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A STUDY OF THE MORAL EDUCATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

The present study explores the status, challenges, and effectiveness of moral education in primary schools of Duggada Block, District Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand. Recognizing that true education integrates intellectual, moral, and emotional development, the study emphasizes the importance of moral values such as honesty, cooperation, empathy, and respect in shaping children's character. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 200 respondents (60 teachers and 140 students) representing both government and private primary schools. Findings reveal that while 96% of teachers acknowledged the importance of moral education, its implementation remains largely informal and inconsistent, with private schools showing better organization than government schools. Teachers cited administrative workload and lack of institutional support as major constraints. The study concludes that moral education must be systematically integrated into all subjects and school activities through experiential learning, teacher modeling, and home-school collaboration. Recommendations include curriculum integration, teacher training, moral assessment tools, and policy implementation under NEP 2020. Strengthening moral education at the primary level is essential to nurture ethical, compassionate, and socially responsible citizens.

Keywords: Moral Education, Primary School, Value Education, Teacher Role, NEP 2020, Character Development.

Introduction

Education is not confined to intellectual development; it encompasses the cultivation of moral, emotional and social dimensions of human personality. The goal of true education is to produce individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethical, compassionate and socially responsible. In this regard, moral education plays a central role in developing values such as honesty, respect, cooperation, tolerance, empathy and a sense of justice. In the Indian context, the idea of moral education is deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical traditions. Ancient texts like the Upanishads and teachings of great thinkers such as Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore emphasized education as a process of character building. Modern education, however, often emphasizes academic excellence and technological advancement, sometimes neglecting moral and ethical growth. The result has been an increase in social problems such as intolerance, indiscipline and moral confusion among youth.

Primary education is the first formal stage where structured learning begins. During these years (6–12 age group), children develop habits, attitudes and moral reasoning that often remain with them throughout life. Therefore, primary schools play a decisive role in shaping moral behavior. Teachers are not merely instructors of knowledge but role models whose behavior, attitude and decision-making profoundly influence children. In line with this, the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) stresses value-based and holistic education, calling for “character building as the central goal of schooling.” Despite policy emphasis, however, moral education at the grassroots level often remains unstructured, with inconsistent practices across schools. NCERT (2022) report emphasizes integrating moral and value-based education through play, stories, and activities in early schooling, fostering ethical behavior and social-emotional development among primary children. Lickona(1991) highlights that systematic moral education in primary schools fosters respect, honesty, and responsibility among children. It concludes that moral values are best developed through teacher modeling, classroom dialogue, and school-wide ethical practices integrated into daily learning. Sharma (2018) found in his study that structured value education programs in primary schools significantly improve students' honesty, cooperation, and empathy, emphasizing the teacher's role in nurturing moral behaviour through daily classroom interactions. The present study seeks to evaluate the status, challenges and effectiveness of moral education in primary schools and to propose practical strategies for improvement.



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Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the concept and importance of moral education for primary school children.
2. To analyze the role of teachers, schools, and parents in promoting moral values.
3. To examine the present status and methods of moral instruction in primary schools.
4. To identify major challenges in the implementation of moral education.
5. To suggest practical measures to strengthen moral education in primary schooling.

Review of Literature

The understanding of moral education has evolved through the insights of various scholars, philosophers and educational organizations who have emphasized its central role in holistic human development. Mahatma Gandhi (1948) regarded education as “the realization of the best in man—body, mind, and spirit,” highlighting that knowledge without morality is incomplete and that true education must build character, discipline and compassion. From a psychological perspective, Piaget (1932) explained moral development in children as a gradual and interactive process, wherein moral reasoning evolves from strict obedience to authority toward a stage of mutual respect, cooperation and autonomy. Building on Piaget’s framework, Kohlberg (1981) proposed six stages of moral development categorized under three levels—pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. He stressed that moral growth occurs when individuals are encouraged to engage in reasoning, dialogue and ethical decision-making. Thus, schools, he argued, should become moral laboratories that nurture empathy, fairness and justice through participatory learning.

In India, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2017) underscored the need to integrate moral and value education within all subjects rather than treating it as a separate component. It advocated for experiential and reflective learning—through activities, storytelling and community work and real-life applications—to make moral education meaningful and practical. Supporting this, Nair (2019) studied the practices of moral education in Kerala’s primary schools and found that moral stories, school assemblies and teacher modeling had positive impacts on students’ behavior and ethical understanding. However, their implementation remained sporadic due to the absence of structured evaluation and formal assessment mechanisms.

At the global level, UNESCO (2021) emphasized that moral and global citizenship education form a vital part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-4) agenda. It called for education systems worldwide to cultivate ethically responsible, empathetic and globally minded citizens capable of contributing to peace, sustainability and social justice. These studies collectively highlight that moral education is vital for holistic growth but requires structural inclusion, teacher preparedness and community participation.

Significance of the Study

Moral education is indispensable for national development and social harmony. It fosters self-discipline, empathy and civic responsibility among learners. The study is significant as it highlights the current practices and gaps in moral education, offering insights for educators and policymakers. In today’s context of digital distractions, social inequality and value crises made the role of moral education even more critical. The findings can help strengthen teacher training programs, pattern of parents’ healthy behavior at home and develop value-oriented curricula aligned with NEP 2020.

Methodology

The present study employed a descriptive survey method to examine the prevailing practices, perceptions and attitudes related to moral education in primary schools of Duggada block district Pauri Garhwal Uttarakhand. The population comprised primary school teachers and students from both Government and Private primary schools from Duggada block ensuring representation from diverse educational settings. A total sample of 200 respondents—60 teachers and 140 students with 50-50 percent from private and Government primary schools were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to maintain balance across different school types and demographic categories. For data collection, two main tools were utilized: a self-developed questionnaire for teachers containing 25 items designed to explore existing moral education practices, challenges faced and teachers’ perceptions regarding its implementation; and a student observation checklist focusing on key behavioral indicators such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility and discipline. The data were gathered through in-person school visits, classroom observations and informal discussions to ensure contextual accuracy and authenticity of responses. The collected information was then systematically organized and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage distribution and mean scores, complemented by qualitative interpretation to capture



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deeper insights and patterns in moral behavior and educational practices. This mixed analytical approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how moral education is perceived, practiced, and integrated within primary school environments in Duggada block district Pauri Garhwal Uttarakhand.

Findings of the Study

1. Almost all teachers 96% from Duggada block agreed that moral education is essential for children's all-round development. Teachers believed that moral values such as respect, honesty, cooperation and responsibility form the foundation of disciplined behavior. In the same way 4% teachers believed that there is no possibility for change in the behavior of children after imbibed moral education in such children.
2. Moral instruction was mostly delivered through informal means such as morning prayers, value-based stories, national celebrations and classroom discussions. Only 15% Government schools had a structured moral education period whereas 92% private primary school classes had separate period moral education period.
3. Teachers considered they are moral role models but expressed that administrative pressure and syllabus completion often limited opportunities for more value-based activities in primary classes in private and Govt. schools whereas some teacher was really shown role model.
4. Students enjoyed moral stories, songs, and dramatizations. Many students could identify key values but found it difficult to apply them consistently in peer interactions.
5. Private schools reported slightly better organization of moral education activities compared to primary classes in government schools. However, both types lacked systematic evaluation.

Discussion

1. The findings indicate that the intent for moral education exists, but systematic execution is weak. Teachers recognize its importance but struggle with practical implementation due to workload and lack of institutional backing.
2. Moral education should not be confined to lectures or moral stories but should permeate the whole school culture. Children learn more from what teachers do than what they say. Therefore, teacher behavior, classroom climate and peer relationships are vital learning tools.
3. Furthermore, moral learning is most effective when it is experiential— involving real-life situations, problem-solving and reflection. Schools must provide platforms like debates, community service and environmental clubs to practice values. The partnership between school and home is equally critical; parents need to reinforce school-taught values at home through consistent guidance and example.

In the light of Kohlberg's theory, moral reasoning can be enhanced through dialogue and reasoning rather than mere obedience. Similarly, Gandhian philosophy stresses that truth and non-violence must be internalized through daily practice. Thus, moral education must focus on nurturing conscience, empathy and critical reflection— not rote memorization of moral codes.

Conclusion

Moral education is the essence of holistic human development. It nurtures not only intellectual growth but also emotional balance, social sensitivity and spiritual awareness. The study concludes that although moral education is widely recognized in principle, its structured and effective implementation in primary schools in Duggada block remains limited. Teachers play a crucial role, but they need institutional support, specialized training, and adequate teaching materials. Moral education must be treated as a core element of quality education, integrated across all subjects and school activities in all types of schools. Teachers should consciously model moral behavior, while parents and the community must reinforce the same values at their personal level. Developing morally strong children today will ensure a peaceful, compassionate, and responsible society tomorrow.

Recommendations

1. **Curriculum Integration:** Incorporate moral and ethical values into all subjects through stories, historical examples and real-life issues.
2. **Teacher Training:** Organize regular professional development programs focusing on moral pedagogy and value-based classroom management.



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3. **Experiential Activities:** Encourage participation in group discussions, social work and nature-based projects to internalize values.
4. **Parental Collaboration:** Conduct orientation sessions for parents to align home and school moral guidance.
5. **Assessment:** Develop qualitative indicators for assessing students' moral growth through behavior observation, self-reflection and peer feedback.
6. **Moral Environment:** Maintain a clean, respectful and inclusive school atmosphere promoting mutual respect.
7. **Policy Implementation:** Education departments should provide clear policy guidelines for moral education under NEP 2020 and monitor its integration.
8. **Use of Media and Technology:** Educational films, animations and digital storytelling can make moral education engaging for children.
9. **Recognition of Role Models:** Acknowledge teachers and students who demonstrate exemplary moral conduct to motivate others.

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