

Moral judgement and attitude of children towards school

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Morality is the supreme essence of a civilized society which distinguishes men from animals. Patterning of experiences is necessary for higher form of moral judgement. Development of moral judgement plays an important role in shaping the personality of child. The present study was undertaken to find out the association between moral judgement and medium of school, moral judgement and respondents attitude towards the school. A total of 160 children attending classes III-VI from four co-educational (two English and two Assamese medium) schools were selected as sample for the present study. The study was carried out in Jorhat district of Assam. Data were collected with the help of a standardized tool "Moral Judgement Test" and an interview schedule for assessing the students' attitude towards the school. Data were collected in the calander year 2010 and 2011. The collected data were coded and analyzed. Results revealed that there was no association between development of moral judgement and medium of school. Teaching method and co-curricular activities were positive contributing factor for acceleration of moral values and judgement. Results further revealed that there was a significant association between development of moral judgement and students' attitude towards the school. Children who had high ability of moral judgement, their attitude towards the school was also better. Children will benefit from the guidance of adults who can provide strategies to help them to learn self-control, which will later transform into a flexible capacity for moral self-regulation.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Moral judgement, Attitude

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The word moral comes from "mores" which means custom, practice, a way of accomplishing things. Morality involves the regulation of the behaviour of the group to which he belongs. According to Wrenn, a morally mature person is 'a well disciplined person who has thorough control of himself, who takes care of the situation within himself and without outer regulations. Every society has some norms of behaviour for its members which have been evolved through cultural heritage from generations. Every individual is expected to conform to the standard or norms of behaviour inherited from generations. These norms of behaviour are learned in early childhood training through conditioning, reward and punishment, imitation and through reflective thinking. With the growing of the child his social environment widens and the moral values taught in childhood come into conflict with moral values followed by others.

Many philosophers agree upon that moral judgement is

the judgement of good and right in action. Moral judgement is a by-product of child's general social experiences, patterning of experiences is necessary for higher form of moral judgement. Piaget remarked that moral values and judgement play an important role in shaping personality of child.

Blatt and Kohlberg (1976) suggested that the school especially teacher plays a substantial role in development of moral judgement.

Galbraith and Jones (1976) found that children who did not receive training on moral education in class room did not show improvement in moral understanding and desired increasing the rate at the stages of moral judgement acquired.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000, (NCERT) observed that schools can and must strive to restore and sustain the universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of the people, their

moral and spiritual growth enabling them to realise the treasure within.

A few studies have been carried out in respect of home environment and moral judgement of children. But, next to home, it is the school that plays an important role in developing moral judgement of children. For better understanding of relationship between school environment and development of moral judgement, study on medium of school and the student's attitude towards the school and its effects on moral judgement of children is essential. But, literatures on the moral judgement including these two aspects are scanty. In recent years there is a crisis of moral judgement that our society is currently experiencing. Keeping in immense significance of development of moral judgement in children during this age, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

-To find out the association between moral judgement and medium of school and to find out association of moral judgement of the respondents with their attitude towards the school.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. Four co-educational schools having classes from I to X were purposively selected from the list of schools which was collected from the local office of the inspector of schools. A total number of 160 students were randomly selected as the sample for the study. The sample size consisted of equal number of boys and girls from each class of the selected four schools.

Moral judgement test by Sinha and Verma (1992) was used as a quantitative measures for assessing moral judgement ability of children. The test was divided into six parts *viz.*, discrimination, incomplete sentences, analogics, best moral answer, moral reasoning and definition. For scoring each correct answer is to be assigned a score of 1 and an incorrect answer a value of zero. Thus, the maximum possible score for the list was fifty and minimum was zero. The total scores obtained by selected sample could indicate the extent of moral judgement ability of the respondents.

An interview schedule was prepared for assessing the students' attitude toward the school. The first part of the interview schedule consisted of the particulars related to background information of the respondents and the second part consisted of 24 statements representing their attitudes towards the school. Each statement had two point response

'yes' and 'no' and scored as one and zero, respectively. For getting the total raw score, all scores were added up. After the preparation of the tool, it was given to the expert for valuable comments and accordingly some modifications were made. After the preparation of the tool, it was given to the expert for valuable comments and accordingly some modifications were made.

To judge the clarity and reliability of the interview schedule, the interview schedule was pre-tested on 20 per cent of the total sample. This helped the researchers to make some minor changes and helped in improvement and finalization of the interview schedule.

The students attitude towards the school was categorized into Good, Average and Poor attituded. For this categorization, mean and standard deviation were calculated

>Standard deviation + mean : Good
Mean \pm Standard deviation : Average
<Standard deviation - mean : Poor

as per following:

Survey method was adopted for the proposed study. With prior permission from the school authorities rapport building was established to get reliable information from the selected samples. The need of co-operation of the samples in conducting the study was explained to them. Then the moral judgement test along with the interview schedule was given to the respondents. Every effort was made to clarify the questions to the respondents.

After collection of data, raw data were coded for tabulation and statistical computation.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from the result (Table 1) that calculated χ^2 value 0.86 was less than the table value 5.99 at 0.05 per cent probability level for 2 d.f. Hence, there was no association between moral judgement and medium of school. This could be attributed to a number of factors. Schools serve the purpose of systematically passing on the wisdom (or prejudices) of the culture to its young. Schools are a significant force because they expose each child to new information, important new adult models, and increased contact with peers. School experiences play an important part in value formation. Children spend most part of their day attending school, engaging in extra curricular activities and doing home work. School takes the child on well guided field-trips into areas beyond home

Table 1: Association between moral judgement and medium of the school

Medium of school	Level of moral judgement					χ^2
	Very high	High	Average	Low	Very low	
Assamese	19	14	40	2	5	0.86 ^{NS}
English	17	16	34	2	6	

circle. In the course of these trips, many values learnt at home will be reinforced; some will be challenged or shaken. The school serves as a testing ground on which the child develops and strengthens his sense of identity. The curriculum followed by the school, type of school (*i.e.* government or private school) play a significant role in shaping personality of the child.

In the present study both the Assamese and English medium schools give importance to impart moral education through narration of moral stories, organization of drama based on moral values etc. The purpose of giving moral education is to guide students to establish (or decision) their own system of values on which to base their moral decisions. Students are also taught that others may have different value systems and they must be tolerant of these differences. Moral education promotes self-investigation and awareness and the development of internal moral motivations and prevents fanaticism, authoritarianism and moral coercion. Moral education creates cognitive conflict when a participant is faced with someone's responses, which may be in a higher stage than his/her own. This usually increases level of moral maturity. The present results are consistent with the findings of Galbraith and Jones (1976) who pointed out that children who did not receive training through moral education in class room did not show improvement in moral understanding and desired increase in the rate at the stages of moral judgement acquired.

Table 2 reveals that the calculated χ^2 value was 53.94 which was greater than the table value at 0.05 per cent probability level *i.e.* 5.99 for 2 d.f. Hence, there was an association between moral judgment and respondents' attitude towards the school.

School is a formal institution designed to transmit knowledge and skills to children which is essential to become productive members of society. Children spend their time in the school setting almost all day, they have a large stake in what happens to them at school, hence, their reactions to and perceptions of their school experiences are significant. Schools are vital force in children's development, affecting their motivation to learn and modes remembering, reasoning problem solving, and social and moral understanding.

Further analysis of the table revealed that children who had low ability of moral judgement, their attitude toward the school is also poor. This may be indicative of the fact that, these children had attained low score in school examination, interacted poorly in the class, rejected by peers, remain absent in the class and if these children experience unresolved

feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among peers, they can have serious problems in terms of competence and self-esteem which ultimately hampers in personality development of children. Moreover, viewing a great deal of violence cartoon programme by children may hinder their moral development. It is also seen that children who had high level of moral judgement, their attitude towards the school is also better. This may be due to the fact that these children had good relationship with teacher, friendly relationship with peers and they perform better, academically. These children may perceive high-level support from classmates; they make feel highly accepted by classmates and sense of belonging in a school context which helps in developing positive attitude towards the school. The students' notion of autonomy and control is formed by rules and the framework for activities at school, as well as the responsibilities they are given. If the students do not feel the justice and relevance of the regulations and are not allowed to influence the regulations and to participate in activities, they are more likely to have negative perception of school environment. Positive attitude towards the school is important for both the individual student and for the class room. A student with a positive attitude towards the school helps them to develop good attitude towards academic work and school activities. Further, teachers also play an important role in the development of moral judgement. Through good examples, guidance towards proper paths and social training, values cherished by parents are reinforced by the teachers at schools. Similar observations were made in a study conducted by Blatt and Kohlberg (1976) which indicated that the school especially the teacher plays a substantial role in moral judgement development. The influence of schools, therefore, cannot be denied in enhancing the development of children.

Conclusion :

In the present study, no association was seen between moral judgement and medium of school. But an association was found between moral judgement and respondents attitude towards the school. Children who had high level of moral judgement, their attitude towards the school is also better. Parents, teachers and extension agents can help encourage positive development of moral judgement. Here are some simple ideas to help children develop their identity as moral beings.

Young children do not inherently understand the emotions of others or how their own actions can affect them. To assist in conscience development, parents, teachers and

Table 2 : Association of moral judgment of the respondents with their attitude towards the school

Moral judgement	Attitudes towards the school			χ^2
	Low	Moderate	High	
Low	17	9	-	53.94*
Moderate	12	76	12	
High	-	28	6	

extension agents must help children notice others' feelings, especially negative feelings caused by their own misbehaviour.

Children are constantly watching those around them, especially the adults who are most present and significant in their lives. It is, therefore, extremely important for parents, teachers and agents to model the kind of actions they want to engage in because children observe and imitate the behaviour of adults, adults must be sure to demonstrate consistently appropriate behaviour at all times.

An important part of moral development is resisting temptation and delaying gratification. Developing these skills allow children to eventually become successful adults-professionally, personally and emotionally.

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