



## Moral Development of Grade IV Elementary School Students based on Kohlberg's Theory

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur tingkat perkembangan moral peserta didik kelas IV berdasarkan teori Kohlberg. Subjek penelitian ini terdiri atas salah satu siswa Sekolah Dasar berusia 11 tahun berjenis kelamin laki-laki. Penelitian menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak SD yang berusia 11 tahun secara umum termasuk dalam tahap pra konvensional. Berdasarkan hasil analisis data dapat diketahui bahwa anak usia 11 tahun masih berada pada tahap pra konvensional tingkat 1 tahap 1, yaitu cenderung ingin melakukan sesuatu bukan karena membutuhkan hasil melainkan karena takut hukuman. Hal ini sesuai dengan tahapan Teori Kohlberg yaitu pada tingkat Pra-konvensional tahap orientasi hukuman.

**Kata Kunci:** Moral, Peserta Didik Kelas IV, Teori Kohlberg

### Abstract

*This study aims to measure the level of moral development of grade IV students based on Kohlberg's theory. The subjects of this study consisted of a male student, range 11-year-old elementary school students. The research uses qualitative research methods. The results showed that elementary school children aged 11 years were generally included in the pre-conventional stage. Based on the results of data analysis, it can be seen that 11-year-old children are still at the pre-conventional stage 1, which tend to want to do something not because they need results but because they are afraid of punishment. This corresponds to the stage of Kohlberg's Theory, namely at the Pre-conventional level, the stage of punishment orientation.*

**Keywords:** Morals, Grade IV students, on Kohlberg's theory.

### Introduction

Character education in elementary schools aims to cultivate learners who understand correct moral and ethical values and can internalize them in their daily actions (Labudasari, 2018). Students are expected to be able to have good character as an implication of

character education. In addition, learners honed to have the ability to think critically and analytically, be able to consider the consequences of actions, as well as have a strong social awareness and responsibility towards the surrounding community, the ability

to solve problems and take the right decisions based on the right moral and ethical values.

Morality is a moral trait or the whole of principles and values related to good and bad (Wahidah & Maemonah, 2020). Morality refers to a person's ability to understand the difference between right and wrong, practice ethical values, and consider the consequences of their actions. The development of morality in elementary school-age learners is a complex and important process in children's lives.

At elementary school ages, children begin to explore and assimilate the moral values of their environment, such as family, peers, and school environment. On the other hand, children are also influenced by new experiences they experience outside the environment they are used to. The process of moral development in elementary school students can be influenced by several factors, namely the family environment, school environment, and direct experience (Wahidah & Maemonah, 2020).

The family has an important role in shaping children's values and morality. Children will model the behavior of parents and other family members and are encouraged to learn to distinguish between right and wrong. Next to the second is the school environment. School is an important social environment where children can learn to appreciate diversity and interact with people from different backgrounds. The third is hands-on experience. A child's direct experience can help shape their morality. Positive experiences such as cooperation and kindness, or negative experiences such as violence and discrimination will have an impact on the formation of children's morality.

The development of morality in elementary school children is an important foundation for the formation of children's character in later life. Therefore, the attention and active role of the family, school environment, and surrounding community are very important in shaping children's morality. Understanding the moral development of learners is very important because morality or ethics is an important aspect of human life (Marinda, 2023). Good morals can help students become good individuals, behave well, and be able to make the right decisions in different

situations. In the context of education, understanding the moral development of students is very important to design learning that is by the stage of moral development of students (Hasanah, 2019). In this case, teachers must pay attention to and understand the values held by learners and set a good example in every action and behavior.

According to observations made by researchers, she found that learners behave unethically. she may tend to engage in unethical behavior or violate social norms and values espoused by society. In addition, there is an inability to develop healthy interpersonal relationships. This resulted in him having difficulty in establishing healthy interpersonal relationships with others. Another thing is not caring about social responsibilities: Students may also be less concerned about their social responsibilities, such as keeping the environment clean or helping people in need.

Another result is a lack of empathy and sensitivity to the feelings of others. This can make them less concerned about the feelings and needs of others, and less likely to be selfish. In addition, poor academic performance. He tends to disrespect educational values, such as discipline, order, and hard work. To understand the moral development of students, teachers can use various efforts to explore the moral development of students to get a better understanding of the process of moral development based on Kohlberg's theory and have the skills to assess the stages of moral development of students.

## Method

The research conducted includes the type of qualitative research. The definition of qualitative research according to Moleong (2015: 6) states that qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others holistically through the description in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods.

Another opinion was expressed by Sugiyono (2016: 15) who stated that qualitative

research is research used to examine natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments), where researchers are the key instrument, sampling data sources is carried out purposively, and snowball, collection techniques by triangulation (combined).

In this study, researchers collected descriptive data obtained from data collection with a qualitative approach expressed in the form of words. Data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

This research was conducted to understand and explore the character of grade IV elementary school students according to Kohlberg's developmental theory. Based on the problems in this study, the research design used is descriptive qualitative. Yusuf (2015: 333) stated that in qualitative research data is presented in a descriptive form where research should be sourced from the data collection. This research is conducted to the fourth grade at SD negeri Gunung Agung, Kokap, Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta. It was held on April until June 2023.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

Data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. This research was conducted to better understand and explore the character of grade IV elementary school students according to Kohlberg's developmental theory. Kohlberg's theory of moral development identifies six stages of moral development divided into three levels, namely pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Each level and stage is defined by the characteristics of thinking, motivation, and moral action. In the context of grade IV elementary school students, they are usually at the pre-conventional level and are undergoing the second of six stages of moral development.

According to Kohlberg's theory, an 11-year-old whose morals are less favorable is likely to be at level 1: the stage of pre-conventional morality, or level 2: the stage of conventional morality. At

level 1 in the pre-conventional morality stage, stage 1 is oriented towards punishment and obedience. At this stage, the child tends to obey the rules only to avoid punishment or negative consequences that may arise from their actions. While in stage 2: orientation towards self-satisfaction. At this stage, the child tends to act to meet personal needs and obtain immediate benefits, without considering the applicable rules or the interests of others.

In the context of education, grade IV elementary school students who are at this stage can show behavior such as obeying the rules for fear of punishment or expecting rewards, and considering the interests of their friends in certain situations (Wahidah & Maemonah, 2020). They also begin to understand the importance of respecting each other and apologizing if they make mistakes.

### Discussion

The moral development of behavior has been studied by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg were two major figures in the study of moral development. Piaget was a developmental psychologist who studied how children understand morality and ethics through the stages of their cognitive development. He identified four stages of moral development, namely the legal stage of natural morality, the stage of reciprocal morality, the stage of authority morality, and the stage of universal morality (Hasanah, 2019). The stages of moral development, John Piaget introduced his theory of human moral development in the pre-moral phase (0 to 5 years), at which stage humans or children do not feel obliged to obey rules. The age of zero to five years is the golden age for the child's brain. At this age, the child's brain develops rapidly and easily accepts external stimuli. So, this period is known as the golden age of children (Rachman, 2011: 59).

The golden age is a time when children's learning paths about human characteristics, attitudes, intellectuals, emotions, and morals are formed. The better the quality of caregiving, the more and better the learning path formed by the brain (Rachman, 2011: 66). John Dewey also

introduced his theory of the pre-moral or pre-conventional phase which according to him is a phase in this level of human attitudes and behavior is based on many biological and social impulses, marked that the child is not yet aware of its connection with rules. Explained in the theory is that basically, humans have the same moral development, as in the early stages of life humans do not have a concept of life that reflects moral values. Education has a strategic role in this regard because, without a foundation of education, humans will be controlled by the drive of their biological needs alone.

Meanwhile, Kohlberg was a social psychologist who extended Piaget's theory of moral development through empirical research in adolescents and adults. Kohlberg identifies six stages of moral development consisting of three levels, namely the pre-conventional level, the conventional level, and the post-conventional level. Kohlberg also proposed that the moral development of individuals occurs through a process of solving moral problems and solving moral dilemmas. These two figures have made a great contribution to understanding moral development in humans. Kohlberg's theory (Hersh, R.H. 1977, in Hasanah, 2019) About moral development is a theory that proposes that humans go through three different levels of moral development, namely pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels. Each of these levels of moral development consists of two stages, each of which has specific features. In the book (Gibbs, t.t.). Kohlberg identified six stages, two stages occurring at three distinct levels-the pre-conventional, conventional, and the post-conventional.

### 1. Pre-conventional Level

The pre-conventional level is the stage in which a person views morality from a personal point of view and orientation based on punishment and reward. At this level the child recognizes rules and that good and bad begin to have meaning to him, but they are solely related to the reactions of others. Judgments about good and bad deeds are determined only by external factors. The purpose of moral judgment of actions is based only on the consequences of the

child's behavior. This level consists of two stages, namely:

Stage 1: punishment orientation and obedience to authority, where a person abides by the rules to avoid punishment. This stage is characterized by the thought that rules are made by authorities that cannot be challenged. Children should abide by these rules without exception. If violated, it will get consequences proportional to the number of violations it makes. Children are egocentric and fear of the consequences of their actions is the dominant feeling that accompanies this moral motivation.

Stage 2: reward orientation, in which one follows the rules for obtaining rewards.: punishment or reward, bitter or pleasant thing. What is striking is that these motives are external only and can undergo many changes. This stage is likened to the relationship of people in the market: exchange. The reciprocal relationship between people is a matter of "if you do something for me, then I will do something for you" but for the fulfillment of gratitude and a sense of justice.

### 2. Conventional Level

Kohlberg's research shows that usually (but not always) children begin to transition to this level between the ages of ten and thirteen. Here deeds begin to be judged based on general norms and obligations and authorities are upheld. This level is called by Kohlberg "conventional", because here the child begins to adjust (Latin: *convenire*) his judgments and behaviors to the expectations of others or the codes prevailing in his social group. Meeting the expectations of a family, group, or nation is regarded as something valuable in itself, regardless of its consequences or consequences. In his attitude, the child not only conforms to the expectations of certain people or to social order but also puts loyalty to him and actively supports and justifies the prevailing order. In short, children identify with their social group and its norms. This second level includes also two stages:

Stage 3: Adjustment to the group or orientation to be a "sweet child". Children tend to orient themselves to the wishes and expectations of family members or other groups (school here is

certainly important). Good manners are behaviors that are pleasant and helpful to others and approved by them. The child takes a stand: I am a "good boy-nice girl", meaning she is what parents, teachers, and so on expect me to be. He wants to behave "reasonably", meaning according to prevailing norms. If he deviates from the norms of his group, he feels shame and guilt. In this case, for the first time, the child begins to notice the importance of the intention of the deed. Deeds are good, as long as they mean good. For example, when he helped his in the kitchen by washing dishes, there was a broken glass. In the past, the act was considered morally bad morally, because it could bring punishment. In the third stage, the deed is considered good, because behind it there is a good intention.

Stage 4: Law and order orientation. The notion of the "group" with which the child should fit here is extended: from familiar groups (that is, people known to the child personally) to more abstract groups, such as ethnicity, country, and religion. Emphasis is exerted on fixed rules, authority and the defense of social order. Good behavior is to do one's duty, respect authority, and maintain the prevailing social order for the sake of order itself. People who violate traditional rules or deviate from social order are guilty.

### 3. Post-conventional Level

Kohlberg's third level is also called the "autonomous level" or "principled level". At this level, moral life is seen as the acceptance of personal responsibility based on principles espoused inwardly. The norms found in society do not by themselves apply but must be judged based on the blossoming principles of personal freedom. Young people begin to realize that their group is not always right. Being a member of a group does not avoid that sometimes he has to dare to take his stance. This third level also has two stages:

Stage 5: Legalistic social-contract orientation. Here is realized the relativism of personal values and opinions and the need for efforts to reach a consensus. In addition to what is agreed by democratic means, good and bad depend on personal values and opinions. The legal aspect

is emphasized, but it is particularly concerned with the possibility of changing the law, provided that it is for social purposes (in contrast to the rigid view of law and order in stage 4). In addition to the legal sphere, free consent and agreements are binding elements for obligations. A promise must also be kept if it develops into a disadvantage because it comes from free consent.

Stage 6: Orientation of universal ethical principles. Here people organize their behavior and moral judgments based on personal conscience. What is striking is that ethical principles and conscience apply universally. Basically, these principles concern justice, willingness to help one another, equality of human rights, and respect for human dignity as a person. People who violate these principles of conscience will experience deep remorse. He condemned himself for not following his own moral convictions. According to Kohlberg, his research has shown that few people reach this sixth stage. Kohlberg proposed that not everyone goes through all these levels of moral development and that a person's level of moral development can be influenced by the environment, life experiences, and social influences.

This research was conducted in grade IV of SD Negeri Gunung Agung in Kulon Progo from April to June 2023. In this study, the research subject was one of the grade IV students who experienced a tendency to emotions that were not good so the researcher observed during learning and interviewed at break time. In addition, researchers also interviewed informants, namely PJOK teachers and PAI teachers also their parents. Researchers obtain information using interview and observation techniques. Interviews were conducted with subjects and informants in the form of the following questions:

1. What do you think about swearing at friends and causing a mess? Why did you do that?
2. What do you think about not going to school just because it's raining? Do you think there are other ways to deal with the situation?

3. When you say rudely to the teachers, what do you expect to happen? What can you do if there is a difference of opinion with the teacher?

4. How do you feel when you are told to do an assignment by the teacher and you argue with it? Why do you feel that way? What can you do if you don't agree with the task?

Based on the results of interviews given to respondents, the respondents' answers can be analyzed as follows: The subject of the study (respondent) has a moral development like what Kohlberg's theory suggests, that he belongs to stage 1. This assessment is based on what the respondent said about the motive for his actions when he stated that he was only reciprocating the actions of friends. He promised not to repeat it. So that in subsequent observations, respondents corrected their attitudes for fear of punishment received. It's not that he consciously wants to improve himself.

Next, the question of why respondents did not go to school when it rained. He stated that the road was difficult. But he promised to be more enthusiastic about school in the future. In the next observation, he would still go to school even though it was raining, not because he wanted to be smart or because of other things, but he considered that he had to go to school for fear of being punished in the form of not being given grades to cause not to move up the grade. This indicates that he complied solely because he wanted to avoid corporal punishment or damage to rights.

Next, the question of why respondents gave answers to the question of why he said more politely in class when there was a teacher but said less politely with friends when playing. Not because they want to improve themselves or because of something else, but because they think that they have to go to school for fear of being punished: obey simply because they want to obey and avoid punishment or damage to rights. The respondent's answer showed that he had a law-abiding motive for fear of being punished. The respondent answered the question of why he started working on the task on command. Not because they want to improve themselves or because of something else, but because they think that they have to go to school for fear of being punished: obey simply because

they want to obey and avoid punishment or damage to rights. The respondent's answer showed that he had a law-abiding motive for fear of being punished.

Based on the results of the analysis of the answers put forward to moral questions answered by respondents, in general, it turns out that the moral development of respondents who are at the age of 11 years is still at the pre-conventional level. The reason they say to do or not do something, in line with Kohlberg (Whelan & Duska), where at this pre-conventional level, if a child hears that something is good or bad, the image that exists in him is very different from that of adults. Children at this level have a very narrow view of society. Action is judged only in terms of possible consequences. Some of these consequences come from nature, but some come from people (society). Children are small, weak, and dependent on others from society for pleasure and/or pain.

Thus psychologically, the child tends to see himself as inferior to authority and submissive to those who hold authority (for the child they are concretely identified as having the power to impose sanctions in controlling his actions) because they are instruments of pleasure and pain in his life.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis using Kohlberg's theory of moral development, 11-year-olds are still at the pre-conventional stage 1 and tend to want to do something for fear of punishment. This is evidenced by the results of interviews that strengthen the evidence that he fears punishment.

In the results of this simple study, respondents aged 11 years tend to have only entered level 1 stage 1, that is punishment orientation and obedience to authority, where a person abides by the rules to avoid punishment. This stage is characterized by the thought that rules are made by authorities that cannot be challenged. He should abide by these rules without exception. If violated, it will get consequences proportional to the number of violations it makes. Children are egocentric and fear of the consequences of their actions is the

dominant feeling that accompanies this moral motivation. Although there may be exceptions in other cases, the age of 11-12 may be at a lower or higher level of moral development.

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