

MORAL JUDGMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CONTEXT OF GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract: Moral judgment of high school children in context of general intelligence was studied on a sample of 72 children of 13 to 16 years studying in 8th to 10th standards in Government and Private schools from urban area and Government schools from rural area of Dharwad taluk, Karnataka. Correlation research design was employed to know the moral judgment of high school children in context of general intelligence. Gupta's (2010) Moral Judgment Test and Standard Progressive Matrices (Raven, 1996) were used for the study. It was found that majority of children fell in moderate level followed by 13.9 percent in high level of moral judgment. More than half of the children were intellectually average followed by the above average (33.3%) and below average (13.9%), none of the children were intellectually superior and intellectually impaired. The association between general intelligence and moral judgment of high school children was found to be statistically non-significant. Children with above average general intelligence had high moral judgment compared to intellectually average and below average. However, ANOVA revealed non-significant difference between the groups.

Key Words: High school children, moral judgment, general intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Morality is the supreme essence of a civilized society which distinguishes Homo sapiens from animals. The entire structure of the society is built on it. No civilization can survive for long which is not based on the principles of morality. Therefore, it is the crying need of the hour to infuse it into the hearts of human beings from childhood.

Moral development refers to the process by which children learn how to act toward others and behave in the society. It involves the acquisition of concepts such as manners, guilt, shame and understanding the difference between right and wrong. Children make judgment based on moral values which are standards and principles for judging things, people, objects, ideas, actions and situations to be good worthwhile, desirable or, on the other hand, bad, worthless.

The term "morality" comes from the Latin word "mos" which indicates the "character", law, rule, order and proper behavior. Morality in this way is in conformity to the moral code of the social group. An individual's morals may be regulated by the society and government, one's religion, or self. The values driven by the society or government are relative and can change with the change in government or society. Most individuals develop their moral code primarily at home, through the influence of their families and parents who are the first socializing agents to inculcate these values in a child. Standards of behavior and moral values may change over time; from generation to generation across cultures and locations (Smith, 2006).

Childhood is a golden opportunity for forming the layers of thought, moral judgment and values. It is a formative period, a period of learning and habit formation. Habits and traits of character formed at this age have a profound effect on the child and adolescent. The foundation of good character can be laid by moral values. The good or bad influence that operates in one's childhood makes a person good or bad in later life. As children grow, like other dimensions of development, moral development progresses gradually which help them to distinguish right from wrong. Morality consists of a system of rules, and the essence of morality is to be sought in respect to which the individual acquires these rules. Acquisition of morality as commonly conceived by the psychologists is the internalization of a set of virtues, ideals and values, sanctioned by society which becomes an integral part of the individual's self through the process of development (Piaget, 1932). Morality evolves from humans expending cognitive abilities that allow the development of within group altruism or cheating, cooperation and norm following behavior (Greene and Haidt, 2002).

Kohlberg and his colleagues have found that in the course of moral development, individuals tend to pass through an orderly sequence of three major levels with two sub stages in each: The pre-convention stage with two sub stages (1. Punishment and Obedience, 2. individual instrumentation and exchange), the conventional stage (3. interpersonal conformity, 4. social system and conscience) and the post conventional stage with another two sub stages (5. human right and social welfare morality, 6) Personal conscience). Pre-convention children (4 to 7 years) are responsive to cultural labels of good and bad out of consideration for the kinds of consequences of their behavior-

punishment, reward or the exchanges of favors. At the conventional level individuals view the rules and expectations of their family, group or nation as valuable in their own right. Individuals who pass to the post-conventional level (adolescents and adults) define the morality in terms of self-chosen principles that they view as having universal ethical validity and application for the good of all. Some adults may not reach the post-conventional level. It is a system of beliefs, values and underlying judgments about the rightness or wrongness of acts which the psychologists call conscience.

Based on studies in different cultures, Kohlberg (1976) concluded that there were eleven basic moral values found in every society: Laws and rules; conscience; personal roles of affection; authority; civil rights; contract; trust and justice in exchange; punishment and justice; value of life; property right and values; truth; sex and sexual love. According to Kohlberg, when a person faces a moral dilemma which includes a conflict between such moral values then a person has to weigh the competing claims of these values and decide which values out to take precedence.

Skinner (1990) view of the origins and development of morality states that the mind of a newborn is a so-called blank slate, where direct experiences and the consequences they beget are the sole sources of moral learning. Freud believed that children develop a conscience in an ongoing process throughout the middle childhood years. Children of this age are not self-interested opportunists with a punishment and obedience orientation to moral compliance, rather development of conscience is rooted in their efforts to understand the desires and interests of other people.

Young children are intuitive moralists who begin to understand values in the context of relationship of significance to them. Young children develop an intuitive morality from the socialization efforts of caregivers in helping to shape their own sensitivity to the feelings and thoughts of others and in their developing grasp of normative standards of behavior (Damon and Lerner, 2006).

By age six or seven, physiological changes in the brain make a child more capable of thinking abstractly and drawing moral distinctions. The child understands, for instance, that lying is a betrayal of trust. Along with the capacity to think in a new and moral way, a school-age child begins to experience the prompting of an extremely sensitive internal monitor "the conscience" which acts as a holding tank for the values and standards he/she has taken in, or internalized, since earliest childhood. The child's conscience sends him/her a clear signal whenever he/she betrays that which he/she knows to be right.

A child at school age still needs parents to set rules for daily behaviour to help him establish an inner order which in turn helps him develop a sense of morality. Without their limits, children may fail to develop the feeling that they are responsible for their own actions, or they are obliged to conform to social values (Santrock, 2001). At no other period in life are people as likely to be as concerned with moral values and principles as they are during adolescence. They assume that it is their solemn duty to reform their parents and the world following their own personal standards. As children enter the adolescence period, they extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world. During this period the body goes through revolutionary changes. Physical changes and development in an adolescent are closely related with mental and social development (Sharma, 2006).

Children's moral behaviour is also moderated by a number of factors such as social and economic factors. It has been observed that the degree of morality or immorality of individuals is related to the social-cultural values emphasized by a particular environment (Kalgo and Isyaku, 1993). Children's method of perception, memorization and thinking are inseparably bound to the patterns of activity, communication and social relations of the adult in which the individual is socialized. Thus, the environment in which the child is brought up has a lot to offer in the explanation of the varied behaviours and attitudes. This in other words, postulates that moral or immoral behaviours exhibited by children has so much to do with the locality in which they are brought up (Cole and Scribner, 1974). Intelligence is another concept that affects morality of children. Intelligence is the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge, power of thinking, reasoning and mind superior ability (Saeidipour, 2009). In other words Binet and Simon (1916) has proposed Judgment as common sense, practical sense, initiative, ability to adapt themselves to different situations. Good judgment, good understanding, good reasoning, these activities are the basic intelligence.

Children are the future of India. The future of our country depends on the moral values imparted to them during their childhood. The moral development of children in today's society has become more and more challenging. Children are engaged in acts of copying and being caught in exams, cheating, lying and bullying and focus on self-gains, academic achievement in terms of marks, disregarding the intangible values and virtues which has been the major concern of parents, teachers, educators or significant adults. The moral values should be cultivated in the individuals, right from the childhood. It is the primary need of a country and society (Singh, 2011). There are very few studies that have explored the correlation between moral judgment and general intelligence. Hence the present study aimed to know the moral judgment of high school children in the context of general intelligence.

2. METHODOLOGY:

2.1 Research Design: Correlation research design was used to know the relationship between general intelligence and moral judgment of high school children.

2.2 Population and sample: High school children studying in 8th to 10th grade in Government and Private schools from urban area and Government schools from rural area (as there were few Private schools in rural area) of Dharwad taluk, Karnataka formed the population. Four schools from urban area with two each from Private and Government and two Government schools from rural area of Dharwad taluk were selected for the study and from each standard (8th to 10th) two boys and two girls were randomly selected for the study. The sample constituted 72 children where 24 were from rural and 48 were from urban area.

2.3 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 values. The test consists of twenty stories, followed by questions with alternative answers that have been organized 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 and categorized in to low (39 - 67), moderate (68 - 96) and high (97-123).

Standard Progressive Matrices - Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) is a test of a person's intellectual capacity. The scale consists of 60 problems divided into five sets A, B, C, D, E with 12 problems in each set and each set begins with simple problems and end with complex ones. The five sets provide six opportunities for grasping the method and five progressive assessment of a person's capacity for intellectual activity. A score of one is given for correct answer and zero is given for wrong answer. A total score a child would obtain is 60 and minimum being zero. On the basis of raw score, children are categorized into five groups ranging from 5th percentile (intellectually impaired) to 95th percentile (intellectually superior). Children whose score lies between 25th and 75th percentile are considered as intellectually average.

2.4 Statistical Analysis:

- Frequency and percentage were used to describe the level of moral judgment and general intelligence of high school children.
- Chi-Square a non parametric test was used to know the association between moral judgment and general intelligence of high school children.
- One way ANOVA (Analysis of variance) techniques was used to know the influence of general intelligence on the moral judgment of high school children

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The Percentage distribution of high school children by levels of Moral judgment is presented in Table-1. None of the children fell in low level of moral judgment. Majority (86.1%) of children were in moderate level followed by 13.9 percent in high level of moral judgment. It is satisfactory to know that most of the children are with desirable moral judgment. Louis and Emersion (2011) who studied high school children of Tamil Nadu found that most of the students (boys & girls) had good moral reasoning ability. Rest (1999) presents a four component model of moral judgment. The four component model represents the internal "process" necessary for a moral act. The four components of the model are: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral action. It is presumed that these components are not personality traits or virtues; rather they are major unit of analysis used to trace how a person responds in a particular social situation. Rest states that operation of a single component does not predict moral behaviour. Instead behaving morally depends upon each process and the execution of the entire ensemble. Each process involves cognitive, effective and behavioural aspects that function together in fostering the completion of moral action.

Table-2.1 presents the general intelligence of the high school children. The sample were divided into five categories based on their intelligence levels. 52.8 per cent of the adolescents were intellectually average followed by the above average (33.3%) and below average (13.9%), none of the children were intellectually superior and intellectually impaired.

The association between moral judgment and individual general intelligence of high school children is presented in Table-2.2. It is observed that children who had moderate level of moral judgment, 54.8 per cent were intellectually average, 32.3 per cent were intellectually above average and 12.9 per cent were intellectually below average. In case of children who had high moral judgment, equal number (40.0%) of children were intellectually average and above average while 20.00per cent were below average in their intelligence ability. The association between general intelligence and moral judgment of high school children was found to be statistically non significant.

Mean comparison of moral judgment of high school children by level of general intelligence presented in Table-2.3 revealed that high school children with above average general intelligence had high moral judgment (87.41) compared to intellectually average (85.42) and below average (85.10). However, ANOVA revealed non-significant

difference between the groups. Singh (2013) found no significant difference in moral judgment of high and low intelligence group of adolescent students (14-19 years). It is in conformity with the findings of Redid (1989) that moral judgment of children (8th to 10th std) did not differ by level of Intellectual capacity of children. In this study non significant association was found between general intelligence and moral judgment this may be because intelligence is general mental ability distributed normally while, ability of moral is related to the socio cultural environment of the individual and with many other socio-cultural and familial factors.

However Kumar and Dhull (2012) reported that children's studying in 9th standard having higher intelligence had higher moral reasoning compared to children having lower intelligence. Similarly Lazarescu (2012) revealed that children(6 to 10 years) having low intellectual coefficient exhibited fear due to adult authority in broad proportion and use lie in order to avoid punishment, while subject having high IQ choose to assume punishment instead telling lies.

4. CONCLUSION:

Majority of high school children had moderate level of moral judgment. More than half of the children were intellectually average. Children with above average intellectual ability had higher score on moral judgment. However General intelligence was not significantly associated with moral judgment.

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