



Effect of Religious Education on the Moral Development of Children

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ABSTRACT- Character building is the optimum goal of education prescribed by all educational philosophies. A quantitative study, with ex post facto 'retrospective' design, was conducted to identify how does religious education affect the moral development of children. The study engaged a sample of 1350 participants from 4 to 15 years of children studying in public schools, *madaris* and out of school children from the province Punjab. A self-constructed tool, 'Moral Development Interview Inventory' was applied to the participants. The study held 3x3 factorial design. The data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed age wise ascending differences in the three groups. However, with growing age, public school students left behind the out of school children and that of *madaris*. At the mid years of 7-11, school going students exhibited better moral reasoning than that of *madrasa* students and children without education. However, at the age of 11-15, the students having madrasa education exhibited the best increase in moral development than their competitors.

Keywords: Moral Development, Character Building, Religious Education, MDII

I. INTRODUCTION

Like all previous educational policies in the History of Pakistan, the 'National Educational Policy (1)' has mentioned the need of religious education as, "knowledge is empowerment and a purposeless empowerment (without having religious values) tends to be a form of tyranny"(1) (p.11). Following the policy, *Islamiyat* as a subject is being taught in all schools, *madaris* and institutes of higher education consistently since 1947. Despite a visible emphasis on the subject, several international and national agencies keep on criticizing the moral behavior of our students, on the basis of which the curriculum for Islamic studies has been changed and revised several times in the recent years by the Govt. of Pakistan, depending upon the media reports. (2-4)

There are three main streams of formal education in practice in Pakistan these days, public schools, private schools and *Deeni Madaris*. Private schools have diverse syllabi for religious education and they decide themselves what and how to teach regarding religion while in public schools there is a compulsory subject of Islamic studies at all schools, colleges and universities till graduation level. *Denni Madaris* are initiated and sustained by religious organizations and sects where most of the subjects as Arabic Language, *Hidith*, *Fiqah* with mandatory education of Quran are being taught.

In spite of regular religious education in both public schools and *madaris*, several moral and social disorders have been observed which disclose deficiencies in students' moral disposition. Therefore, it is essential to identify the reason of such dissonance and divergent behavior among our young generation. This makes the effects of present religious input questionable.

Furthermore, previous researches also establish relationship of moral development and religious education like Perrin (5) who found a positive association between honesty and religiosity. The studies (6-8) revealed that children having religious education displayed more confidence, academic achievement, self-discipline and capacity to overcome stress and depression. On the contrary, the absence of religious education was observed to cause moral deterioration as mentioned by Khan (9), Shekhani&Jafarey(10) on the basis of media reports, that students do not exhibit ethical values when come in practical life. The similar phenomenon was identified by studies(11-13) who suggested that prior to making students competent professionals like doctors, scholars and technicians, they must be encouraged to become good

human beings.

However, the case is not one sided. There are some authors who advocate that religious education is not the solution of ethical problems(14). Nucci (15) stated that for living a valuable life, no religious education is needed and argued that children should be taught universal values without keeping in view their race and territory. He advocated that when children are controlled by religious doctrines, they do not inculcate these values rather rebel and refuse.

To resolve this controversial issue, a study was designed to investigate how religious education can affect students' moral development and at what age it has an optimum influence. The study also meant to see is there intensity of religious subject input makes a difference in students' moral development?

Statement of the problem

Based on the discussion above, a study was designed to determine how does religious education affect children's moral development.

Objectives of the study

The study intended to follow the given objectives:

- 1- To identify how moral development of children is affected by religious education.
- 2- To measure the increase in moral development with growing age of children.
- 3- To identify the difference in moral development of school and *madrassa* going children.
- 4- To measure the difference in the moral development of school children and those without education.
- 5- To determine the difference in moral development of children without education and studying at *Deenimadaris*
- 6- To establish the moral development difference in girls and boys of public schools, *Deenimadaris* and out of school children from 4-15 years of age.

Study Hypotheses

The given null hypotheses were tested by the study:

H₀1: The out of school children have the same moral development in all three age groups.

H₀2: The public school children have the same moral development in all three age groups.

H₀3: The *madaris*going children have the same moral development in all three age stages.

H₀4: The children studying in *madaris* and public schools have the same level of moral development.

H₀5: The children studying in *madaris* and those without education have the same level of moral development.

H₀6: The children studying in public schools and *madaris* have the same level of moral development.

H₀7: The children studying in public schools and *without education* have the same level of moral development.

H₀8: Children from ages 4 to 15years have the same moral development.

H₀9: All boys and girls from 4-15 years of age have the same moral development.

H₀10: All children studying in public schools, *madaris* or out of school have the same level of moral development.

H₀11: The age and religious education has no significant interaction effect on the moral development of children.

Assumption

The study holds following one assumption:

1. Universal moral values, selected for the study are part of every religion of the world which are; integrity, truthfulness, patience, justice, respectful behavior for parents, elders, poor & needy, courage, honesty, kindness to others, enemies and mankind.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Human ethics and ideals, concepts and values, are a way of revealing the interior regions of man and the underlying dimensions of genuine life” (16) (p.1). One of the emerging branches of moral psychology is social psychology which, as a science, encompasses theories of both ethics and psychology. “It is a discipline of both intrinsic and practical interest; uncovering the determinants of moral judgment and behaviour. These determinants may help us to better understand what educational and policy interventions may facilitate good conduct and ameliorate bad behaviour”(17)(p .10).

‘Morality’ by meaning is a set of norms which are socially constructed and accepted by a specific group in a certain territory and time. It shapes the features of a personality. Therefore, an individual is acknowledged and recognized by his/her altruism, pro-social behavior, good values and strong beliefs. Thus, societies develop cumulative set of values depending upon justice, honesty, fairness, truth and curtesy (18).

Therefore, character building,i.e.teaching of moral and ethical values has been considered as the basic purpose of education. Several educationists, like Huitt(19), Power (20) and previous studies (21)(22) have declared education as a moral activity. Therefore, moral training is the foremost purpose of education(23-27).

Birsch(28) presented “Divine Command Theory of Ethics” which states that religion is the greatest source of values that are universally acceptable. All religions including, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity or Judaism hold strong set of beliefs for good values like justice, truth, integrity and human rights. Following any religion in its true spirit can save us from all social problems.

Recognizing the need for religious education, several countries in the world are making religious education as the mandatory part of schools and higher institutions and are funding through federal governments like Greece, Norway and Soviet Union who are discarding their previous communist indoctrination (29). Likewise, Netherlands and Germany have replaced religious education with ethical programs. Since 1944, England and Wales have been introducing religious education in their schools and have become role models for other nations.

Puka (30) (p.18) states that “morality grows in human beings spontaneously alongside physical limbs, basic mental and social capacities”. This concept is derived from the previous theory of Piaget (31), Kohlberg (32) and Gilligan (33)who explored that students of all ages can be provided such moral activities which can enhance their moral maturity. Piaget emphasized that children learn through experiences or interactions rather memorizing facts or stories. He advocated to present moral conflicts before students to think over and rationalize their decision.

Kohlberg(34)suggested that children tend to understand moral dilemmas and analyze their decisions through such values as equality, justice, human solidarity and rights. He presented six moral development stages which were originally came from three major levels: pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional. Children achieved every next level after attaining the first one. The current study has focused these six levels of moral development as the dependent variable.

Another moral psychologist, Gilligan (33) was proponent of differentiated moral development in male and female persons. She identified that women are more care oriented than men and therefore, their family inclination should be given proper place in the given hierarchy of moral stages. The discussion above builds a foundation for the justification that religious education should be an essential part of education system. However, Hull (29) (p.5) comments as, “It takes a rather specific and narrow form, when a nation seeks to hold onto its traditional values by creating a dogmatic instruction for school children in the traditional religion of that country.”

Pakistan is an Islamic Republic which was meant to survive on the teachings of Islam complying the “Two Nation Theory’ presented by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan. Therefore, recognizing the need for religious education, “article 31 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan declares that our educational policy must ensure preservation, practice and promotion of Islamic ideology and principles as enshrined in the teachings of the Qur’an and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW)” (1) (p. 9).

Thus, the research focuses the impact of religious education being taught at all public schools and Deenimadaris and to identify which input is developing students moral reasoning comparatively in a more effective way.

III. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

The research was conducted in positivistic quantitative paradigm with a Causal Comparative, ex post facto, retrospective design. One of the independent variables was religious education having three intensity levels; no religious education, one subject *Islamiyat* and complete religious education in *madaris*. The second independent variable was age factor with three groups of; 4-7, 7-11 and 11-15 which was regarded as attribute variable. The scores obtained on Moral Development Interview Inventory (MDII) was the dependent variable. The study considered intervening variables; family and peer influence, environment, media and most of all heredity factors which were controlled through research design.

3.1 Research design

The research held a 3x3 factorial design because there were two independent variables having three factors each and one dependent variable, scores on MDII.

Table 3.1
Factor Distribution in the research design

Students stage of Age	B1 Out of school children	B2 Islamiyat as one subject	B3 All religious subjects
A1 Students of Early childhood 4-7 years	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_1	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_2	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_3
A2 Students of Child hood 7-11 years	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_4	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_5	MDII mean score 150 participants μ_6
A3 Adolescents 11-15 years	MDII mean score 150 participants	MDII mean score 150 participants	MDII mean score 150 participants

*Where: 'A' is the age factor and 'B' is the religious education, each having three levels.

3.2 Population

All children from age 4 year to 15 year, studying in public schools, DeeniMadaris and out of school from Punjab province were taken as the population of this study. The population was distributed in nine groups as per following characteristics.

- All children having age from 4 to 15 years from urban and rural areas of Punjab, studying in *DeeniMadaris*.
- All children having age from 4 to 15 years from urban and rural areas of Punjab, studying in public schools.
- All children having age from 4 to 15 years from urban and rural areas of Punjab, who were out of school and attending no public school or *madrasa*.

3.3 Sample distribution

The study used a multistage stratified random sampling technique for selecting representatives from all nine groups of the population. Three districts; Lahore, Sheikhupura and Okara were selected from the

province Punjab, then from each district, the students of three age groups; 4-6 (early childhood), 7-11 (childhood) and 12-15 (adolescents) were selected from both rural and urban areas. These students were studying in public schools, Deeni Madaris and one group was out of school. Finally, the students were distributed as an equal sample of girls and boys from each group. Every group contained 150 participants and in total there were 1350 children.

Table No. 3.2
Sample distribution detail

District	Area	Sample group			Strata			Gender distribution
					Age 4/25	Age 4/25	Age 4/25	
Lahore	Urban	A1 75	B1 75	C1 75	Age 4/25	Age 4/25	Age 4/25	Boys/ girls for each cell
					Age 5/25			
					Age 6/25			
		A2 75	B2 75	C2 75	Age 7/15	Age 7/15	Age 7/15	50%
					Age 8/15			
					Age 9/15			
					Age 10/15			
		A3 75	B3 75	C3 75	Age 12/18	Age 12/18	Age 12/18	Do
					Age 13/19			
	Age 14/19							
	Rural	A1 75	B1 75	C1 75	Age 4/25	Age 4/25	Age 4/25	Do
					Age 5/25			
					Age 6/25			
		A2 75	B2 75	C2 75	Age 7/15	Age 7/15	Age 7/15	Do
					Age 8/15			
Age 9/15								
Age 10/15								
A3 75		B3 75	C3 75	Age 12/18	Age 12/18	Age 12/18	Do	
				Age 13/19				
	Age 14/19							
				Age 15/19				

3.4 Instrument and its validity and reliability

Based on the theoretical background of Kohlberg's MJI (Moral Judgment Interview) (35), the researcher herself developed an instrument using the technique of Thurstone scale development steps (36) because the recent instruments including; DIT₁ & DIT₂ (Defining Issues Test) prepared by Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau (38) SORM (Social Reflection Objective Measure) constructed by Basinger & Gibbs (37), MJT (Moral Judgment Test) by Lind (40) and SRM (Social Reflection Measure) made by Gibbs & Wildaman (39) were found limited in applicability at the native context. MDII's concurrent validity was established using MJT by Lind (40) during pilot testing at 135 subjects from the target population. The Cronbach alpha value was determined as .951 at 0.01 probability level. The test-re-test reliability was calculated as .909 > 0.01. The instrument was found substantially valid and reliable. It contained ten dilemmas and the children were asked to decide the action and then to tell the reason behind their action. Each dilemma addressed one of the universal value; truthfulness, patience, honesty, respect of parents and elders, integrity, forgiveness, helping poor and needy, treating enemies and mankind in general. Stages of moral development were measured by a scoring scheme, following the six stages proposed by Kohlberg i.e "pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional" and the intermittent 6 stages.

3.5 Procedure of data collection

The instrument was consisted of ten dilemmas (stories). It was in printed form and the scoring scheme

was with the researchers. The researchers approached *DeeniMadaris* and presented the instrument to the children in urban and rural areas. Those children who could not write, were told the stories by word and scored later. Likewise, students of public schools (30 schools) were engaged through school teachers and their school mates. However, the out of school children were found in slums, *kachiabadi* and gypsies' tents within the cities and in their suburbs. All 'out of school' children were told stories by the researchers themselves verbally and their answers were written. The students were asked to explain the reason of their answer insistently.

3.6 Analysis of data

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The maximum score a child could obtain was 60. The mean score of all groups was calculated and One Way Analysis of Variance (*ANOVA*) was conducted to see three main effects and then interaction effects of different levels of the two variables. Those comparisons where F-ratio was found significant, the *Tukey's HSD* test was calculated to find the individual difference. To compare gender differences in the moral development, *T-test* for independent sample was applied.

3.7 Study delimitations

The study was delimited to:

1. Three districts from province Punjab; Lahore, Sheikhpura and Okara
2. Public schools in the sample districts only
3. Ten universal values as: integrity, patience, kindness, truthfulness, justice, respect toward elders and parents, generous behavior toward enemies, poor and needy and courage.

IV. RESULTS

Table No. 4.1

Description of Mean and Standard Error for three age groups under three major groups of out of school, one subject and all subject religious education

Education	Age	Mean	SDE
Out of school	Age group 4-7	13.813	.545
	Age group 7-11	23.053	.545
	Age group 11-15	26.720	.545
Public school education	Age group 4-7	16.247	.545
	Age group 7-11	29.453	.545
	Age group 11-15	39.387	.545
Education of madrasa	Age group 4-7	14.273	.545
	Age group 7-11	29.920	.545
	Age group 11-15	42.213	.545

The Table 4.1 reveals an overall increase with ascending years of age in the moral development of all three groups of children from without education, one subject education and all subject education. The out of school children had Mean score of M=13.813, M=23.053 and M=26.720 during 4-7, 7-11 and 11-15 years of age. Most of these children acquired the second stage of moral development of mutual goodness while some of them have reached 3rd stage of moral development and wanted to act as per expectations of their family and society. The students from public schools exhibited morality up to fourth stage of upholding rules and regulations but a few of them are still on 3rd stage who prefer family relations instead of sacrificing their interests for rules having Mean score; M= 16.247, M.29.45 and M.39.38 respectively. However, the students of *DeeniMadaris* having M= 14.273, M=29.920 and M= 42.213 at three age stages revealed maximum increase in adolescence and some of the students have attained fifth stage of challenging rules for human rights. It shows that students of madrasa education who were approximately equal to the children without education at early childhood, suddenly improved at adolescence due to learning practical aspects of religious education i.e. practicing Quran, Hadith and other Islamic knowledge.

A univariate analysis was conducted to see whether the above differences were significant and not by

chance.

Table No. 4.2

ANOVA table for mean differences of moral development of out of school children having three age groups

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	6635.102	142.477	.000
Intercept	1	202163.209	4341.103	.000
Age factor	2	6635.102	142.477	.000
Error	447			
Total	450	46.570		
Corrected Total	449			

The Table no. 4.2 shows with $F(2, 477) = 142.477, p = .000 < .05$ that children without education had a significant increase in moral development with growing age. The null hypothesis, "The out of school children have the same moral development in all three age groups" has been rejected but there is less increase than that of other groups because they could not obtain stage higher than the third stage which shows there is no tendency in these children for obeying rules and regulations with growing age.

Table No. 4.3

The ANOVA table for comparison of moral development at three age stages in Public Schools

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	20213.669	472.158	.000
Intercept	1	361987.042	8455.423	.000
Children of public schools at three age stages	2	20213.669	472.158	.000
Error	447	42.811		
Total	450			
Corrected Total	449			

A significant difference is shown in table 4.3 with values $F(2, 477) = 472.158, p = .000 < .05$ during three age stages of public school children. The null hypothesis is false, "the public school children have the same moral development in all three age groups." The empirical evidence shows that students of public schools had age wise significant difference in their moral development.

Table No. 4.4

The ANOVA table for age wise differences in madrasa going students' moral development

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	26114.816	514.553	.000
Intercept	1	358648.036	7066.619	.000
Madrasa going children with three age stages	2	26114.816	514.553	.000
Error	447	50.752		
Total	450			
Corrected Total	449			

It is indicated in the table 4.4 showing $F(2, 447) = 514.553$ at $p = .000 < .05$ that there is found a significant difference in the moral development of madrasa going children at three age groups. The analysis does not support the null hypothesis that, "The madrasa going children have the same moral development in all three age stages." It brings to light that students at madaris learned sufficient moral concepts of Quran, Hadith, Fiqah and Tafseer and they have increased moral development at every age stage.

Table No. 4.5

ANOVA table for the comparison of moral development of 'out of school' and public school children

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5	13050.758	292.026	.000
Intercept	1	552594.001	12364.941	.000
Out of school children	1	11556.250	258.585	.000
Public school children	2	24852.188	556.097	.000
group one * group two	2	1996.583	44.676	.000
Error	894	44.690		
Total	900			
Corrected Total	899			

The Table 4.5 reveals a significant mean difference with $F(2, 894) = 44.676$ $p = .000 < .05$ in the moral development at all the three age stages of two major groups of 'out of school' children and public school children. The school going children cumulatively had better stages of moral development than those 'out of school' without any religious education due to studying one subject Islamiyat.

Table No.4.6

The ANOVA table for the comparison of the moral development of 'out of school' and madrasa going children

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5	15327.424	314.984	.000
Intercept	1	549673.960	11295.989	.000
Uneducated children in three age stages (age-one)	1	11137.284	228.875	.000
Madrasa educated children in three age stages (age-three)	2	29421.643	604.625	.000
Age-one * age-three	2	3328.274	68.397	.000
Error	894	48.661		
Total	900			
Corrected Total	899			

The Table 4.6, reveals a significant mean difference with $F(2, 894) = 68.397$ $p = .000 < .05$ for the moral development at all the three age stages of two major groups of 'out of school' children and public school children. The school going children cumulatively had better stages of moral development than those 'out of school' without any religious education due to studying one subject Islamiyat.

Table No. 4.7

The ANOVA table for the comparison of the moral development of 'out of school' and public school children

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5	18532.167	396.140	.000
Intercept	1	720631.210	15404.084	.000
Children in Madrasa education	2	46129.743	986.061	.000
Children in school education	1	3.868	.083	.774
Group 2 * Group 3	2	198.741	4.248	.015
Error	894	46.782		
Total	900			
Corrected Total	899			

Table 4.7, adds sufficient evidence that there is significant mean difference with $F(2, 894) = 4.248$ $p = .015 < .05$ in the moral development at all the three age stages of two groups of 'madrasa going children and

public school children. The madrasa going children were low in moral development in the early childhood and were equal to school going in their childhood but they exhibited higher moral development in their adolescence as compared to Public school children. It means that madrasa students improved their moral reasoning due to practical and meaningful aspect of religious education.

Table 4.8

Comparison on gender basis from all three major groups of out of school, public school and madrasa school children

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Score	Equal variances assumed	11.333	.001	-2.810	1348	.005
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.821	1347.887	.005

The table 4.8 manifests the significant difference in boys and girls of all three age stages and all three major groups as out of school children, public school children and madrasa children with $t(1348) = -2.810$ at $p = .005 < .05$. The results support Gilligan's theory that male follow justice morality and female follow care-oriented morality which is regarded as the third stage of morality where family and society norms are given more importance keeping the expected role from the individual on top priority. Therefore, the null hypothesis that "All boys and girls from 4-15 years of age have the same moral development" is rejected.

Table No. 4.9

The ANOVA table for cumulative main effect of religious education on all three major groups at all three age stages

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	7565.801	60.458	.000
Intercept	1	907666.685	7253.075	.000
Religious education	2	7565.801	60.458	.000
Error	1347	125.142		
Total	1350			
Corrected Total	1349			

The table above 4.9 depicts the significant difference among all nine major groups at all three stages due to different religious education levels with $F(2, 1347) = 60.458$ at $p = .000 < .05$. Findings show that there were differentiated effects of religious education on the three age stages of children. Cumulatively a positive significant effect was recorded among students of early childhood (4-6), childhood (7-11) and adolescence (12-15). It has negated the hypothesis that all children studying in public schools, *madaris* out of school have the same level of moral development.

Table No. 4.10

The ANOVA table for cumulative main effect of age factor on all three major groups out of school, public schools and *madaris*

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2	49281.187	779.715	.000
Intercept	1	907666.685	14360.880	.000
age	2	49281.187	779.715	.000
Error	1347	63.204		
Total	1350			
Corrected Total	1349			

The table 4.10 depicts the significant difference among all nine major groups at all three age stages. The findings $F(2, 1347) = 63.204$ $p = .000 < .05$ show that students of different age groups; early childhood (4-6), childhood (7-11) and adolescence (12-15) exhibited different level of moral development. Overall, children had an increase in the moral development with growing age. This finding has rejected the hypothesis that there is no effect of age factor on the moral development of children.

Table No. 4.11

The ANOVA table for overall interaction effect of age factor on all three major groups out of school, public schools and madaris

Between-Subjects Effects	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8	15132.347	323.956	.000
Intercept	1	907666.685	19431.513	.000
Age	2	49281.187	1055.022	.000
Religious education	2	7565.801	161.970	.000
Age * Religious education	4	1841.200	39.417	.000
Error	1341	46.711		
Total	1350			
Corrected Total	1349			

The Table 4.11 reveals as $F(4, 1341) = 39.417$ $p = .000 < .05$ about the interaction effect of age and religious education for all nine groups of children. It means that the cumulative increase in students' moral development was due to the interaction effect of students' increasing age and religious education growing intensity. The findings reveal that with growing age of children, the religious education subjects and practices should be increased to achieve the maximum increase in children's moral development. Both factors of religious education and age interactively add child's moral maturity. Therefore, the last null hypothesis is also rejected, "the age and religious education has no significant interaction effect on the moral development of children."

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study holds following findings:

1. An overall increase in the moral development of children was observed with ascending years of age of all three groups of children from no education, one subject education and all subject education.
2. The out of school children attained second stage of moral development as the maximum level where they exhibit mutual goodness. Only some of them have reached 3rd stage of moral development and wanted to act as per expectations of their family and society.
3. The students from public schools exhibited morality up to fourth stage of upholding rules and regulations but a few of them were still on 3rd stage who preferred family relations instead of sacrificing their interests for rules.
4. The students of Deeni Madaris at three age stages revealed maximum increase in adolescence and some of the students have attained fifth stage of challenging rules for human rights.
5. The students of madrasa education who were approximately equal to the children without education at early childhood, suddenly improved at adolescence due to learning practical aspects of religious education i.e. practicing Quran translation, Hadith and other Islamic knowledge.
6. The out of school children had a substantially significant increase in moral development at three age stages.
7. It is proved that children without religious education also have moral development but has less increase than that of other groups because they could not obtain stage higher than the third stage which shows there is no tendency in these children for obeying rules and regulations.
8. The students of public schools exhibited significantly different moral development with their age difference. Studying Islamiyat have influenced students' moral development.
9. The increasing age of Madrasa children have also influenced their moral maturity. It brings to light that students at madaris learned sufficient moral concepts of *Quran*, *Hadith*, *Fiqah* and *Tafseer* with other religious subjects with growing age which had made them aware of rules and obligations towards society.
10. The school going children cumulatively had better stages of moral development than those 'out of school' without any religious education due to studying one subject Islamiyat.
11. The moral development at all the three age stages of two major groups of 'out of school' children and public school children were significantly different. The school going children cumulatively had better stages of moral development than those 'out of school' without any religious education due to studying one subject Islamiyat.
12. The madrasa going children were low in moral development in the early childhood and were

equal to school going in their childhood but during adolescence, they exhibited higher moral development in comparison of Public school children. It means that madrasa students improved their moral reasoning due to practical and meaningful aspect of religious education.

13. There was found a significant difference in the moral development of male and female children. The results supported Gilligan's theory that male follow justice morality and female follow care-oriented morality which is regarded as the third stage of morality where family and society norms are given more importance keeping the expected role from the individual on top priority.

14. Moral development is affected by the intensity of religious education the students interact with. Overall, a positive significant effect of religious education was observed among students of early childhood (4-6), childhood (7-11) and adolescence (12-15).

15. All nine groups were significantly different in their moral development. Overall, children had an increase in the moral development with chronological year increase. There was a positive significant effect on students with growing age from early childhood (4-6), childhood (7-11) and adolescence (12-15) in attaining moral reasoning.

16. The interaction effect of all the nine groups including age and religious education factor was significant. It means that the cumulative increase in students' moral development was due to the interaction effect of students increasing age years and religious education growing intensity. The findings reveal that with growing age of children, the religious education subjects and practices should be increased to achieve the maximum increase in children's moral development. Both factors of religious education and age interactively raise the child's moral development stage.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study provided an empirical evidence that out of school children having no religious education could not attain the 4th, 5th and 6th stages of moral development. However, as per Kohlberg's perspective there was a slow increase in their moral reasoning due to chronological age factor. They lagged behind children of public schools and *madaris*. These findings supported all previous studies of Huitt (13, 19), Power (20), Dewey (21), Sockett (24) Jackson et al. (25), Ayers (27) Tom (26) and Noddings (23) who advocated that character building is the essential purpose of education.

Obtaining sufficient religious education input, children of public schools and *madaris* exhibited higher moral development than those without education. However, the students of *madaris*, at early childhood, 4-7 years, showed as low moral development as out of school children due to less understanding of moral lessons given in Quran and learning it without knowing its meaning. This finding supports Piaget (31) cognitive theory who emphasized that children learn through experiences or interactions rather memorizing facts or stories. He advocated to present moral conflicts before students to think over and rationalize their decision.

At the age of early childhood, 7-11 years, public school students performed better on moral development scale as compared to madrasa education because madrasa students were still memorizing the syllabi while students of public schools started to practice some ethics from Islamiyat in their school. This supported Berkowitz (18) concept that, 'Morality' by meaning is a set of norms which are socially constructed and accepted by a specific group in a certain territory and time.

There was established a direct proportion of chronological age and the moral development in all children from three groups; out of school, madrasa students and public school students which is congruent to the notion of Puka (30) (p.18) who states that "morality grows in human beings spontaneously alongside physical limbs, basic mental and social capacities".

The study findings mainly supported Piaget (41) and Kohlberg's (32, 34) theory of moral development. Thus, there was found a substantial positive effect of religious education on the moral development of children because by raising the religious education intensity, i.e content and duration, the children moved to higher moral development stages.

However, a few students at schools and *madaris* could reach up to 5th and 6th stage of moral development, which shows the dire need of effective and rigorous input of religious education at all age stages of children in schools and *madaris*. This finding also reinforced the Kohlbergian findings that not all of the

people approach to the highest stage of moral development and that only 20% people were at 6th stage in America.

Another finding that girls performed slightly less than boys is similar with Gilligan's point of view that female follow care-oriented morality as compared to boys who approach fourth stage of following rules and regulations. The study found its reason as girls have less social interaction and preferred family commitments, therefore, most of them were found at 3rd stage of moral development.

It is important that researchers could not find previous data about the moral development of children without education and those studying in *madaris*, which the present study has added to the field.

VII. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has investigated the moral development level of students at *madaris* and public schools and out of school children in Pakistan for the first time to help policy makers, teachers, religious scholars and parents to decide appropriate curriculum and instructional strategies to up bring moral citizens and to remove deficiencies wherever needed. The research findings are helpful to review and improve *madaris* system for introducing a comprehensive, effective and productive syllabi for making *madrasa* students morally and socially sound. Following recommendations are presented in this regard:

1. As the out of school children performed the least at the moral development scale, the society must enhance literacy rate to produce a sound generation who are aware of ethical and moral principles of the society and at least need to be provided interaction with religious education in *madaris*.
2. School education, either public or private, need to introduce more subjects of religious education, especially related to moral practices in their syllabi from one class to the higher level.
3. All religious concepts should be practically incorporated in the curriculum (related to daily practices).
4. Students of *madrasa* education, especially at early childhood need to be familiarized with learning by doing, meaningful religious practices with lively game environment and group activities to avoid rote learning.
5. The students of Hifz classes need to be introduced with Quran translation and practical Hadith selection. Memorization without understanding the content, imparts no acceleration in moral concepts.
6. The students gain maximum influence at the age of 12-15. Therefore, they need to be provided a climate of moral values and ethics for appropriate adjustment in the society.
7. The pedagogies for teaching religious education need to incorporate; discussion method, role playing, project, debates, story- telling, story writing, case studies and scenario-based learning.
8. Teachers in both public schools and *madaris* should be role model for practicing high moral values.
9. The students at *madaris* should be provided opportunities of social exposure and social interaction for longer and frequent spans so that they may be familiar with their community members and communicate for better understanding of real world around them.
10. The staff at *madaris* should be trained with mainstream teachers to be familiarized with latest pedagogies.
11. There should be frequent interactions, seminars, workshops for *madrasa* teachers with public teachers to learn from each other and share and extend their experiences.
12. Students at *madaris* should have opportunity to learn and use technology for healthy purposes in the disciplines of science, history, languages and art to extend their vision.
13. Girls are usually less social and have no exposure so they need to be encouraged for positive interaction with girls from other institutions and should be given access to the technology for developing their global identity.

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