Similar trend was observed in older age (15-16 years) group where majority of them (87.5%) showed moderate followed by high (12.5%) level of moral judgment. None of the adolescent in both age groups fell in low level of moral judgment category. The association between age and moral judgment was non-significant as indicated by Chi-square value (0.058). Zhang (2012) and Rani (1991) also found non-significant association between age (12 to 27 years) and moral judgment of adolescents

The percentage distribution of adolescents by levels of emotional intelligence is presented in Table 2a higher proportion of 68.1 per cent of children had medium emotional intelligence followed by 22.2 per cent with high while 9.7 per cent had low emotional intelligence.

The pattern of distribution was similar among boys and girls (Table 2a). Majority of boys (36.1%) showed medium level followed by high (11.1%) and low level (2.8%) of emotional intelligence. Among girl's a higher proportion (31.9%) showed the medium level followed by high (11.1%) and low (6.9%) level. However, Chi-square analysis showed non-significant association between gender and emotional intelligence. The finding is in line with Zarak and Ahmadian (2015) and Mimrot (2011) who also found that gender was not associated with emotional intelligence in new generation due to the influence of culture and education

It was observed from the Table 2b that 45.8 per cent of children in age range of 13 to 14 years had medium level of emotional intelligence followed by high (12.5%) and low (8.3%) level. Similar trend was observed in older age (15-16 years) group where majority of them (22.2%) were in medium level followed by high (9.7%) and low (1.4%) level of emotional intelligence. The association between age and emotional intelligence was non-significant as indicated by Chi-square value (1.934). Nasir and Masrur, 2010; Balci-Celik and Deniz (2008) also found non-significant association between age (11-20 years) and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

Table 3 depicts the association between moral

**Table 1 : Percentage distribution of adolescents by levels of moral judgment (n=72)**

Levels	Frequency	Per cent
High	10	13.9
Moderate	62	86.1
Low	-	-
Total	72	100

**Table 1a : Association between gender and moral judgment of children (n=72)**

Characteristics	Category	Moral judgment of children				Modified $\chi^2$
		Low	Moderate	High	Total	
Gender	Male	-	29 (80.6)	7 (19.4)	36 (100.00)	1.86NS
	Female	-	33 (91.7)	3 (8.3)	36 (100.00)	
	Total		62 (86.1)	10 (13.9)	72 (100.00)	

NS = Non-significant; Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage

**Table 1b : Association between age and moral judgment of children (n=72)**

Characteristics	Category	Moral judgment of children				Modified $\chi^2$	(r-value)
		Low	Moderate	High	Total		
Age	Younger (13 - 14 year)	-	41 (85.4)	7 (14.6)	48 (100.00)	0.058NS	(-0.028NS)
	Older (15 -16year)	-	21 (87.5)	3 (12.5)	24 (100.00)		
	Total		62 (86.1)	10 (13.9)	72 (100.00)		

NS = Non-significant; Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

judgment and emotional intelligence of adolescents. The result revealed that 72.6 per cent children who were having moderate level of moral judgment showed medium level of emotional intelligence, About 6 children who were having high level of moral judgment showed high level and 4 children had medium level of emotional intelligence. Chi-square test revealed significant association between moral judgment and emotional intelligence of children. Similarly a positive and significant correlation was found. This is consistent with other researchers who have found that the students of high emotional intelligence had better moral judgment than the students of average and low emotional intelligence (Platsidou, 2004; Dominic and Julius, 2013 and Danovitch and Keil, 2009). Other studies have documented that children irrespective of age favoured emotions as a better advisor for moral dilemmas and emotion of disgust influenced people's moral judgment. Attention control processes regulates

the people emotional experiences and judgment concerning other people (Dillen *et al.*, 2012; Heblkar, 2001 and Athota *et al.*, 2009). This may be because moral development as a part of personality is inextricable from one's emotional ability and competence. A balanced, well-lived life, characterized by moral integrity, is one that reflects mature emotional competence. Fast and automatic intuitions based on emotional arousal are the primary source of many moral judgments and that deliberations are used mostly to construct justifications for judgments. When an individual develops the ability to feel, interpret and express emotions correctly, adaptively and follows accepted standard, he/she stands a chance of putting up actions that are morally inclined. The control and regulation of emotional reactions to stimulation in the environment determine the exhibition of appropriate behaviours, and moral competence consists in expression of appropriate behaviours.

**Table 2 : Percentage distribution of adolescents by levels of emotional intelligence (n=72)**

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Low	7	9.7
2.	Medium	49	68.1
3.	High	16	22.2
	Total	72	100.0

**Table 2a : Association between gender and emotional intelligence of children (n=72)**

Characteristics	Category	Emotional intelligence of children				Modified $\chi^2$
		Low	Medium	High	Total	
Gender	Male	2 (2.8)	26 (36.1)	8 (11.1)	36 (50.0)	1.469 NS
	Female	5 (6.9)	23 (31.9)	8 (11.1)	36 (50.0)	
	Total	7 (9.7)	49 (68.1)	16 (22.2)	72 (100.0)	

NS = Non-significant; Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

**Table 2b : Association between age and emotional intelligence of children (n=72)**

Characteristics	Category	Emotional intelligence of children				Modified $\chi^2$	(r-value)
		Low	Medium	High	Total		
Age	Younger (13 - 14 year)	6 (8.3)	33 (45.8)	9 (12.5)	48 (66.7)	1.934NS	0.160NS
	Older (15 -16year)	1 (1.4)	16 (22.2)	7 (9.7)	24 (33.3)		
	Total	7 (9.7)	49 (68.1)	16 (22.2)	72 (100.0)		

NS = Non-significant; Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

**Table 3 : Association between moral judgment and Emotional intelligence of adolescents (n=72)**

Moral judgment	Emotional intelligence			Total	Modified $\chi^2$	(r-value)
	Low	Medium	High			
Moderate	7 (11.3)	45 (72.6)	10 (16.1)	62 (100.0)	9.930**	0.346**
High	-	4 (40.0)	6 (60.0)	10 (100.0)		
Total	7 (9.7)	49 (68.1)	16 (22.2)	72 (100.0)		

\*\* Indicate significance of value at P=0.01, respectively; Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage

**Conclusion :**

There is positive and significant association found between moral judgment and emotional intelligence. However age and gender was not associated with level of moral judgment and emotional intelligence. Children of either gender seemed to have good moral skills and emotional intelligence.

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