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Relationship Between Moral Atmosphere of School and Moral Development of Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The major goal of this study was to analyze the relationship between moral atmosphere of school and moral development of students and secondary school teachers. The study was quantitative in nature, and data was gathered through a survey. All secondary school teachers and students made up the study's population. Simple random sampling technique was utilized for selecting the sample of instructors (107) and students (300). School moral climate questionnaire was administered on teachers and students at secondary school level. Data were examined by utilizing statistical software for social sciences (SPSS), Pearson correlation was utilized for finding the association. The findings indicate a strong correlation between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the school. Teenagers' moral growth is significantly influenced by their school environment. It is proposed that education should improve children 's morality rather than to educate them merely academic information.

Keywords: Moral Development, Moral Atmosphere, Secondary Schools, School Teacher, Instructors.



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Introduction

According to numerous studies, adolescents' moral development is significantly influenced by their parents, teachers, peers, and the school environment. According to Aspin, (2000), morals are the behavioral patterns. Morals, derived from the Latin word *mores*, which means customs, are the values and principles that guide human behavior. These are routine actions that have psychological repercussions (Lorensen & Burgoon, 2007). Parent-child interaction patterns seem to influence children's moral development (Boyes & Allen, 1993). (Kadivar et. al., 2016) assert that children's moral development is significantly influenced by the moral atmosphere in the household. Furthermore, when the viewpoints and treatment of every family member are respected and encouraged, moral development is greatly encouraged.

Moral development in adolescence is a matter of great concern. The period of adolescence becomes significant due to a number of circumstances and novel skills where their effects on moral development are investigated. King and According to Mayhew (2002), adolescents' moral development is a significant issue since their moral character is still growing at this age. The three studies on this central issue examine how psychological processes affect moral development (Ellemers et. al., 2019), parents (Hart & Atkins 2002; Hart, Atkins, & Markey, 2004), peers (Fabes et. al., 1999), and social institutions (Parsons, 2017).

According to Lotfabadi (2008), moral development is the result of intricate and reciprocal connections that rely on a person's intrinsic qualities, social environment and experiences, development of moral judgment, and transformation of inspirations and feelings of compassion. Piaget and Kohlberg take a cognitive approach to moral development (Cam et. al., 2012).

Piaget (1932) worked on moral development of children and he proposed four developmental stages of moral development. According to Piaget, these stages are sensorimotor stage (0 to 2 years), preoperational (2 to 7 years), concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years) and the formal operational stage (11 to adolescence). Therefore, each step explains the comprehension of environmental information and reflects a different level of analysis. As the present study mainly concerns with secondary school students, and their age level is adolescence.

The process by which people acquire and internalize a sense of right and wrong is referred to as moral development. It is a complex and ongoing process that begins in childhood and continues throughout a person's life. Many psychologists were interested in the study of moral development, including Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg developed a six-step and three-point concept of moral development. The first level is the pre-conventional level, where individuals make decisions based on self-regard and outside rewards or punishments. The next level is the conservative level, where persons make conclusions based on social norms and opportunities. The third level is the post-conventional level, where persons make results based on their own special values and ethics (Bajovic & Rizzo, 2021).

Kohlberg (1969) advanced Piaget 's (1965) study on moral development. He believed that experience and intellectual development lead to moral thinking. Three levels, referred to as pre-conventional moral reasoning, conventional moral reasoning, and post-conventional moral reasoning, made up his proposed six stages of moral reasoning. Pre conventional moral reasoning is related with egocentrism and moral judgment is considered a concrete and individual perspective. People who use conventional reasoning do so from the standpoint of social norms and conventions. Post conventional stage is built on principles that underlay rules and norms. In this stage, universal ethical principles are developed (Toner, 2019). Care and justice orientations organize moral judgment. She talked about how women's morality of care was disregarded in favor

of justice analysis because men often provide the arguments for moral development (Killen, 2018). The germs of a major propensity for blatant immorality have begun to sprout in Pakistani culture today. It is typical to lack patience, which encourages immoral attitudes. Negative thoughts and actions lead to anarchy and arrogance (Jillani, 2009).

The norms, values, and meaning systems that pupils of a school share are referred to as the moral climate of schools (Høst et. al., 1998). The way that members of a social unit define, interpret, and approach common problems and quandaries is influenced by the moral atmosphere, which is a force field of beliefs, conventions, ambitions, and assumptions that are seen as touchstones for good or bad and right or wrong (Snell, 2000). A common culture or mutual knowledge of what constitutes proper or wrong behavior based on interactions among group members is referred to as a moral environment. Although many individuals are concerned about how the school environment affects children's behavior, little research has been done on the connection between students' behavior and the moral climate of the school (Lin, Lin, & Lin, 2025). The idea of moral environment was first proposed by Kohlberg (1981) as a connection between moral behavior and moral judgment. It is often known that group membership serves as a motivating factor for adolescents' socialization, growth, and academic career. According to (Kavussanu et. al., 2002), moral environment can be defined as the common standards that help create a group's ethos like moral climate.

Writing materials, the moral guidance of teachers and school administrators, and institute and classroom rules all contribute to the moral climate. Trainers act as models for ethical or immoral conduct (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). In order to control the influence of the collection customs of these environments on moral cognitive behavior, Lawrence Kohlberg and his associates studied organization and safe environments. This helped to create the concept of moral atmosphere. As a result of group members' communication, they intended for sets to actively create their own ethos and a shared sense of appropriate behavior (Hyatt, 2022). The premise that climate can only be evaluated by the opinions of the organization's members is the starting point for investigations into the moral climate of schools. In this way, the organization's culture is reflected in great part in the moral climate. However, the term "moral atmosphere" may be used more widely to describe not only a school's culture but also its ecology (its building and facilities), milieu (the staff and student characteristics, including their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and educational backgrounds), and organization (the structures and processes of teaching, communication, and decision-making). Since the teachings on values may be subtle and unexpected, the moral atmosphere is frequently a concealed curriculum of values education (Jackson et. al., 1993).

Based on Kohlberg's theory of education, we believe that moral atmosphere plays a crucial role in influencing people's capacity for moral reasoning and moral behavior (Da Silva dos Santos et. al., 2024). A school 's moral culture, therefore, refers to a shared conscience as distinct from an aggregate of individual consciences. Although moral culture is one dimension of moral atmosphere, it is product of the other three; students and staff (milieu) interacting through a system of structures and procedures (o We think that moral atmosphere is important in affecting people's ability to reason and act morally, according to Kohlberg's theory of education (Da Silva dos Santos et. al., 2024). Therefore, a school's moral culture distinguishes a collective conscience from a collection of individual consciences. When students and faculty (milieu) engage through a system of structures and procedures (organization) in a physical setting (ecology), they create a culture over time, even if moral culture is only one aspect of moral atmosphere. Their desire to participate in all facets of the school's moral climate will determine how moral that culture becomes (Hiller & Woodall, 2019).

Both current and former researchers are very interested in the topic of moral growth. Numerous studies on moral judgment and moral growth have been carried out. Li, Guo, Zheng, and Yu (2013) conducted an experimental study in which they sought to determine the connection between students' moral development and their views of the moral milieu. A comparative research of adolescents' opinions of the moral atmosphere at school in contemporary Russia was carried out by Karabanovaa and Sadovnikova (2014). Mushoriwa (2014) investigated how students in Harare, Zimbabwe's secondary schools perceived the moral climate. All of these studies inspired me to carry out a study on the connection between students' moral growth and the moral climate of schools in Pakistan.

Material and Methods

A survey was conducted to understand the importance of the moral atmosphere in secondary schools and its impact on students' behavior. The study aimed to explore the relationship between students' moral development and the moral environment of secondary schools in Kotli AJ&K. This descriptive research involved data collection through a survey. The study included 107 secondary school teachers and 1,253 students from 9th and 10th grades in government schools. A sample of 107 teachers from both public and private schools and 300 students was selected using a random sampling technique, making a total of 407 respondents from eight government secondary schools. To assess students' perceptions of their school's moral atmosphere, the School Moral Atmosphere Questionnaire (SMAQ) developed by Host, Brugman, Tavecchio, and Beem (1998) was adapted. This questionnaire, consisting of 19 items, was designed to measure students' views on moral atmosphere and its connection to moral competence. Additionally, a questionnaire with 36 statements on a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate students' moral development. The questionnaire was validated by experts from the University of Kotli AJ&K, and its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, with a student reliability score of 0.724 and a teacher reliability score of 0.795. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 23.0, employing methods such as percentage, frequency, mean score, and Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between moral development and the school's moral atmosphere. The findings were then presented in tables.

Results

Table 1. *Descriptive Analysis of students*

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Students work collaboratively	4.09	2.019
2	student does understand a lesson, other students help him	3.92	1.976
3	Students only help their friends	3.68	1.915
4	Students do not like naughty children	3.70	1.920
5	Students fight among themselves	2.90	1.700
6	Students fight and abuse each other	3.54	1.878
7	Students believe in teachers' reprimands	3.74	1.930
8	Students complain about teachers' reprimands	3.79	1.943
9	Students take vacations from school	3.67	1.912
10	Students make excuse new assignment	3.64	1.904
11	Students do cheat in the exam	3.96	1.909
12	Students steal each other's things	3.72	1.931
13	Students take care of the school things	4.03	2.004
14	Students respect teachers	3.88	1.966
15	Students copy teachers	3.72	1.925
16	Students are disciplined in school	3.60	1.894
17	Students vandalize the school	3.57	1.886
18	Newcomers in school are bullied by students	3.56	1.883
19	Students follow discipline in school	3.81	1.948

Table no 01 indicates that the descriptive analysis of students shows that most of the respondents were agreed with all the statements. The highest mean score 4.09 shows that the respondents were in favor of the statement that students work collaboratively. While the lowest mean score 2.90 shows that all students were not in favor of the statement that student fight among -themselves. Furthermore, mean score of most of the statements are above the value of 3 which means respondents were agreed with them.

Table 2. *Descriptive Analysis of Teachers*

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Teachers have good attitude towards students	4.15	2.027
2	Teachers have to deal with our bad behavior	3.77	1.653
3	Our teachers kindly explain the problem to us	4.09	2.012
4	Teachers answer the question of the students to depth	3.87	1.958
5	Teachers treat students with compassion	3.73	1.922
6	Teachers prohibit students from littering	3.65	1.901
7	Teachers punish students for violating school rules and regulations	3.81	1.942
8	Student faces any difficulty, the teachers help him	3.94	1.975
9	Teachers are friendly with us	3.75	1.927
10	Teachers teach us ethics	3.79	1.910
11	Student loses something, the teachers help the students to find it.	3.61	1.911
12	If a student gets hurt, the teachers help him by providing medical aid	3.47	1.854
13	Teachers encourage the students when they ask the questions	3.41	1.837
14	Teachers urge us to follow ethical rules and regulations	3.60	1.888
15	Teachers allow students express themselves	3.57	1.880
16	Teachers appreciate the good work done by the students	3.88	1.960
17	Teachers gives more importance and attention to some students in the class.	3.58	1.881
18	Teacher consider students to be ethical	3.79	1.911
19	Promote sense Of justice in my students	3.93	1.973

Table 02 indicate that the descriptive analysis of teachers shows that most of the respondents were in favor of all the statements. The highest mean score 4.15 shows that majority of the respondents were agreed with the statement that teachers have good attitude towards students. While the lowest mean score 3.41 shows that respondents were agreed with statement that teachers encourage the students when they ask the questions. Furthermore, most of the statement means score were >0 which shows teachers were in favor of the statement

Table 3. *Correlation between moral development of students and moral atmosphere of school*

Variables	N	r value	Sig.
Moral atmosphere of school and moral development of students	407	.356	.000

The findings of the Pearson correlation test, which was used to determine the connection between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the school, are displayed in Table 3. The R-value indicates that two variables have a substantial correlation ($r = .356$ at $p = .000$). It indicates that there was a significant correlation between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the institution.

Table 4. *Correlation between moral development of teachers and moral atmosphere of school*

Variables	N	r value	Sig.
Moral atmosphere of school and moral development of teachers	407	.363	.000

The findings of the Pearson correlation test, which was used to determine the connection between the moral development of secondary school instructors and the moral atmosphere of the school, are displayed in Table 4. The R-value indicates that two variables had a substantial correlation ($r = .363$ at $p = .000$). It indicates that the moral development of secondary school instructors and the moral climate of the school were positively correlated.

Discussion

The current study was aim to find the relationship between the moral atmosphere of school and moral development of secondary school students. The study contributes to the understanding of moral development in secondary school students. By examining the impact of the moral atmosphere, it sheds light on the factors that shape and influence students' moral reasoning, decision-making, and behavior. Schools can assess and improve their moral atmosphere to create a conducive environment for students' moral growth. This may involve promoting ethical values, fostering empathy and moral reasoning skills, and providing opportunities for moral engagement and reflection. The study recognizes the moral atmosphere as an important factor in the socialization process of adolescents. It acknowledges that the school environment, including peer interactions, teacher-student relationships, and institutional norms, can significantly impact students' moral development. The research contributes to the field of character education. It highlights the role of the moral atmosphere in shaping students' character traits, such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and fairness.

First, a validation process of all instruments was presented. The reliability of instruments was being checked by using Cronbach' alpha Student reliability (.724) and Teacher reliability (.795). The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) 23.0 version was used for the analysis of collected data. The researcher was entered the collected data into the system and analyzed by using simple percentage, frequency and mean score. Pearson correlation test was used to find out the relationship between the moral atmosphere of schools and moral development of secondary school students. Major finding of the study of teacher's moral atmosphere and moral development of students were that our teachers have good attitude towards students and teachers kindly explain the problem to us. While the findings about the students were students respect teachers and students work collaboratively.

The study's second finding concerned the relationship between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the institution. The Pearson correlation test was used to determine the connection between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the school. The R-value indicates that two variables have a substantial correlation ($r = .356$ at $p = .000$). It indicates that there was a significant correlation between secondary school students' moral development and the moral climate of the institution. It is recommended that the

study be carried out in various populations and that the relationship between additional variables, such as the moral climate of the home and the moral growth of teenagers, be taken into account in future research.

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Conclusion

It is concluded that students work collaboratively, does not understand a lesson, students only help their friends, do not like naughty like naughty children, fight among themselves, students fight and abuse each other, and also believe in teachers' reprimands. Students complain about teachers' reprimands, take vacation from school, make excuses new assignment, do cheat in the exam, students steal each other's things and also students take care of the school things. Students respect teachers, copy teachers, well-disciplined in school, vandalize the school, and also newcomers in school are bullied by students. Teacher have good attitudes towards students, deal with our bad behavior, teachers explain the problem to us, teachers answers of the question of the students to depth, teacher treat with compassion, prohibit students from littering and also teachers punish students for violating rules and regulations. If a student faces any difficulty, the teachers help him, teachers are friendly with us, teachers teach us ethics, if a student loses something the teachers help the students, teachers encourage the students when they ask questions and also teachers urge us to follow ethical rules and regulations. Teachers allow students to express themselves, appreciate the good work done by the students and also give more importance and attention to some students in the class. Teachers consider the students to be esthetical, promote sense of justice, promote sense of equality, students are fair in dealing with others, students to be honest with others, develop a positive relationship, motivate students to share ideas and things, and also provide course content to helps students to talk polity with others. The consolidated that course contents help students to stop unfair behaviors, contents Improve decision making power in students, content promote religious values in students, complete assigned along with responsibility and also attend religious program and debates. Students are motivated to offer Zohar prayer in school, aware of bad influences in society, arranges the religious programs, teachers acknowledge the good behavior of students, arranges morning assembly regularly, know that they are accountable for mistakes, and also contents help in promoting the moral values. It is concluded that there is significant relationship between the moral atmosphere of school and moral development of students at secondary level and there is significant relationship between the level of moral development of teacher of secondary level and moral atmosphere of school.

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