

Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies for Moral Education

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i11/23848> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i11/23848

Published Date: 27 November 2024

Abstract

The strategic research of moral education plays an important role in the field of education. Exploring the effectiveness of moral education is a major topic for improving and promoting educational strategies. This study examines the effectiveness of moral education through focus groups. This study used purposive sampling to conduct focus group interviews with 14 participants in a public university located in Selangor, Malaysia, which were recorded using an electronic audio recording device and transcribed verbatim upon completion, and the textual content was analysed and categorised using thematic coding. Finally, the data are analyzed and interpreted through the theoretical framework of constructionism. Through the results of this study, it is found that the strategy of enhancing life reality and experiential learning, and using teachers as facilitators to conduct moral education is more effective, it is effective for students to participate in moral education in life while seeking strategic education courses. This study may provide a theoretical basis for learning theory and moral development theory, and help policy designers in curriculum design. In general, based on the teaching effectiveness discussed in this study, it will help the innovation of curriculum and teaching methods, and in the future, we encourage more research to adopt the constructivist perspective for analysis.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Teaching Strategies, Moral Education

Introduction

As modern education pays more and more attention to teaching and strategy, moral education also begins to emphasize the importance of strategy application under the influence of other science education (Asif et al., 2020). In today's educational landscape, moral education is seen as a critical component of fostering not just academic success, but also the overall character development of students. This has led to the adoption of various teaching strategies that aim to engage students in ethical thinking and moral decision-making. Character education programs, which emphasize the teaching of core values like respect, responsibility, and fairness, have become widely implemented in schools (Biesta, 2021). These

programs often involve purposeful instruction, as well as activities that encourage students to practice these values in real-life situations.

The effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on factors such as the educational environment, the commitment of educators, and the cultural context in which they are applied. As schools continue to face challenges such as bullying, social inequality (Ribeiro et al., 2021), and the influence of digital media, the need for effective moral education strategies remains pressing. Educators are increasingly seeking to create programs that are not only effective in promoting ethical behavior but also adaptable to the diverse needs of students in a globalized world (Andreotti, 2011; Narayanti et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

Despite the widespread adoption of ethical education programs, there is still debate about the most effective strategies for teaching moral values. Empirical studies have had mixed results, with some methods being more successful in some settings than others (Thambu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). This variability underscores the need for continued research into the effectiveness of different pedagogical strategies, especially as societies become more diverse and face new ethical challenges. For educators seeking to prepare students for the complexities of modern life (Lukovitskaya, 2020), understanding which approaches best promote ethical development is critical.

In addition, the teaching strategies of moral education have long been difficult to be tested effectively in the complex cultural context (Watson, 2022). It is mainly reflected in the application of teaching strategies in diverse cultures, which have different performances in different regions (Shang et al., 2021). Effective ethical strategies are difficult to define due to the interference of many different factors.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the most effective teaching strategies to promote students' moral development in different educational settings?
- 2) How do cultural and social contexts influence the effectiveness of different ethical education strategies in cultivating ethical behavior and decision making?
- 3) What role do pedagogical approaches play in the successful implementation of moral education programs in schools?

Literature Review

Moral Education

The goal of moral education is to develop virtues of character. Moral character consists of three elements: moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action (Cohen & Morse, 2014). According to this theory, Astuti claimed that moral behavior alone is insufficient and that understanding and feeling at ease are necessary in order to determine whether or not a behavior is moral (Astuti, 2024). The moral system contains two prescriptive which including proscriptive regulations depends on the behavioral activity and inhibition regulatory systems (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013). These guidelines influence our actions, thoughts, and feelings. Moral motivations manifest in different forms, including personal ones (such as self-discipline and hard work), interpersonal ones (such as avoiding harm and offering assistance),

and those that operate at the group or collective level (such as maintaining social order and promoting social justice) (Rai & Fiske, 2011).

Research on moral education mostly concentrate on moral principles (Simmons, 2020), innovative teaching methods (Amanov, 2023), experience, and problem-solving techniques (Khan, 2023). Studies show that moral principles, creative teaching methods, experience, and problem-solving techniques can all help to improve the efficacy of moral education initiatives in classrooms. According to Ribeiro et al. (2021), moral education textbooks built on moral principles have the power to create decent citizens and bolster Malaysia's multiethnic population's sense of national cohesion. In order to cultivate positive student morale in Taiwan, Joensuu-Salo (2021), suggested that parents be involved in moral education through experience sharing. Moral education textbooks in China are used to teach morality, and they contain material that challenges students' critical thinking and helps them answer moral conundrums based on actual situations (Lourie et al., 2021).

Past Studies of Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies for Moral Education

Past research on the effectiveness of teaching strategies in moral education has highlighted the critical role that teaching methods play in shaping students' moral reasoning and moral behavior. Several studies have examined the impact of various teaching methods, such as direct teaching, discussion-based approaches, and experiential learning, on moral development (Pegu, 2021). For example, Berkowitz and Bier (2005), conducted a comprehensive review of character education programs and found that interactive and student-centered approaches (such as cooperative learning and service learning) are more effective in promoting moral development than didactic teaching. These approaches encourage students to actively engage with ethical dilemmas and promote a deeper understanding and internalization of ethical principles.

Similarly, a study by Lapsley (2021), highlights the importance of integrating moral education into the broader curriculum through approaches such as narrative ethics and moral discourse. Their findings suggest that when moral education is integrated into subjects such as history and literature, it helps students contextualize moral concepts, making them more relevant and applicable to their lives. This integration not only enhances students' moral reasoning skills, it also supports the development of a moral identity, which is essential for consistent ethical behavior (Griffin et al., 2020). In addition, research by Narvaez (2023) shows that discussion strategies that encourage students to express their ideas and participate in debates about moral issues can significantly improve their moral reasoning skills. These interactive discussions provide a platform for students to explore different perspectives, challenge their assumptions, and develop a more nuanced understanding of ethical concepts, which argue that these strategies are particularly effective in cultivating critical thinking and empathy, which are key components of moral development.

Strategy Changes of the Moral Education Effectiveness

Environments such as the home, school, and community can foster moral education. This inevitably makes it difficult for people to believe in the moral education of purpose. For example, many Chinese families pay little attention to moral education courses taught in schools or professional institutions (Asif et al., 2020). The goals of moral education in schools are to develop morals, decent mindsets, and well-behaved children. However, the

effectiveness of moral education using specific educational methods is still controversial. Technology is developing quickly, and this has both beneficial and harmful effects. Technological advancements have the potential to improve people's efficiency in their daily lives, but they can also have the opposite effect, altering people's personalities and lifestyles (Zulkifley et al., 2020). Schools must undoubtedly adapt and alter in order to keep up with the ongoing developments in this area. Education is significantly impacted by the digitalization of daily life. Even with the most recent advancements in digital tools and instructional software, schools and teachers continue to struggle with how to incorporate technology into curricula and better prepare children for the future. The idea of digital literacy aids in the comprehension and fulfillment of the needs of schools and students in a digital society by researchers, educators, and education officials (Pangrazio et al., 2020). In a similar vein, educational institutions are attempting to incorporate technology into moral instruction. Reviving moral education has been the focus of a lot of effort over the past ten years in an attempt to slow down the rise in criminal and deviant behavior that characterizes contemporary society (Yuldoshev, 2023). Numerous studies demonstrate that bullying happens in schools and that students struggle with academic dishonesty, as seen by the many instances of plagiarism and cheating in the academic community (Schwitzgebel et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks help develop research questions and theory-based research methods. First, constructivist theory can be used to explore how teaching methods that encourage active participation and reflection (e.g., group discussions, case studies) can contribute to improving the effectiveness of moral education programs. The theory supports the idea that when students are actively involved in constructing their moral understanding, they are more likely to internalize those values. This confirms the necessity of the effectiveness of moral education. In addition, social learning theory helps to explain how teachers' attitudes and behaviors affect students' moral development. This suggests that when teachers model ethical behaviors and create a positive, supportive classroom environment, students are more likely to adopt those behaviors on their own. This theory can be used to analyze the impact of the teacher's role in moral education beyond the formal strategies used in the classroom. It also develops the discussion of teaching methods in research question 3.

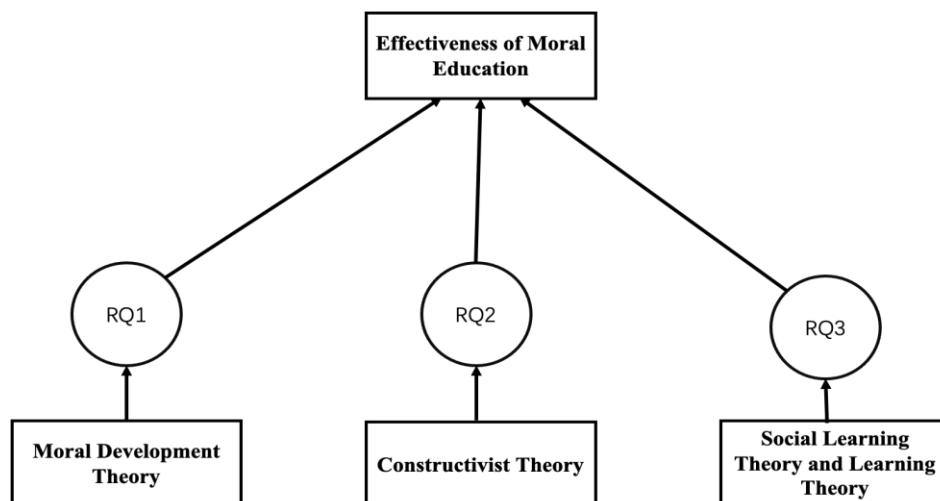


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Moral Development Theory

According to Kant (Lewin, 2021), moral actions are solely those performed out of a sense of duty. These actions must be carried out, regardless of the situation or the consequences for oneself or others, because they are intrinsically required. In contrast, actions taken in pursuit of personal goals or driven by desire or inclination hold no moral significance or value. An act can only be considered truly moral, and thus motivated by duty, when it contradicts one's own inclinations. Programs for stage-appropriate moral education could be developed using the study's findings and Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Esmaeili et al., 2021). While older students in the conventional or post-conventional phases could participate in more intricate ethical discussions and challenges, younger pupils in the pre-conventional stage, for instance, might benefit from more tangible instances of good and wrong (Uncu, 2021). This will enable educational institutions to customize moral education curricula to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Kohlberg identified six structural stages of moral reasoning, based on the formal nature of thinking about hypothetical moral dilemmas—situations that involve conflicting values and can be resolved in multiple ways. These stages are organized into three levels, each containing two stages. Progressing through these stages is believed to involve a gradual separation of moral principles from "prudential" considerations and social norms. In outlining these stages, we will adhere to the more well-known "ideal type" descriptions that Kohlberg provided in his earlier work (Kohlberg, 1969). The later framework, which uses the concept of "sociomoral perspective" (Colby et al., 2022), attempts to eliminate any traces of specific moral content from the stage descriptions. This approach has the practical effect (questionable at best) of eliminating the appearance of regressions at the more advanced stages of moral development, but it also makes achieving the higher stages more challenging.

Constructivist Theory

According to constructivist theory, which holds that students actively create their own understanding and knowledge via experiences, curriculum that promotes moral reasoning activities could be created using the study's results (Mohammed & Kinyó, 2020). Schools could create programs that let students investigate moral questions via dialogue, introspection, and practical exercises, helping them to build their own moral frameworks in a nurturing setting.

Constructivist teaching and teacher education have clearly gained prominence. Discussions on these subjects dominate academic and professional journals across various disciplines. Additionally, constructivist methods are evident in national and state policy documents aimed at shaping the curriculum and teaching methods in American schools, as well as in state and local policies. For instance, the Tucson, Arizona Unified School District is considering requiring early elementary teachers to discard their mathematics textbooks and instead teach math primarily through a constructivist approach using manipulatives.

Social Learning Theory and Learning Theory

According to social learning theory, which places an emphasis on imitation and observational learning, teacher preparation programs may benefit from the study's findings. Teachers can be instructed to model moral behavior and employ instructional practices that support students' moral development by knowing which strategies work best (Watson, 2022). According to this view, instructors are essential to moral education because of their contacts with students and their personal behavior in addition to their direct instruction.

On the other hand, identification in learning process is another important composition for the explanation of this theory. Recognition learning is often given significant importance among the various processes involved in socialization, regardless of whether explanatory theories prioritize psychological or sociological factors (Wang, 2024). Several factors contribute to this emphasis. Informal observation clearly shows that the complex behaviors exhibited by members of society are largely acquired with minimal or no direct instruction, simply through observing the behavior patterns demonstrated by various socialization agents. This is especially the case for behaviors that lack a reliable eliciting stimulus, other than the cues provided by others' responses.

Methodology

Research Design

This study applies qualitative research design using case study approach to explore the effectiveness of moral education teaching strategies. Multiple case studies are used to investigate the experiences of different roles in teaching in teaching scenarios. The benefit of multiple case research is found in the ability to conduct cross-case analysis. This research design moves beyond the examination of a single case, focusing instead on the contrasts and commonalities between cases. Therefore, it involves more than simply performing additional case studies. Instead, it represents an advancement in formulating a theory about the elements influencing both the differences and similarities among cases (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2021).

The primary approach is through focus groups, chosen for their ability to generate rich, detailed data and effectively capture the nuanced perspectives of participants within limited time and budget. Focus groups are particularly valuable in qualitative research because they provide a platform for interaction between participants, allowing for the emergence of different perspectives and greater insight into the research topic.

Sampling Method and Informers

The study involved purposive sampling to select participants who had relevant professional knowledge and experience in moral education, and they need to personally participate in moral education. Therefore, the purpose sampling method was adopted in this study to recruit participants in focus groups. To minimize observer bias and enhance the credibility of the findings, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to participant recruitment, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Sampling Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
People who can communicate in English	People in other languages
Get involved in education (teachers, administrators, students)	Not involved in education
Attended moral education classes/lectures	Never participated in a moral education class

A total of 14 participants were selected to ensure a rich and comprehensive discussion. The participants were divided into three focus groups to encourage interaction and to allow for a variety of perspectives to be explored. The first group consisted of three teachers and one administrator, providing insights from the perspective of those who design and deliver moral education. The second group included four university students, offering a viewpoint from those who have experienced moral education firsthand. The third group was a mixed group, comprising three teachers and three students, to facilitate a dialogue between those who teach and those who learn. One of the reasons for this is so that different levels of sources can include discussion content on different topics and get answers from different groups of people under the same topic, which is more conducive to data. In addition, conducting multiple rounds of focus group discussions can facilitate questioning and further exploration of underlying topics. The data being analyzed is used in the next phase for further discussion.

Research Location

This study was conducted at a public university in Selangor, Malaysia, and the research carried out in the region was approved by the ethics Committee of the region. The university's population structure and students' cultural background are relatively rich, and the acceptance of moral education is relatively high, so it is suitable for this research.

Pre-Test and Pilot Test

In order to ensure the high reliability and validity of the data collected in this study, pre-test and pre-test were conducted before the formal study. In qualitative research, informants in a pre-test are persons or a small group of participants who are engaged in the initial evaluation of research instruments, processes, or interventions prior to the primary study (Gani et al., 2020). In the pre-test stage of this study, the researcher invited experts from the research institution to evaluate the data collection process and the question setting of the focus group, and revised the design of the session according to the opinions of experts and peer review. During the pilot test, informants are typically selected based on criteria similar to those used in the main study. According to the design of the focus group session, the researcher

simulated the discussion of the focus group and pre-considered the problems that might arise in it.

Data Collection Process

After identifying the callers, this study selected a researcher as moderator and another researcher as recorder, using electronic recording devices to make audio recordings and mark some key statements. The moderator announces the start of the focus group after making sure all the informants are present. Each member can take the initiative to answer, and when some inactive members have not spoken for a long time, the moderator will directly ask the member a question. After this, the digital audio is manually transcribed and preserved as a verbatim.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method of this qualitative research is mainly carried out by the text content topic coding of verbatim transcribed manuscripts, so as to complete the research related to the effectiveness of moral education teaching strategies. First, recordings of focus group discussions are transcribed into text format. This ensures that all verbal data is accurately captured for analysis and, in order to ensure ethical compliance, statements are made regarding possible privacy concerns of informants. After this it enters the coding phase, where the record is systematically encoded by identifying and labeling important text fragments relevant to the research question. Coding involves assigning codes to sections of data that represent concepts or topics related to the effectiveness of ethical education teaching strategies, and grouping similar codes into broader topics. This process involves analyzing the code for patterns and relationships and organizing them into categories that reflect the main themes in the data. A thematic analysis of the following text content is carried out to explore the identified themes in depth. This involves how the research topics are related to each other and how they address the research question. The data in each topic was analyzed to understand how participants' experiences and perspectives influenced the overall research results. Finally, the results of thematic analysis are used to interpret the discussion results of the focus group in order to answer the research questions.

Ethical Consideration

The study was conducted in strict accordance with the academic code of ethics and was approved by the ethics committee of the study site before the study was carried out. In order to protect data security and the privacy of participants, the data collected in this study was anonymized prior to publication. At the same time, only researchers participated in the process of text transcription in this study.

Result and Discussion

From the result of the focus group, both educators and students reached a consensus during the focus group discussions that the most efficient teaching tactics for moral education involve the use of real-life events, conversations, and storytelling. Instructors highlighted the significance of including tangible scenarios and ethical predicaments to ensure moral teachings are relevant and captivating. Students expressed agreement with this viewpoint, highlighting that these tactics facilitated their ability to link moral principles with their own personal experiences, resulting in more profound and meaningful lessons. The focus group participants indicated that the success of moral education programs is closely linked to the

pedagogical approaches employed by educators. Teachers who were passionate about moral education and used interactive methods, such as discussions and group work, were perceived as more effective. Students noted that when teachers genuinely cared about the subject and created a supportive learning environment, the moral lessons were more impactful.

Back to the focus group, participants noted the inconsistency in how moral education is delivered across different educators, with some teachers being more comfortable and effective than others. Additionally, students mentioned that discussions sometimes lacked depth, and there was a concern that moral education could feel forced when integrated into other subjects.

Effective Teaching Strategies for Moral Education

RQ1: What are the most effective teaching strategies to promote students' moral development?

The findings from the focus groups provide significant insights into effective teaching strategies for moral education. In response to RQ1, two key themes emerged: the use of real-life scenarios and storytelling. Real-life scenarios were highlighted as particularly effective in helping students relate moral principles to their personal experiences, thus fostering practical moral reasoning skills. This observation is consistent with Almazroui (2023) argument that moral education is most impactful when students are encouraged to apply ethical principles in scenarios reflecting their own lives. Similarly, storytelling was identified as a powerful tool for engaging students both emotionally and cognitively in moral lessons. Calvert & Abadia (2020) supports this, emphasizing that narratives with technology help students internalize moral values more deeply. The focus groups confirmed that these strategies, which combine emotional engagement and practical application, facilitate a more profound understanding of moral concepts among students.

RQ2: How do pedagogical approaches influence the successful implementation of moral education programs in schools?

In exploring RQ2, which examines the role of pedagogical approaches, two themes were prominent: the role of teachers as facilitators and the effectiveness of active learning through discussions. The study found that teachers who adopt a facilitative role, as supported by constructivist theory, significantly enhance moral education outcomes. Constructivist theory posits that students actively construct their understanding through experiences, and the focus group results affirmed that when teachers provide guidance and create a collaborative learning environment, students are more likely to engage with and retain moral lessons. This is consistent with findings by Ammar et al. (2024), who stress the importance of instructor involvement in the success of character education programs. Additionally, active learning through discussions emerged as a critical strategy. By engaging students in moral reasoning through debates and dialogue, teachers encourage the construction of personal moral frameworks, which not only reinforces moral concepts but also promotes critical thinking and reflection—essential components of moral development.

RQ3: What challenges are associated with the implementation of moral education strategies?

The findings related to RQ3 reveal two significant challenges: inconsistent delivery across educators and the difficulty of integrating moral education into the curriculum. The focus groups indicated that some teachers are more comfortable and effective in delivering moral education, while others struggle, resulting in variability in how moral lessons are conveyed. This suggests a need for professional development programs focused on moral education pedagogy to ensure consistent and effective teaching practices. Another challenge lies in the integration of moral education into other subjects. While it was noted that incorporating moral lessons into various disciplines can enhance their relevance, participants cautioned that these efforts must be undertaken thoughtfully to avoid a sense of contrivance. Constructivist principles advocate for moral education to be naturally woven into everyday learning, rather than being treated as an isolated component (Mengi-Dinçer et al., 2021). Liang et al. (2024) suggest that the design of the curriculum includes some advance consideration of effectiveness. This requires careful curriculum design that ensures moral education is an integral part of students' overall educational experience.

Implication

The findings of this study have important ramifications for the creation and execution of moral education initiatives in educational establishments. The results emphasize the significance of employing a variety of interactive pedagogical approaches, such as ethical problems, storytelling, and group discussions, to successfully involve students in moral thinking. The study highlights the significant impact that teachers' views and the educational environment have on shaping students' moral growth. These observations indicate that in order for moral education to have a genuine impact, it should be seamlessly included into the wider curriculum and reinforced by a school environment that emphasizes free discussion and analytical thinking. Furthermore, the findings of the study support the need for professional development programs that provide educators with the necessary skills to establish inclusive and introspective learning environments. This will ultimately cultivate a student population that is more conscious of ethical considerations and socially accountable.

From the perspective of theoretical influence, this study may help improve the attention of Moral Development Theory to the needs of students, especially the relevant research on value conflict and coping strategies in the face of moral problems. The effectiveness of moral education helps to understand the potential strategic ways in moral development (Mamorasulovich, 2022). This study discusses strategies for this stage of development from the perspective of moral education.

Conclusion

To summarize, the results of this study support and expand upon previous studies regarding the efficacy of moral education methods. The study emphasizes the significance of practical applicability, teacher involvement, and the deliberate incorporation of moral education into the overall curriculum. This study emphasizes the importance of active, experiential learning and the essential role of instructors as facilitators in moral education, based on constructivist philosophy. To improve the efficiency of moral education programs in schools, it is crucial to address the mentioned problems by focusing on professional development and meticulous curriculum design. These observations offer a solid basis for further investigation and application in the realm of moral education. In addition, this study has some relative limitations which may as with other studies of this type. The regional population of this study

is skewed towards students in tertiary education, so the conclusions may not be entirely practical for those who attend secondary school only. This study also recommends that the role played by teachers in effectiveness be examined in future research using more constructivist analytical frameworks.

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