

## INVESTIGATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORAL JUDGMENT AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The study was designed to examine the relationship between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems among Early Adolescents. The study was correlational in nature and 200 sample comprising of 100 (males) and 100 (females) of age range 12/13-15 were taken from Azad Jammu Kashmir district sudhnoti. Two measures (Comunian, 2004) and (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1991) were used. The present study was designed to find out the relationship between the level of Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems among early adolescents. The main purpose was to determine the correlation between Behavioral problems and moral judgment. The study might be helpful for the adolescence and for their caregiver. Additionally, it gave information for the parents of adolescence to control poor moral judgment and behavioral problems they suffer. Furthermore it provided useful information regarding way to build a positive outlook on life and knowing the importance of believing the potentials and abilities among adolescence. It's also beneficial for youth in this way that it may definitely give awareness about them as how to minimize behavioral problems and poor moral judgment and how to behave according to society.*

**KEY WORDS:** Moral Judgment, Behavioral Problems, Correlation

### INTRODUCTION:

The concept of morality necessitates the ability to make choices and be held accountable for them. Without the freedom to choose between different courses of action, moral responsibility loses its meaning, as individuals cannot be held accountable for outcomes they have no control over. The intricate relationship between morality, responsibility, freedom of choice, and determinism delves into the philosophical debate surrounding, moral responsibility in the context of determinism, which asserts that all events, including human actions, are

ultimately determined by causes external to the will. Our judgments of others' actions, including moral judgments, play a crucial role in shaping our own evaluative processes and learning mechanisms. By recognizing and reacting to the consequences of different choices, we internalize societal norms and values, thereby refining our own decision-making abilities. Moral judgments and emotional reactions serve as mechanisms for learning and adaptation. Through observing and evaluating the choices of ourselves and others, we refine our understanding of what constitutes "good" and "bad" behavior, thereby improving our ability to make

morally informed decisions. (Lind, et.al, 1985).

Although morality has been a topic of discussion since the beginning of human civilization, the scientific study of moral development did not begin in earnest until the late 1950s. Before Kohlberg's groundbreaking work, there was a prevailing positivist perspective in the social sciences, which asserted that scientific inquiry should be objective and value-free, with morality considered outside the realm of empirical investigation. This perspective stemmed from the belief that subjective matters such as morality were not amenable to scientific study and should be left to philosophy or theology. Kohlberg's decision to study moral development scientifically challenged this positivist boundary. By applying empirical methods to investigate the cognitive and moral reasoning processes underlying moral development, Kohlberg demonstrated that morality could indeed be studied in a systematic and rigorous manner. (Feng, 2014).

### **Models explaining Moral Development /Judgment & Behavioral Problems**

#### **Theoretical Issues:**

#### **How Development Occurs?**

The psychoanalytic, learning, and cognitive-developmental theories each focus on different features of moral development.

**Psychoanalytic** theory: Freud's psychoanalytic perspective on moral

development, emphasizing the role of emotions and internal processes in shaping moral behavior. Freud's theory, although controversial and widely debated, offers insights into how early experiences and unconscious drives influence the development of morality. According to Freud, the superego emerges as a result of this identification process. The superego consists of two components: the conscience and the ego ideal. **Conscience:** The conscience represents internalized rules and prohibitions, reflecting societal norms and parental expectations. It functions as an internal moral judge, guiding behavior by generating feelings of guilt or shame when individuals violate moral standards. **Ego Ideal:** The ego ideal comprises standards of excellence and aspirations for moral behavior. It represents an idealized image of oneself based on admiration for parental figures or other authority figures. (Hanly, C. 1984)

**Kohlberg,** Kohlberg's theory posits that moral reasoning progresses through a series of universal stages, each characterized by distinct ways of thinking about moral dilemmas. Contrary to the notion that these stages arise solely from biological maturation or direct socialization, Kohlberg argues that they emerge through active cognitive processes, shaped by both individual experiences and social interactions. Kohlberg's theory underscores the dynamic nature of moral development, which is shaped by both internal cognitive processes and external social influences. By integrating Piaget's insights into cognitive development with his own research on moral reasoning, Kohlberg offers a comprehensive framework

for understanding the complexities of moral development across the lifespan. (Kohlberg, L.1984)

**Piaget**, Piaget described mental stages as hierarchically integrated systems, with each stage incorporating and building upon the cognitive achievements of earlier stages. Furthermore he asserted that the sequence of mental stages is universal across cultures, meaning that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds progress through the same series of stages in their cognitive development. (Piaget, 1952).

**Carol Gilligan and the Morality of Care**, Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's focus on justice-based morality neglected the moral perspectives and values commonly associated with women's experiences. She proposed an alternative framework centered on an ethic of care, which emphasizes empathy, compassion, and interconnectedness in moral decision-making. In Gilligan's view, women's moral reasoning is often grounded in considerations of relationships and caring for others, rather than abstract principles of justice. This perspective aligns with what Gilligan referred to as Stage 3 (interpersonal relationships) in her critique of Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Gilligan believed that Kohlberg's theory exhibited a gender bias. Her theory did not focus on specific stages, but rather by more generalized modes of thinking and reasoning. She associated these modes, “*the ethic of care and the ethic of justice*”, with male and female differences and based them on two divergent ethics of

moral reasoning. The ethics of justice were similar to Kohlberg's post-conventional stages, where participants based their responses on principled reasoning (Gilligan, 1982).

**Gibb's Theory of Moral Judgment**, Gibb's Theory of Moral Judgment offers a refined framework for understanding moral development, emphasizing the distinction between immature and mature moral reasoning while simplifying Kohlberg's original six-stage model into a more practical and accessible format. This revision contributes to ongoing discussions in moral psychology regarding the nature and progression of moral development across the lifespan. (Gibbs, et al., 1992).

### **PBT Theory –Behavioral Problems**

The Problem-behavior theory signifies that the probability of involvement in problematic behavior relies on unified domains of its impact including social & environmental factors, personality characteristics and involvement of those related to the orthodox values. Furthermore this theory intricate that, a child brought up in an environment where there is high-risk situational factor of single parent with the peak level of poverty and poor school performance is grounded by higher potential of deviant behavior among children those suffered with such kind of deprivations. This theory provides a platform for knowing the numerous psychosocial threats for involvement in problematic behaviors. As an example, problem behavior theory relies more upon a “conceptualization of

personality”, perceived environment and “behavior systems” within the social structure of the adolescent (Jessor, 1987).

The research conducted in 2005 had two primary objectives. Firstly, it aimed to examine the structure of both externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors during early adolescence. Secondly, it sought to explore the stability of these issues for both boys and girls over time. To achieve these goals, the researchers recruited a sample of 650 13–14-year-olds, who completed an expanded version of the Youth Self-Report (YSR). The YSR is a widely used instrument for assessing various aspects of psychosocial functioning and behavior in adolescents. Using confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), the researchers tested several competing models to determine the best representation of the structure of problem behavior at two different time points (referred to as Time 1 and Time 2). This suggests that boys who exhibit lower levels of problem behavior tend to demonstrate greater consistency in their behavior over time compared to those with higher levels of problem behavior. (Reitz et.al., 2005).

Period of early adolescence plays a very significant role because at this point a value system and behavioral code of conduct is largely shaped. So it leads toward the govern of moral reasoning and moral codes. Additionally, at this stage the aim of exploring the moral issues has implications not only for schools as well as for parents and society as a whole. This study originates that early adolescents use a diversity of modes to make moral decisions. These comprise of

care - where they wish others not to suffer; justice - where decisions are made according to principles (golden rule), and “narrowly concerned” or selfish. All three modes were used by males and females; however, males were much more likely to choose the narrowly concerned mode than were females (Perry & McIntire, 1995).

The present study aimed to investigate the moral judgment ability of pre-adolescents (9-11 years old) attending public schools. Specifically, it focused on their capacity to describe situations in terms of right and obligation, under the notion that teenagers can enhance their self-awareness and moral sensitivity by considering perspectives other than their own. The sample comprised 200 children, evenly distributed with 100 participants aged 8-9 years and another 100 aged 10-11 years, with a balanced sex ratio. Results of the study indicated a significant difference in moral judgment ability between the two age groups, with older children (10-11 years) scoring higher than younger ones (8-9 years). This finding suggested that while maturity is not the sole determinant, it is an important factor contributing to the development of moral judgment ability in pre-adolescents. (Gupta, 2010).

The Oakland Growth study, conducted by H. E. Jones in 1939, examined the moral judgment of 98 adolescent offspring aged 10–18 years. Participants responded to Kohlberg Moral Judgment Interviews, providing insights into their family dynamics during two waves of longitudinal follow-up at the Institute of Human Development, University of California, Berkeley. The

findings indicated that adolescent moral judgment was significantly and consistently associated with reports of positive interfamilial relationships and the cognitive stimulation of moral reasoning within the family context. (Speicher, 1992).

The study conducted among 4053 pupils aged 14–15 in 33 UK schools aimed to assess moral judgment, an important component of character development, within the context of moral and character education. This research addressed a notable gap in understanding pupils' character development, particularly within the UK educational context, amidst a global interest in moral and character education. The study provides valuable insights into the state of moral judgment among adolescents in UK schools and underscores the importance of addressing moral and character education within educational curricula. By understanding the factors influencing moral development and identifying areas for improvement, educators and policymakers can implement effective strategies to promote ethical decision-making and character development among students. (Walker et al., 2017)

### **Operational Definitions of Variables**

**Moral judgment:** By defining moral judgment operationally based on scores obtained from the Padua Scales of Moral Judgment developed by Communion in 2004.

**Behavioral problems:** Behavioral Problems is operationally defined as on the basis of

scores obtained by Child Behavioral Problems Checklist developed by Achenbach and Edelbrock in 1991.

### **Significance of the study:**

The findings of this study could offer valuable insights for adolescents and their caregivers. This research may provide parents with information to help manage issues related to poor moral judgment and behavioral problems experienced by adolescents. Additionally, it offers useful guidance on fostering a positive life perspective and understanding the significance of acknowledging the potentials and capabilities of adolescents. Moreover, it is beneficial for adolescents as it raises awareness on how to reduce behavioral problems and poor moral judgment, and how to adapt behaviors that align with societal expectations. Implementing these insights can contribute to creating a healthier environment, potentially enhancing adolescent performance across various aspects of life with the support of psychologists.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of the study were as follows;

1. To examine the relationship between moral judgment scores and behavioral scores among early adolescents
2. To Find out Gender differences in Moral Judgment.
3. To Investigate Gender differences in Behavioral Problems.

### **Hypotheses:**

The following research hypotheses were formulated to achieve the above objectives.

1. There is a significant relationship between Moral Judgment scores and Behavioral scores among early adolescents.
2. There is a significant difference between Mean Moral Judgment scores of boys and girls among early adolescents.
3. There is a significant difference between Mean Behavioral Problems of boys and girls among early adolescents.

The above research hypotheses were tested through the following Null hypotheses;

1. No significant relationship between Moral Judgment scores and Behavioral Problems scores among early adolescents.
2. No significant difference between Mean Moral Judgment scores of boys and girls among early adolescents.
3. No significant difference between Mean Behavioral Problems of boys and girls among early adolescents.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

This study was designed to examine the relationship between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems among Early Adolescents.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

Design of the study was correlation. Random sampling was used to select the sample from

the population. Population of the study includes all the male and female students of two private schools. The approximate size of the population according to the authorities of both the schools was 1000.

### **Participants:**

Participants included 100 boys and 100 girls of early adolescents. Sample was taken from two institute of Azad Kashmir as Yadgar model public school and Mong City public school. All the subjects belong to class 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> and their age range is 13/14-15years.

### **Instruments:**

One Scale and one Checklist used in the research, scale for moral judgment and Child Behavioral Problems Checklist. Details of the instrument are given below.

### **Padua Scales of Moral Judgment**

Moral Judgment scale was used which was originally developed by Comunian in 2004.

### **Child Behavioral Problem Checklist**

A Child Behavioral Problem Checklist used to access the behavioral problems in children, developed by Achenbach and Edelbrock in 1991. There were 37 statements with 7 response categories, these 37 common behavioral problems and among the children of 10-13/14 years old. These 7 categories were totally "false" and "false to greater extent", "false to some extent", "do not know", "true to some extent", "true to greater extent", "totally true". There corresponding scores were 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 respectively (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1991).

### **Procedure**

The researcher’s setup appointments with the authorities in order to carried out the mandatory requirements. After establishing the level of rapport with adolescents that was deemed adequate, the researcher’s proceeded to collect the data.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed through SPSS Version 26 .In the analysis of present study following tests were used. T- Test, mean, standard deviation and correlation. The level of significant use to test the null hypotheses was .05. Definitions and Abbreviations were also used in the study.

**RESULTS:**

In the present study data were analyzed statistically through SPSS (Special Package for Social Sciences). Mean, Median, SD, t-test (test of significance) and Pearson correlations were computed for behavioral problems and Moral Judgments.

**Table 1**

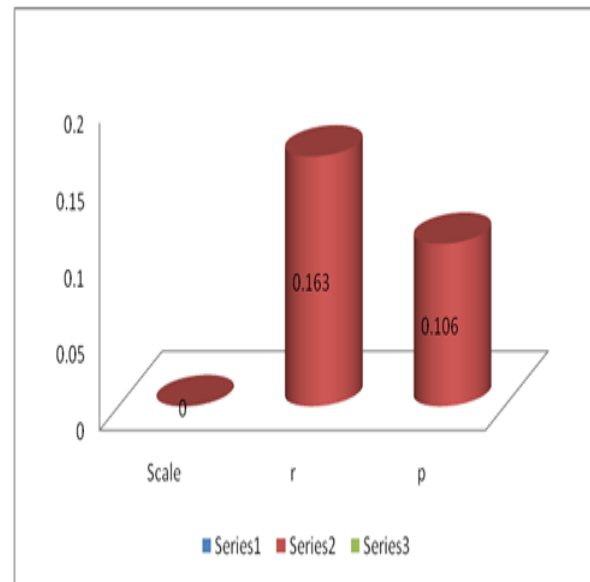
*Correlation Coefficient among Moral Judgment Scale and Child Behavior Problems Checklist (N = 200)*

Scales	p
r	
MJS	.106
.163	<i>CBPC</i>

*Note.* MJS = moral judgment scale ; child behavioral problems checklist ; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

From the above table it illustrates that Correlation coefficient r is .163 and the level

of significant is .106, which indicates that there is no significant relationship between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems. So the first null hypothesis of the study “No significant relationship between Moral Judgment scores and Behavioral Problems among early adolescents” was accepted.



**Figure 1**

This figure shows graphical representation of correlation between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems.

**Table 2**

*Mean, Standard deviation and t-values of males (N=100) and females (N=100) on Moral*

**Judgment**

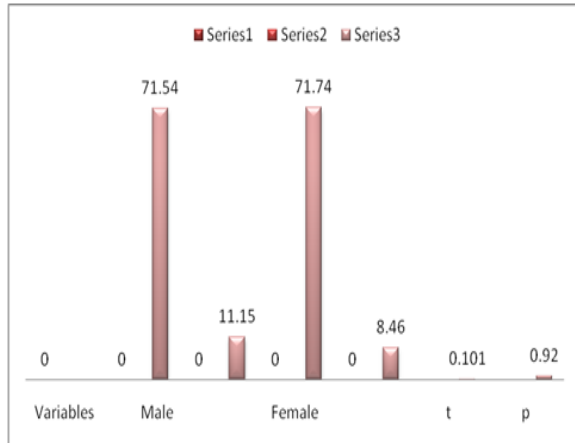
Note. MJS Moral Judgment scale; M = mean; SD =

**Table 3:** Mean, Standard deviation and t-values of males (N=100) and females

Variables	Male (100) M SD	Female (100) M SD	t	p
MJS	71.54 11.15	71.74 8.46	.101	.920
BP	107.60 28.16	107.22 31.37	-.064	.949

standard deviation

The above table indicates that mean value of male is 71.54 and SD is 11.15, and the mean value of female is 71.74 and SD is 8.46. The t value is .101 and the significance level is .920. According to the results there is no difference exist between them. So the 2<sup>nd</sup> null hypothesis of the study “No significant difference between mean Moral Judgment scores of male and female early adolescents” was accepted.



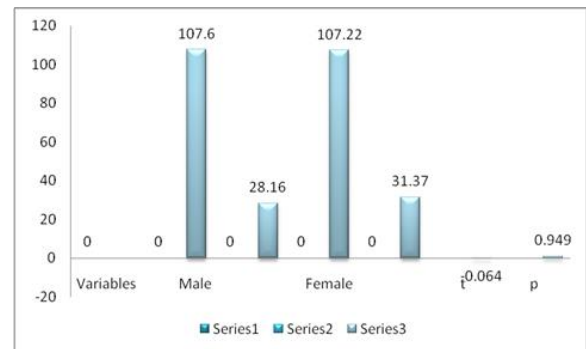
**Figure 2**

This figure shows graphical representation of males and females on Moral Judgment.

(N=100) on Behavioral Problems

Note. BP= behavior problems; M=mean; SD= standard deviation

The above table indicates that mean value of male is 107.60 and SD is 28.16, and the mean value of female is 107.22 and SD is 31.37. The t value is -.064 and the significance level is .949. So according to the results there is no significant difference between Behavioral Problems among male and female early adolescents. So the 7<sup>th</sup> null hypothesis of the study was



accepted.

**Figure 3**

This figure shows graphical representation of males and females on Behavioral Problems.



## Discussion

In the present study no significant relationship found between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems. If we see the previous studies on Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems among early adolescents, we will find that the results were different in the past. Indeed, recent experimental findings have shed light on the complex relationship between people's judgments of intentionality and their moral evaluations of behavior. While the distinction between intentional and unintentional actions is a fundamental aspect of everyday understanding, researchers have discovered that moral judgments can influence how individuals perceive and interpret the intentionality of behaviors. In some cases, individuals may intuitively judge an action to be more intentional or deliberate when it is morally condemned, compared to when it is morally neutral or laudable. This phenomenon suggests that moral appraisals can bias individuals' assessments of intentionality, leading them to attribute greater intentionality to behaviors that are deemed morally wrong or harmful. Instead, it suggests that moral judgments may play a significant role in shaping our understanding of intentionality, influencing how we interpret and evaluate others' actions in social contexts. (Brugman, D. 2009).

According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis of the study, “No significant difference exists between Mean moral judgment scores of male and female adolescents”. If we compare this hypothesis with previous study the result differed; we elaborate it with example of

previous research. “Recent studies have been done to examine gender differences in moral judgments. The results showed that females did score higher on the care-based scale than males, although females did not tend to score any differently than males on the justice scale (Gump et al., 2000).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> null hypothesis of the study: “No significant difference between mean Behavioral Problems of males and females early adolescents” was accepted. There was also difference in this study with previous researches. It could be better understood by examples related to previous researches. For Example: Indeed, behavioral problems are a significant concern among children and adolescents in the United States, with prevalence rates varying depending on the population sampled and assessment methods used. Generally, prevalence estimates range from 5% to 16% for children identified with specific behavioral issues. One notable trend is the higher prevalence of behavioral problems among boys compared to girls, particularly concerning problems related to aggression, anxiety, moodiness, and conduct issues. Research consistently shows that boys are more likely to be referred for and identified as having psychological and behavioral problems during childhood and early adolescence. Gilligan believed that Kohlberg's theory exhibited a gender bias. Her theory did not focus on specific stages, but rather by more generalized modes of thinking and reasoning. She associated these modes, *the ethic of care and the ethic of justice*, with male and female differences and based them on two divergent ethics of moral reasoning. The

ethics of justice were similar to Kohlberg's post-conventional stages, where participants based their responses on principled reasoning (Gilligan, 1982).

### Conclusion

It was determined that although no relationship found between Moral Judgment and Behavioral Problems, but here point to be noted that is "Moral Judgment is necessary for moral behavior but is not sufficient" so it is not necessary to have relationship between these two as some people are morally well developed but they are poor in their behavior. As compared to present, in the past parents have leisure time and they gave their attention to their children and were properly guide their children about moral values and behavior; but now the parents are busy in their own works they are not able to give proper time and attention to their children. It leads toward behavioral problems. Additionally, it should be the responsibility of parents/ caregivers as well as teachers to educate the children about moral code of conduct. To deeply involved them on focusing the moral values, so that they can be aware about this fact and its importance and apply those in their lives. This in returns creates balance atmosphere and is beneficial for the welfare of society as well. Furthermore the issued related to behavior and we can say that the causation factors behind the problematic behavior or delinquent one should be need to address and resolve the co-occurring factors behind this act of behavior.

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