

Abstract

The study aims to investigate into the ways kindergarteners deal with moral problems, and to examine the underlying psychological factors of their moral judgment and moral dispositions. Thus, it is hoped that insights can be shed on the moral development of young children.

The study undertakes a grounded theory approach towards the problem under investigation. A group of 18 (half from each gender) kindergarteners from K1 to K3 classes are to be interviewed individually and observed among their classmates. Data collected are then coded, categorized and theorized in order to (i) give an in-depth description of the moral responses of kindergarteners and (ii) reach for an account of the important psychological factors contributing to pro-social moral judgments and behaviors of kindergarteners.

It is observed that all kindergarteners are capable of understanding and responding to moral problems. Their ways of coping and reasoning exhibit a rich complexity of choices. Moreover, some of them show flexible deliberations in respond to different moral circumstances.

Grounded in the responses given and the behaviors exhibited by the children, two prototypes are demarcated for comparison's sake—those with more pro-social dispositions exhibited and those with less. It is found from the comparison that linguistic competence, peer relationship, social competence, role-taking and self-control are among the most distinguishing factors of moral judgment and dispositions of kindergarteners. In addition to the above results, age and gender differences are also observed in choices of moral judgment and behavior; for instance, older children show better grasp of moral language as well as general well-being in their handling of moral problems. Nonetheless, this observation is in need of further substantiation in order to become a conclusive argument on the moral development of young children.

In conclusion, educational implications are drawn from the discussions and suggestions for moral upbringing of young children are offered for the school, the teacher and the parent in the hope of cultivating the young's moral awareness, responsiveness and deliberation.

Keywords: moral judgment, moral development, moral education, kindergartener, grounded theory