

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL KNOWLEDGE AND MORAL REASONING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

A well informed, skilled and morally developed society is the ultimate goal of an educational system. However, a perception exists in Pakistan that the given first two components, i.e., information and skills, are more focused in school curriculum and instruction but morals among students are informally addressed during class teaching. Such schooling of the learners does not meet the socio-moral needs of a developing society. Resultantly there occurs a societal moral decline that Pakistani society is facing now a day. The current study has, therefore, been conducted to determine role of the given moral instructional contents in fostering moral reasoning and judgment (determining the moral justification of an action) among the secondary school students, to address the issue related research question, as whether students' moral knowledge accounts for variations in their moral reasoning. The research data for this correlational study was collected on two variables i.e. moral knowledge and moral reasoning of the students. For the purpose, researcher developed two instruments and used for measuring the variables involved in the present research. An achievement test was developed to measure moral knowledge of the secondary school students while, a test based on moral dilemmas was constructed to assess their moral reasoning. Psychometric properties of both the tests, for validity and reliability purpose, were ensured through expert judgments. Further improvement in tests was made on the basis of students' responses that were taken in piloting of the instruments. A sample of 600 students of the grade 9 with their age range 14-16 years participated in the study. The

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*correlation coefficient=0.204**, n=595, p<0.05 indicates that there was small correlation between students' moral knowledge and their moral reasoning levels.*

Keywords: *Relationship, Moral knowledge, Moral reasoning, Secondary level*

Introduction

There is increased international interest of the globalizing communities on character education; therefore, they invariably expect education, along with other purposes to develop the moral values among humans. Accordingly an instructional system, i.e., learning objectives, content, teaching learning strategies and assessment needs to be evolved around the learners' total personality development. In this regard, National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009) has also charged educational institutions to; i) develop responsible members of local and global society; ii) nurture the total personality of the individual; iii) raise individuals commitment to democratic and moral values, having a sense of personal responsibility.

In the light of the policy guidelines, school education in Pakistan need to have a lot of its positive influence on the moral thoughts or behavior of learners. The influence of school education (Afifa, 2010) and explicit and implicit course content (Mayhew, Matthew & King, Patricia, 2008) has been witnessed in the given studies. The reported influence is insufficient because dishonest behaviors are observed in daily social practices (Nazir, & Aslam, 2010) and gradual loss of value system (Umbreen, 2010) indicates moral decline. Simultaneously, the moral content size in Pakistani school text books is considered to be sound irrespective of its intended influence in fostering learners' moral behaviour. Hence, there is need to establish as whether moral knowledge is the source of moral reasoning among students.

Several initiatives have been taken in education system to take a more central role in providing moral education to students for fostering moral behavior. Although school curriculum is rich in the form of moral contents, the practices in schools suggest otherwise. Hence, education system is being debated since long for promoting knowledge rather than developing morally enviable students. The schools seem to be confined to inculcating information and pursuing higher scores by students.

Students' total personality development including their morals is given secondary place in school education. There are, therefore, reservations on the part of social scientists that the school product is least displaying the socially desired moral behaviour in their daily life practices. From the given situations: the intended one and the emerging one, a problem arises as whether the moral content learning is playing its role in developing moral reasoning of students which ultimately translates into moral actions. Similarly, Bolognani, (2007) concluded that formal education was not considered as one of the most effective means to reinforce moral values, as it was seen more as the resource for acquiring skills rather than shaping ideas.

Literature Review

The related literature review through which following related concepts and mechanics were discussed.

Content Knowledge Leading to Moral Knowledge

The instructional demands of the National Education Policy are translated into national curriculum, therefore, the stated policy's 'morals demand', has been addressed in the content of different school subjects. Major focus is on explicit moral contents in humanities such as; i) Islamic Studies, ii) Social/Pakistan studies, iii) Urdu and iv) English of 1st to 10th grades.

All the four courses include learning objectives of moral education. For example in Islamic Studies, general learning objective 4 and 5 are intending to develop students' moral values (National Curriculum: Islamic Studies, 2006b). Similarly explicit as well as implicit moral content is on the moral values in the text books of Urdu and English. The given content is in pursuance of the morality based intended learning outcomes stated in the following:

- i) Development of high national esteem, recognition of national culture and civilization and command on code of life (National Curriculum: Urdu, 2006a).
- ii) Appropriate ethical and social development; to develop among students' social and ethical and social attributes and values relevant in a multicultural and civilized society (National Curriculum: English, 2006c).

In the course of 'Pakistan Studies', there are learning objectives addressed by moral content on topics; Society and Culture of Pakistan, basic features of Pakistani society; problems caused by class differences and social qualities; ways and measures to improve the status of women; culture, diversity, unity, national cohesion and integration etc., (National Curriculum: Social/ Pakistan Studies, 2007). Hence, there is explicit reasonable content on moral values like; honesty, cooperation, sacrifice, justice, tolerance, truthfulness, equality, lawfulness, politeness and patience.

The given intentionally designed moral content in school curriculum is supposed to address the issue of underdeveloped morals in terms of content addition or its simple delivery in classroom. Although to Mayhew, et.al., (2008), attainment of morals could be with two approaches of classroom interventions; i) focus on moral content in the curriculum, and ii) focus on pedagogical strategies. The latter is more important because it stimulates moral reasoning about existing moral issues in broader perspectives in order to serve the public good by observing moral practices. Stimulating moral reasoning inside classroom and social interaction with peers, parents and society outside the classroom have an important role to play in one's moral development because according to Durkheim as quoted by Haidt and Graham, (2009) 'our moral thought is essentially social'.

Development of Moral Reasoning

Development of moral reasoning reflects the way one makes moral decisions through justice, judgment and the nature of judgment indicates the principles and beliefs behind the judgment (Brandon, Kerler, Killough & Mueller, 2007). The principles and beliefs have their base in moral knowledge and social interactions. During this process, an individual establishes moral intent through reasoning which results in moral judgment that essentially generates moral action because it is impossible to find moral behaviour; arising from affectivity alone, without any cognitive element' (Wadsworth, 1989). Similarly, Jones and McNamee, (2003) emphasized that moral reasoning is not moral action but it provides a base for moral action or at least is predictor of moral action.

The following figure presents the internal structure of moral judgment with the help of Rest's (1984) four identified components of morality.

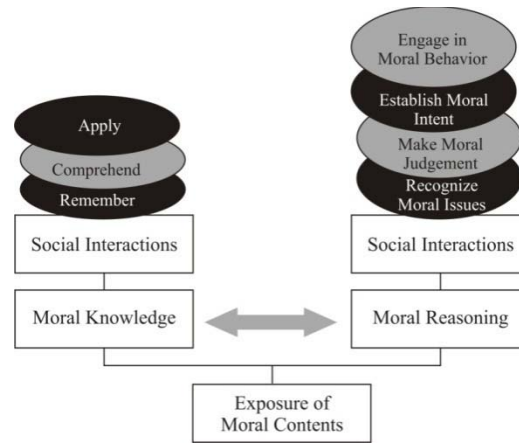


Figure-1: Moral knowledge and moral reasoning relationship model.

The above two major inter-related, developmental components show the path of knowledge as a source of moral reasoning. Exposure of moral content imparts information which expands through more knowledge and social interaction. Presenting moral content in active, reactive and reflective way; essentially develops moral reasoning. The given processes (internally and interrelated) are summarized with the help of four identified components of morality by Rest, (1984); Bebeau et al., (1999); Bebeau, (2002); Rogers, (2002); Thoma, (2002). The complete phenomenon involves moral knowledge (remembering, expanding and relating), moral sensitivity (i.e. awareness of the moral dimensions of situations), moral reasoning (i.e. determining which alternative line of action is morally justified), moral motivation (i.e. prioritizing moral values above others) and moral character (i.e. following through on one's convictions).

The above discussion reflects that along with imparting moral knowledge, an important purpose of education is to develop students' moral reasoning effectively. Further the given discussion pinpoints that how we come to behave in moral (or immoral) ways. Obviously, part of this question depends on how reasoning connects with the background moral knowledge and consequent moral behaviour or action. Looking into the processes of moral knowledge, moral reasoning and moral

action, the stance is how teaching of moral content works for stimulating moral reasoning in such societies where morals of the citizens are undesirable, hence under complaints.

This investigation following Kohlberg's theory of moral development (see figure 1) established the relationship between moral knowledge (having variant ways of presentation and situations) and moral reasoning in Pakistani setting.

The study addressed the following research questions.

1. What is the level of secondary students' knowledge on moral values given in their text books?
2. What is the proportion of secondary school students on a certain moral reasoning level (stage) with reference to Kohlberg theory?
3. Is there significant relationship between students' moral knowledge and their moral reasoning?

Methodology

Following is the research methodology adopted to conduct the given research study:

Research Design: The research is a correlational as it describes the degree of relationship between two variables. Furthermore, this study is exploratory in nature because its purpose is to clarify the understanding of the relationship between moral knowledge and moral reasoning of secondary school students. The researcher believes that there is, relation between the given two variables, but not causation, hence correlation design is appropriate for this research.

The two variables, i.e., moral knowledge and moral reasoning of the same secondary school students were assessed through academic achievement test (in the form of scores) and moral reasoning (levels) by moral reasoning test. Students' scores (table 2) and their reasoning levels(see figure 2) were transformed into categorical, ordered data and Spearman rho was applied for correlating both variables.

Participants: The population for the current research was 10th grade students of Federal Government Educational Institutions (63) (FGEIs) of Islamabad Capital Territory (I.C.T). The students were on the verge of completion of their secondary education. Most of the students of FGEIs

belong to; urban locality, salaried class of middle or lower middle socio-economic status. These also generally belong to families of different geographical regions and cultures from all over Pakistan. The results on the described population of this study may be applicable on the students of other localities having the same characteristics although they were not part of this study.

A representative sample was selected from the target population of 63FGBEIs having secondary classes. These institutions were divided into four strata: urban and rural area secondary schools having Urdu as medium of instruction; and urban and rural area model schools where English is medium of instruction. From each one of the four strata, five institutions were selected on convenience basis ($4 \times 5 = 20$ institutions). Here convenience is in the sense of school principals' consent/ cooperation in quality data collection because administration of the data collection instruments took approximately three hours of the grade 10 students. It was, therefore necessary to get prior consent of the school principal.

A group of 30 students was finally selected to participate in the data collection. Keeping in view the size of available classroom, 30 students were preferred for smooth and fair conduction of both the tests in conducive correction the total group size was in the range of 27 – 33, and then intact group was selected, but in case the number of present students in the selected group was more than 34, then 30 students were randomly selected by random exclusion of the additional students.

Instruments: The following two instruments were used to collect data from the selected sample of the study.

- i) Moral knowledge test (MKT) based on moral contents to measure moral knowledge and;
- ii) A moral reasoning test (MRT) to determine moral reasoning level.

A brief description of both instruments is given below:

MKT based on moral contents was developed. It was suitable for grade 10 students. Following process of its construction was adopted.

Reliability and Validity: The content domain of the test was up to grade 9 textbooks of Islamic studies, Social/ Pakistan studies, Urdu and English. A final achievement test of 39 items which were related to 10 moral values i.e. honesty, tolerance, cooperation, lawfulness, justice, equality, sacrifice,

respectfulness, politeness and patience. There are 3-6 test items (table 1) on each moral value. The subject matter experts made, content validation (CVI= 0.61) of the test, classification of test items on identified moral values and determination of authenticity of answer key. Further psychometrics of the test were calculated on the piloted data, i.e., alpha coefficient is 0.75 while mean score 26.71 and SD is 5.12. Following table presents the value-wise psychometrics of the test.

Table 1
Psychometrics of Value wise items of moral knowledge test

Moral Values	No of test Items	Content Validity Index	Discrimination Index % (items' mean)	Difficulty Index % (items' mean)
Honesty	05	.65	38	68
Tolerance	03	.57	31	53
Cooperation	03	.66	34	60
Lawfulness	04	.64	46	59
Justice	04	.64	30	66
Equality	03	.66	28	78
Sacrifice	04	.64	27	66
Respectfulness	03	.57	29	69
Politeness	06	.62	25	63
Patience	04	.60	25	83

A MRT was developed by Zaman and Nasir, (2011) which consists of 10 moral dilemmas contextualized in the school curriculum and local social settings. Each dilemma, having a moral conflict to resolve through moral judgment, focuses a certain moral value. The participants were put to interpret each moral dilemma, defining the critical issues of a dilemma, and judging a response to the dilemma. For the purpose of content validity, a consultative dialogue was held with a focus group of five experts who discussed the contents of each dilemma for its relevance to the construct (moral value), brevity, and clarity of the conflicting issue.

Procedure: Researchers administered both tests in two sessions; one (MRT) immediately after the other (MKT) to the same 20 groups of students. They also scored the two tests himself for the sake of uniformity of procedure and to minimize sources of measurement error. MKT scripts were assessed according to the scoring key. Achievement scores of each student were converted into 6 levels, following the pattern of Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Islamabad. Students'

range of scores, level value and label is given in the following table:

Table 2
Students' score percentages, knowledge levels and labels

Sr. #	Range of scores(X)	Level value	Label
1	$X \geq 70\%$	6	Outstanding
2	$60 \leq X < 70$	5	Excellent
3	$50 \leq X < 60\%$	4	Very Good
4	$40 \leq X < 50\%$	3	Good
5	$33 \leq X < 40\%$	2	Fair
6	$X < 33\%$	1	Satisfactory

The researchers also assessed moral reasoning filled tests in accordance with previously specified levels based on students' expected responses (Zaman & Nasir, 2011). Each participant gave their response on the 10 dilemmas out of which rated 'mode stage' (between 1-6) was calculated for analysis. Responses on each moral conflict were given value and label according to the following table.

Table 3
Moral reasoning levels: values and labels

Sr. #	Level/stage	Label of moral reasoning level
1	6	Universal Ethical Principle Orientation
2	5	Social Contract Orientation
3	4	Law and Order Orientation
4	3	Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation
5	2	Personal Reward Orientation
6	1	Punishment-Obedience Orientation

Descriptive analysis was made to find out the frequencies of the students' levels on moral reasoning and moral knowledge. Spearman rho was applied to assess correlation between the moral knowledge and moral reasoning.

Results

Three types of results, for the three research questions, are reported here, i.e., i) students' moral knowledge levels; ii) students' moral reasoning levels; and iii) relationship results between students' moral knowledge and their moral reasoning.

Moral knowledge and moral reasoning

Students' moral knowledge and moral reasoning results are displayed in the form of graphs following with brief description.

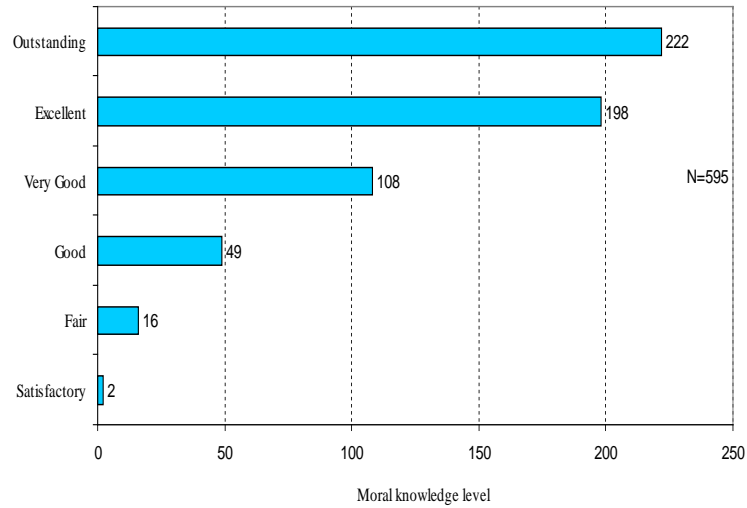


Figure 2a Moral knowledge level

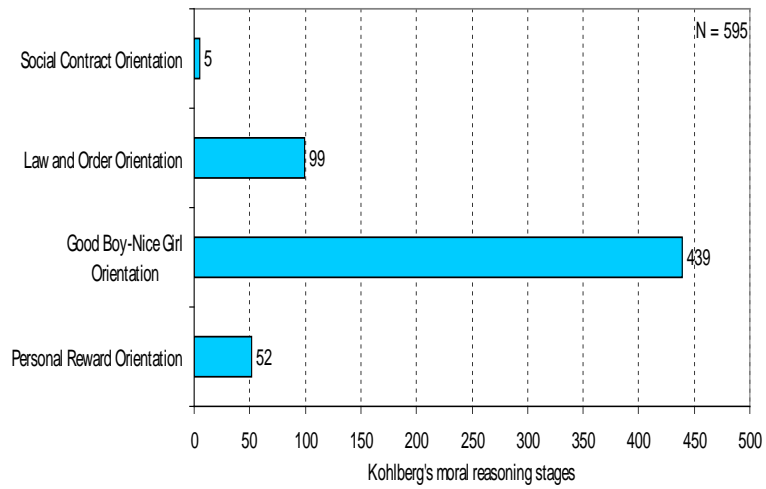


Figure 4.2A

Figure 2b Kohlberg's moral reasoning stages

Students' scores, on MKT (Figure 2a) reflect that 37% of them were outstanding, while 33% were excellent and 18% were very good while 8% were good in their moral knowledge, where as only 4% of them were not good at moral knowledge.

Students' moral reasoning level determined by MRT reflected (Figure 2b) that majority (73%) of them were on 'Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation', while 16% were on 'Law and Order Orientation', 9% were on 'Personal Reward Orientation' and 01 were on 'Social Contract Orientation'. Both results of figure 2a & 2b show that majority of the students have upper levels of moral knowledge but in moral reasoning levels the case is not similar in students' distribution.

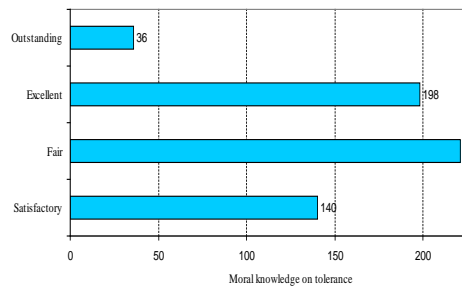


Figure 3a Moral knowledge on tolerance

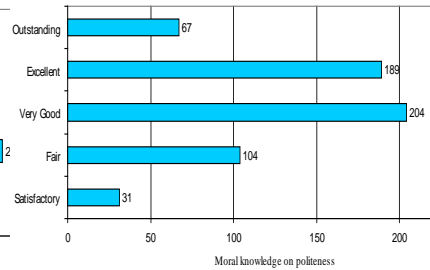


Figure 3b Moral knowledge on politeness

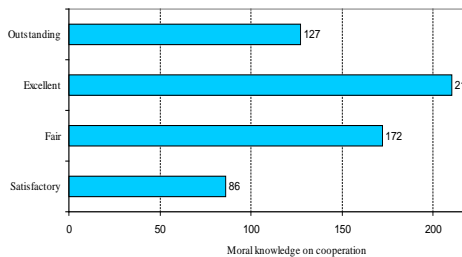


Figure 3c Moral knowledge on cooperation

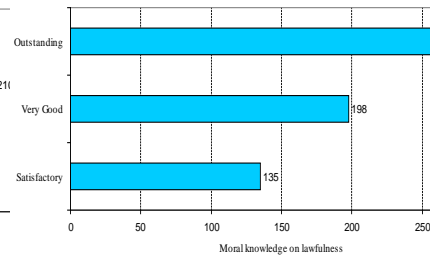


Figure 3d Moral knowledge on lawfulness

There is less percentage of students whose knowledge is excellent on four moral values i.e., tolerance, politeness, lawfulness and cooperation were 39%, 42%, 43% and 56% respectively. The given score percentages are lesser than those of test scores.

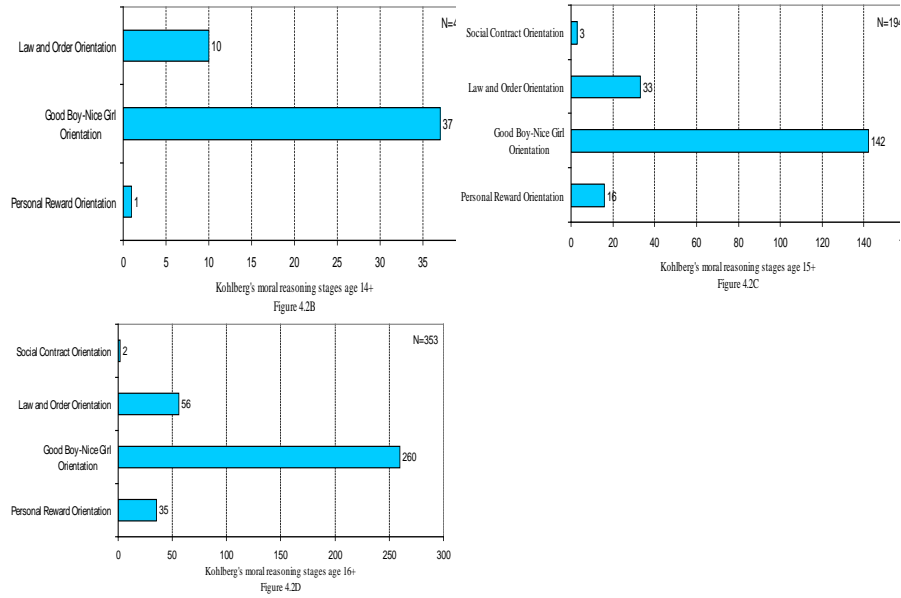


Figure 4 Distribution of sampled students by Kohlberg's moral reasoning levels

Students' age-group analysis of MRT results show (figure 4) that 77% of 14-years old, 73% of 15-16years old were on Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation level of moral reasoning. Similarly 21%, 17% and 16% students of 14, 15 and 16-years old respectively were on Law and Order Orientation level of moral reasoning. Whereas, 2%, 8% and 10% students of 14, 15 and 16 years old were on Personal Reward Orientation. Only 2% of 16-years and 01% of 15-years students was on Social Contract Orientation respectively.

Majority of students attained the Good boy –Nice girl Orientation of moral reasoning, whereas a small fraction of students was at the Law and Order Orientation. These findings reflect 'moral development delay' among Pakistani students as compared with the stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. It is interesting to note that there was no student on Universal Ethical Principle, i.e., level 5 of moral reasoning. The relationship between students' results on MKT and MRT was assessed. The correlation coefficient .204**, (N=595), was small but significant, (p<0.01) and r² =0.04. These results indicate that students' moral reasoning level tends to go high with their moral knowledge level.

The coefficient of determination suggests that 4 percent of variance in secondary school students' moral reasoning could be explained by their moral knowledge.

The relationship between moral knowledge and moral reasoning on the different moral values was explored. The resultant correlation coefficients (n=595) for; honesty ($r=0.149$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.02$), cooperation ($r=0.137$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.019$), lawfulness ($r=0.185$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.024$), justice ($r=0.127$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.016$), equality ($r=0.119$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.014$), sacrifice ($r=0.116$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.013$), politeness ($r=0.119$, $p<0.01$, $r^2=0.014$) and patience ($r=0.086$, $p<0.05$, $r^2=0.0073$). The coefficients of determination given against each moral value suggests that 2%, 1.9%, 2.4%, 1.6%, 1.4%, 1.3%, 1.4% of variance in students' reasoning level on honesty, cooperation, lawfulness, justice, equality, sacrifice, politeness and patience could be explained by their knowledge of the respective moral value.

There is insignificant but slight correlation between the students' moral knowledge and moral reasoning on the two moral values, i.e., tolerance ($r=0.044$, $p>0.05$) and respectfulness ($r=0.076$, $p>0.05$), (n=595). The variance in students' moral knowledge least allows variance in their moral reasoning on tolerance and respectfulness.

Discussion

The current study assessed two variables moral knowledge and moral reasoning of 10th grade students. First the results of the descriptive analysis are discussed in the following.

It is evident from the results on MKT that majority of 10th-grade students had either 'outstanding' or 'excellent' moral knowledge given in their courses content. These results show emphasis on moral contents, i.e., simple delivery of information and their remembering during instruction in schools. Students' knowledge on four moral values, i.e., tolerance, politeness, cooperation and lawfulness is comparatively less than their overall performance on MKT. The given former three values are directly related with desired social practices. Students' knowledge on lawfulness is also weaker as compared to their understanding of other six moral values, i.e., honesty, justice, equality, sacrifice, respectfulness and patience. The stated dissatisfaction about students' knowledge on the

certain moral values is obvious in correlation between moral knowledge and moral reasoning results.

MRT results evidenced that majority of 10th grade students were at the 'Good Boy – Nice girl Orientation' level of moral reasoning. Being the majority of 10th -grade students at stage 3 means they make their moral judgments keeping in mind others' approval, family expectations and traditional values (Woolfolk, 1998). They obviously do not decide the moral conflicts on the basis of their own principles or beliefs. They do not judge the cause and effect of their moral decisions in the long run. The majority of the students at the given stage think in terms of what pleases others, before moral action. They possibly do so because their moral judgments base on the daily life social actions which are different from what they study in the textbooks.

A small number of the students attained the 'Law and Order orientation', to them laws need to be practiced, authority are to be respected and social order be maintained. A few of them were on social contract orientation which suggests that their moral judgments are based on socially agreed upon standards and other individuals' rights. None of them was at Universal Ethical Principle Orientation and Punishment-Obedience Orientation because the given two levels are at upper and lower extremes that are reportedly not compatible to the age stage of the students according to Kohlberg theory of moral development.

MRT results evidenced delay in students' moral development which requires our classroom practices to focus on moral reasoning by putting the students in thought provoking, active, reactive and reflective situations where they may be able to develop among themselves better understanding of social issues.

The results of age group-wise comparison are contrary to the conception of age related moral development. Furthermore, this analysis reflects that during three years age range, there is no evidence of significant change in students' moral reasoning. It implies that students' context i.e. home and school environment which are almost constant, account for moral reasoning development. The number of students at level 5 and 6 of moral knowledge is greater than those whose moral reasoning orientation level is even 4 and 5. The identified levels of moral reasoning reflect somewhat moral developmental delay among Pakistani students as compared to the findings of Eisenberg (1979), where the moral stage

increases in frequency with age, and indicates a decrease with age. The students' have sound potential moral knowledge but they least reflect better understanding of moral conflicts while giving moral judgments. Although the learning demand and social need is that students need to be able to; recognize the moral issues, make moral judgments, establish moral intent and engage in moral behaviour (see figure 1). The moral stance that majority of the students reflected, seems to be the result of family, peer and demands of educational system which are more influential factors in establishing cultural norms and beliefs for moral functioning of individuals (Hart, 2005). This leads to the Piagetian view of moral reasoning as a process of coordinating perspectives rather than the application of principles or rules as described in Kohlberg theory (Carpendale, 2000).

The relationship in moral knowledge and moral reasoning of the secondary level students was carried out. The issue under investigation, whether the students take into account their moral knowledge while making moral judgments in different situations. The results described small correlation because only four percent shared variance existed that allowed us to explain the variance in students' moral reasoning by the variance in moral knowledge. The small correlation implies that remembering moral content does not automatically guarantee the development of moral reasoning. It needs to focus the way of presentation of the learning content to the students in class and consequently its assessment. The fault seems to be with the least focus on morals during teaching as well as assessment.

Moral content results show that our textbooks and lectures are affluent in moral injunctions but we least engage students for developing their moral reasoning which is socially need of the hour. The given classroom product is squarely, according to Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, and Sanger (2009), the result of our pedagogical attempt where we teach morality but not teach morally. Moreover, we behave in classroom with regard to 'achieving motive' approach, i.e., knowledge achievement. Achievement motivation results in a strategy to utilize the available time effectively in a competitive environment for excelling in achievement scores. Conversely the instructional practices required for moral development generally follow 'surface motive' approach--instrumental or extrinsic, to meet minimum requirements with least effort' both by the teachers and students (Biggs, 1990).

The other reasons behind small correlation in moral reasoning and moral knowledge might be ignoring the significant aspect of students' personality development. It is probably due to the stereotype attitudes of the teachers towards students' moral and character development and over emphasis on the dominance of our defective examination system demanding content cramming. There is in this regard the importance of the crucial social activities often overlooked in morally deteriorating society. There is need, according to Ingersoll, (1994) at the core of school to introduce such social activities which are fundamentally social to transmit moral values and behaviors.

Furthermore, the findings of the study have implications that affectivity of moral knowledge as a source of moral development is insufficient. Therefore, such educational programs or contents of courses and activities need to be included in school curriculum which are research based, like role-playing, perspective-taking reflective thinking, discussion and debate on morally conflicted events and service-learning programmes (Mason & Gibbs, 1993; DeWolfe & Jackson, 1984; Keefer & Ashley, 2001; Hudec, 2002). In addition, there needs to be of greatest degree of internal organizational control in school to curb negative peer interactions which according to Sanders, (1990); Kilgannon and Erwin, (1992) affect moral reasoning adversely. A supportive and safe learning environment for students to ask questions for reflective thinking on the aversive moral actions would be helpful in making moral judgments. Therefore, it is essential to provide students with opportunities to engage in reasoning about the consequences of bad relations, actions and events on our lives (Boom, Brugman & Heijden, 2001).

Annexure “A”

List of Experts in Moral Reasoning Test Construction

Sr. #	Name of Expert	Qualification/ Status	Institution
1	Ahmad Bilal	Ph D Scholar (Education)	University of the Punjab, Lahore
2	Aziz-ur- Rahman	Ph D Scholar (Education)	International Islamic University Islamabad
3	Mushtaq Ahmad	Ph D Scholar (Education)	University of the Punjab, Lahore
4	Zubair Ahmad	Ph D Scholar (Education)	University of the Punjab, Lahore
5	Mirza M. Aslam	Ph D Scholar (Education)	Preston University, Islamabad

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