

EVALUATING THE MORAL COGNITION OF ELEMENTARY STUDENT IN BANDUNG CITY (INDONESIA)

Nady Febri Ariffiando¹, Mubiar Agustin²

¹S.Pd. Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia, ariffiandonady@gmail.com

²Dr. M.Pd. Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia, mubiar@upi.edu

Abstract

Moral Cognition is the ability of a person to distinguish right and wrong based on a strong belief in ethics and apply them in action. Moral cognition is also the consideration or reasoning of a moral behavior and decision-making based on moral values. Someone can be said to be moral when all moral actions done are based on moral values that are understood and believed. To understand and to believe, one needs to experience the processing of life events and experiences related to himself and others. There is unity between reasoning and moral behavior. Moral cognition develops through stages and each stage has identifiable forms, patterns and organizations. This research aims to see the moral cognitive difference of elementary school students from the different aspects of school type, gender and parental education level in a sample of five grade elementary students in Bandung Indonesia. This research use quantitative descriptive. Participants in the study were 180 elementary students at primary schools from Bandung (West Java Province), Indonesia selected by cluster sampling. The sample consisted of 90 male and 90 female students from grade five (age 11). The results indicate that (1) Moral cognition between students from SDN, SDIT and PS did not show any significant differences; (2) Moral cognition between male and female students is significantly different; (3) None of the variables father's job, mother's job, father's education, and mother's education can affect significantly moral competence in students. The difference of student's moral cognition because of the female students responded more emotionally than their male peers. So, this finding can approve that girls are more care oriented in their moral judgments. The strength of socio-cultural factors in a little city affects the role of parents in moral cognitive development of their children. There kinds of school cause no deference of student's moral cognition. This is likely due to the three schools' environment having similar characteristics in terms of moral education.

Keyword: moral cognition, elementary student, Bandung city

1. INTRODUCTION

Someone is said to be moral when able to judge good and bad things (have moral awareness) and followed by good behavior, true and in accordance with values. There is unity between reasoning and moral behavior. Kohlberg (1969) calls this moral reasoning a moral cognition. According to Sigelman (1999) and Eysenck (2004), human morality has three components. (1) cognition: Thoughts and decisions about moral issues. Emphasized by Piaget and Kohlberg. (2) emotions: Feelings, such as guilt, connected to moral issues. Emphasized by Freud. (3) Behavior: How we behave, and the extent to which we behave honorably or not. Emphasized by social learning theorists.

Kohlberg (1977) mentions that reasoning or cognitive morality is the deciding factor that determines moral behavior. Moral cognition is the consideration or reasoning of a moral behavior and decision-making based on moral values. To have a good and righteous morality, a person is not enough to just take action that can be judged good and right. One can be said to be moral when all moral actions done are based on moral

values that are understood and believed. To understand and to believe, one needs to experience the processing of life events and experiences related to himself and others.

Piaget and Kohlberg show that moral cognition develops through stages and each stage has identifiable forms, patterns and organizations (Duska and Whellan 1975; Isaksoon, 2014). A person's moral cognitive development is a change of reasoning and a person's feelings and behaviors about right and wrong standards. Here is a table of moral development

Stage		What Is "Right" and Why
Level 1: Preconventional	Stage 1 Heteronomous morality	Avoiding the breaking of rules that are backed by punishment. Superior power of authority determines "right."
	Stage 2 Instrumental purpose and exchange	Following one's own interest and letting others do the same. Following rules only when it is in one's self-interest. "Right" is defined by equal exchange, a fair deal.
Level 2: Conventional	Stage 3 Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationship, and interpersonal conformity	Exhibition of stereotypical good behavior. Living up to what is expected in a person's role. Respect for trust, loyalty, gratitude. Belief in the Golden Rule, putting yourself in the other person's shoes.
	Stage 4 Social accord and system maintenance	Making a contribution to society, group, or institution. Fulfilling duties to which you have agreed. Point of view of the system is maintained. Avoid breakdown of the system.
Level 3: Postconventional	Stage 5 Social contract and individual rights	Rules are upheld because they are a social contract; however, nonrelative values are upheld regardless of majority opinion. Concern for laws and duties is based upon rational determination of overall utility. Welfare and rights are protected.
	Stage 6 Universal ethical principles	Self-chosen ethical principles determine right. Laws and social duties are valid only because they are based on such principles. The individual respects the dignity of all human beings in a decision and has personal commitment to beliefs.

Adapted from Kohlberg (1984); Trevino (1986; Takon (1999); Isakson (2014).

A person's moral cognitive development is influenced by various factors. Kohlberg (1981) argues that the age factor and place or environment of a person's life affect his moral cognitive rigidity. Kohlberg's research shows that a mature person is more mature cognitive than children. This is because adults face more moral conflicts. Similarly with urban societies more mature cognitive morality compared with different rural communities.

Other factors that can influence moral cognitive development are: parents' role and family system (Freud, 1930; Kiser & Black, 2005), formal education (Rest, 1986; Thorkildsen, 1994; Derry Bery & Thoma, 2000), role taking (Kohlberg, 1976; Leman, 2001), and also, gender (Eysenck, 2004; DeWolfe, Jackson, & Winterberger, 2004).

AL-Naser (2006) has indicated to a set of influencing factors in the family's role in the Moral; education, which is the following:

- 1) Gender: studies had indicated to the presence of differences between the males and females in the Moral developmental process (Kindlon & Thompson, 2002) since the females enjoy higher level of Moral intelligence compared to the males, this is because the mothers take longer time in raring and educating the females on the Moral virtues.
- 2) Parents' age: the effect with statistical significance of the parents' age variable on the Moral and social education, since it revealed that the younger parents tend to neglect more them the older parent, also the older parents tend to over-protection.
- 3) Parents' education level: the more educated the mother the less they are severe with the children in the hygienic and eating table etiquettes and frequently use the discussion method as a training method.
- 4) Mothers with high ideational level are more inclining to permissiveness in control than the less educated mothers. Al-Kahlout (2004) study found out the absence of relation between the adolescences moral intelligence level in the secondary stage and the mother's educational level, the more the mothers are educated the less they are strict with the children. This explains that the mothers with high level of education are more inclined to permissiveness in controlling than the less educated mothers.
- 5) Size of the family or the number of its members: studies showed that the effect of the family size has significant role. Presence of positive correlation between the number of the sons in the family and the mothers tendency to use the severe control and punishment in raring their sons, also the children's rejection, lack of protection and core about them (Mohammed, 2010).

Neighborhood becomes one of the main factors affecting moral development. The school environment is part of this environmental factor. In Indonesia there are several types of primary schools. Primary schools in Indonesia can be divided into two, namely schools that are managed by the government and schools that are managed by private foundations. One of the schools that is managed by the private foundations that is currently growing rapidly in Indonesia is an integrated Islamic school. This school combines the curriculum of Islamic education and the national education curriculum. In addition there is also Islamic boarding school that also implements Islamic education system. In this school the students stay in the dormitory, all activities of the students from morning to night must follow the program that has been prepared.

From the above explanation, the researcher wanted to see the moral cognitive difference of elementary school students from the different aspects of school type, gender and parental education level in a sample of five grade elementary students in Bandung Indonesia.

2. METHOD

The researchers have used a quantitative descriptive method, which is consisted of the independent variables:

- (1) Type of Primary School: Integrated Islamic Primary School (Sekolah dasar islam terpadu), Elementary School (sekolah dasar negeri), Islamic Boarding School (pesantren)
- (2) Gender: Female/male
- (3) Educational level of mother and father: School, Diploma and University degree.
- (4) Parents' job

Sample: Participants in the study were 180 elementary students at primary schools from Bandung (West Java Province), Indonesia selected by cluster sampling. The sample consisted of 90 male and 90 female students from grade five (age 11).

Scale: Moral Judgment Test (MJT) was developed by Dr. Jorge Lind (1977 – 2006) which could make it possible to assess the ability of people to judge arguments pro and contra a controversial moral problem on the basis of their own moral principles, that is, irrespective of their opinion on the particular problem. The MJT confronts individuals with a situation which puts a high demand on them. The two sets of arguments (pro and contra) are matched to represent the same qualities or levels of moral reasoning though with opposing implications. The MJT uses moral dilemmas, which is a situation in which a person cannot make a decision without transgressing an important moral rule or principle. In the standard MJT, two dilemmas are used, the mercy-killing dilemma and the worker's dilemma. The moral task of the MJT is contained in the arguments that are subsequently presented to the participants. For each dilemma, the participants have to

say how much they accept or reject a set of 12 arguments. Six of these arguments are in favour and six are against the doctor and the workers, respectively. They are to decide on a difficult moral dilemma and then to rate arguments in favour and against this decision on a scale from "I strongly reject (-4) to I strongly accept (+4)". The MJT can be used with children as young as 10 years of age if they have no learning deficits and upwards. The moral competence score or "C- score", which indexes the subjects' moral judgment competence, can range from 1 to 100. The C- score is sometimes categorized as very low (1-9), low (10-19), medium (20-29), high (30-39), very high (40-49) and extraordinary high (above 50).

3. RESULT

Type of Primary School: Integrated Islamic Primary School (Sekolah dasar islam terpadu/SDIT), Elementary School (sekolah dasar negeri/SDN), Islamic Boarding School (pesantren/PS) : to compare students' moral kognitif moral from SDIT, SDN and PS, an independent sample T-test was conducted. Means and standard deviations of kognitif moral for students from SDIT, SDN and PS are shown in table 1.

Table 1. The results of independent sample T-test

School	N	M	SD	t	df	P
SDN	60	16,39	10,16	-2,397	198	0,017
SDIT	60	15,14	11,89			
PS	60	16,23				

As it can be seen in table 1, the results indicate that moral competence between students from SDN, SDIT and PS did not show any significant differences. This is likely due to the three schools' environment having similar characteristics in terms of moral education. These results provide no evidence that different environments do not affect a person's moral cognitive development.

Gender effect on moral competence: to compare male and female students on moral competence, an independent sample T-test was conducted. Means and standard deviations of moral competence for male and female students are shown in table 2.

Table 2. The results of independent sample T-test

sex	N	M	SD	t	df	P
Male	90	15,39	9,15	-2,369	197	0,016
Female	90	19,14	10,89			

As it can be seen in table 1, the results indicate that moral competence between male and female students is significantly different. The results indicate that just as in some other studies and is inconsistent with the findings of some another researchers. It might be interpreted that female students responded more emotionally than their male peers. So, this finding can approve that girls are more care oriented in their moral judgments.

Effects of parents' job and education on moral competence: Multiple regression was used to investigate the effects of parents' job and education on children's moral competence. Results of multiple regression for fathers' and mothers' job and education are shown in table 3.

Table 3, The results of multiple regression

Constant	Beta	T	P	R ²
Father's Job	0,013	0,162	NS	0,016
Mother's job	-0,028	-0,0283	NS	
Father's education	0,066	0,634	NS	
Mother's education	-0,0145	-1,218	NS	

These findings express that non of the variables father's job, mother's job, father's education, and mother's education can affect significantly moral competence in students ($F(4, 194) = 0.730, P = NS$). The strength of socio-cultural factors affects the role of parents in moral development of their children.

4. DISCUSSTION

The results of this study indicate that there are significant moral conitive differences between male and female students. From the results of this study, teachers should provide moral learning that can accommodate the moral development of both male and female students. Students are invited to do moral reasoning to develop students' moral conitive. The more often students are invited to do the reasoning, the better the students' cognitive moral development.

School environment is one environment that is not less important in developing students' moral cognition. Therefore, moral learning in schools should be done by applying a moral cognitive model that can hone the students' reasoning. The curriculum in school should be tailored to the needs of students in their moral cognitive development. Teachers should also give students the opportunity to reason in order to develop their moral cognition.

The results of this research indicate that there is no significant difference between the moral conitive of students studying in SDN, SDIT mupun PS. This does not mean that different environments do not affect moral cognitive development. This happens because the characteristics of the school in terms of moral learning are the same. All three schools use the same method of imparting value to students.

On the other hand, parents' emphasizing on formal education, and prevalence of similar socio-cultural factors causes that parents' job and education cannot affect moral competence as opposed to what was expected. School consultants, media, and etc. should aware parents about their great role in children's moral development.

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