



UNVEILING THE INFLUENCES ON MORAL JUDGMENT: A STUDY OF GRADE 9 STUDENTS IN ODISHA CONSIDERING BOARD OF STUDIES, SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, INTELLIGENCE, AND GENDER

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Abstract

This study investigates the influences on moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha, focusing on the impact of educational board affiliation (BSE vs. CBSE), socio-economic status (SES), intelligence, and gender. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 810 students across Bhadrak and Balasore districts. The Defining Issues Test (DIT) and General Mental Ability Test were employed to assess moral judgment and cognitive abilities, respectively. The findings reveal significant differences in moral judgment based on educational board affiliation, with CBSE students exhibiting higher mean scores compared to BSE students. Socio-economic status also emerged as a significant predictor, with students from higher SES backgrounds demonstrating more advanced moral reasoning. Intelligence was found to be a crucial factor, with higher cognitive abilities correlating with more sophisticated moral judgments. However, no significant gender differences were observed in moral judgment levels. This comprehensive analysis highlights the need for tailored educational interventions that consider these diverse factors. The study underscores the importance of refining curricula and pedagogical approaches to support ethical development, particularly in socio-economically diverse settings. The insights gained can guide educators and policymakers in creating more equitable and effective educational practices, fostering holistic moral and cognitive growth among students.

Keywords: Moral Judgement, Grade 9, BSE, CBSE, Intelligence, Socio-Economics Status

Background of the Study

Moral judgment, a crucial aspect of ethical development, significantly impacts adolescents' decision-making and behavior. As students approach adolescence, their ability to make reasoned moral decisions evolves, influenced by various factors including educational systems, socio-economic backgrounds, cognitive abilities, and gender. This study aims to assess the level of moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha and explore how this judgment varies with respect to their educational board affiliation, socio-economic status, intelligence, and gender. In India, the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) are two predominant educational systems, each with unique curricula and pedagogical approaches. The CBSE, with its emphasis on holistic and integrated learning, contrasts with the BSE's more traditional and localized approach (Kumar & Sharma, 2016). Research has suggested that different educational systems can impact various aspects of students' cognitive and moral development (Singh, 2017; Kumar et al., 2018). Moreover, Socio-economic status (SES) is a well-documented factor influencing educational outcomes and moral development. Higher SES is often associated with better access to resources, which can enhance cognitive and moral growth (Duncan et al., 2014; Evans, 2016). Studies have shown that children from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically and exhibit more advanced moral reasoning compared to their lower SES peers (Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2016).

Similarly, the relationship between intelligence and moral judgment has been the subject of considerable research. Cognitive abilities are believed to play a role in the complexity of moral reasoning, with higher intelligence often correlating with more sophisticated moral judgments (Kohlberg, 1981; Moshman, 2011). Intelligence affects how individuals understand and resolve moral dilemmas, suggesting that students with varying levels of intelligence might exhibit different moral judgment patterns (Rest, 1986; Derryberry & Tucker, 1992). Along with, Gender differences in moral judgment have been widely studied, with evidence suggesting that males and females may approach moral issues differently (Gilligan, 1982; Walker, 2004). Research indicates that females are often more empathetic and care-oriented in their moral reasoning, while males might focus more on justice and rules (Eisenberg, 1986; Halpern, 2012). Understanding these differences in the context of Grade 9 students in Odisha could provide valuable insights into how gender influences moral decision-making and highlight the need for tailored educational interventions.

Reviews of Related Literature

1. Educational Boards and Moral Judgment

Educational boards play a significant role in shaping students' cognitive and moral development through their curricula and pedagogical practices. Research has shown that different educational systems can influence various aspects of students' learning and moral reasoning. For instance, Kumar and Sharma (2016) explored how different educational boards impact cognitive and moral development, finding that the curriculum and teaching methods of the CBSE might foster more holistic development compared to the traditional approaches of the BSE. Singh (2017) further supports this, indicating that educational boards with a focus on integrated learning can influence students' moral judgments positively. In contrast, Kumar et al. (2018) argue that the more localized and traditional curriculum of the BSE might limit the exposure of students to diverse perspectives, potentially affecting their moral reasoning abilities.

2. Socio-Economic Status and Moral Judgment

Socio-economic status (SES) has been consistently linked to various educational and developmental outcomes, including moral judgment. Duncan et al. (2014) highlight that higher SES is associated with better academic and developmental outcomes, including advanced moral reasoning. This is supported by Evans (2016), who notes that children from higher SES backgrounds have access to more resources and supportive environments, which can enhance their moral and cognitive development. Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2016) found that SES influences moral judgment, with children from higher SES backgrounds exhibiting more sophisticated moral reasoning. The implications of SES on moral development are crucial in a diverse socio-economic landscape like Odisha, where disparities may impact students' moral judgment (Rest, 1986; Derryberry & Tucker, 1992).

3. Intelligence and Moral Judgment

The relationship between intelligence and moral judgment has been a topic of significant research. Kohlberg (1981) established that higher cognitive abilities are associated with more advanced stages of moral development. Moshman (2011) expanded on this by suggesting that intelligence influences the complexity of moral reasoning, with individuals exhibiting higher cognitive abilities demonstrating more nuanced moral judgments. This notion is supported by Rest (1986), who found that higher intelligence correlates with more sophisticated moral reasoning skills. Derryberry and Tucker (1992) also reported that cognitive abilities are

crucial in determining how individuals resolve moral dilemmas. Therefore, it is pertinent to examine how intelligence affects moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha.

4. Gender Differences in Moral Judgment

Gender differences in moral judgment have been explored extensively, revealing distinct patterns in moral reasoning between males and females. Gilligan (1982) argued that females are more likely to adopt a care-oriented approach to moral reasoning, while males often focus on justice and rules. This was further supported by Eisenberg (1986), who found that females exhibited more empathetic and care-based moral reasoning compared to males. Halpern (2012) also highlighted that gender differences influence moral decision-making, with females typically demonstrating greater empathy and concern for others. Walker (2004) noted that these gender differences in moral reasoning reflect broader social and psychological patterns, making it important to consider gender when assessing moral judgment.

5. Comprehensive Studies and Gaps

While individual studies on educational boards, SES, intelligence, and gender provide valuable insights, comprehensive research integrating these variables is limited. Previous research has often examined these factors in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding how they interact to influence moral judgment. Singh (2017) and Kumar et al. (2018) emphasize the need for integrated studies that explore how educational boards and socio-economic factors collectively impact moral development. This study aims to address this gap by providing a holistic analysis of how educational board affiliation, socio-economic status, intelligence, and gender collectively influence moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of how various factors influence moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha. By investigating the impact of different educational boards (BSE and CBSE), socio-economic status (SES), intelligence, and gender on moral judgment, the study provides critical insights into several areas. The research sheds light on how different educational systems affect students' moral reasoning. The comparative analysis between BSE and CBSE can reveal whether the curricula and pedagogical approaches of these boards contribute differently to the development of moral judgment.

This understanding can guide educators and policymakers in refining educational practices and designing curricula that better support students' ethical development. Moreover,

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exploring the influence of socio-economic status on moral judgment is significant for identifying how economic disparities impact students' moral and ethical development. Given the socio-economic diversity in India, understanding these dynamics can help in crafting targeted interventions and support systems that address the needs of students from various socio-economic backgrounds, promoting more equitable educational outcomes. The study also adds to the understanding of how intelligence relates to moral judgment. By examining the correlation between cognitive abilities and moral reasoning, the research provides insights into how different levels of intelligence affect students' capacity for complex moral reasoning.

This knowledge can inform the development of educational strategies that are responsive to varying cognitive abilities, ensuring that all students receive appropriate support for their moral development. Additionally, investigating gender differences in moral judgment is crucial for recognizing how males and females may approach moral issues differently. This aspect of the study can lead to the creation of gender-sensitive educational practices that accommodate diverse moral perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive and balanced learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

The development of moral judgment in Grade 9 students in Odisha is influenced by multiple factors, including the educational board (BSE vs. CBSE), socio-economic status, intelligence, and gender. Despite the significance of these factors, there is limited research on how they interact to affect moral reasoning in this demographic. This study seeks to unveil how these elements collectively impact the moral judgment of students, aiming to provide insights that can guide more effective educational practices and interventions. Thus, the study entitled *“Unveiling the Influences on Moral Judgment: A Study of Grade 9 Students in Odisha Considering Board of Studies, Socio-Economic Status, Intelligence, and Gender”*

Operational Definition of the Keyterms

- **Moral Judgment:** In the context of this study, moral judgment refers to the ability of Grade 9 students to evaluate and make decisions about moral dilemmas based on their understanding of ethical principles.
- **Board of Studies:** This term denotes the educational board under which the students are enrolled, specifically the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) or the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

- **Socio-Economic Status (SES):** SES is defined by the students' family income, parental education levels, and occupation.
- **Intelligence:** Intelligence in this study refers to cognitive abilities as measured by standardized intelligence tests or academic performance indicators.

Research Objectives

- To assess the level of moral judgment of BSE and CBSE school students of Odisha.
- To find out the different in the moral judgment scores of Grade 9 students with respect to
 - Board of studies (i.e., BSE & CBSE)
 - Socio-economic status of the students
 - Intelligence of students
 - Gender of the students

Hypothesis

- There exists no significant different in the mean moral judgment scores of grade 9 students with respect to their Board of studies.
- There exists no significant different in the mean moral judgment scores of grade 9 students with respect to their socio-economic status.
- There exists no significant different in the mean moral judgment scores of grade 9 students with respect to their intelligence level.
- There exists no significant different in the mean moral judgment scores of grade 9 students with respect to their gender.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to systematically gather and analyzed quantitative data on the study habits of students from BSE and CBSE schools in Odisha. The aim was to provide a detailed account of the current study practices among these student groups and identify any significant differences or similarities.

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises all Grade 9 students enrolled in BSE (Board of Secondary Education) and CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) schools in Odisha. This population represents students from various districts within the state.

Sample: The sample will be drawn from Grade 9 students in two specific districts of Odisha: Bhadrak and Balasore. The sample will include: **390 students** from BSE schools, **420**

students from CBSE schools. Simple random sampling technique will be used to select the sample.

Tools and Techniques Used

- **Defining Issues Test (DIT):** The Defining Issues Test is a well-established measure used to assess moral judgment. It presents students with a series of moral dilemmas and asks them to rate the importance of various considerations in resolving these dilemmas.
- **General Mental Ability Test:** The General Mental Ability Test will be used to evaluate students' cognitive abilities and general intelligence.

Data Analysis

i. Level of Moral Judgment of BSE And CBSE School Students of Odisha.

The collected data on the moral judgement of Grade 9 students from BSE schools was systematically analyzed using numerical scoring methods. The scores of moral judgement scale was first converted to t score and then analysed. Students were categorized into three distinct levels based on their percentile scores:

Table 1: Level of Moral Judgement of BSE and CBSE School Students

Groups	High		Average		Low	
	Percentile 75 and above		Between percentile 25 and 75		Percentile 25 and below	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
BSE	117	30	187	47.95	86	22.05
CBSE	148	35.23	173	41.19	99	23.57

The findings offer a comparative analysis of the moral judgment levels among Grade 9 students from BSE and CBSE schools. In BSE schools, approximately 30% of the students exhibited superior moral judgment, placing them in the top 25th percentile. The majority, about 47.95%, demonstrated average levels of moral judgment, falling between the 25th and 75th percentiles. Additionally, around 22.05% of students showed lower levels of moral judgment, ranking in the bottom 25th percentile.

In comparison, CBSE students displayed slightly higher levels of moral judgment, with 35.23% of them falling in the top 25th percentile. A majority, 41.19%, exhibited average moral judgment, situated between the 25th and 75th percentiles. However, a similar proportion of 23.57% showed areas for improvement, falling in the bottom 25th percentile.

Both findings highlight variability in moral reasoning abilities among students from both boards. While the majority in each group demonstrated average moral judgment, CBSE

students had a slightly higher percentage of those with superior moral judgment. Despite this, a significant segment in both groups requires attention to enhance their moral reasoning skills.

ii. Different in the Moral Judgment Scores of Grade 9 Students With Respect to
a. Board Of Studies (i.e., BSE & CBSE)

Table 2: Difference in Moral Judgement between BSE and CBSE School Students

Groups	N	M	SD	df	T Ratio	Table Value	Remark
BSE	390	53.72	7.85	808	8.36	1.962	Significant
CBSE	420	57.87	6.24				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in moral judgment levels between Grade 9 students from BSE and CBSE schools. The results showed a significant disparity, with CBSE students having higher mean moral judgment scores than their BSE counterparts. The t-value of 8.36, far exceeding the critical value of 1.962 at the 0.05 significance level, indicates that the difference is statistically significant. This suggests that school affiliation (BSE vs. CBSE) plays an important role in shaping moral judgment among these students.

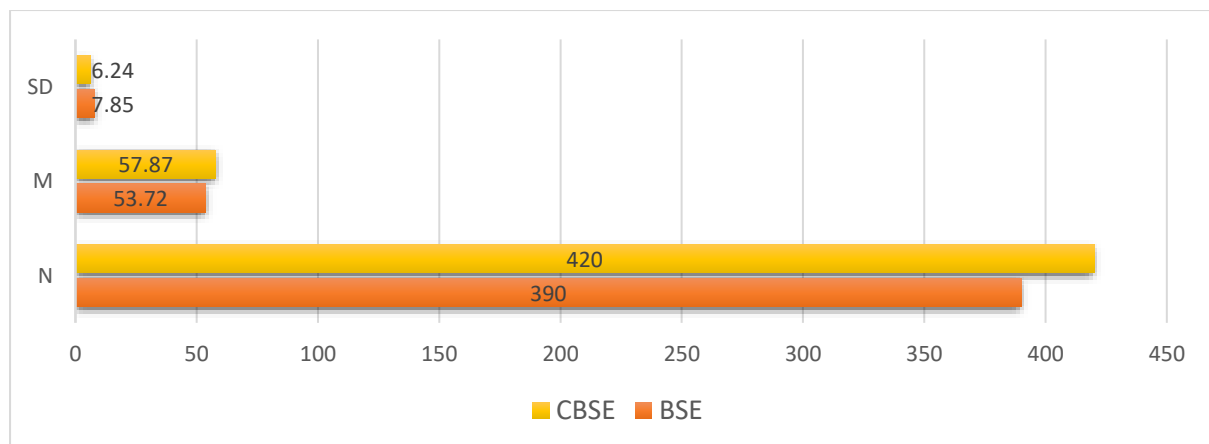


Figure 1: Difference in Moral Judgement between BSE and CBSE School Students

b. Socio-Economic Status of The Students

Table 3: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to their Socio-Economics Status

Groups	N	M	SD	df	T Ratio	Table Value	Remark
High	179	55.75	5.64	408	2.40	1.962	Significant
Low	231	54.24	6.79				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine potential differences in moral judgment levels among Grade 9 students based on their socio-economic status. The moral judgment scores were converted into t-scores and analyzed.

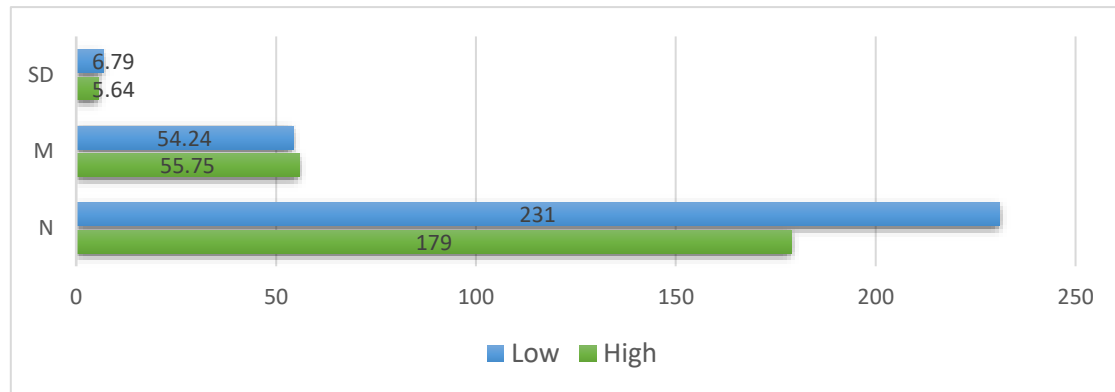


Figure 2: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to their Socio-Economics Status

The analysis focused on two groups: students in the top 25th percentile, indicating superior socio-economic status, and those in the bottom 25th percentile, indicating lower socio-economic status. Students in the middle range, between the 25th and 75th percentiles, were excluded from the analysis.

The t-test results revealed a significant difference in moral judgment levels between students from high and low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. Students from high SES backgrounds had substantially higher mean moral judgment scores compared to those from low SES backgrounds. The t-value of 2.40 exceeded the critical t-value of 1.962 at the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the difference is statistically significant and suggesting that socio-economic status is a key predictor of moral judgment among Grade 9 students.

c. Intelligence of Students

Table 4: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to Their Intelligence Level

Groups	N	M	SD	df	T Ratio	Table Value	Remark
High	158	62.17	5.27	303	15.29	1.962	Significant
Low	147	51.71	6.46				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate differences in moral judgment among Grade 9 students based on their intelligence levels. The moral judgment scores were converted to t-scores for analysis. The focus was on two groups: students in the top 25th

percentile, representing superior intelligence, and those in the bottom 25th percentile, representing lower intelligence. Students in the middle range (between the 25th and 75th percentiles) were excluded from the analysis.

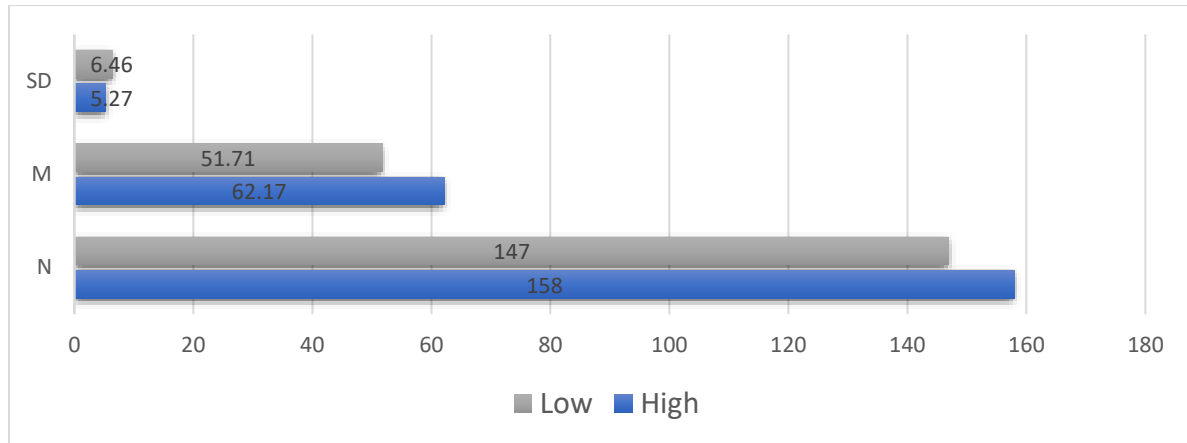


Figure 3: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to Their Intelligence Level

The t-test results showed a significant difference in moral judgment levels between students with high and low intelligence levels. Students with higher intelligence demonstrated notably higher mean moral judgment scores compared to those with lower intelligence. The t-value of 15.29, far exceeding the critical value of 1.962 at the 0.05 significance level, indicates that this difference is statistically significant. This suggests that intelligence level is a key predictor of moral judgment among Grade 9 students.

d. Gender of the Students

Table 5: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to their Gender

Groups	N	M	SD	df	T Ratio	Table Value	Remark
Boys	476	54.95	7.13	808	0.436	1.962	Not Significant
Girls	334	55.17	6.98				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in moral judgment levels between Grade 9 boys and girls. The results revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups, with a t-value of 0.436, much smaller than the critical value of 1.962 at the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that any observed differences in moral judgment are likely due to chance, and gender is not a significant predictor of moral judgment among Grade 9 students. The findings suggest that boys and girls do not differ significantly in terms of their moral judgment levels.

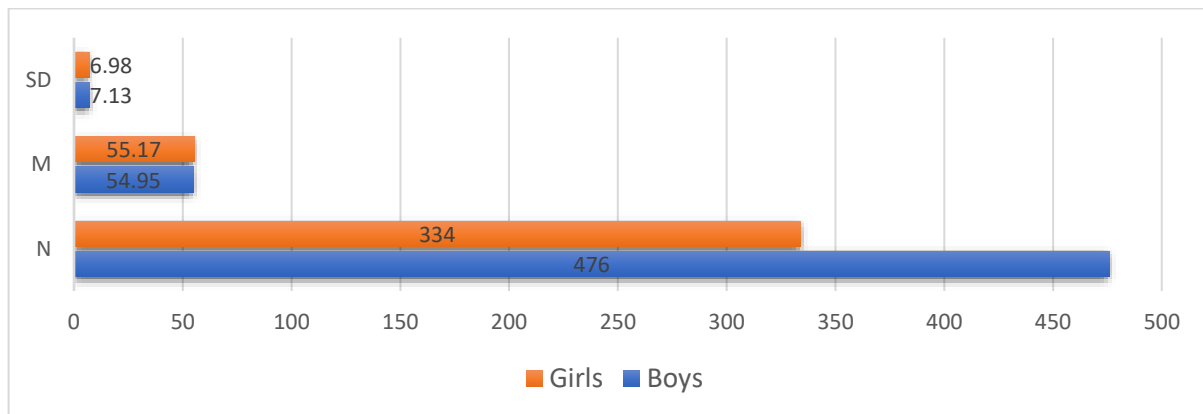


Figure 5: Difference in Study Habits between Grade 9 Students with Respect to their Gender
Major Findings

- **Educational Boards:** CBSE students exhibited higher mean moral judgment scores compared to BSE students, indicating that the educational board plays a significant role in shaping moral judgment.
- **Socio-Economic Status:** Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds had significantly higher moral judgment scores than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Intelligence:** Higher intelligence levels were associated with more advanced moral judgment, with students in the top 25th percentile showing significantly higher scores.
- **Gender:** There was no significant difference in moral judgment scores between boys and girls, suggesting gender does not play a major role in moral judgment among these students.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the influences on moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha, focusing on educational board affiliation, socio-economic status, intelligence, and gender. The findings revealed significant differences in moral judgment scores based on educational board affiliation, socio-economic status, and intelligence, but not gender. The results indicated that students from CBSE schools exhibited higher moral judgment scores compared to their BSE counterparts. This aligns with Kumar and Sharma (2016), who found that the CBSE curriculum, with its emphasis on holistic and integrated learning, fosters more advanced moral reasoning. Singh (2017) also supports this, suggesting that educational boards with integrated learning approaches positively influence students' moral judgments.

Moreover, the study found that students from higher SES backgrounds had significantly higher moral judgment scores than those from lower SES backgrounds. This finding is

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consistent with Duncan et al. (2014) and Evans (2016), who highlighted that higher SES is associated with better access to resources, enhancing cognitive and moral development. Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2016) also found that children from higher SES backgrounds exhibit more sophisticated moral reasoning. Similarly, the analysis showed that students with higher intelligence levels demonstrated significantly higher moral judgment scores. This supports Kohlberg's (1981) theory that higher cognitive abilities are associated with more advanced stages of moral development. Moshman (2011) and Rest (1986) further corroborate this, indicating that intelligence influences the complexity of moral reasoning. Along with, the study found no significant differences in moral judgment scores between boys and girls. This contrasts with some previous research, such as Gilligan (1982) and Eisenberg (1986), who suggested that females might exhibit more empathetic and care-based moral reasoning. However, the findings align with Halpern (2012), who noted that gender differences in moral judgment might not always be significant.

Educational Implications

- **Curriculum Development:** Insights from the study can guide the design of curricula that better support students' moral and ethical development.
- **Tailored Interventions:** Understanding the impact of socio-economic status and intelligence on moral judgment can help in crafting targeted interventions for students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Teacher Training:** Educators can be trained to recognize and address the varying moral reasoning abilities of students, ensuring more effective teaching strategies.
- **Policy Making:** Policymakers can use the findings to create more equitable educational policies that address the needs of students from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Gender-Sensitive Practices:** The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive educational practices that accommodate diverse moral perspectives.
- **Holistic Development:** Emphasizing the importance of holistic and integrated learning approaches, particularly in CBSE schools, to foster better moral judgment.
- **Resource Allocation:** Schools can allocate resources more effectively to support students' moral and cognitive development, especially those from lower SES backgrounds.

- Parental Involvement: Encouraging greater parental involvement in the moral and ethical education of their children, particularly in lower SES families.

Conclusion

The study on moral judgment among Grade 9 students in Odisha reveals significant influences from educational board affiliation, socio-economic status, and intelligence. CBSE students demonstrated higher moral judgment levels compared to BSE students, highlighting the impact of different curricula and pedagogical approaches. Higher socio-economic status and intelligence were also associated with more advanced moral reasoning. However, gender did not significantly affect moral judgment. These findings suggest that educational interventions should consider these factors to enhance moral development among students.

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