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Impact of moral education on personal, aesthetic, humanitarian, social, and professional and religious values among school students

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Abstract

In today's educational context, students frequently encounter ethical dilemmas and value conflicts, making moral instruction crucial for fostering responsible decision-making. This study explores the impact of moral instruction on the ability of ninth-grade students to make conscious moral choices in a selected school in Pune. It specifically examines decision-making across six value domains: personal, professional, social, aesthetic, humanitarian, and religious values. A descriptive survey design with a quantitative approach was employed. The sample consisted of 100 ninth-grade students, both boys and girls, who had received continuous moral instruction from the first through the ninth standard in the same school. Data were collected using a researcher-developed Moral Decision-Making Scale comprising 36 situational items with multiple response options, complemented by an opinionnaire to assess students' perceptions of moral instruction's influence on their decisions. Personal interviews with selected students and teachers were conducted to validate and enrich the quantitative findings. Results indicate that students exhibited varying levels of moral decision-making across different value domains, with higher levels in social, humanitarian, and professional values, and comparatively lower levels in personal and religious values. A majority of students acknowledged that moral instruction positively influenced their ability to make conscious moral decisions, although its impact differed across value areas. The study concludes that sustained, systematic moral instruction enhances moral awareness, ethical reasoning, and decision-making skills, emphasizing the importance of integrating robust moral education in secondary school curricula to foster character development and responsible citizenship.

Keywords: Moral instruction, moral decision-making, value education, moral values

Introduction

Through education, the students should be trained to discover their potential and talents to make the right decisions, so that, when they are placed in difficult situations, they would think critically and avoid pressure to do wrong. Braun, developer of World War II rockets, said, "If the world's ethical standards fail to rise, we shall perish. "The world society is in a state of crisis, and if current practices are not preserved, civilisation as we know it will come to an end".

Herbert declared that the whole work of education, which is a long and complex training, should focus on one particular thing that could be summed up in the concept "Morality". According to Bertrand Russel the chief aim of education is the "formation of character".

Need for the study

The development of morality is an important aspect in the formation of character. The moral aspect has been neglected not only at the personal, professional, social, aesthetic, humanitarian, religious, local, state, national and international levels. Today, young people need help and guidance in the development of their values and value system more than ever before. Formal education can become a major agent in teaching moral values. Thus, moral instruction is essential in schools. The primary aim of moral instruction is to develop the ability of the students to make the right moral decisions in their lives when they encounter a moral crisis. Are the students of this generation able to make conscious moral decisions? Does moral instruction help them to develop the ability to make conscious moral decisions? This study attempts to ascertain the influence of moral instruction on the ability of conscious decision-making by the 9th standard students in a selected school in Pune.

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Importance of the study

This study will help teachers, school administration and curriculum planners to examine and assess making a conscious moral decision among 9th standard in selected schools. This study will help to ascertain the ability of the students to make conscious decision-making.

Questions to guide the study

Are students able to make conscious decisions on their personal, professional, social, aesthetic, humanitarian and religious values?

Review of Literature

Moral education has been widely acknowledged as a crucial component of holistic education, contributing significantly to the development of ethical reasoning, character formation, and conscious decision-making among students. Educational philosophers and researchers have consistently emphasised that the ultimate aim of education extends beyond intellectual growth to include moral and social development.

Plato (c. 380 BCE) emphasised that education should aim at cultivating virtue, asserting that moral development is inseparable from intellectual training. Supporting this view, Herbart (1906) stated that the primary purpose of education is the formation of moral character, and that all instructional activities should ultimately lead to morality. Bertrand Russell (1926) also highlighted that the chief aim of education is the formation of character, stressing the importance of ethical development in educational processes. In the Indian context, Gandhi (1987) strongly advocated moral education as the foundation of true education, emphasizing that education without character is incomplete. He argued that moral training should be integrated into daily school life to nurture responsible and value-oriented citizens. Similarly, Bhatia and Bhatia (2008) ^[2] emphasized that the ethical aim of education is supreme, and all other educational objectives are subordinate to the moral aim.

Several empirical studies have examined the influence of moral instruction on students' moral judgment and decision-making. Digaraj (1992) ^[3] found that moral education at the primary school level had a positive impact on students' ethical understanding and behavior. Dubey (2002) ^[4] conducted a comparative study on adolescents studying in schools managed by different educational agencies and reported that students exposed to systematic moral instruction demonstrated higher levels of moral judgment and value orientation.

Research at the secondary school level indicates that adolescents' moral reasoning is significantly influenced by structured educational experiences. Sucharitha R (2011) ^[14] observed that secondary school students who participated in value-based discussions and moral dilemma activities showed enhanced moral reasoning and decision-making abilities. Vishalache Balakrishnan (2009) ^[15] highlighted that the use of real-life moral dilemmas in classrooms enables students to analyze ethical situations critically and make conscious moral decisions.

Gender differences in moral decision-making have also been explored in educational research. Found that female students generally exhibited higher moral sensitivity and ethical awareness than male students. Supporting this finding, Sangeetha (2018) reported ^[12] significant gender differences in emotional competence and decision-making styles among senior secondary students, with girls demonstrating greater reflective judgment.

The role of socio-cultural and religious background in moral development has been emphasized by several researchers. Noted that moral judgment among students is shaped by family environment, religious teachings, and school-based moral instruction. From a philosophical perspective, Knight (1980) argued that moral education grounded in clear value systems helps students integrate ethical principles into everyday life and decision-making processes.

Studies have also highlighted the importance of values such as personal, professional, social, aesthetic, humanitarian, and religious values in shaping students' moral choices. Surekha B, (2010) ^[13] stated that life is a continuous process of making choices, and that moral decision-making is influenced by psychological, social, and educational factors. Similarly, emphasized that educators and all those involved in a child's development must understand the fundamental principles of moral education to promote moral and social growth.

Overall, the reviewed literature clearly indicates that moral instruction plays a significant role in enhancing students' moral awareness, ethical reasoning, and conscious decision-making abilities. However, many studies recommend further research at the secondary school level within specific school contexts. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of systematic moral instruction on the conscious moral decision-making of ninth-grade students in a selected school in Pune.

Method of research

The descriptive survey method with a quantitative analysis approach will be used in this study to investigate the influence of moral instruction on the ability of conscious decision making by 9th standard students in selected school in Pune. The survey will be conducted with the use of the opinionnaires and personal interviews. This study will be a status study.

Research design: Descriptive survey

Sample

100 students were taken as a sample. From the population, the researcher chose those students who studied from first standard to ninth standard in the same school and had attended Moral Instruction classes during their school time as samples for the study. Or from the population, the researcher has chosen all those students who studied all 9 years in any Adventist school.

From the population, the researcher has chosen 100 students for the study, comprising 51 boys and 49 girls from Spicer Higher Secondary School.

Data Collection Tools

The investigator will be making a tool, namely a scale, on the Moral Decision-Making Scale (MDMS), which is a situational test having 4 alternatives.

An opinionnaire will be developed to find out if 9th standard students can make the right moral decision.

Data Analysis Tools

The analysis of the data was taken from each item to be answered collectively from the opinionnaire. How many percent of students can make the right decision? What percentage of students agree that moral classes influenced them to make the right decision, and what percentage of students disagreed with the influence of moral classes in making the right decision? Compare the scores of boys and girls who will make the right moral decision. Finally, data

obtained through an interview is presented to support the data obtained through opinionnaire.

The researcher will interview the teachers who conduct moral instructional classes to find out whether all the values in the research are included in the syllabus and taught in the moral instructional classes.

Importance of moral situation

Moral life cannot grow in a vacuum. It is relative throughout the environment in which it is nurtured. Moral laws and moral virtues vary considerably with different times and places. One who has good attitudes and good reactions in a moral situation has good character.

Teachers provide instruction to the students, motivates them for learning, helps them to rectify their mistakes, guides them in different situation and evaluates their performance, etc. in other words, a teacher uses content as a medium or tool not only to enable students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes but also to help them in the all-round development of their personality which is what education stands for.

Number of items included in different situations

Out of 36 situational items selected, there are 12 public situations, three family situations, 11 classroom situations, 4 school situations and 6 peer situations.

- **Scoring opinionnaire:** It was decided that the Situational test items should depict the values for which the respondents had to express their preferences. Each Situational test item had four alternatives, out of which only one alternative was the correct answer. The scoring for the toll was simple since there was only one key response given out of four alternatives; one score will be given to the answer. Thus, the maximum score possible for the tool is 36.

- **Data Collection Interview:** A few students have taken the interview, the same items from the opinionnaire have been asked to the particular students who have filled the questionnaire. Then, the researchers will read the item from the opinionnaire and the researcher asked the student which one had influenced him/her to make the decision.

To the students, who said the decision was taken by the influence of moral classes, the researcher asked the students which incident influenced them from the moral classes. To the students, who said the decision was taken by influence other than moral classes, the researcher will ask the students which one has influenced them to take the moral decision.

The study is limited to six categories of values, namely personal, professional, social, aesthetic, humanitarian and religious values.

- **Scope:** This study will help teachers, school administrators and curriculum planners to examine and assess the impact of moral instructions in terms of the making of conscious moral decisions among high school students.

Limitation

The following are the limitations of the study

- For this study, students of standard nine are selected from schools in Pune. Hence, generalisation can be made only to the standard 9th students of 3 in the selected school in Pune.
- This study is limited to the accuracy of the responses by the students.

Value categories	Values
Personal Values	Self-confidence and self-respect
Professional Values	Dignity of labor and curiosity
Social Values	Service and cooperation
Aesthetic Values	Tolerance and loyalty
Humanitarian Values	Dignity of man and gratitude
Religious values	Forgiveness and Faith in God

Definition of Values

- **Personal Values:** The principles and ideologies that a person follows in personal life.
- **Professional Values:** The principles and ethics that a person follows in a workplace
- **Social Values:** Principles and ideologies that encourage us to live together.
- **Aesthetic Values:** It is a judgment of value based on the appearance of an object and the emotional responses it evokes.
- **Humanitarian Values:** Principles and ideologies that are basic to human nature to make their life smooth and happy.
- **Religious Values:** Persons believe in a particular thought, which is a guide for reasoning between good and bad.

Table 1: Personal values, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

Categories	Number of Subject / Percentage
Number of Right Decisions	32 (32%)
Number of Wrong Decisions	68 (68%)
Agreed, the influence of moral instruction	22%
Disagreed with the influence of moral instruction	78%

The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 32 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 68 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 22% students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision, and 78% students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.

Table 2: Professional values, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions and% of students agree &% of students disagree the influence of moral instruction

Categories	Number of Subject/Percentage
Number of Right Decisions	66 (66%)
Number of Wrong Decisions	34 (34%)
Agreed on the influence of moral instruction	48%
Disagreed with the influence of moral instruction	52%

The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 66 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 34 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 48 students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision, and 52 students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.

Table 3: Social values, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

Categories	Number of Subject / Percentage
Number of Right Decisions	79 (79%)
Number of Wrong Decisions	21 (21%)
Agreed on the influence of moral instruction	53%
Disagreed with the influence of moral instruction	47%

The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 79 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 21 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 53 students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision, and 47 students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.

Table 4: Aesthetic values, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

Categories	Number of Subject/Percentage
Number of Right Decision	58 (58%)
Number of Wrong Decision	42 (42%)
Agreed the influence by moral instruction	41%
Disagreed the influence by moral instruction	59%

The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 58 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 42 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 41 students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision and 59 students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.

Table 5: Humanitarian value, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

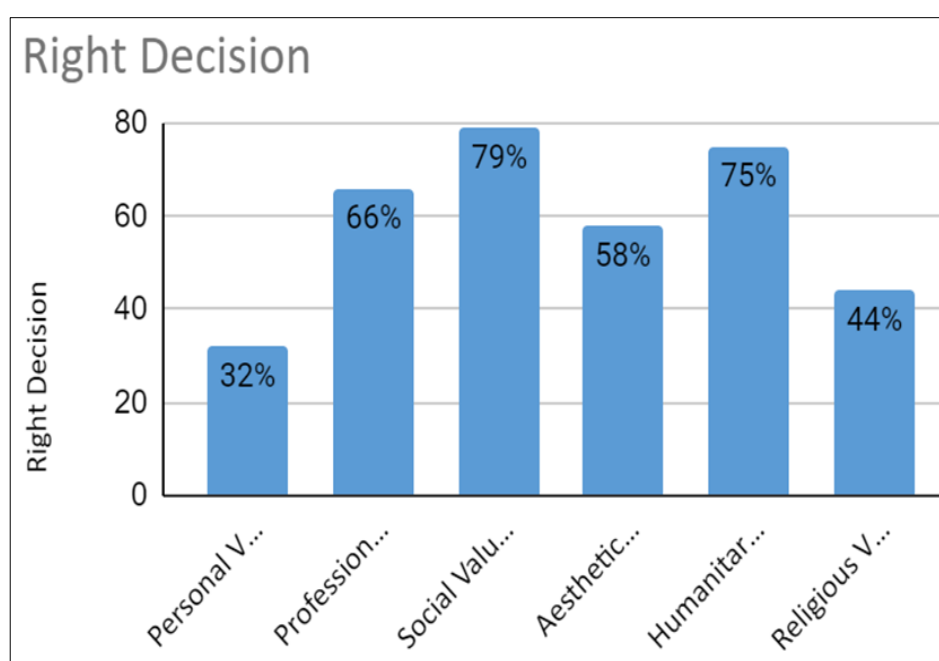
Categories	Number of Subject / Percentage
Number of Right Decisions	75 (75%)
Number of Wrong Decisions	25 (25%)
Agreed on the influence of moral instruction	52%
Disagreed with the influence of moral instruction	48%

The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 75 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 25 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 52 students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision, and 48 students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.

Table 6: Religious values, table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

Categories	Number of Subject /Percentage
Number of Right Decisions	44 (44%)
Number of Wrong Decisions	56 (56%)
Agreed, the influence of moral instruction	33 (58.93%)
Disagreed with the influence of moral instruction	23 (41.07%)

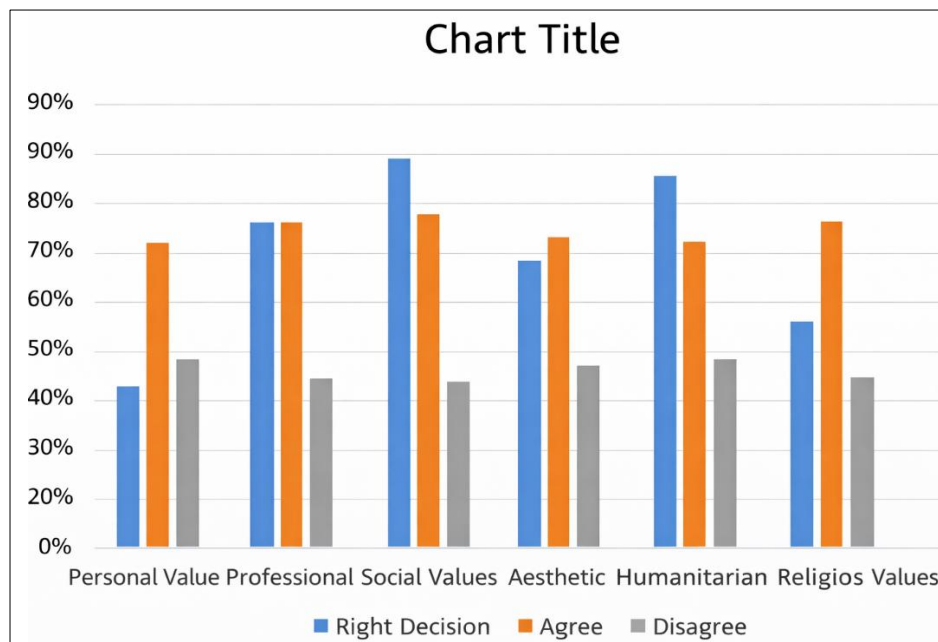
The total number of students taken for the study is 100. Out of 100 students who responded to the opinionnaire. 44 students were able to make the right decision. The remaining 56 students made the wrong decision. Out of 100 students, 33 students said that their moral classes influenced them to make their decision, and 67 students said that their moral classes did not influence them to make their decision.



Graph 1: Right Decision

Table 7: Table showing the% of students making right decisions & wrong decisions, and% of students agree &% of students disagree on the influence of moral instruction

Values/Subjects:100	Right Decision	Wrong Decision	Agree	Disagree
Personal Values	32%	68%	62%	38%
Professional Values	66%	34%	66%	34%
Social Values	79%	21%	67%	33%
Aesthetic Values	58%	42%	63%	37%
Humanitarian Values	75%	25%	62%	38%
Religious Values	44%	56%	66%	34%

**Graph 2:** Chart title

Conclusion

Among the categories of various values, in which social values among students are high (79%), second, humanitarian values 75%, third, professional values 66%, fourth, aesthetic values 58%, fifth, religious values 44% and personal values 32%, could make conscious right decisions on moral values.

Among the categories of various values, in which personal values 68%, second religious values 56%, third aesthetic values 42%, fourth profession values 34%, fifth 58%, fifth humanitarian values 25% and social values 21% could not make conscious right decisions on moral values.

Among the categories of various values, in which social values 53%, second Humanitarian values 52%, third profession 48%, fourth aesthetic values 41%, fifth religious values 33% and personal values 22%, students agreed that moral classes helped them to make conscious right decisions.

Among the categories of various values, in which personal values 78%, second religious values 67%, third profession values 52%, fourth aesthetic values 49%, fifth 48%, fifth humanitarian values, and social values 47%, students disagreed that moral classes did not help them to make the right decisions.

Surekha B says that life is a matter of choices. Civilised living in a modern complex society forces individuals at every point or moment to choose among competing stimuli. Psychologically, this choice may be explained by a set of principles.

Therefore, Radhashyam S says that the persons connected to the work and education of the child must know the essential

basis of moral education that influences and promotes the moral and social development of the child.

Therefore, it may be concluded, in general, that the Spicer and Hume McHenry Schools in Pune City are effective in implementing moral instructions in order to develop moral values and the ability to make conscious decisions among the school students.

Contribution of research in education

The parents, teachers, school administrators and educational policy makers should keep in mind when they design the curriculum with a view to making education a forceful tool for the cultivation of moral values.

Schools may plan for developing a definite outlook on values in students, teachers and parents.

Possible knowledge contributions

This research will definitely contribute to the field of academics in planning and implementing value education.

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