

**Investigation of Moral Reasoning among Prospective Teachers Enrolled in B.Ed Program;
in the Light of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development**

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ABSTRACT

The qualitative paper idea was to explore the moral thought in students undertaking their studies at university level based on the stages provided by Kohlberg in the moral development theory. This study on emphasis on pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional stages. This study will examine how this theory can be applied into practice in terms of teaching and theoretical understanding. Study population was all the B.Ed students of one state university of Lahore city. It had 50 B. Ed students volunteers who volunteered to provide data as long as they were over the age of nineteen. The study was conducted using one of the Kohlberg Dilemmas as its instrument. 10 questions were developed to find the reaction of the participants. The students are expected to provide a rationale as to why they say yes or no to a question. The answers were classified under the scheme provided by Kohlberg. Major findings were stunned that over 60 percent of students are at the stage of maintaining the social order which is the demanded level per Kohlberg to the adults aged above twenty years. The rest 40% are yet to achieve this moral stage. Recommendations on key findings are provided. The results of this research demonstrate that the moral education interventions of sustained and theory-based and culturally-adapted interventions are needed to promote the ethical competence of the teacher preparation programs.

Keywords: Moral development, Kohlbergs' Dilemma, B. Ed students, Stages of moral development

INTRODUCTION

The studies on the Kohlberg Theory of Moral Development with references to the moral reasoning of future educators in B.Ed programs have become an urgent topic of study because of the crucial role of teachers in the development of ethical and moral abilities in learners (O'Flaherty and Gleeson, 2017; Cummings et al., 2007). The sphere has developed since the introduction of the cognitive-developmental framework by Kohlberg in the middle of the 20 th century, which now focuses on the stages of pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional moral cognition (Samuelson, 2014; Nucci, 2006). Theories about moral thinking and moral reasoning were made by Jean Piaget (1932) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1976, 1986). Moral reasoning is a thinking process that is involved in the making of judgments concerning the right and wrong questions (Woolfolk, 2011). Kohlberg has tested the morality of children and adults, by subjecting them to moral predicaments; scenarios where no decision is unambiguous and unquestionable (Woolfolk, 2011). The dilemmas are used by Kohlberg to explore the moral thinking of people. He is not actually interested in the subject saying yes or no to this dilemma, but the thinking that led to the answer (Crain 1985).

This development is an indicator of increased awareness of practical importance of the moral reasoning in learning institutions, with the ethical decision-making of teachers affecting classroom dynamics and student progression (Tobias and Boon, 2010; O'Flaherty and McGarr, 2014). According to empirical evidence, the majority of pre-service teachers are functioning at the conventional level, and specific moral education interventions are required to address the situation (Al-Disi and Rawadieh, 2019; Oliveira et al., 2012). The social and theoretical significance of the study is also emphasized by the issue of ethical readiness among teachers and the consequences of the democratic classroom behaviour (Cummings et al., 2003).

Although the importance is not denied, one of the unresolved issues is the underdevelopment of the moral reasoning of the future teachers in the course of their learning (Cummings et al., 2007; Cummings et al., 2001). According to some research, there is a knowledge gap about the way Kohlberg stages take concrete form in B.Ed groups and how they affect the process of teaching (O'Flaherty and Gleeson, 2017; Solano and Pedagogmania, 2013). Besides, the effectiveness of modern teacher education curriculum in cultivating post-conventional moral reasoning is a controversial issue due to the fact that some researchers believe that instruction in ethics is missing or occasionally improperly implemented (Tobias and Boon, 2010; O'Flaherty and McGarr, 2014). There are also opposing views on the role of cognitive development in moral reasoning development or whether it should take into account a wider array of socio-emotional and situational elements (Boyd, 2020; Dabdoub & Berkowitz, 2024). The effects of such a gap are possible shortcomings in the ability of teachers to negotiate ethical challenges and to provide an example of a morally upright action, which can influence education and social justice in schools (Eren, 2024; Nucci, 2016).

It is globally agreeable that teachers are one of the important variables among the learning of the children. Teachers are concerned with a significant task educating the people of society and their moral development as well. To this end, the teachers should possess themselves proper moral development since a teacher who has poor moral development cannot play any helpful part in the moral development of his or her students. And teacher training institutions are most significant to the moral growth of teachers. Owing to the mounting significance of moral reasoning to the teachers we have carried out a study in a public institution of higher learning in Lahore city to establish whether future teachers are equipped with the moral reasoning as required as spelt out in the theory of moral development by Kohlberg. The research study is titled; Investigation of Moral Reasoning Among Prospective Teachers Enrolled in B.Ed Program; in the Light of the Theory of Moral Development by Kohlberg.

Objectives of the Study

This report aims to review the available literature on the topic of the Exploration of Kohlberg Theory of Moral Development in the context of moral reasoning of potential teachers in the B.Ed programs with consideration of pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional levels. Explore the practicality of this theory. The objectives of the study are followed:

- Explore the ethical thinking of BEd students, as postulated by Kohlberg theory of moral development.
- Decision on the necessary actions to be taken to create moral reasoning in B.Ed students.

Significance of the Study

Moral development of the individuals is one of the most important functions of education. Moral developments entail the alterations in thoughts, feelings and actions over the norms of right and wrong. Moral development includes interpersonal dimension that governs the activities of a person when he is not related with others and interpersonal dimension that governs interactions and resolves conflicts (Gibbs, 2003; Walker, 2004, 2005). The importance of this study is that as a teacher, the role of imparting

moral and ethical growth to the student is crucial and there is diversification in the approach of teaching moral reasoning in the teacher training programs. The critical analysis of empirical evidence and theoretical discourse will give an insight into this research that can improve teacher preparation studies to achieve an elevated level of moral reasoning and ethical competence. This research will be valuable to the students that they will be informed concerning their present level of moral reasoning. Results will be beneficial to the university administration to ensure they train their teachers on how to think in the most moral way.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins the current study incorporates three-tier and six-step moral development model introduced by Kohlberg with the current insights into moral competence and ethical decision-making in education (Santos et al., 2024; Fernandes & Martins, 2024; Pritchard, 1999). The most important concepts are the stages of moral reasoning before conventional and post-conventional and the way they are associated with the professional ethics and the classroom as practiced by teachers. This framework facilitates exploring how the moral development theory can be utilized to inform both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching methods, which goes in line with the aim of improving moral education in teacher preparation (Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2020; Niekerk, 2014).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section provides mapping of the research landscape of the literature on Exploration of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development as applied to the moral reasoning of the potential teachers of B.Ed programs with respect to pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional stages. Explore the practical implication of the theory on the teaching practices and theoretical knowledge. The studies reviewed are both longitudinal and cross-sectional, qualitative, systematic, and cover various geographic regions, such as Ireland, Jordan, Malaysia, Turkey, and Brazil among others. The study is a collective research topic because it was done on the distribution of stages of moral reasoning in future teachers, the effectiveness of an educational intervention, culture, and integration of courses, which offers a broad representation of the comparison concerning the mentioned research questions.

The results of numerous research studies were that most of the potential teachers were at the conventional phase, and a relatively smaller number were at the post-conventional phase and none at the pre-conventional (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017; Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2019; Oliveira et al., 2012). A number of studies reported that there were cultural and institutional differences in the allocation of stages whereby some situations exhibited more post-conventional reasoning (Amimo & Mooka, 2023; Bordignon, 2011). Practical realization of the moral reasoning in teaching is a significant topic in studies concerning moral reasoning. Research findings stressed that increased moral reasoning levels are associated with improved ethical decision-making and professional practice in the case of teachers (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017; Salopek, 2013; Loving et al., 2003). The moral reasoning matters when it comes to the capacity of teachers to address ethical dilemma, classroom management and leadership (Tobias & Boon, 2010; Cummings et al., 2003). As it is observed in some studies, moral stances and behaviors of teachers are also shaped by moral motives and epistemological beliefs (Eren, 2024; Karimnia & Jamadi, 2019). There was also a study that mentioned the necessity to adjust moral dilemmas and curricula to the local context in order to remain relevant and effective (Pérez et al., 2018).

The available literature covering the Theory of Moral Development developed by Kohlberg in its relation to future teachers participating in B.Ed programs demonstrates a number of themes. The first is the fact that most potential teachers, according to consistent findings, work at the conventional phase of moral reasoning, with only a few of them at post-conventional stages. Educational interventions, especially the ones that include the discussion of moral dilemmas and training in ethics promise in fostering moral

development. Other issues include the role of contextual variables (culture and academic success and program specialization) in the development of moral reasoning, and theoretical applications of the Kohlberg stages to the fields of character education and ethical pedagogy, which highlights the practical implications of teacher preparation programs. The review of the research substantiates the theory of Kohlberg that the majority of teachers in their prospective profession mostly use the conventional level of moral reasoning, with the less percentage advancing to the post-conventional level. This distribution is similar to the claim of a developmental progress of moral judgment described by Kohlberg and also notes the difficulty of going beyond the societal norms of moral reasoning in the teacher education contexts (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017; Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2019; Oliveira et al., 2012). Empirical evidence reveals that contextual and cultural factors can affect the development of moral reasoning in future teachers, so Kohlberg stages can be displayed differently in a variety of educational environments. This highlights the necessity of culturally responsive modifications of the framework by Kohlberg in terms of teacher education research and practice (Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2019; Enciso et al., 2022).

The overall findings of studies on the Kohlberg Theory of Moral Development concerning the moral reasoning of future teachers on B.Ed programs are consistently found to be working mostly at the conventional level of moral reasoning. This phase is marked by compliance with the mores, rules and expectations in society with a relatively smaller number of people showing post-conventional reasoning of principled ethical thinking and independent moral judgment. The pre-conventional reasoning seems to be not very common in this population. The differences in cultures highlight the significance of the adaptation of moral education according to local norms and demands since the development of moral reasoning is closely connected with sociocultural and educational policies. Sustained, theory-grounded, and interactive learning methods, including moral dilemma discussions, case-oriented learning and ethics training based on the theory introduced by Kohlberg, have been shown to be measurably effective in developing moral reasoning in teacher candidates. Nonetheless, short-term or surface level interventions are likely to have little effect, which underscores the need of integrating the entire curriculum. The incorporation of professional codes of ethics and directed questioning strategies also contribute to the internalization of moral values and strengthen the moral decision-making skills.

Research Design

The research design used in this study was the descriptive survey research to examine the level of moral reasoning among the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students at a university belonging to the government sector located in Lahore. A descriptive survey design is mainly suitable where the purpose of the research is to quantify and outlets the distribution and the qualities of a particular phenomenon in a given population (Cummings et al., 2001). This has been widely applied in previous studies on moral reasoning with pre-service teachers, in which the objective is to characterize moral development stages and record normative levels of moral reasoning among groups of students instead of the intervention efficacy (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017; Özcinar, 2015). The descriptive method will enable the researcher to take a position of the moral reasoning state of the B.Ed. students and this will give a good baseline information which could guide the teacher education curriculum development and practice. Cross-sectional descriptive designs based on standardized measures of moral dilemmas have been effectively utilised in previous research in the field of teacher education to record the moral reasoning levels and to compare the different groups of pre-service teachers (Cummings et al., 2001; O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017). The present methodological approach is consistent with the exploratory style of the current research, which aims at comprehending the current levels of the future educator as regards to moral reasoning.

Sample of the Study

The research population included the entire B.Ed. student body currently studying on the 2024-2025 academic year in a public sector university in Lahore, Pakistan. A clear definition of the population is

necessary in defining the extent to which the research findings can be generalized and in making sure that the sampling procedures are formulated accordingly (Cummings et al., 2001). The justification of B.Ed. students as the population of interest depends on the fact that the moral reasoning skills of pre-service teachers are paramount to their future practice in the field because of the fact that teachers act as role models and decision-makers in matters that require ethical reasoning in learning institutions (Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2020; O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017).

There was the use of random sampling technique to select 50 B.Ed. students out of the target population. Random sampling is a sampling technique whereby every individual in the population is given an equal and independent opportunity to be included in the sample hence reducing selection bias and increasing the sample representativeness (Cummings et al., 2001). Random sampling in the educational research is not a new practice but can be said to be a sound method to get samples that may result in generalizable results, within the limitations of realistic research environments (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017). The sampling procedure was done as follows:

- *Sampling Frame Development:* The entire list of all B.Ed. students taking the 2024-2025 term was taken out by the university office. A different identification number was given to each and every student to form a complete sampling frame.
- *Random Selection:* 50 student identification numbers within the sampling frame were selected (randomly) with the help of a random number generator. Such computerized random selection process made it rather objective and removed researcher bias during the sample selection.
- *Sample Size Justification:* The sample size of 50 students was chosen with both the practical consideration and the previous studies on moral reasoning among pre-service teachers. The size of the sample used by previous researchers in the field of study has been between 30 and 100 or even more participants and 50 participants are the acceptable sample size of descriptive profiling studies (Cummings et al., 2001; O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017; Ozcinar, 2015). Bigger samples may be statistically more powerful, but a sample size of 50 students is practically and methodologically reasonable in a descriptive study, especially in cases when the intensive qualitative measure, such as the moral dilemma interviewing technique, is used.
- *Replacement Protocol:* To allow the sample to be random and reach the desired sample size, students who were selected haphazardly but refused to take part or were not available were selected as replacement participants randomly to ensure the sample remained random.

Research Instrument

The main study tool used in the current research was the Heinz Dilemma that is a standardized instrument created by Lawrence Kohlberg within the framework of his Moral Judgment Interview (MJl). The most commonly known and widely tested tool of evaluating moral reasoning is the Heinz Dilemma and has been the focus of moral research over the last 50 years (Kohlberg, 1984). Heinz Dilemma is a cognitive developmental theory of moral reasoning which was created by Lawrence Kohlberg and his associates at Harvard University and was a component of a larger system to measure the moral judgment and stage development (Kohlberg, 1984). The theory of Kohlberg suggests that moral reasoning follows a universal development of six steps, which are arranged in three levels, namely, pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional (principled) morality. The Heinz Dilemma and the figures of wider Standard Issue Moral Judgment Interview were meant to induce and tabularly examine the order and phase of moral judgment in an individual (Kohlberg, 1984).

The Heinz Dilemma is a moral conflict scenario where a man called Heinz has to make a decision on whether to steal a drug that is overpriced to save her sick wife when he is unable to afford the purchase of the drug through the legal means. The conflict is designed to produce a clash between such conflicting moral values in this situation as the value of human life and respect to the rights to property and legal

authority. Not just what Heinz should do, but more to the point why he should do so is also requested of the respondents. The evaluation of the level of moral development among the respondents is on their reasoning and the justification they have given, and not their particular decisions (Kohlberg, 1984). The Heinz Dilemma is intended to test the organization and the level of moral thinking as opposed to the content of moral beliefs and particular moral choices. It evaluates the way people reason concerning moral problems, what principles they refer to, and the complexity of their moral decision-making (Kohlberg, 1984; Özcinar, 2015). The tool will be able to determine reasoning typical of each of the six stages proposed by Kohlberg, since Stage 1 (obedience and punishment orientation) to Stage 6 (universal ethical principles). The Heinz Dilemma has been applied in educational research especially to profile the moral reasoning abilities of pre-service teachers, with the studies having consistently determined that the majority of teacher education students reason at conventional levels (Stage 3 and 4) with a smaller number of students able to reason at post-conventional levels (O'Flaherty & Gleeson, 2017).

Administration Procedure

Heinz Dilemma may be conducted in various forms such as individual interview, written answers, or computer mediated form. In this experiment, the dilemma was in written form and students were requested to read the situation slow and then give written answers to a set of probe questions. The general management of administration process included the following:

- *Introduction to the dilemma:* A written form of the Heinz Dilemma scenario was presented to the participants who were advised to read and go through it in detail.
- *Initial Response:* The first question that the participants were asked was what they think Heinz should (not steal the drug or steal the drug) do.
- *Justification and Reasoning:* After making their first decision, the participants were then given a bunch of probe questions that were meant to get them to see the reasoning behind their choice.

Data Collection Procedure: The procedure of data collection was carried out according to the ethical standards of research and a systematic procedure was adhered to make the process consistent and rigorous. The steps that were followed are as follows:

- *Stage 1: Ethical Approval and Recruitment of the participants:* Before the data collection the ethical approval of the university was received and prospective teachers and given all necessary information regarding the objective of the study, data collection procedures, voluntary nature of the participation, confidentiality assurances and their ability to withdraw any time without repercussions.
- *Stage 2: Instrument Administration:* The data collection sessions would be held at the convenient time and the time of the academic programs of the participants would be considered. The participants were invited to a calm and cozy classroom setting where people can think critically. The researcher gave verbal standard instruction on what to do, and that there were no correct or incorrect answers as long as one thought in various ways of the moral issues. This was followed by the presentation of Heinz Dilemma scenario and probe questions that were presented to the participants. They were instructed to:
 - Read the dilemma thoroughly and allow time to get acquainted with the situation.
 - Think seriously on what Heinz should do and why.
 - Write in-detailed answers to all probe questions.
 - Justify their arguments as much as possible, with principles, values that they are based on.

The participants were provided with a reasonable amount of time to answer the questions (30-45 minutes on average) and offered to seek clarification in case it was required. The researchers were not unavailable during the session to respond to procedural queries but did not affect the moral thought of the participants.

- *Stage 3: Data Recording and Management:* All the written answers were gathered, given identification codes to ensure their confidentiality and stored in a secure place. The answers were then ready to be analyzed by tabulating them based on the probe questions and making sure that all the information were readable and complete. Incomplete or unclear responses were mentioned to be followed up or excluded in the analysis.
- *Stage 4: Scoring and Analysis:* The responses obtained were assessed by the stage-scoring of the Moral Judgment Interview developed by Kohlberg. This process involved:
- *Scorer Training:* Two raters (independent) were trained on the MJJ scoring procedures with the help of the standardized scoring manual created by Kohlberg. The training was in the form of learning the descriptions of the stages, training with sample responses, and reaching consensus on practice cases.
- *Independent Scoring:* Each of the raters read all responses of the participants independently and gave them stage points based on the form and content of moral reasoning displayed.
- *Inter-Rater Reliability:* Inter-rater reliability was determined with the help of Cohen kappa or percentage agreement to provide uniformity in scoring. All disagreements among raters were discussed and, where a third expert rater was required, the third expert rater was consulted.
- *Data Analysis:* Descriptive statistics were performed on the data in order to describe the distribution of the stages of moral reasoning among the sample of the students in the B.Ed. when the reliable stage scores were obtained.

INTERPRETATIONS OF RESULTS

The data collected through dilemma is tabulated and analyzed by taking Percentage.

Table No.1

Question	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Q1: Should Heinz steal the drug?	9 (18%)	41 (82%)		
Q2: Is it actually right or wrong for him to steal the drug?			21 (42%)	29 (58%)

The results of question 1 shows that 18% respondents are on stage one because they replied in context of punishment. Some says that Heinz should not steel because of punishment and some says that he should steel and can avoid the punishment by bribing the police or it is not such a huge amount for which he has to face major punishment. According to Kohlberg's interpretations all these respondents lies on stage 1 that is called "obedience and punishment" and the 82% respondents simply argue that the Heinz should have to steal the drug because the druggist has not given him the drug. Here they So with this response we are right to put them on stage 2 that is called "individualism and exchange."

In response to question 2 most respondents said that it is right to steal because may be he loves his wife. Some respondents says that to save the life is his responsibility. One gave the reason that druggist is selfish person that is why Heinz is right to steal the drug. So by giving this type reasoning the 42% respondents lie on stage 3 that is called "good interpersonal relationship." 58% respondents gave the reasoning against stealing the drug. Most of them gave the reason that it is not a healthy sign for society.

Some says that Heinz should find out another solution. All of are at stage 4 that is “maintaining social order”.

Table No: 2

Question	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Q3: Does Heinz have duty or obligation to steal the drug?		20 (40%)	30 (60%)	
Q4: If Heinz does not love his wife should he steal the drug for her? Does it make a difference in what Heinz should do whether or not he loves his wife?	19 (38%)		13 (26%)	18 (36%)

In question 3 of table 2 the 40% respondents gave the reasons according to the 3rd stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development That is “good interpersonal relationship” and 60% were agree with” maintenance of social order” is his responsibility that is 4th stage of the theory.

The results of question 4 shows that 38% were on 2nd stage namely “individualism and exchange” .they simply refuse that if Heinz not love his wife he did not steal. And 26% were on stage 4th namely” maintenance of social order”. As they argue law should have primary importance for a person. 36% respondent gave the reason that Heinz should have to protect the life of her wife whether he has love for her or not. So they are on 5th stage of theory that is called “social contract and individual right.”

Table No: 3

Question	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Q5: Suppose the person dying is not his wife but a stranger. Should Heinz steal the drug for the stranger?		29 (58%)	8 (16%)	13 (26%)
Q6: Suppose it is pet animal he loves. Should Heinz steal to save the pet animal?		25 (50%)		25 (50%)

In response to question 5 the respondents said that Heinz should steal the drug because his love for human life, because of sympathy, to become a good person. These types of views put 58% respondent on 3rd stage of “good interpersonal relationship”. And 16% were not in favor of stealing because for the implementation of law. So, they are on 4th stage ” maintaining the social order”. 26% respondents said that life has more value and it is a duty of society to ensure the basic rights of human beings. So, they are on 5th stage; social contract orientation.

In response to question no 6 the 50% were in view that Heinz should save the life of pet animal because of his love for pet , sympathy and care so they are on 3rd stage called good interpersonal relationship. And 50% prospective teachers were lie on stage 5th “the social contract and individual rights. Most of the respondent gave the reason that it is his moral duty, law violation is not good but here is the matter of life.

Table No: 4

Question	Stage 1	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Q7: Is it important for people to do everything they can save another life?		20 (40%)		30 (60%)	
Q8: Is it against the law for Heinz to steal? Does that make it morally wrong?	4 (8%)		36 (72%)		10 (20%)

Q7: Prospective teachers were in favor to save the life but reasons behind it were different. People saved the life because loving and caring nature of human beings. These arguments put the 40% prospective teachers on 3rd stage of "maintaining social order". Majority i.e. 60% prospective teachers wants to save the life because basic rights, moral duty etc. They are on stage 5th called "social contract and individual rights"

Q8: 8% prospective teachers were on stage one with response that it is against the law and he might be punished for it. The 36% respondents thought that it is wrong because it has a negative effect on society. It may promote might is right. They are in 4th stage "maintaining the social order." The 20% respondents in stage 6th universal principals with argument that those laws which are dangerous for human life not necessary to obey, to steal is not morally wrong he has to accept the penalty for it.

Table No: 5

Question	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Q9: In general should people try to do everything they can to obey law?		20 (40%)	30 (60%)	
Q10: In thinking back over the dilemma, what would you say is the most reasonable thing for Heinz to do?	10 (20%)	34 (68%)		6 (12%)

Q9: 40% respondents were lie in stage 4" maintaining social order". The prospective teachers said no people have to respect to law, obey the law, respect for law. On the other hand 60% said that respect for others rights and liberties is important. And they were lie in stage 5th "social contract orientation".

Q10: 20% prospective teachers said that Heinz is right to steal as druggist is very cruel and selfish. They are on stage 3 that is "good interpersonal relationship." 68% said that Heinz should try to find out another way if Heinz broke the law the others might be..... They were in 4th stage the "maintaining the social order". And 12% in 6th stage "universal principles".

Table 6: Number of students exist on each stage out of 50

Question	Reasoning on Stage 1	Reasoning on Stage 2	Reasoning on Stage 3	Reasoning on Stage 4	Reasoning on Stage 5	Reasoning on Stage 6
1	9 (18%)	41 (82%)				
2			21 (42%)	29 (58%)		
3			20 (40%)	30 (60%)		
4		19 (38%)		13 (26%)	18 (36%)	
5			29 (58%)	8 (16%)	13 (26%)	
6			25 (50%)		25 (50%)	
7			20 (40%)		30 (60%)	
8	4 (8%)			36 (72%)		10 (20%)

9			20	30		
			(40%)	(60%)		
10		10	34		6	
		(20%)	(68%)		(12%)	
Total No. of students	13	50	125	160	86	16
Total percentage	2.6%	12%	26%	34%	23.2%	2.2%

Table: 6 revealed that reasoning of 2.6 percent responses were categorized as on stage one, of pre conventional level, that is characterized as “Obedience and Punishment” orientation. 12% response were decided to be categorized as “ individualism and exchange” orientation, by the penal of judges. 26 % responses were categorized as to be fall at the 3rd stage, that is “Interpersonal Relationships” stage of conventional level, the 2nd level of moral development according to Kohlberg’s theory. Table also showed that 34% responses lied at “Maintaining Social Order” stage. Column 6 shows the B.Ed students’ responses for the stage of Social Contract and Individual Rights, which is the recommended stage for these students. The table also reflects that only 23.2% responses were scrutinized as at “Social Contract and Individual Rights” stage. Last column showed the responses of the students which could be categorized as at “Universal Principles” stage which is the highest stage of moral development. According to Kohlberg it is not necessary that every individual can reach this stage, still 2.2% of total responses have placed in this category.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The response analysis of ten questions about moral dilemmas shows that the vast majority of future teachers functions at the conventional level of moral development (Stages 3 and 4) and some tendencies to think at the post-conventional level (Stages 5 and 6) are observed in a significant minority. Such a pattern of distribution can be explained by the theoretical framework of Kohlberg according to which the majority of adults operate on the conventional level. Only a quite small percentage of the future teachers displayed pre-conventional moral thinking. In Question 1, only 18% of the respondents had Stage 1 reasoning "Obedience and Punishment Orientation" which entails avoiding punishment or reducing the effects of punishment by bribery. This result is worrisome, because it demonstrates that about 1 in 5 teachers in the future can be still influenced by the focus on the external outcomes in their ethical decisions in favor of the moral principles that can be internalized.

The fact that the Stage 4 reasoning score is very high (58% in Question 2, 60% in Question 3, and 68% in Question 10) shows that the majority of future teachers understand the role of social institutions and laws in ensuring the stability of the society. This is especially applicable to teachers, who have no other choice but to act within the institutional order to make students learn about the importance of laws and social rules. But, the strict compliance to law and order that can be observed in certain responses can also be the sign of the restricted moral flexibility. To give an example, in Question 8, 36 percent of the participants concentrated only on the adverse social implications of law violation without taking into consideration any moral justification of civil disobedience under extreme conditions. This is an indication that although potential teachers believe that social order is important; they might be helped in seeing scenarios where traditional regulations do not align with superior morality.

The comparatively high percentages of Stage 5 reasoning in Question 6, 7, 9 (50%, 60%, and 60 percentage respectively) also indicate that once moral dilemmas possess a particular reference to basic rights and life-or-death cases, most potential teachers will be able to rise beyond conventional thinking and start the universal ethical reasoning. Stage 6 reasoning, on the top level of the Kohlberg system, was

found in very few cases: The percentages are quite low, but the fact that the prospective teachers think on the highest level on a consistent basis is rather significant, as it has been identified that only a very little number of adults think on the highest level constantly. These people can be moral leaders in the school environment, and they can lead in-depth discussions on complicated ethical matters and set an example of making ethical decisions.

Facilities should clearly include moral development as a learning outcome in B. Ed programs, and involve special coursework, field experiences and assessment strategies to encourage ethical thought. This integration must not be an independent course but rather a strand that runs throughout the preparation of the professionals. Scheduled evaluation of moral reasoning development must be introduced in B.Ed programs, with validated measures and various modalities of following development. This evaluation ought to guide individual counseling as well as the enhancement of the program. Moral maturity of teachers is not a luxury but a need that must be prepared. In a world that is growing more socially complex, one that is marked by long-standing inequities and contentious values, schools require educators capable of critically considering ethical matters, making principled judgments about challenging situations, and helping students to strive towards their own ethical growth. This research shows that most aspiring educators already have the principles of such moral leadership, as well as identifying the necessity of purposeful, long-range development of ethical reasoning during the teacher preparation process. The results support that moral development is not an inborn characteristic but an ability that can be developed by the use of the right education experiences. Focusing on moral development as a dosage of teacher training can equip teachers with not only the knowledge of competent instructors but also ethical professionals who are able to establish just, caring, and ethically lively learning communities. Kohlberg himself, said, that that teacher is a moral teacher, and the school a moral teacher, whether they would like it or not (Kohlberg,1970). The issue is not whether teachers will guide the moral growth of students, but whether they will make good choices carefully, competently, and in a manner that will encourage justice, compassion, and human flourishing. According to this research, through deliberate training and encouragement, future educators are capable of attaining the moral reasoning skills required to carry out this very serious duty.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- The moral development theory and ethics training should be clearly introduced into the curriculum of teacher education programs to promote the higher-level moral reasoning and beyond the implicit or piecemeal approaches. Formal programs, including case-based dilemma discussions, have been found to be effective in improving the moral judgment of aspiring educators (Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2020; Tobias & Boon, 2010; O'Flaherty & McGarr, 2014).
- Since conventional moral reasoning prevails in potential teachers, it would be efficient to create educational opportunities that would encourage students to think critically about the norms of society and train them to make independent moral judgments, thus, training them to deal with complicated ethical situations in the workplace environment(Al-Disi & Rawadieh, 2019; Cummings et al., 2007; Cummings et al., 2003).
- Curriculum design and pedagogical choices must take into consideration cultural and contextual elements to make them relevant and appealing to various student groups to foster the process of equitable moral growth at different institutional and societal contexts (Enciso et al., 2022; Amimo and Mooka, 2023).

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