

**SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS (GENDER, SCHOOL LOCATION, SCHOOL TYPE)
AND LEVEL OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS A CASE STUDY OF
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WESTERN UGANDA**

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Abstract

The study was to determine the socio-demographic factors (gender, school location, and school type) and moral development of students in selected secondary schools in Western Uganda. Sought further in this study were the following; (1) Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents and (2) Significant difference between gender, school location, school type and level of moral development (LMD) of students. The descriptive comparative and correlation design were utilized. Six hundred thirty six (636) senior two and three students were selected through purposive, systematic random sampling. A researcher designed instrument to determine the LMD was used. Frequency tables and t test analyzed the data. The majority of the students were females (51%), teenagers (99%) and secular (56%). LMD had a grand average of (1.648) indicating a heteronomous level of moral development. There was a significant difference between gender, school location, school type and level of moral development of students (males, 33.7152 and females, 44.3674; Urban, 33.2516 and Rural, 33.8354; Secular founded, 39.4870, and Faith founded, 48.4970)

It was concluded that, gender, school location, and school type differently affect moral development of students. It was recommended that gender, school location, and school type should be approached differently while advancing moral development of students.

Key words: Gender, School, location, Moral, Development

Introduction

Moral development is a change in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding standards of right and wrong (Durkheim, 1961). Bull (1973) uses the word morality to mean 'manners. Morality can also be referred to as generally accepted code of conduct in a society or pursuit of good life. Traditional character educators (Strauss, 2000) emphasize processes of internalization and self-control that would result in virtuous conduct and habit creation while cognitive developmentalists (Kohlberg, 1973) emphasize development of structures of moral development which underlie action choices. According to Johnstone (2008), morality means cultural values or codes of conduct or social mores. The question that guided this study was: Is there a significant difference between gender, school location, school type, and level of moral development of students?

Literature

Age and moral development

Rest, Davison & Robbins (1978) studied age trends in judging moral issues: A review of cross sectional, longitudinal and sequential studies of the Defining Issues Test. Cross-sectional data on several thousand high school, college, and graduate students from all regions of the United States show striking differences on the Defining Issues Test (DIT) when grouped by age-education level. Adults show stronger positive relationships with years of education than with chronological age. Longitudinal studies show that individuals over 2- and 4-year intervals generally show decreases in lower stages and increases in higher stages. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies suggest a general plateau in development in early adulthood and after formal education. Sequential studies indicate that generational effects do not account for age trends. Similarly, sampling biases and testing effects do not seem to be serious artifacts. The evidence supports Kohlberg's general model of moral development and the validity of the DIT as an assessment instrument.

Smentana (1981) studied preschool children's conceptions of moral and social rules at the University of Rochester. This study examined preschool

children's conceptions of moral and social-conventional rules. 44 children between the ages of 2-6 years and 4-9 years were divided into 2 groups of 21 and 23 children according to age. Children made judgments concerning the seriousness, rule contingency, rule relativism, and amount of deserved punishment for 10 moral and conventional preschool transgressions. Analyses of variance with age and sex as between-group factors and domain as the within-group factor indicated that, constant across both sexes and the ages studied, children evaluated moral transgressions as more serious offenses and as more deserving of punishment than conventional transgressions.

Guttmann (1984) studied cognitive morality and cheating behaviour in religious and secular school children in Israel, Haifa University. Sixth-grade pupils from secular public (n = 68) and religious public (n = 57) schools were compared with regard to cognitive morality and actual moral behavior. The results show that the religious subjects exhibited a higher level of moral development than the secular group and tended to resist temptation more on a paper and pencil test, but less on a test of actual cheating behavior. The results also show low correlation among the various measures of moral cognition and moral behavior. The disagreement presented above indicated that age and moral development controversy is not yet over. Most studies reviewed were foreign and those done in Uganda was from different contexts which gap this study filled.

Gender and moral development

Thomas (1986) studied estimating gender differences in the comprehension and preference of moral issues in the University of Minnesota, USA. The claim of a gender bias is considered on measures of moral development focusing on concepts of justice. Both meta-analyses and secondary analyses on 56 samples of over 6000 male and female subjects were used to estimate the magnitude of gender effects. Inconsistent with current expectations, the results indicated that overall, and at every age/educational level, females scored significantly higher than males.

Second, the magnitude of that difference was small, both in comparison with age/education effects and in relation to conventional interpretations of the measures employed.

(Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988) emphasized the gender differences thought to be associated with these two orientations. The morality of care emphasizes interconnectedness and presumably emerges to a greater degree in girls owing to their early connection in identity formation with their mothers. The morality of justice, on the other hand, is said to emerge within the context of coordinating the interactions of autonomous individuals. A moral development based on justice was proposed as more prevalent among boys because their attachment relations with the mother, and subsequent masculine identity formation entailed that boys separate from that relationship and individuate from the mother. For boys, this separation also heightens their awareness of the difference in power relations between themselves and the adult, and hence engenders an intense set of concerns over inequalities. Girls, however, because of their continued attachment to their mothers, are not as keenly aware of such inequalities, and are, hence, less concerned with fairness as an issue. Further research has suggested, however, that moral development does not follow the distinct gender lines which Gilligan originally reported. The preponderance of evidence is that both males and females develop based on justice and care. While this gender debate is unsettled, Gilligan's work has contributed to an increased awareness that care is an integral component of moral development. However, Kohlberg's theory remains relevant because whether boys reach the universal ethical principal level earlier than their counter parts, girls this autonomy level cannot be over emphasized. It is true that nature's role in shaping morality cannot be over emphasized. Naturally girls even tend to outgrow their counter parts-boys in both physical and mental capabilities. You would find girls and boys in the same age group but belonging to different levels of moral development. Therefore, nature and nurture are fundamental elements in moral development. Similar

findings documenting the different perspectives concerning the freedoms and entitlements of those in dominant and subordinate positions have been obtained in (Neff, 2001; Mensing, 2002; and Conry, 2004). The disagreement presented above indicated that gender and moral development controversy is not yet over. Most studies reviewed were foreign and those done in Uganda was from different contexts which gap this study filled.

School type and moral development

General school climate should foster fairness and respect for others. Moral development and character education are not limited to discrete academic subject areas, but are infused throughout school life. The school climate should be one characterized by mutual respect for all persons. School rules should be ones which protect student safety, and promote respect for others. Enforcement of school policies should be characterized by firmness, fairness, and flexibility. School authority should not be characterized by harshness or intolerance. Halpin and Craft (1963) calls the most ideal climate the 'open climate' as opposed to the closed climate which is characterized by apathy and unhappiness of all members.... Stern (1963) defines climate as the personality of the school and asserts that there is correlation between the personality of the individual and the personality of the institution. Wabwire (1991) which was a study on academic performance of girls in different school climates in Ankole region of Uganda, found out that there was no significant difference in their performance and concluded that school climate had no influence on performance. Acker (1984) reported that nowhere in the world have women participated equally with men in formal education. By comparison with their counterparts, they under participate; tend to under achieve in post primary education especially in science and technology.

Osire (1983), Nakiranda-Kawoya (1989) and Mpiangu (1990) found evidence to the effect that school climate contributed to the academic successes but differed with Bunjo-Musisi (1983) findings that school climate did not have a

significant effect on Geography performance. Lee and Lockheed (1990) in his study on the effects of single sex schooling on achievement and attitudes in Nigeria found that single sex schooling especially for girls emphasized control and discipline though co-educational schools had a more relaxed and friendlier atmosphere. Lee and Lockheed (1990) concluded that the uninterrupted effect of school on students in a boarding environment could be specifically favorable for cognitive development. Wahrman (1981) studied college students of various religions and found religion to be unrelated to moral development. Religion accounted for a mere 5% of the variance of DIT P-scores in a study by Dickinson and Gabriel (1982). Similarly, Radich (1982) studied religious youth and found no significant differences based upon religion (as cited in Rest, 1986). Some researchers have studied moral development as an outcome of theology. Childerston (1985) found students rated as fundamentalists were likely to score at stage 4, while students who did not fit the fundamentalist category were likely to score at stage 6. Copeland (1994) studied 242 Christian college students and found students with more fundamentalist theology scored lower on moral development, using the DIT, than Christians who were not categorized as fundamentalists. There was a slightly negative correlation ($r = -.13$) between scores on a measure of religious fundamentalism and principled reasoning (Rest, et al., 1999). Researchers have also investigated the religious motivation of individuals as an effect on moral development. Blizzard (1980) found a significant relationship between moral reasoning and internal, as opposed to external, sources of religious authority. Blizzard also found a relationship between P scores among Christians and moral abstract personal theology. In a study of 210 Christian college students, De Witt (1987) found small but significant differences in moral development based upon the subject's level of intrinsic religious motivation. Ang (1989) studied that 41 Bible college students and found intrinsic religious motivation was related to higher moral development more than extrinsic motivation. Ang (1989) concluded Bible

colleges should incorporate pedagogy that would facilitate development of intrinsic religious motivation.

Ernsberger (1977) and Ernsberger and Manaster (1981) used the Religious Orientation Scale (as cited Allport & Ross, 1997) to factor intrinsic/extrinsic orientation into the DIT scores. They found intrinsically-oriented church members were more likely to espouse moral development of their church's theology. Similar studies, however, did not result in similar observations (Brown & Annis, 1978; Waters, 1980). Ernsberger and Manaster's research has not been sufficiently validated. Findings relating intrinsic religious motivation and authority were consistent with Fowler's faith development model (Wallwork, 1980). According to Fowler, an individual's faith was deepened and strengthened through thoughtful reflection on religious beliefs and a willingness to investigate new religious ideas.

Many researchers found no relationship between religious identification and moral development. Warren (1992) did not find significant differences between students at Christian schools and public-school students. Bruggeman (1996) also found no relationship between attending public or private religious high schools in outcomes of P scores. Wahrman (1980) did not find a significant relationship between moral development and religiosity or amount of time one has been actively religious. No significant differences in moral reasoning were found in the religiosity of two-year nursing students (Aronovitz, 1984). Guldhammer (1982) found principled development increased across college, but the increase was unrelated to religious identification. Catholicism was found to be unrelated to moral development among college students (Wahrman, 1981). Researchers investigating religious beliefs also frequently found no relationship between beliefs and moral development. Washington (1999) did not find any relationship between religious beliefs and moral development or religious activities and moral development among 149 college students. In a study of 392 freshmen at a Christian college, Banks (1995) found no significant differences on DIT scores

between those classified as liberals and those classified as conservatives on religiosity measures. In a convenience sample of students at a large secular university, Hansen (1995) did not find any relationship between moral development and religiosity, regardless of the liberalism or conservatism of the individual's religious orientation. Wahrman (1981) found a weak 0.153 correlation between religious dogmatism and moral development. Longitudinal studies were infrequent in the literature, but researchers using such data often reported no relationships between religion and moral development. McNeel (1991) performed longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of students in a Christian college and found that students showed principled level maturation equivalent to national norms. No statistically significant differences were reported among students at Christian colleges and those students attending secular schools in a study combining cross-sectional and longitudinal data (Buier, Butman, Burwell & Van Wicklin, 1989).

However, some researchers found negative relationships between religion and DIT scores. Hoagland (1984) found conservative Christians used less principled development than liberals and nonreligious individuals, and conservative Christians were more likely to operate at conventional stages. Faqua (1983) reported Christian college students scored below national norms on the DIT. The lower scores were found both in science majors and religion majors. Being a science or a religion major was not significantly related to moral development. A difference between church members and nonmembers, with nonmembers scoring higher on the DIT, was found by McGeorge (1976). Clouse (1991) and Stoop (1979) found Christians generally scored at stage 4 (as cited in Rest, 1986). In another study by Nelson (1998), Bible college students showed very slight progress in moral development and remained in the conventional stages. Ernsberger and Manaster (1981) found negative relationships between religiosity and moral development, even after controlling for socio-economic factors (as cited in Rest, 1986). Positive findings relating religion and moral development were reported by some researchers. Positive studies involving students included Harris (1981), Friend (1991) and Nelson

(2004). Harris found biblical literacy and P scores were significantly related among high school students (cited in Rest, 1986). Friend found seminary students scored higher on the DIT than liberal arts undergraduate students. Nelson found biblical literacy, moral development, and academic development progressed together among Bible college students, but moral development was more related to biblical literacy than academic development.

Good and Cartwright (1998) found Bible college students showed moral development during their freshmen year yet reverted to lower-level thinking by their senior year. Good and Cartwright concluded that the senior students had learned to think at higher stages yet chose to ignore that moral philosophy in favor of conforming to the expectations of their religious community. Wilcox (1986) reported evidence that some people may demonstrate lower moral development because they fear being labeled as troublemakers or socially deviant. The immature yet principled thinker may find it difficult to advocate a principled life in a conventional world. Kuran (1997) has written about the common phenomenon of people misrepresenting their own beliefs in order to conform to social norms.

Overall, the literature available concerning moral development of Christians was quite contentious. As a result, Rest (1986) agreed with Kohlberg and concluded that religion was generally independent of moral development. Such a conclusion was in contrast with the work of Fowler who directly tied moral development to the development of faith. Fowler's definition of faith, however, was not faith in the common religious sense (God's providence) but rather faith in unproven ideas. The disagreement presented above indicated that school type and moral development controversy is not yet over. Most studies reviewed were foreign and those done in Uganda was from different contexts which gap this study filled.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between age, gender, school type and level of moral development of students in secondary schools in Western Uganda.

Methods

Using the descriptive survey design particularly the descriptive comparative and correlation designs data were collected. The descriptive correlation design was used to establish whether or not there is a significant relationship between the age, gender, school type and level of moral development of secondary school student. The sample size of 636 students was selected from the population using Slovin's formula. The sample size was selected utilizing purposive sampling technique which based on the following inclusion criteria to qualify for the study: (1) male or female students in any of the faith and secular and (2) students of S2 and S3 of the selected secondary schools. To determine demographic characteristics of the respondents' frequency distribution and percentages were used. The t test was used to establish whether there was a significant difference between age, gender, school type and level of moral development of students.

Findings and discussion

Objective: To determine whether there is a significant difference between the Social-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in terms of; Age, Gender, Type of school and moral development of students.

More than half of the student respondents were female (51%) as compared to (49%) of their male counterparts as shown in Table 1. Gender disparity in schools generally is actually an observation. The studies of Filmer and Pritchett (1999) showed that the enrolments in developing countries varied according to gender. Male enrolments were usually higher than female enrolments. Furthermore, Ferguson, (1991) in his study carried out in Kenya revealed that school attainment varied by gender and was emphasized by UNESCO (1993) and Ardayfio-Schandorf (1995) who asserted that while women are benefiting from the expansion of educational opportunities in the developed countries like USA, Canada, Finland and

France, cultural and economic barriers prevent women both in gaining access to formal education and in enjoying the same range of educational opportunities offered to the males, in most developing countries, like Uganda. The gender gap is an important issue to be addressed by policymakers. Thus, the Millennium Development Goals of education emphasize education for all as a right and not a priority regarding someone's gender. It is for this reason that 31.6% going to Universities in Uganda now are female. In terms of sex differences at age 13- and 17-years boys show 10% more heteronomy than girls (Bull, 1973).

Table 1A
Demographic Characteristics of the Students
n=636

Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	323	51
	Female	313	49
	Total	636	100
School location	Urban	172	49.9
	Rural	173	50.1
	Total		
School type	Private		48
	Public		52
	Total		100

Source: Field Data

This finding is also supported by Thomas (1986) studies estimating gender differences in the comprehension and preference of moral issues in the University of Minnesota, USA. The claim of a gender bias is considered on measures of moral judgment focusing on concepts of justice. Both meta-analyses and secondary analyses on 56 samples of over 6000 male and female subjects are used

to estimate the magnitude of gender effects. Inconsistent with current expectations, the results indicate that overall, and at every age/educational level, females score significantly higher than males.

*Student respondents were 15 and 16 years of age making (51%) and (49%) respectively. This means that the students are teenagers. These are good years to utilize to impart morals at this tender age. Bull (1973) in support argues that growth is the law of life, and there must be moral as well as physical and mental growth. Bull continues to say that heteronomy is strongest at 7 years and 9 years, when it dominates 53% and 54% of the responses respectively. At 11 years it has dropped to 42% then 13 years to 30%, 15 years to 21% and 12% at age 17. It is important to teach children moral values at a tender age. The Book of Proverbs attributed to Solomon says: **Teach children in a way that fits their needs, and even when they are old, they will not leave the right path (Proverbs: 22, 6).** Rest, Davison & Robbins (1978) studied age trends in judging moral issues: A review of cross sectional, longitudinal and sequential studies of the Defining Issues Test. Cross-sectional data on several thousand high school, college, and graduate students from all regions of the United States show striking differences on the Defining Issues Test (DIT) when grouped by age-education level. Adults show stronger positive relationships with years of education than with chronological age. Longitudinal studies show that individuals over 2- and 4-year intervals generally show decreases in lower stages and increases in higher stages. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies suggest a general plateau in development in early adulthood and after formal education.*

Majority of the students (56%) were from secular founded while (44%) belonged to faith founded schools. This means that the quality of education offered by secular founded schools in Uganda is good since it attracts more students. Bull (1973) is of the view that different situations inevitably produce different levels of heteronomy.

Table 2

Significant difference between gender and Level of Moral Development (LMD) of students in selected secondary schools

<i>er of students</i>	<i>arithmetic Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Decision on H₀</i>
Male	33.7	2.2	28.482	.000	significant effect	rejected
Female	44.4	6.6				

Source: Field Data

Note: Difference is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 2, arithmetic mean suggested that females morally developed faster than their counterparts males. The P-value was less than .01 ($P < .01$) indicating that there is a significant difference in the mean scores between males (33.7) and females (44.4) at 1 percent level of significance. However, the results indicate that the deviations are clustered around the mean for males than for females. This shows that females are not consistent in their development.

Table 3

*Significant difference between school type and Level of Moral Development (LMD)
of students in selected secondary schools*

<i>ype of school</i>	<i>ometric Mean</i>	<i></i>	<i>alue</i>	<i>value</i>	<i>terpretation</i>	<i>ion on H_o</i>
<i>r founded</i>	39.4870	2.8588	18.955	.000	cant effect	ed
<i>founded</i>	48.4970	5.4051				

Source: Field Data

Table 4

*Significant difference between the school location and Level of Moral
Development (LMD) of students in selected secondary schools*

<i>ool location</i>	<i>ometric Mean</i>	<i></i>	<i>alue</i>	<i>value</i>	<i>terpretation</i>	<i>ion on H_o</i>
<i>16</i>		1.7417	2.873	.004	cant effect	ed
<i>54</i>		1.8506				

Source: Field Data

This finding is in agreement with Lack (2009) that there's no one right way to approach moral development. The finding is supported by (Rest, Davison & Robbins, 1978; Smentana, 1981 and Guttman, 1984) who found that age was positively related to moral development. Also, the finding on gender was similar to that of Thomas, 1986; Gilligan, 1993; Neff, 2001; Mensing, 2002 and Conry, 2004). Interestingly, (Osire, 1983; Nakiranda-Kawoya, 1989 & Mpiangu, 1990 and Lee Lockheed, 1991) found evidence that school climate contributed to academic success but disagreed with (Bunjo-Musisi, 1983; Wahrman, 1981; Dickinson & Gabriel, 1982) findings. This may suggest that religion is independent of moral development, which is in agreement with the study findings.

Expressed linearly, ' $LMD = 6.057 + .694age + .207gender$.' Therefore, Moral development policies should emphasize age (.746) and gender (.148) in that order.

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