

The Relationship between Head Teachers' Moral Reasoning and Their Performance

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Abstract: *The study was designed to determine the relationship between the moral reasoning of head teachers of government secondary schools and their performance. The objectives of this study were (I) to explore the relationship between secondary schools' head teachers' moral reasoning and their performance and (II) to determine the correspondence between head teachers' moral reasoning and gender. Data collected from 160 head teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab were analyzed. For collecting data, Form "A" of Moral Judgment Interview was used as an instrument. Global stages of head teachers and their Weighted Average Scores (WAS) were determined by using Standard Issue Scoring Manual. A significant relationship was not found between moral reasoning and the performance of secondary school head teachers. Significant correspondence was not determined between the head teachers' moral reasoning and gender.*

Key Words: Head Teachers, Kohlberg's Theory, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, MJ Interview Form A, Moral Reasoning, Performance, SI Scoring Manual

Introduction

Headteachers manage their schools, work as role models, and are responsible for students' overall development. They play a vital role in the success of their institutions. Quality leadership creates a conducive learning environment and is considered effective in improving schools ([Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011](#)). Keeping in view the importance of the head teachers' role in the schools and for achieving the desired outcomes of secondary education, the government of Pakistan is making efforts to improve the performance of head teachers through training and a vigilant monitoring system. But failure in these efforts indicates that there is something which has not been explored yet that affects the overall performance of the head teachers.

When head teachers interact with people in their day-to-day business, so moral dimension of their job becomes more crucial. Morality is considered an important aspect of human relations ([Pervez, 2005](#)). That's why character building is an objective of formal education, and education cannot be seen separately from values ([Freeks, 2015](#)). Being a moral means following a set of principles helpful for distinguishing right from wrong ([Shaffer, 1988](#)). [Pettman \(1979\)](#) was of the view that morality is the way we think and behave.

Moral reasoning is defined as cognitive skills that a person utilizes to solve issues relating to right and wrong conduct ([Dukerich, Nichols, Elm & Vollrath, 1990](#)). In moral reasoning, we make value judgements and

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decide the course of action ([Sivakumar, 2014](#)). The development of moral reasoning skills of people is a great contribution to the quality of society ([Sanger & Osguthrope, 2008](#)). To [Rest \(1986\)](#), moral reasoning can be validly recognized and determined by Kohlberg's theory. This theory contributed a lot to moral education ([Zhang & Zhao, 2017](#)).

The focus of Kohlberg's theory is the cognitive aspect of moral education, where the justice principle forms the basis of reasoning ([Malchanov, 2013](#)). Kohlberg identified six stages and three levels of moral reasoning. In pre-conventional reasoning, children do not have any understanding of society's rules. They show no or low levels of beneficent and unselfish behaviour ([Chin & Chou, 2013](#)). In conventional reasoning, expectations of family, society's laws and loyalty to the country form the basis of morality ([Santrock, 2005](#)). People at this level understand right and wrong and also know that these moral standards are not theirs but imposed by society ([Farooq, Farooq, Tabassum & Khan, 2018](#)). At the post-conventional level, people see beyond self-interest and others' expectations. They show a high level of altruistic behaviour ([Chin & Chou, 2013](#)). The individuals develop their own abstract principles and base their beliefs on these principles ([Farooq et al., 2018](#)).

Identification of factors that influence the performance of head teachers and whether morality is one of them or not is very relevant in this context, as head teachers' performance has a significant impact on the performance of their institutions. This is the question that forms the basis for conducting this study in educational institutions. As for as the relationship between morality and performance is concerned, it is important to mention that few studies have been conducted throughout the world so far, having no evidence in Pakistani culture.

[Shank \(2005\)](#) investigated the possible association between moral reasoning and the performance of pharmaceutical companies sales' people and made the following suggestions, 1) a larger sample should be taken in future studies, and 2) a similar study should

be conducted in other organizations. But unfortunately, there isn't any evidence of research work considering his recommendations on the said topic since then. So, there is a dire need to work on this topic in Pakistani culture, which has not been studied yet.

Pakistan has a dominant male society, where the majority of females are still deprived of their basic rights. They are not even allowed to take important decisions regarding their own lives. So, it is important to know their moral reasoning stages and whether they are inferior to males in their moral judgments (as Kohlberg claims) or not.

Keeping in view the above questions and the suggestions made by [Shank \(2005\)](#), this study was conducted in Pakistani culture to find out the relationship between secondary school head teachers' moral reasoning and their performance.

This study was based on the following objectives:

- I. To determine the association between secondary school head teachers' moral reasoning and their performance
- II. To find out the correspondence between the gender and moral reasoning of the head teachers

The null hypotheses that were tested for achieving objectives I and II;

H0I: "there is no significant relationship between secondary school head teachers' moral reasoning scores and their performance scores.

H0II: "there is no significant correspondence between gender and moral reasoning of head teachers."

Literature Review

Kohlberg's Theory

Kohlberg focused on moral education's cognitive aspect and based the theory on the justice principle ([Malchanov, 2013](#)). His theory contributed a lot to educate people morally ([Zhang & Zhao, 2017](#)). Internalization is considered a key concept of the theory. ([Santrock, 2006](#)).

Level 1: Pre-Conventional Reasoning

No internalization of moral values at this level as rewards and punishment control moral reasoning (Santrrock, 2006). Right, at this level, is to obey the authority (Chin & Chou, 2013). This level consists of two stages.

Stage I: Heteronomous Morality

At this stage, consequences influence moral decision-making (Rathus, 2007). Children obey adults, and the purpose is to avoid punishment (Santrrock, 2005). These people believe that rules should be obeyed only to avoid punishment. For example, a student does not run in the hallway because he wants to avoid the consequences attached to breaking the rule.

Stage II: Exchange of Favour

Individuals pursue their own interests and, in the process, let others do the same. They show good behaviour towards others because they want others to do the same in return (Santrrock, 2005).

Level 2: Conventional Reasoning

At the level of conventional reasoning, socially shared moral rules and norms form the basis of morality (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; McLeod, 2013). A person is considered at this level of Kohlberg's theory who abides internally by certain principles, rules and laws which are imposed by others (Santrrock, 2006). These people, while making judgments give importance to expectations of their family, society's laws and loyalty to their country (Woolfolk, 2008). This level, too, consists of two stages.

Stage III: Good Boy Nice Girl

At this stage, individuals give importance to caring and loyalty. They adopt parents as role models (Santrrock, 2005). In good boy – nice girl orientation, what pleases others is the basic principle for determining morality (Woolfolk, 2008). For example, a student cleans the chalkboards or throws out the gum she is chewing to please the teacher.

Stage IV: Law and Order Orientation

Moral judgement is based on a clear understanding of justice, law, and duty (Santrrock, 2005). People, at this stage, believe that society's laws are absolute. They must respect authority figures and must maintain social order (Woolfolk, 2008).

Level 3: Post Conventional

Moral thinking, at this level, is completely internalized. People's own moral standards form the basis of their moral decision-making (Rathus, 2007). At this level, conscience is considered the highest moral authority.

Stage V: Social Contract

The validity of actual laws is determined, and it is examined to which extent fundamental human rights are protected by these laws (Santrrock, 2005). Socially agreed standards determine the good. (Woolfolk, 2008). According to Rathus (2007), laws stem from agreed-upon procedures at this stage.

Stage VI: Universal Ethical Principles

A person will be considered at this stage if he follows conscience while facing a clash between law and conscience, even though some personal loss is involved (Santrrock, 2005). He considers wrong and right as matters of one's conscience. Morality, at this level, is based on the abstract, universal concept of justice, human dignity and equality (Woolfolk, 2008).

Moral Reasoning and Performance

The effect of cognitive moral development on the performance of real estate agents was studied by Izzo (2000). The researcher found a positive association between CMD and the success of salespeople. Sheehan, Husted, Candee and Bergen (1980) investigated the possible connection between moral decision-making and the performance of 244 nurses. They concluded that the nurses who rarely achieved clinical performance were at the lowest level of moral reasoning. McNergney and Satterstorm (1984) also investigated the

relationship between moral reasoning and the performance of elementary student teachers. They collected the data from 56 elementary student teachers by using Defining Issues Test (DIT) and assessed their performance in the quality of expression, classroom environment, control, and planning. They did not find any relationship between moral reasoning and performance. [Thoma and Rest \(1987\)](#) conducted research to study the correspondence between moral reasoning and the performance of 38 student teachers. They also found no correspondence between moral reasoning and the performance of teachers.

[Shank \(2005\)](#) investigated moral reasoning's impact on the performance of salespeople of a pharmaceutical company and explored the answer to the following research question. "Is there any connection between the post-conventional reasoning and salesperson's performance?"

He collected data from 63 respondents using DIT_2 for measuring moral reasoning. He also used a demographic questionnaire to collect information regarding income, education, and experience. He concluded that there was no significant correspondence between a sales representative's cognitive moral development and three years average sales quota achieved, income, education, and experience. For future research, [Shank \(2005\)](#) made the following suggestions.

- I- A larger sample should be taken in future studies.
- II- A similar study should be conducted in other organizations.

Moral Reasoning and Gender

[Farooq \(2009\)](#) investigated the moral reasoning stages of the 5th class, 8th class, and 10th class students. He collected the data from 300 students. He found no gender differences among younger students. However, he detected a significant difference in moral reasoning of 10th-class students in favour of females.

Using the same instrument, [Safdar \(2009\)](#) collected data from 100 secondary school teachers to investigate their moral reasoning

and to find out gender differences. She did not find significant differences between stages of moral reasoning of male and female secondary school teachers.

[Friesdorf \(2015\)](#) found a gender difference in moral reasoning in favour of women. [Joshi and Pooranchand \(1994\)](#) found that as for as joint families are concerned, the girls have higher moral values than the boys of these families. The result of [Rodregues's \(1983\)](#) research was in accordance with the above-mentioned studies. He found females slightly higher in moral reasoning than males of their age group. When Kohlberg's instrument was delivered on a large scale, [Hinman \(2005\)](#) found females a full stage below males. Israel's 92 adolescents were studied to determine their moral development by [Snarey, Reimer and Kohlberg \(1984\)](#). They concluded that significant gender differences in stage scores were not found. A study was conducted by [Vimalasiri \(2001\)](#) investigating the moral reasoning of management students and practitioners. He found no correspondence between the gender and moral judgment levels of the subjects.

Method

Participants

Data collected from 160 Secondary School Headteachers (male 95 and female 65) were analyzed, who were selected as samples of the study. All the head teachers were master's degree holders and had the administrative experience of at least three years.

Research Instrument

The researcher used Form "A" of Moral Judgment Interview for the collection of the data. He conducted written interviews because [Colby and Kohlberg \(1987\)](#) declared it suitable for data collection from a large number of participants. The respondents were instructed that the Moral Judgment Interview consisted of stories with challenging issues. They may choose any of the solutions they want.

The interview form consisted of three dilemmas. These dilemmas created a situation which was problematic but interesting for

people of all ages ([Comings, Maddux, Cladianos & Richmond, 2010](#)). Each dilemma was followed by standardized questions, which were designed to the clarification the reason given by the subject for a particular judgment. The dilemmas were modified slightly according to the culture; for example, Heinz became Farjad, Joe became Ali, and US dollars became Pakistani rupees. The researcher also developed a demographic questionnaire which was included in the interview form.

Data Collection

The selected schools were visited by the researcher personally for data collection. However, due to cultural constraints, for collecting data from female heads, he used a female research assistant.

To verify the results given by the heads in the self-reports and to measure their performance, the Secondary School Certificate results of the last three years were taken from their respective Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education.

Results

Table 1. Gender differences in moral reasoning

Stage	1	2/3	3	3/4	4	4/5	Total	X ²	Level of Significance
Male	01	01	01	43	46	03	95	3.21	0.05
Female	00	00	01	35	26	03	65		
Total	01	01	02	78	72	06	160		

$$d.f = 5$$

$$\chi^2_{0.05(5)} = 11.07$$

Table 1 shows that 3.21 is the χ^2 value and the critical χ^2 value is (11.07), being greater and resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis. So, it is determined that there is no correspondence between moral reasoning stages and gender.

This finding is consistent with the work of [Safdar \(2009\)](#), [Snarey et al. \(1984\)](#) and [Wimalasiri \(2001\)](#).

To determine the relationship between moral reasoning and the performance of

Analysis of Data

The data of 160 subjects were analyzed. Their global stage scores, as well as their Weighted Average Scores (WAS), were determined by using SI Scoring Manual.

The researcher was blind to the culture, gender, age, qualification, and administrative experience of the respondents while scoring the dilemmas. The researcher scored one dilemma for all subjects, then second and third dilemmas.

The procedure adopted for scoring the dilemmas is briefly discussed in the following lines. First of all, the interview material was broken down into interview judgments by the researcher. Secondly, he matched IJs with the Criterion Judgments (CJ). And On the basis of this match, a stage score was assigned.

Pearson Correlation was performed to determine the association between morality and the performance of head teachers. For determining the correspondence between the gender and morality of heads, the chi-square technique of statistical analysis was applied.

secondary school head teachers, the researcher identified the stages and Weighted Average Scores (WAS) of the respondents by using MJI Form A. Three years of SSC results were collected by self-reports using a demographic questionnaire and were verified by Board Gazettes of their respective Board of Intermediate And Secondary Education. Pearson correlation was calculated to determine the relationship between WAS and three years average performance of head teachers of secondary schools. The result was $r = -0.144$. Therefore, after accepting the null hypothesis, the conclusion was that "moral reasoning did not correspond significantly to the performance of head teachers.

This finding is in accordance with the work of Mc Nergney and Satterstorm (1984), [Shank \(2005\)](#), [and Thoma and Rest \(1987\)](#).

Discussion

Investigating the relationship between secondary school heads' moral reasoning and their performance and also determining the correspondence between MR and gender was the aim of the study. In this study, a significant relationship was not found between head teachers' moral reasoning and their performance. This finding is in accordance with the work of Mc Nergney and Satterstorm (1984) and [Thoma and Rest \(1987\)](#). [Shank \(2005\)](#) investigated the relationship between moral reasoning and the performance of salespeople of a pharmaceutical company. He did not find significant correspondence between moral reasoning and performance. He measured the moral reasoning of the respondents by using DIT-2.

In this study, Form "A" was used to determine the stages of head teachers' moral reasoning and their Weighted Average Scores (WAS). The other studies used DIT-2 for the purpose. Though the above studies also investigated the relationship between moral reasoning and performance but none of those researches was conducted on managers.

As regards head teachers' moral reasoning, the investigator found no gender differences. It means that females are not inferior to males in

making moral judgments. This finding supports the work of [Snarey et al. \(1984\)](#) and [Wimalasiri \(2001\)](#). [Morilly \(2013\)](#) found no influence of gender on moral reasoning while investigating South African Insurance Company's managers' moral reasoning. [Safdar \(2009\)](#) also investigated secondary school teachers' moral reasoning and found no gender differences.

Conclusions

Following conclusions were drawn.

- I. No significant relationship ($r = -0.144$) was detected between moral reasoning and the performance of secondary school head teachers.
- II. Significant gender differences ($\chi^2 = 3.21$) were not found in head teachers' moral reasoning.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was conducted in government secondary schools of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is suggested that future studies be conducted in private schools and in different areas of Pakistan and at different levels, considering other variables like awards won by the school, dropout rate, physical facilities and school climate, school discipline etc.

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