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Exploring the Impact of Instructional Strategies on Moral Development of Students at College Level

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Abstract



Education aims at the accomplishment of knowledge and moral development of students at every level. In present time, educational institutions are facing the problems and challenges regarding behavioral and moral issues. Schools, colleges, and universities are facing moral deterioration in every part of the world. Curriculum and textbooks of syllabus are full of moral content, but students are not engaged in activities to improve their moral development. There has been no research on impact of instructional strategies on moral development of students at college level in academic institutions. Therefore, this study entitled as “Exploring the impact of Instructional Strategies on Moral Development of Students at College Level”, was an endeavor to fill this gap. For this study an exploratory research design was used to find out the desired outcomes. Systematic literature review was done for it. The findings of study revealed that instructional strategies had pronounced impact on moral development of students in colleges. These instructional strategies focused on the activities of class discussion, open ended question answers, role plays, dialogues and moral dilemmas, active participation, and collaborative learning for moral development of students at college level.

Keywords: Moral Development, College Students, Instructional Strategies

Introduction

Education has basic purpose of inculcating moral values in students (Aamer, 2009 Musling, Ismail, Darmi, Kamaruddin & Jaffar, 2021). According to Wynne and Walberg (1984), education focuses on objectives of competence and character which are supposed to be accomplished side by side. They asserted that students with strong character exhibit high level of morality. There have been different definitions by various philosophers and researchers according to their own perceptions. Moral education includes relevant content and specific instructional strategies which may inculcate values such as honesty, truth, respect, personal and social responsibility, and human consideration in students. (Shaaban, 2005). It is defined as how a person perceives and acts about right and wrong (Kaur, 2015). Further, Khanam (2010) defined morality in terms of shaping and defining the traits of a person. Every society of the world gives importance to morality in order to determine individual's character. Hence, moral development is perceived crucial and inevitable purpose of education.

Above discussion throws light on significance of moral education in educational institutions. Javed, Kausar, and Khan (2010) stated that degradation in morality has become the burning issue in present time. They opined that moral development is in fact the ability of children to differentiate between right and wrong. Akin, Terri, and Others (1995) were of the view that on behaviors and attitudes regarding moral values should be inculcated among students along with regular academic subjects. The values of respect, honesty, justice, care and citizenship can be developed. In modern era, globalizing communities have increased their focus and interest in character education. Therefore moral development is now being considered as one of the main objectives of education. All constituents of curriculum i.e. goals, content, teaching strategies and methods and assessment must revolve around the moral development of students (Zaman & Mehmood, 2015). Moral education is taught as a distinct subject in many institutions but some institutions take it as a consistent subject. A

large number of researchers focused on the amalgamation of moral education and curriculum instead of treating it as a separate subject (Shaaban, 2005).

Moral development of adolescent occupies significant importance in their lives which is crucial to enable them discern good and bad traits of character (Park & Peters, 2006). Park & Peterson (2008) enlisted the qualities of positive character who has patience, compassion, humanity and satisfaction. Teen-age is a vital transitional stage of life. During this phase, great changes in individual's life takes place which has strong effect on adolescent's relationship with their environment (Vera-Estay, Dooley & Beauchamp, 2015).

Therefore, adolescents must be introduced with the skill of moral reasoning to make difference between good and bad. Moral reasoning increases with age due to increased social communication of adolescents with other individuals (Eisenberg, Zhou, & Koller, 2001; Gibbs, 2010; Malti & Latzko, 2010).

Many researches in their studies have supported the idea of using instructional strategies in order to improve moral development of students at college level. As a matter fact, educational institutes are lagging behind in the area of moral teaching. Tappan (1998) stated students must be prepared to justify their moral action and moral behavior on the basis of their reasoning faculty. He proposed that class discussion could be carried out in class based for moral development. He highlighted the dearth of researches on teaching strategies for moral education. It was also endorsed by Schuitema, Dam, G.T.M., and Veugelers (2003) in their study. They suggested teaching strategies could be applied by the teachers in the classrooms. Zaman and Mehmood (2015) discussed the subjects which can be used for the moral development of students due to their richness in moral content. They described that every subject of humanities is appropriate for moral teaching. These can be activities like, class discussion, role play moral dialogues, open-ended question answers, moral dilemmas, active participation, and collaborative learning that can be applied in classrooms. Students' ethical values can be helpful to mitigate their moral decadence. By using these activities, moral values can become the part and parcel of students' character and behavior (Sari, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Keeping in view the above discussion, it can be stated that there is dire need to address such gaps through exploratory study. Therefore, present study entitled, "Exploring the impact of Instructional Strategies Moral Development of students at college level" was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the instructional strategies for moral development of students at college level through systematic literature review.
2. To determine the impact of instructional strategies on moral development of students at college level
3. To suggest instructional strategies for moral development of students at college level.

Research Questions

- Q.1. What type of instructional strategies are being used for developing moral reasoning in students at college level?
- Q.2. Do instructional strategies have impact on moral development of students at college level?
- Q.3. What type of instructional strategies can be suggested for the moral development of college students?

Research Methodology

The current exploratory study is designed to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) which is to identify themes relevant to the research question and critically analyse the contents in order to answer the question (Dewey & Drahota, 2016). A research question is identified in the beginning of the research for a systematic review, inclusion and exclusion criteria are determined, and after selection of the appropriate content, data is extracted whose quality is assessed and then it is synthesised to present a wholistic interpretation (Mohamed Shaffril, Samsuddin & Abu Samah, 2021). The systematic literature review is more rigorous, specific, replicable and more transparent, as compared to usual literature review, because it answers certain questions.

The research selected a range of articles from the last two decades i.e. from the beginning of the 21st century for identifying teaching strategies used for developing values, religious or ethical in adolescents. This specific review has suggested briefly the most popular and effective strategies in practice for adolescents in schools.

Systematic Literature Review

Garrison (1971) has discussed in detail the importance of morality at college level as students undergo the transitional experience. They have exposure of winds of change in society as well as at personal level. The college's education has basic purpose of inculcating thoughtfulness among students. Further Garrison emphasized that a good college gives strong vision regarding moral value. College education is not for teaching personal morality but provides channel for learning encompassing the values of respect and awareness regarding the rights of others.

Trow (1976) stated that education influences behaviors and attitudes of students through the content of curriculum, teaching methods and activities. Even personal character of teacher leaves deep impact on moral development of students. Shabaan (2005) put forward an argument that matter of moral education is considered debatable in many aspects as many educational liberals view it as a form of preaching. Moral values are transferred by teachers and parents unintentionally through their characters' traits (Nyberg, 1990). Therefore, avoidance of moral education in schools is not possible. But it raises a question how it should be done (Satz, 2000). Most of the researchers affirmed that moral education should be imparted to students in steps (Carbone Jr., 1970; Nyberg, 1990; Westby, 2002). Moral development is a continuous process through which children develop sense of belonging with their social and cultural norms, modify their behaviour as per laws and rules stated by outer agencies and are able to show appropriate attitude and behaviour towards members of the society (Lin & Parr, 2013).

In any society of the world, college education focuses on purposeful achievement. College education aims at dual objectives of attaining of degree and career. According to Kohlberg (1981), during college life students undergo transitional phase and face a clash regarding traditional morality and post conventional morality. The purpose of college education has an objective of preparing students to face the challenges in life. Therefore it is viewed as vital part in higher education.

Schwartz (2000) stated that parents should play key role in developing basic moral values in their children before entrance in high school. Students have a new world in which they enjoy complete freedom decision making at college level. Different contextual factors give them a unique and novel knowledge about self-awareness. They are independent in deciding right and wrong at their own. Therefore, the significance of moral development at college level cannot be denied for the existence and flourishing of community. But in current era, higher education is paying more heed on scientific development rather than character and moral development of students (A Plan for a New Century Committee as cited in Murray, 1995).

MacElroy (2003) outlined many features of college's life which play instrumental role in providing new choices, freedom, and sense of responsibility. Sometimes these choices become hurdle for students' better life. During college life, students are trapped in the whirl of values which they inherit from family. As soon as they are in college, each interaction affects their personality. All the time students learn decision making from their peers. He further stated that a great number of educationalists emphasize on the execution of character and moral education at higher education level instead of school level. College life is pivotal in students' real world as it leads them towards their future life.

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002) stated that the environment of institutes should develop sense of responsibility, intellectual honesty and a democratic view of thinking and analyzing facts for correct and unbiased decision making. Learners may actively participate in society for social justice, developing their own identity and respecting others' diversity and esteem. They should know their responsibilities towards themselves and the other members of the society and are able to differentiate right and wrong actions.

Cross-cultural comparative study done by Taneri, Gao and Johnson (2016) explored the causes of deterioration of morality. They gathered perceptions of teachers regarding changes in ethical values to have a comparison. They discussed that that most of the countries like USA, China and Turkey are facing the moral and ethical erosion. Every culture and every person perceives moral differently. They concluded in their study that youth is not considering the moral values seriously instead of it they are endorsing their own belief systems which is devoid of morals or values.

Han (2015) indicated those qualities which are essential for students and teachers at a learning institute for personality development in Korean culture. He identified five major values which needed to be practices by academia: a strong value system, volunteerism, sense of belongingness to

community, leadership, and character development. He further pointed out many moral behaviours like teamwork, confidence, cooperation, passion, consideration, service, self-respect and self-understanding, responsibility, love, sincerity, vision and manners to form a sensible citizen.

Blooms (1987) denied that universities and learning institutes have produced democratic beings. Whereas Levine (1980) and Bloom (1987) mentioned that colleges are failed to inculcate morality in students at college level.

Kohlberg theory is a pioneer theory in moral cognitive development acknowledged by a great number of educationist and theorists. They used it as a base for the evaluation of ethical issues and problems present in colleges of China (Zhang and Zhao, 2017). According to Kohlberg's theory is meaningfully pertinent for moral development at college level (Schemrich, 2003). Smith (1978) also clarified that college phase is a very critical phase of life for students to sharpen their faculty of moral reasoning.

Zhang and Zhao (2017) ascertained that moral development should be student centered. They were against the outdated "teaching and learning" of moral values where students are "being educated", "being transformed." They opined that learners should be independent in giving the reason behind moral action. They must be proficient enough to differentiate between good and bad at their own. Moral development aims at students' autonomy to make moral decision at their own. Teachers and schools must provide a platform in class for moral discussion where students have freedom to participate. Teachers must bring into discussion current social issues instead of imparting stereotype ideas to students. Each student should be motivated for his own judgment. Teachers play the role of a guide and facilitator in class discussion. Kohlberg (1987) suggested that moral issues and conflicts can be the source of improving moral development of students. He emphasized on classroom discussion through moral dilemmas to enhance moral development of students during college years.

Branden Berger and Bowman (2015) conducted multi-institutional and longitudinal study to find the effect of college on students' prosocial development. They asserted that moral and prosocial development are the significant outcomes of learners in higher education. King and Mayhew were of the view that that college years play leading role in civic and developmental viewpoints. During this phase, they cope with moral challenges of complex world and become ready to face novel moral scenarios for social responsibility (2002). The main objective of education at college and university level is to sharpen the rational faculty of students. Colleges and universities should demand active contribution and involvement of students in societal skills (Brandenberger, 2005; Schneider & Hersh, 2005).

Parks (1986) stated that colleges play vital role to consolidate students' rational thoughts for their moral and social development. Therefore colleges are considered basic platform to enhance their abstract thinking to deal with the social- moral challenges. Many researchers have seconded this opinion by stating that (King & Mayhew, 2002, 2004) and (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) moral reasoning of students develops to great extent during college education.

Jarrar's (2013) study on graduate students of university in Jordan found that affect moral values are affected by education, culture, gender, religion, thoughts and family relations. She emphasized that environmental and cultural factors have great effect on Jordanian youth which ultimately have brought changes in their value system. She put forward her argument that higher education does not promote morality among students. Students must be made familiar with reflective morality along with traditional and ordinary morality at university level. It is one of the responsibilities of higher education to encourage students for moral development.

Many researches have reported the use of ethical concepts in ESL class for moral development of students at college level (Johnston, Juhasz, Marken & Ruiz, 1998). They suggested that ESL class can be the best platform for teaching morality. It was also proposed by Gilness (2003) that literature is replete with use of ethical dilemmas for creating awareness of universal ethical themes. Johnston et al. (1998) identified that various ethical issues can be discussed for moral development of students in ESL classrooms.

This viewpoint was also supported by Schuitema et al. (2003) in their study highlighted that language learning and teaching may collaboratively improve students' moral development. Ryan (1996) discoursed that moral development should be focused on freedom and self-reliance of students. He basically emphasized on transformation of ethics like honesty, courtesy, humbleness, and

responsibility. Estes and Vásquez-Levy (2001) stated that English literature can be used for students' moral developments it gives challenges on ethical matters.

Dewey (1909) emphasized that teaching in itself is a great channel for moral development of students. Each subject and method of teaching is "pregnant with moral possibility". Freeks (2007) pointed out that "character-building and character education have the same meaning." Helterbran and Strahler (2013) suggested strategy of "Socratic" seminars instrumental in character building of students as both teachers and students come into discussion. It is helpful for their personal and societal moral growth.

Shaaban (2015) in his study discussed rationale of moral education in ESL curricula. This platform can be helpful for learners to hone reasoning skills, language skills, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and social cognizance. It was suggested by Nucci (1987) that moral education is not a separate entity and neither it should be taught separately, rather it needs to be integrated in all subjects and courses.

The claim of assimilation of ethical and moral values into curriculum is being hailed by modern researchers. The material and content can be taken from ESL for activities to engage and attract the learners as lectures of social studies, literature and ESL are full of moral themes. (Pereira, 1993; Ryan, 1993; Sanchez, 1998; Shumer, 1999).

Many researchers have interpreted instructional strategies distinctively such as, Akdeniz (2016) explained that the whole process which is meant to change learners' behaviour, internalize knowledge and practices, and achieve the learning outcomes depends on several strategies and actions called instructional strategies. Likewise, Simsek (2011) takes it as arrangement of learning environment, experiences leading towards a modification in behaviour of learners are instructional strategies. All activities which are planned for teaching and attaining learning objectives are instructional strategies (Canady and Retting, 1996; Saskatchewan, 1991).

Vygotsky, Bruner, Piaget, and Bandura examined strategies of instruction and proposed philosophies established on them (Richardson, 2001). According to them instructional strategies are basically the approaches and methods used by the teachers for achieving the major objective of instruction. Instructional strategies based on role play and storytelling can be helpful in moral teaching and learning (Dapice, Cobb, Hutchins and Siegel 1988).

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (1991) focused on Intellectual honesty of students is a key factor to enhance their knowledge regarding moral values rather than direct teaching of moral behaviour and value. Students can show more sensitive behaviour. UNESCO (1991) suggested many teaching strategies to inculcate moral values among students (interviews, debates and discussions, drama, collaborative projects, brainstorming, literature, photographs, and role-play).

Churchill et al. (2013) also suggested different strategies which can be implemented in class room. These include group work, interviews, and project tasks. Rosnow (1990) proposed the use of role-plays based on curriculum content and discussions to sharpen critical thinking and ethical and moral talent among students. Johnson (2010) viewed that role plays which are based on dilemmas can also be very encouraging for students' active participation and these moral conflicts and issues improve their critical and analytical skills. According to Sanderse (2012), role modelling also plays a vital role in teaching morality but regrettably it is not appreciated by majority of teachers.

Dolph and Lycan (2008) have supported the idea of class discussions to solve moral problems which can stimulate moral growth and can prepare them to encounter similar issues. Urban et al. (2018) suggested in their study that character education programs can strengthen the moral character of students. Group work is another important activity for students' moral and prosocial development. Discussion in small groups is the most cited strategy in research for moral development. Many researchers believed in strategies of dialogue and interaction for enhancing students' moral and prosocial development (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975).

Kohlberg's study is considered pivotal in stirring many researchers to use moral dilemma discussions. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) studied 33 moral educational programs in which they highlighted the recurrently used strategies. Those included cooperative and collaborative learning, moral discussion, role playing, and perspective -taking and peer interaction.

Discussions in class on moral issues is a first-rate platform to enhance communications skill (Parker 1997, Preskill 1997). Further, it fuels the progress of attitudes like patience, open-mindedness,

autonomy and respect (Grant 1996, Saye 1998). Elkind and Sweet (1997) opined that “Socratic Method” is dynamic way to boost moral development of students at college level. It is a great source of promoting critical thinking of student and making them realize the difference between right and wrong.

Mayhew and King (2008) suggested two approaches used as classroom interventions to increase students’ moral development in college years. Firstly, it focuses on content of curriculum based on moral values and secondly, it emphasizes on various instructional strategies. Many researchers in their studies supported the idea of inculcating moral attitudes, behaviours and values through the usage of instructional strategies of modelling and moral dilemmas (Reimer, Paolitto & Hersh, 1983; Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989).

Mayhew and King (2008) analyzed the hidden and obvious effect of moral content of curriculum and of instructional strategies on students’ moral reasoning in their pretest and posttest study of 423 undergraduates. They used strategies of reflection and interactive teaching -and learning. Students with negative interaction with their peers in class showed low level in moral reasoning.

Dean (2005) critically analysed education on citizenship in schools of Pakistan. In his study he included curriculum and textbooks of social studies, teaching- learning approaches applied in schools. His findings revealed that curriculum and textbooks are dominantly promoting the notion of ethical citizenship. National Education Policy (1998-2010) focuses on the notion that citizens of the country should be educated “to build up our future economic life” and “build up the character of our future generation” to have “the highest sense of honour, integrity, responsibility and selfless service to the nation” (p.5). He presented the gloomy picture of Pakistani classrooms used in learning process based on rigidity and boredom. Classrooms are just transferring prescribed textbook knowledge to students. No attention is being given on teacher-student interaction and values are imparted through lectures instead of making students to decide independently.

Ahmed, Shaukat, and Abiodullah (2009) in their study compared the role of three types (public, private and Madrassah) of schooling regarding moral and prosocial development of students. The study was conducted in Pakistani background. The basic moral values like honesty, ferocity, reverence, patience, and nationalism were included in this study. The students of Madrassah School were found having high level of morality but on the other hand they were more prone to violence as compared to children of public and private schools. Students of Private schools showed far better results in patience than students of public sector.

Almani, Soomro and Abro (2012) examined the effect of modern education on morality of learners in Pakistani context. The findings revealed that contemporary education has great impact on morality. The prevailing status of moral development in institutions of Pakistan is grim. Information based knowledge is given more importance than development of moral values while teaching. Resultantly, Pakistani institutions are deteriorating and facing moral crisis (Serfraz, Munir, Mehta & Qamruzzaman, 2022). The study concluded that there is lack of total personality development in Pakistani institution. They suggested that the content of English and Urdu textbooks is unequivocally on the moral values (Zaman and Mahmood, 2015). Kohlberg presents a very relevant strategy in this regard which is Socratic questioning. It was found that if students were engaged in contradictory discussions about moral dilemmas, they tend to think critically, and their moral reasoning improved to higher stages. Therefore, the Socratic questions were found effective in enabling students to think deep into the matter and critically analyse the conflicting factors. It helped them to foresee the most appropriate and acceptable decisions.

Kohlberg favoured social studies and English as more relevant subjects for moral discussion in class. Some teachers prepare themselves purposefully to teach moral values in embedded in regular curriculum. Much criticism rests upon Kohlberg regarding his moral reasoning approach and its practicability in the classes. Prince (1998) claimed that moral education is inevitable in classroom. Colleges and university educationist and administration must take decisions to train their faculty through different ways i.e. in-service training programs, and the use of experts (Prince, 1998). Kohlberg opines that though discussing moral dilemmas and moral conflicts with students take time and seemingly need extra effort, however, the most important outcome of each subject is to have deep understanding of its ethical considerations.

Thus, teaching should not focus on cramming of the subject matter but how it's going to be absorbed and internalized by the students. Teachers should plan lessons as part of the teaching strategy to improve moral development.

Findings

1. Generally there are studies which emphasize on the definition of moral development rather than describing the ways through which it can be improved.
2. Majority of studies described the importance of moral development of students during college life.
3. All elements of curriculum including objectives, content of curriculum, teaching strategies and methods must focus on moral development of students at college level.
4. This study highlights the demand put by various researchers regarding the amalgamation of moral education with curriculum instead of teaching it as a distinct subject at college level.
5. Findings revealed that there is paucity of research on instructional strategies for students' moral development at college level in Pakistan.
6. There is much focus on content teaching in schools, colleges and universities.
7. At college level, subjects of Social Sciences and Humanities can serve the best platform for students' moral development. These subjects are full of moral content.
8. Text books have moral content but students at college level are not involved and motivated in activities to enhance their moral reasoning.
9. There is less focus on instructional strategies and activities for students' moral development at college level.
10. Colleges and universities must devise their own teaching methodologies and instructional strategies based on the content for the moral development of students at college level.
11. Teachers can be best role models for their students' moral development at college level through their words and actions.
12. Teachers should motivate and encourage their students for independent decision making at college level.
13. This study explored various activities which can be applied at college level to improve students' moral development at college level.
14. Majority Studies supported the idea of inculcating moral values and behaviour through instructional strategy of discussion of moral dilemmas.
15. These activities include moral dilemmas, critical thinking, cases, scenarios, role play, active participation, cooperative learning, and dialogue, and class discussion, open-ended question answers, writing projects, inquiry, group assignments, service learning and problem solving to promote moral development of students at college level.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study through systematic literature review revealed that nearly every educational institution has curriculum that is rich in moral content. But domain of instructional strategies to improve students' moral development at college level has received less attention of researchers in every part of the world. Pakistan is not an exception (Serfraz, Munir, Mehta & Qamruzzaman, 2022). Institutions including colleges, schools and universities do not emphasize on moral development of students (Alvi, Khanam & Kalsoom, 2020). Education aims at the accomplishment of knowledge and moral development of students at every level. Therefore, college teachers also have the responsibility of moral development of students. They should concentrate on activities and strategies to improve students' thoughtfulness and understanding about themselves and other people of the society. The present systematic literature review (SLR) highlighted a range of instructional strategies (critical thinking, moral dilemmas (Kohlberg, , case studies, role play scenarios (Sanderse, 2012; Rosnow, 1990), active participation, collaborative learning and moral dialogue (Parker 1997, Preskill 1997), class discussion (Dolph & Lycon 2008), open ended question answers, cooperative learning, group assignments and problem solving etc.) for moral development of students at college level.

Recommendations

- Future research studies must pay heed on this area of impact of instructional strategies on students' moral development at college level.

- College life is the most important phase of students' life. Therefore this period of transformation should be treated carefully by the teachers and administration for their moral development.
- There is lack of research regarding how moral values should be taught in at college level.
- At every level of education, teachers should integrate instructional strategies in lesson plans for moral development of students at college level.
- At college level, content cramming should not be encouraged.
- Students' moral development is crucial at every level of education. It should not be restricted to any specific stage of educational life.
- Instructional strategies focused on students' active participation and moral development must be promoted in classes.
- Colleges should be considered basic platform to enhance students' abstract thinking to deal with the social- moral challenges.
- Policy makers must devise policy to promote moral development of students at college level.

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