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### A Study to Investigate the Relationship between Moral Reasoning and Moral Development in the light of Kohlberg's Theory at Primary Level Students in Lahore

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#### Abstract



*This study explored primary school students' moral reasoning abilities using Kohlberg's framework, focusing on six core values: accountability, self-control, respect, compassion, humility, and forgiveness. The research aimed to investigate the relationship between moral reasoning and ethical development. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 50 students in Lahore's public schools. The findings showed a strong correlation between moral reasoning and moral growth, indicating that students' moral reasoning abilities are closely tied to their ethical development. However, the results also revealed a concerning trend: teachers often underestimate their students' moral reasoning capabilities. This oversight may hinder students' moral development, as they may not receive adequate support or guidance to refine their moral reasoning skills. The study highlights the need for teachers to recognize and nurture students' moral reasoning abilities, fostering a more comprehensive approach to moral education. By doing so, educators can empower students to develop into ethically mature individuals, equipped to navigate complex moral dilemmas.*

**Keywords:** Moral Reasoning, Moral Development

#### Statement of the Problem

Despite the significance of moral education in shaping the values and behaviour of future generations, there is a lack of understanding about the relationship between moral reasoning and moral development among primary-level students in Lahore. Kohlberg's theory provides a framework for understanding moral development, but its applicability to Pakistani students remains unexplored. This study aims to address the gap by investigating the relationship between moral reasoning and moral development among primary-level students in Lahore, with a focus on identifying the level of moral reasoning and its correlation with moral maturity, as per Kohlberg's theory. This research will provide insights into the moral development of Pakistani students and inform strategies for effective moral education.

#### Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

It will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on moral development and reasoning, specifically in the Pakistani context. By understanding the relationship between moral reasoning and development, educators can create targeted interventions to enhance students' moral maturity and character. This study will provide insights into the applicability of Kohlberg's theory in a non-Western context, enriching our understanding of moral development across cultures. Implications for teacher training: The study's findings will have implications for teacher training programs, emphasizing the need for educators to prioritize moral reasoning and development in their teaching practices.

#### Introduction

Education is a tool to bring stability and balance to improve financial conditions, and the way of living as well as to avoid wars and chaos in the world (The World Bank, 2022). It is a vehicle to spend a sustainable life (Unesco, 2022). The crucial part of the life of a child is to get an education that is

not only a way to attain social, physical, or economic prosperity but also shapes one's personality by alternating attitude in a positive direction. This is the purpose of moral education.

Moral education is essential for instilling values in children that enable them to lead a fulfilling life and contribute positively to their community's development. The term "moral" originates from the Latin words "mos" and "moris," referring to the shared values and principles that govern a community's way of life, collectively forming a moral code. As a vital aspect of every community, it is the responsibility of adults to pass on these values to younger generations. The roots of moral education can be traced back to ancient schools, where moral development was a fundamental aspect of education, alongside other essential knowledge. In the past, the Puritans recognized the Bible as a powerful tool for instilling morality in children, making its study compulsory. However, with the evolution of schools, moral education unfortunately lost its emphasis, highlighting the need for its revival and integration into modern education systems.

As the 19th century dawned, educational institutions emerged as the hub for both character development and academic instruction. Educators were equipped with a moral teaching framework, but the fragmentation of religion into various denominations led to confusion and discord. By the early 20th century, the emphasis had shifted to cultivating physical, emotional, economic, and civic well-being. However, this oversight of ethical instruction yielded complex and problematic human behaviour. In response to this prevailing issue, two innovative approaches - "values clarification" and "cognitive developmental moral education" - were pioneered to underscore the significance of moral guidance.

Initially, educators were seen as promoters of moral principles, but the concept of cognitive developmental moral education emerged from the groundbreaking work of Piaget and Kohlberg. Kohlberg's focus on moral pedagogy was a pivotal contribution, as he sought to understand the underlying motivations behind individuals' moral decisions. He proposed a three-tiered framework of moral development, with each level subdivided into two stages, providing a nuanced understanding of moral growth. Kohlberg's stages were based on interviews with subjects, presenting them with moral dilemmas, such as the famous "Heinz Dilemma," where a man steals medication to save his wife's life. The reasoning behind their choices determined their level of morality. Following Kohlberg's work, the term "moral education" was largely replaced by "character education," as the former was often associated with religious indoctrination. Character development gained prominence, emphasizing the cultivation of virtuous traits. Character education aims to promote positive actions and discourage negative ones. As a result, educational institutions began prioritizing character building, a stance that remains prevalent today. The "infusion approach" is a notable example, positing that developing a robust character is essential for achieving success in life. Schools now adopt this approach through seminars, curriculum, or classroom pedagogy that enhance character building, recognizing its significance in shaping responsible and compassionate individuals.

In modern Pakistan, character formation is a key focus in education, with Islamic principles and the Prophet's (PBUH) way of life serving as the ultimate guides for achieving moral excellence. The Holy Prophet's (PBUH) life provides a paradigm for ethical living, offering a shining example for followers to emulate. The teachings of the Quran and Sunnah offer a clear roadmap for distinguishing right from wrong, serving as a moral compass for individuals in Pakistan (Uzmi & Nakhada, 2015). Islam not only differentiates between right and wrong but also guides attaining morality (Saddique & Habib, 2021). However, parents often blame the current education system for failing to instill strong moral values in students (Asif et al., 2015). This highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to character education in Pakistan, one that integrates Islamic principles and values into the curriculum to foster morally responsible individuals.

Moral education is crucial for forming strong characters and securing a better future. Schools are expected to provide both cognitive and moral grooming, but unfortunately, moral education is often neglected in Pakistan (Rosenberg, 2015). The curriculum and teachers tend to focus solely on academic learning, overlooking the importance of personality building and moral development (Asif et al., 2020). Moral education is essential for distinguishing between virtuous and evil and adopting the right path for future development. However, the new generation's focus on materialism has led to a decline in the development of ethical values and virtuous individuals. Schools are expected to provide a holistic education, encompassing both academic and moral development (Rosenberg, 2015).

Nevertheless, moral education is often neglected due to insufficient attention from the curriculum and teachers (Asif et al., 2020; Soomro & Tanveer, 2016). Teachers play a vital role in imparting morality, as they spend quality time with students and can create a positive environment that promotes egalitarianism and collaboration (Demirel et al., 2016; Uwaezuoke & Ifeoma, 2020). Similarly, homes are essential for instilling morality, with parents being the most influential figures in a child's life. However, parents' increasing focus on materialistic development has led to a neglect of moral progress (Asif et al., 2020). It is essential to strike a balance between academic and moral education to foster responsibility in individuals.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study are,

- To find out the level of moral reasoning at primary level students in Lahore in the light of Kohlberg's theory
- To explore the relationship between moral reasoning and moral development of primary-level students in Lahore

### **Research questions**

1. What is the moral reasoning proficiency of primary school students in Lahore, as evaluated through the lens of Kohlberg's theory?
2. Is there a correlation between the moral reasoning abilities and moral maturity of primary-level students in Lahore?

### **Literature Review**

Contemporary society is facing an alarming rise in criminal activities, with offenses like murders, suicidal attacks, and violent robberies becoming increasingly common. The prevalence of unethical characteristics among the young generation is having a devastating impact on the entire society, affecting not only themselves but also their loved ones. The religious community once considered the primary source of moral guidance, has been neglected, leading to a shattering of the moral roots of society. This neglect of moral values has had severe consequences, hindering the progress of the nation as a whole. The haggard teaching of morality is a significant contributor to this downfall. The negative consequences of this moral decay are evident in the form of immature pregnancies, murders, robberies, rapes, and other sinful activities. The depravity in society has become so widespread that even those considered role models are engaging in evil deeds, while those who attempt to remain pure become victims of this corrupt situation. The immoral crimes have reached a peak, making even the closest relationships untrustworthy. Parents are doubtful of their children, husbands doubt their wives, and vice versa. The family, once a sanctuary, has become a source of anxiety. It is high time to examine the causes of this condition. Possible factors include the neglect of moral values in schools and homes, economic crises, and parental neglect. Parents, often busy earning a living, fail to indulge moral values in their children, instead providing material comforts and pampering them without focusing on their moral development (Kilton, 2017). This lack of attention to moral upbringing has led to a generation lacking in ethical principles. The moral downfall is more pronounced in contemporary society than in the past, leading some to attribute it to the advancement of technology. However, it is essential to consider multiple factors contributing to this situation. The situation demands attention and action to address the root causes of this moral decay and work towards a more ethical and compassionate society. The consequences of neglecting moral values are far-reaching, affecting not only individuals but also the entire society. It is crucial to re-evaluate priorities and focus on instilling moral principles in the young generation. By doing so, we can hope to create a more harmonious and ethical society, where relationships are built on trust, and individuals can thrive without fear of crime and corruption.

### **Moral Education**

Moral education is the process of teaching individuals to differentiate between virtuous and evil behaviour, enabling them to interact with others responsibly and ethically. This education shapes the moral personality of children, influencing their mindset and behaviour in various social settings. It guides them on how to conduct themselves and grow into responsible individuals. While moral education is often confused with religious education, they are distinct concepts. Proponents of moral education argue that various social factors, such as information and communication technology (ICT), television, social media, unreliable leadership, and the pursuit of wealth, can significantly impact the

values and behaviour of the young generation (Moral Education, 2015). Therefore, moral education plays a vital role in shaping the values and principles of future generations, helping them navigate complex social situations and make informed decisions.

**Lawrence Kohlberg**

The concept of moral education is renowned every time but, these days it has become the mouthpiece of educators. The most significant body in this regard became popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kohlberg is considered the most important personality in the development of moral education. He combined psychology and philosophy and created a remarkable idea that made him a striking scholar in the field of moral education (Samada, Ruiz& Bara, 2018). The cognitive developmental theory by Kohlberg has become the most influential work in the field of moral education in recent times. Its application is considered an efficient product for the experts of moral educators (Zhang & Zao, 2017).

Let’s grasp the idea of Kohlberg’s theory of moral cognitive development.

**Moral Cognitive Development theory**

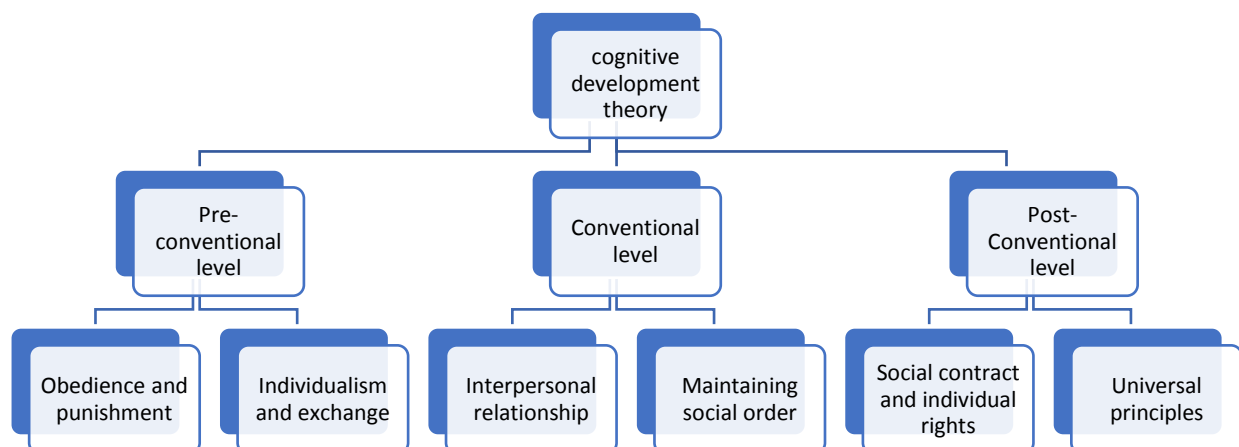
The theory has inspiration from Dewey’s progressive theory and Piaget’s theory of child development. It is the remarkable work that has developed or originated the latest trends in the field of moral education. It has brought revolutionary changes in the application of moral educational content in schools. These contributions are successfully applied in the modern educational context. Ethical maturation and mental progress are interrelated and are the foundation of moral capabilities. The development of an ethical mindset is done in distinct stages that apply to children’s virtuous progress as well. These stages are irreparable. The inclination of ethical progress depends on how much one earns respect in society and gains self-respect that is made possible only by positive contributions in society.

**Stages of Cognitive Development Theory**

Kohlberg developed the stages of moral development based on his work of a decade or more. He indulged the children and adults of different stages of life and based on their answers to the interview he developed his theory of moral development. He was mostly concerned with the moral reasoning of his participants, not with the decision of doing right or wrong. He developed his theory in different stages. His theory comprised three levels having two stages in each level namely,

- Pre-Conventional level
- Conventional level
- Post-Conventional levels

Each level is comprised of two stages.



*Figure 1 Moral cognitive development*

**Level 1: Pre-conventional Morality**

This is the first level of morality and remains till the age of 9. One's actions at this level are mostly guided by obeying the elders and escaping from the negative aspects of punishment.

**Obedience and Punishment**

This stage is mostly seen in children but adults may also show this feature. At this stage, rules are considered absolute and are mandatory to follow, neglecting them may lead to negative or harsh consequences.

**Individualism and exchange**

At this stage, the actions of a child are guided by himself. The best decision is one that serves the needs of an individual.

**Level 2: Conventional Morality**

At this level, societal laws are prioritized. One considers these rules integral for the benefit of society and also for one's personality development.

**Developing Good Interpersonal Relationships**

It is also called the "good boy", or "good girl" stage. At this stage, people's actions depend on what is socially accepted. The accepted norms of the society govern actions of a person. people do whatever other people like. Only those actions are performed by those who are approved by society. One wants to be good in the eyes of others.

**Maintaining Social Order**

At this stage one's actions are governed to keep social stability. People do only those things that are for the benefit of the society. It is about accepting the societal laws and listening to the figures of those who are leaders.

**Level 3: Post-Conventional Morality**

This stage goes beyond the external following of the rules and internalizes them for universal welfare.

**Social Contract and Individual Rights**

At this stage principles are crucial but their collective importance is most significant.

**Universal Principles**

This is the highest level of Kohlberg's theory. Rules came against universal values. Later is considered preferable to earlier. According to Kohlberg, only a few people could reach this level of universal principles.

**Previous Researches**

The concept of moral education is increasing day by day. Different kind of work is done by several researchers in this field. Still, there is dearth of work done in this field. In the case of Pakistan, only a few researches have been done. As far as content analysis is concerned no study in Punjab has been done to analyse moral education at the primary level. Only one study (Saddique, 2021) was conducted to analyse the current moral status at the primary level curriculum but that was not done in Punjab instead this work was on the Sindh curriculum. So, this research will fill the gap by finding out the current status of moral education at the primary level curriculum in Punjab. This acknowledgment of the present level of moral education in the Punjab curriculum will enable the researcher to fill the gap to redress moral education against the national objectives of the Punjab curriculum. Besides this, it will also find out the level of students' morality. Based on the findings the research will propose a module to implement it at the primary level to inculcate morality in students. Research in moral education is increasing day by day. Some of the recent work is discussed below,

Research on moral education has proved the connection between moral education and character building. The research (Krettenauer&Anderson, 2022) also supports this link. Moral education and character education are used synonymously in modern times. Character education indulges nationalism. It can be used to propagate a sense of nationalism (Pradana et al, 2020). Some researchers have explored the method of teaching morality among children by teachers and parents. The study conducted by Birhan et al, 2021 is an example. The objective of their research was to find out the ways teachers and parents indulge morality in students. The study explored the pedagogy used by parents and teachers to indulge morality in students. The focus of their study was to find out the moral values like caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and intelligence. The findings of the study revealed that the most emphasized characteristics of parents were responsibility and honesty. While the most important of teachers was given to the values of respect and care. The method that both parents and teachers prefer is 'advising'. It also indicated that moral education was not taught as an

isolated subject rather it was delivered through already existing subjects. Apart from this the study also highlighted those parents and teachers failed to become ideal role models to indulge morality.

The Govt of UAE implemented a moral education program to cultivate morality in students so that they may serve the nation in the future. The researcher threw light on the effects of the moral educational program implemented by the Govt of UAE. The findings revealed that moral educational programs had positive effects on producing a noble and successful generation (Sbai, 2019). The connection between moral education and sustainable development has also been seen. The research suggested that 3-4 lectures on morality in a week can contribute to the development of sustainable skills in students. Apart from this the research also indicated that curriculum and pedagogy are also important for the transfer of morality (Uwazuok, 2020).

**Methodology**

The study is quantitative as it falls under the category of correlational studies

**Population and sample**

All the primary-level students in Lahore govt schools were the population of the study. The study used a simple random sampling technique. Out of 656 public schools in Lahore, three schools were selected randomly and from these schools, 50 students were randomly chosen as the sample of the study

**Research Tools**

The self-made questionnaire was used as the tool of the study. The questionnaire included 24 items under six values excluded from Kohlberg’s theory. These values are; taking responsibility for the actions, self-control, respect, compassion, humility, and forgiveness.

**Results**

This section of the study discusses the relationship between moral reasoning and moral development in light of Kohlberg's theory at primary level students in the Lahore district. The obtained data was analysed through SPSS 27, by applying descriptive statistics and correlation.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of taking responsibility for action*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
Would you rather take the blame for a mistake you commit unintentionally?	30.0%	20.0%	40.0%	10.0%	2.30	1.015
Can you apologize sincerely for hurting someone's feelings?	16.0%	44.0%	16.0%	24.0%	2.48	1.035
If you were the one who cheated, but your classmate was accused and caught, would you take responsibility and confess to save your classmate from punishment?	4.0%	56.0%	6.0%	34.0%	2.70	0.995
If you accidentally, throw some water on the painting of your friend that he made for you with effort of a week. The fact can hurt him still, will you tell him about it?	10.0%	64.0%	6.0%	20.0%	2.36	0.921

The findings indicate that participants are most likely to take responsibility for their actions when it comes to apologizing sincerely for hurting someone's feelings (M = 2.48, SD = 1.035). Participants are least likely to take responsibility for their actions when it comes to accepting blame for cheating (M = 2.70, SD = 0.995). Participants tend to be neutral when it comes to taking the blame for unintentional mistakes (M = 2.30, SD = 1.015) and telling a friend about accidentally damaging their painting (M = 2.36, SD = 0.921).

These findings suggest that individuals may be more willing to take responsibility for actions that involve interpersonal relationships and emotional harm, but less willing to take responsibility for actions that involve personal consequences or blame. That means they want to avoid punishment. In light of Kohlberg’s theory, the students are at the stage of ‘Obedience and punishment’.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics of self-control*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
If there is a financial problem at home, will you resist buying non-essential objects?	30.0%	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%	1.54	0.908
If there is summer vacation, will you awake early to help your mother	16.0%	44.0%	16.0%	24.0%	1.96	0.947
Would you rather share a secret with someone who promised to keep it?	76.0%	4.0%	10.0%	10.0%	1.54	1.034
If there is a play performance in your school and only one place is left. Your friend desperately wants to take that place. He got late for the audition and you got it. Will you play that role by not sacrificing it for your friend?	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	1.60	0.808

Results indicate that participants are most likely to exhibit self-control when it comes to sharing secrets (M = 1.54, SD = 1.034), with 76% saying they would resist sharing. Participants are least likely to exhibit self-control when it comes to waking up early to help their mother during summer vacation (M = 1.96, SD = 0.947), with only 16% saying they would do so. Participants tend to be neutral when it comes to resisting buying non-essential objects during financial problems (M = 1.54, SD = 0.908), and as far as, playing a role in school performance is concerned 60% are not willing to sacrifice the role for a friend (M = 1.60, SD = 0.808). These findings suggest that individuals may be more likely to exhibit self-control in situations involving trust and confidentiality, but less likely in situations involving personal convenience and relationships. That means they are at the stage of ‘individualism and exchange’ as they can keep the secret of their friend, who in return would also keep the secret.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Respect of the Variables*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
Can you listen to someone's opinion even if you don't agree with it?	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.48	0.814
Would you rather stand up for someone being treated unfairly?	50.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	2.10	1.233
Do you greet the maid of your school or home?	10.0%	70.0%	8.0%	6.0%	1.44	0.884
Can you respect someone's differences and individuality?	56.0%	14.0%	16.0%	14.0%	1.88	1.136

The results of the survey indicate that participants exhibit varying levels of respect in different situations. Listening to someone's opinion even if you don't agree with it; (M = 1.48, SD = 0.814). 40% of participants always listen, 50% sometimes listen, and 10% rarely listen. Standing up for someone being treated unfairly; (M = 2.10, SD = 1.233). 50% of participants always stand up, 20% sometimes stand up, and 20% rarely stand up. Greeting the maid of your school or home (M = 1.44, SD = 0.884). 10% of participants always greet, 70% rarely greet, and 8% sometimes greet. Respecting someone's differences and individuality; M = 1.88, SD = 1.136; - 56% of participants always respect, 16% sometimes respect, and 14% rarely respect. These findings suggest that participants are more likely to exhibit respect in situations involving fairness and individuality, but less likely in situations involving service workers. The results indicate a need for increased awareness and practice of respect in all interactions. That means they respect those in authority. so, they are at the stage of ‘Obedience and Punishment’.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Compassion of the Variables*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
Can you be kind to someone who has done wrong to you?	26.0%	50.0%	12.0%	12.0%	2.10	0.931
Will you add the fellow in your group project	30.0%	50.0%	8.0%	12.0%	2.02	0.937

who is not good in studies and is ignored by the rest of the groups as well?						
Would you rather share your toys with someone who always keeps his toys to himself?	4.0%	96.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.96	0.198
If someone would experience homelessness, would you offer him food and shelter in your own home	56.0%	12.0%	12.0%	20.0%	1.96	1.228

The results indicate varying levels of compassion among participants in different situations. Kindness to someone who has done wrong; 26% always, 50% sometimes, 12% rarely, and 12% never show kindness (M = 2.10, SD = 0.931), indicating a moderate level of compassion. Including someone in a group project; 30% always, 50% sometimes, 8% rarely, and 12% never include someone. (M = 2.02, SD = 0.937), indicating a moderate level of compassion. Sharing toys with someone who doesn't share; 4% always, 96% never, 0% sometimes, and 0% rarely share toys, (M = 1.96, SD = 0.198), indicating a low level of compassion. Offering food and shelter to someone experiencing homelessness; 56% always, 12% sometimes, 12% rarely, and 20% never offer help. (M = 1.96, SD = 1.228) indicating a moderate to high level of compassion. Overall, the results suggest that: Participants are more likely to show compassion in situations involving inclusion and helping those in need (e.g., homelessness). However, they are less likely to show compassion in situations involving personal relationships and past wrongs (e.g., kindness to someone who has done wrong). There is a notable lack of compassion in situations involving sharing personal resources (e.g., toys). That indicates that they are at 'individualism and exchange' as they do good only with those who in return can do good with them.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics of Humility of the Variables*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
Will you admit your mistake knowing about negative circumstances?	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	2.40	1.370
Would you rather share the credit with others for a project you worked on?	10.0%	50.0%	32.0%	8.0%	1.98	1.078
Can you accept constructive criticism and use it to improve?	44.0%	16.0%	34.0%	6.0%	2.02	1.020
If your friend stood first and you failed, would you be happy about his success?	10.0%	56.0%	26.0%	8.0%	2.32	0.768

The results indicate varying levels of humility among participants in different situations. As far as, admitting mistakes is concerned 40% always, 20% sometimes, 0% rarely, and 40% never admit mistakes. (M = 2.40, SD = 1.370), indicating a moderate to high level of humility while, in sharing credit 10% always, 50% sometimes, 32% rarely, and 8% never share credit (M = 1.98, SD = 1.078), indicating a moderate level of humility. For accepting constructive criticism, 44% always, 16% sometimes, 34% rarely, and 6% never accept criticism (M = 2.02, SD = 1.020), indicating a moderate level of humility. And being happy for others' success only, 10% always, 56% sometimes, 26% rarely, and 8% never feel happy for others. (M = 2.32, SD = 0.768), indicating a moderate to high level of humility. Overall, the results suggest that participants are more likely to exhibit humility in situations involving self-awareness (admitting mistakes) and openness to feedback (accepting criticism). However, they are less likely to show humility in situations involving recognition and success (sharing credit and being happy for others). There is a notable variation in responses, indicating that humility is a complex trait that manifests differently in different contexts. That shows learners are at the stage of 'Maintaining Social Order' as they can accept their mistakes but can't be happy with the happiness of others.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Forgiveness*

Variables	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never	M	SD
	%	%	%	%		
If someone takes your favourite toy without asking, can you forgive them and share it next time?	90.0%	4.0%	6.0%	0.0%	1.16	0.510
Can you forgive a friend who didn't invite you to	70.0%	20.0%	6.0%	4.0%	1.44	0.787



their party and invite him next time?							
If someone says something mean to you, can you choose to ignore it and not say something mean back?	40.0%	40.0%	12.0%	8.0%	1.88	0.918	
Can you forgive someone who broke your favourite thing, even if it was an accident?	30.0%	24.0%	26.0%	20.0%	2.36	1.120	

The results indicate varying levels of forgiveness among participants in different situations. As, forgiving someone for taking a favourite toy:90% always, 4% sometimes, 6% rarely, and 0% never forgive (M = 1.16, SD = 0.510) indicating a high level of forgiveness. And forgiving a friend for not inviting you to a party 70% always, 20% sometimes, 6% rarely, and 4% never forgive (M = 1.44, SD = 0.787) indicating a moderate to high level of forgiveness. Ignoring mean comments 40% always, 40% sometimes, 12% rarely, and 8% never ignore mean comments (M = 1.88, SD = 0.918) indicating a moderate level of forgiveness. And forgiving someone for breaking a favourite item 30% always, 24% sometimes, 26% rarely, and 20% never forgive (M = 2.36, SD = 1.120) indicating a moderate level of forgiveness. Overall, the results suggest that participants are more likely to exhibit forgiveness in situations involving minor transgressions (toy-taking, party invitation). However, they are less likely to show forgiveness in situations involving hurtful comments or significant losses (mean comments, broken items). There is a notable variation in responses, indicating that forgiveness is a complex trait that depends on the situation and context.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for moral reasoning and moral development*

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Responsibility of action	50	9.84	3.490	--					
2. Self-Control	50	6.64	3.510	0.927**	--				
3. Respect	50	6.90	3.856	0.944**	0.987**	--			
4. Compassion	50	8.04	2.799	0.945**	0.932**	0.933**	--		
5. Humility	50	8.72	4.010	0.907**	0.813**	0.849**	0.857**	--	
6. Forgiveness	50	6.84	3.026	0.904**	0.963**	0.948**	0.911**	0.830**	--

\*\*p<0.01

Table 7 revealed that - All variables are positively correlated with each other, indicating that they tend to increase or decrease together. The strongest correlations are between compassion and forgiveness (r = 0.945), respect and forgiveness (r = 0.963), and Self-Control and Respect (r = 0.987). The weakest correlations are between humility and self-control (r = 0.813), and humility and respect (r = 0.849). Overall, this suggests that these six variables are related to each other that are part of moral reasoning.

**Findings**

The present study was designed to indicate the level of primary-level students’ moral reasoning and the relationship between moral reasoning and development. To attain the purpose self-prepared questionnaire by the researcher was used as the tool of the study. To determine the level of learners’ moral reasoning, values were extracted from Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. These values were, taking responsibility for the actions, self-control, respect, compassion, humility, and forgiveness. Four questions were made for each value. Based on students’ responses, their level of moral reasoning was determined. As far as taking responsibility for actions is concerned, results showed that students’ level of morality is not so high as 64% (by combining no and never) would not apologize for hurting others and 90% would not save their friend from being the culprit by themselves. In the light of Kohlberg’s theory students’ moral level is at the first stage of conventional morality because they would not mind seeing someone getting punishment for the mistake they commit. This means they want to escape from punishment. So, students’ morality is at the first stage (obedience and punishment) of the pre-conventional level. The condition of self-control is also not good as 50% of children (by combining no and never) will not resist purchasing non-essential objects. 68% (by combining no and never) will not help their mother, 86% (by combining no and never) would not resist keeping secrets, and 80% (by combining no and never) would not leave the role-play for their friend. So, again they stand at the stage of ‘Obedience and punishment’ for they prefer their self-benefits over others and would not give a minor pain to themselves for the happiness of others. The results of respect are also not different as 76% (by combining no and never) do not greet their

maids and 70% (by combining no and never) will not raise their voices against wrongdoings to avoid any negative circumstances. Hence, they are at the stage of ‘Obedience and Punishment’. They would not greet those who are not authoritative. The condition of ‘compassion’ is also worse, as 62% (by combining no and never) would not be kind to those who did any harm, 62% (by combining no and never) would not add those students in group projects who are weak in studies, and 96% (by combining no and never) would not exchange toys with those who in return don’t share. This indicated that they are at the stage of ‘Individualism and exchange’. As far as ‘humility’ is concerned, students’ level is not so good. For, 64% (by combining no and never) students would not admit their mistakes, 58% (by combining no and never) would not share the credit and 64% would not be happy with the success of their friend. This indicates that they are at the stage of ‘Obedience and punishment’ as they will not admit their mistake to avoid punishment. The condition of ‘Forgiveness’ is better as 90% would forgive someone who takes the toy without asking. As far as relationship is concerned, there is a significant relationship between moral reasoning and the moral development of students. To sum up the findings it can be said that in the light of Kohlberg’s theory, primary-level public school students are morally at the first level of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.

### **Discussion**

The present study was designed to find out the relationship between moral reasoning and development. The study indicated that there was a significant relationship between moral reasoning and moral development. It supports the results by Killen & Dahl, 2021. Their research also highlighted that moral reasoning is important to identify “unfair arrangements and articulating arguments for why the arrangements should change” (Killen & Dahl, 2021 p. 1209). That is the moral development. The second objective of this research was to find out the level of moral reasoning at primary level students in Lahore. The results threw light on the fact that the level of students’ moral reasoning was pre-conventional and conventional with the lens of Kohlberg’s theory. The present study supports the research done by (Farooq et al., 2022). They also elaborated that fifth-grade students are at the second stage of moral reasoning in light of Kohlberg’s theory.

### **Recommendations**

1. Integrate moral education into the curriculum, focusing on values like responsibility, self-control, respect, compassion, humility, and forgiveness.
2. Encourage role-playing, group projects, and community service to develop empathy and social skills.
3. Teachers and parents should model moral behavior and guide moral decision-making.
4. Develop programs to promote self-reflection, self-control, and self-awareness among students.
5. Incorporate storytelling, case studies, and real-life examples to teach moral values and principles.
6. Encourage open discussions and debates on moral issues to develop critical thinking and moral reasoning.
7. Provide opportunities for students to take responsibility and make amends for their actions.
8. Foster a positive school culture that promotes respect, empathy, and kindness.

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