



PATNA UNIVERSITY
M.A (PSYCHOLOGY) SEMESTER-3
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY (CC-12)
TOPIC: KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Saba Farheen

UGC NET, UGC PDF, Rajasthan SET, PhD

Part Time Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology, Patna University

Email id- sabapupatna786@gmail.com

- **Moral development** is the development of the individual's sense of right and wrong. A high level of moral development is built on a foundation of cognitive development. The philosophers Plato and Immanuel Kant believed that the moral sense is inborn, that it is a given of the human mind. On the other hand, the philosophers Aristotle and John Locke assumed that moral development requires learning and experience. Kohlberg's approach tends to favor the learning hypothesis. Human beings acquire a moral sense by learning to think clearly, by the example of role models, and by social reinforcement.
- It is important to keep in mind when thinking about how students develop beliefs about right or wrong.
- A **morality of justice** is about human rights or more specifically, about respect for fairness, impartiality, equality, and individuals' independence.
- A **morality of care**, on the other hand, is about human responsibilities or more specifically, about caring for others, showing consideration for individuals' needs, and interdependence among individuals. Students and teachers need both forms of morality.



- According to Kohlberg, there are three principal levels of moral development:
- (1) The Preconventional (premoral) level,
- (2) The conventional level
- (3) The Post conventional (principled) level.
- There are six stages associated with the three levels, two stages to each level.
- **Preconventional**
- 1 Obeying and avoiding punishment from a superior authority
- 2 Making a fair exchange, a good deal
- **Conventional**
- 3 Pleasing others and getting their approval
- 4 Doing your duty, following rules and social drug for his wife, because order



- **Postconventional**

- 5 Respecting rules and laws, but recognizing that they may have limits

- 6 Following universal ethical principles, such as justice, reciprocity, equality, respect for human life and rights

1. The **Premoral level** is associated with early childhood (from about two to seven years old). At this age the child is still relatively self-centered and insensitive to the moral effects of actions on others. The theme of this level is **power orientation**, meaning that to a child thinking at this level, “might makes right.” The parents are seen as right because they are bigger and stronger than the child. Kohlberg called this level of moral reasoning **Preconventional**, because it is not based on the conventions or rules that usually guide social interactions in society. The child adopts an ethics of **obedience and punishment** in stage 1. The rightness and wrongness of actions is determined by whether actions are rewarded or punished by authorities such as parents or teachers. People at this level of moral development are mainly concerned with avoiding punishment or following rules when it is to their own advantage. The new ability creates Stage 2, an **ethics of market exchange**. At this stage the morally good action is one that favors not only the child, but another person directly involved.

2. The **conventional level** is associated with late childhood and adolescence (seven to eighteen years old). Also, many, probably most, adults continue to operate at the conventional level, never progressing to the principled level. The theme of the conventional level is “law and order.” At this level, people care about other people. They think that morality consists of following rules and conventions such as duty to the family, to marriage vows, and to the country. The moral reasoning of children and adolescents from nine to nineteen is most often at this level. At first, in Stage 3, the child’s reference group are immediate peers, so Stage 3 is sometimes called the ethics of peer opinion. As the child becomes a youth and the social world expands even more, he or she acquires even larger numbers of peers and friends. He or she is therefore more likely to encounter disagreements about ethical issues and beliefs. Resolving the complexities lead to Stage 4, the ethics of law and order, in which the young person increasingly frames moral beliefs in terms of what the majority of society believes. To develop ethical principles that reliably avoid mistakes like these require further stages of moral development.



3 The **principled level** is associated with a relatively small percentage of adults. These are people who think for themselves about what is right and wrong. They are not chaotic in their thought processes. They are logical and clear sighted. In certain cases, they may decide that a law or a group of laws are unjust, and they may rebel. Moral judgments at this level are based on personal standards or universal principles of justice, equality, and respect for human life, not just on the demands of authority figures or society. The new focus constitutes Stage 5, the **ethics of social contract**. Now an action, belief, or practice is morally good if it has been created through fair, democratic processes that respect the rights of the people affected. The realization that ethical means can sometimes serve unethical ends leads some individuals toward Stage 6, **the ethics of self-chosen**, universal principles. At this final stage, the morally good action is based on personally held principles that apply both to the person's immediate life as well as to the larger community and society. People who have reached this level view rules and laws as arbitrary but respect them because they protect human welfare. They believe that individual rights can sometimes justify violating these laws if the laws become destructive. People do not usually reach this level until sometime after the end of adolescence. Stage 6 is seen only rarely, in extraordinary individuals.

