THE ROLE OF MORAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. Moral and ethical education is one of the most essential components of primary education, as it lays the foundation for the formation of a child's character, worldview, and social behavior. This paper explores the significance of integrating moral and ethical education into the primary school curriculum to promote students' emotional, intellectual, and civic development. The research emphasizes that moral upbringing helps children understand the difference between right and wrong, develop empathy and tolerance, and build respect for others. Moreover, it highlights the role of teachers as moral role models and the importance of family and community cooperation in strengthening ethical education. The paper concludes that integrating moral and ethical values into early education not only supports academic success but also ensures the formation of well-rounded, humane, and socially responsible citizens for the future.

Introduction. Education is not only a process of acquiring academic knowledge but also a means of nurturing moral, ethical, and social values in students. At the primary education level, this responsibility becomes even more significant, as children begin to shape their personalities, emotional intelligence, and sense of social belonging. In the early stages of schooling, children are highly impressionable and learn moral behaviors not only through instruction but also through observation and imitation. Teachers thus play a vital role as moral role models, influencing students' understanding of right and wrong through their actions, communication, and classroom environment. Integrating moral and ethical principles into teaching practices encourages students to internalize values such as honesty, empathy, respect, and responsibility. As Lickona emphasizes, the aim of moral education is to teach students "to know the good, love the good, and do the good."

The need for moral and ethical education has become even more urgent in today's rapidly changing world, where children are exposed to diverse cultural influences, digital technologies, and global social challenges. Without proper moral guidance, students may struggle to distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviors, leading to indifference, disrespect, or social isolation. Therefore, schools must provide structured opportunities for moral reflection and ethical dialogue to help students build a firm moral compass. Moreover, the success of moral and ethical

education depends not only on teachers but also on family and community participation. Parents, teachers, and local communities must work collaboratively to ensure consistency in moral messages and expectations. When moral education is reinforced at home and in school, children are more likely to develop stable and coherent value systems.

In summary, moral and ethical education in primary schools serves as the foundation for lifelong character development. It prepares children to become responsible citizens capable of making just and compassionate decisions. The purpose of this article is to analyze the importance of moral and ethical education in primary schooling, examine effective pedagogical methods for its implementation, and highlight the shared responsibility of teachers, parents, and society in nurturing morally strong and socially responsible individuals.

Literature Review. Moral and ethical education has long been recognized as an essential component of holistic child development. Scholars from different pedagogical traditions have emphasized that education should not only transmit academic knowledge but also instill values and moral principles that guide human behavior. According to Lickona "Moral education is about helping students to know the good, desire the good, and do the good." He argues that moral values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility should be deliberately integrated into the school curriculum, forming the cornerstone of a child's character [1].

Kohlberg introduced the theory of moral development, suggesting that moral reasoning evolves through a series of cognitive stages from obedience-based morality in childhood to principled reasoning in adulthood. In primary education, teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through the early stages of this development by encouraging discussion, empathy, and critical reflection on moral issues. As Kohlberg stated, "The role of education is not to indoctrinate but to stimulate moral reasoning"[2].

Furthermore, Peterson and Seligman in their Character Strengths and Virtues framework argue that moral education strengthens students' emotional intelligence and resilience. They identify virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and humanity as universal moral foundations that should be cultivated from an early age. Recent studies have shown that the integration of moral education contributes not only to ethical behavior but also to academic achievement, as it enhances students' motivation and social relationships [3]. In summary, the reviewed literature demonstrates that moral and ethical education in primary schools is not limited to teaching rules or discipline it involves nurturing moral reasoning, emotional growth, and social responsibility. The collective findings from global educational theorists affirm that effective moral education requires a comprehensive approach that combines classroom teaching, teacher modeling, and community involvement.

Discussion. The integration of moral and ethical education into primary schooling is essential for developing socially responsible, empathetic, and disciplined individuals. At the primary level, children are highly receptive to moral influence, and their understanding of right and wrong is still in formation. Therefore, schools

serve as one of the most effective environments for cultivating values such as honesty, respect, compassion, and responsibility. According to Lickona "Educating for character is not a peripheral task but the very heart of teaching and learning." This highlights that moral education should be woven into every aspect of school life rather than treated as a separate or occasional subject. Teachers play a central role in moral and ethical education. Through their behavior, language, and classroom management, teachers model moral values that students are likely to emulate. A teacher's fairness, patience, and empathy help students internalize the same principles.

As Kohlberg noted, moral development is best achieved through guided moral reasoning, where students are encouraged to think critically about ethical dilemmas. Classroom discussions, storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving can serve as powerful tools for this purpose. In addition to the teacher's role, family and community involvement is crucial. The moral lessons taught at school should align with those practiced at home to ensure consistency in moral development. When parents and teachers collaborate, students are better able to understand and apply ethical principles in real-life situations.

Furthermore, in the digital era, children encounter new moral challenges such as cyberbullying, misinformation, and online ethics. Thus, moral and ethical education must evolve to address these issues. Integrating topics like digital citizenship, online empathy, and responsible technology use into the curriculum helps students navigate the moral dimensions of modern life. Nucci stresses that education systems must adapt to contemporary realities while maintaining universal moral principles. However, several challenges persist. Many educational systems still prioritize academic performance over character formation. Some teachers lack training in moral pedagogy, and curricula often fail to include structured programs for value education. Overcoming these challenges requires policy-level reforms, professional development for educators, and a renewed understanding that moral education is essential for national and global progress. In conclusion, moral and ethical education in primary schools is not merely about teaching children to behave well it is about preparing them to become compassionate, responsible, and ethical citizens. By integrating moral principles across subjects, fostering collaboration between schools and families, and addressing modern ethical issues, education can truly fulfill its transformative purpose.

Research Discussion. The findings of this research emphasize that moral and ethical education plays a vital role in shaping the character and behavior of primary school students. The study revealed that children at an early age are highly receptive to moral values and social norms when these concepts are integrated into their learning experiences. Teachers, therefore, serve not only as educators but also as moral guides who influence students' attitudes, empathy, and sense of responsibility. Moreover, the study showed that integrating moral education into the curriculum through stories, games, discussions, and real-life examples significantly increases students' emotional intelligence and moral awareness. This integration also promotes cooperation, respect for others, and discipline among students. Another critical point

is that family and school collaboration strengthens the effectiveness of moral and ethical education.

When parents and teachers work together, children receive consistent moral messages both at home and in school, which reinforces positive behaviors. However, the research also identified several challenges, such as the lack of teacher training in moral pedagogy and insufficient teaching materials focused on ethical education. Therefore, it is recommended that educational institutions develop more structured programs, conduct teacher training sessions, and utilize digital tools and interactive learning methods to enhance students' moral learning experiences. In conclusion, moral and ethical education should not be viewed as a separate subject but rather as an integral part of all teaching activities. A holistic approach that combines academic learning with moral development can ensure that students grow into responsible, compassionate, and socially conscious individuals.

Conclusion. In conclusion, moral and ethical education plays a fundamental role in the development of a child's character, behavior, and worldview. Primary education serves as the foundation for instilling essential values such as honesty, respect, empathy, tolerance, and responsibility. The study confirms that the earlier children are exposed to moral guidance, the stronger their ethical understanding and social behavior become. The integration of moral education into all subjects and school activities ensures that students not only acquire academic knowledge but also develop the emotional intelligence and social awareness necessary for successful personal and social life. Teachers and parents have a shared responsibility to create an environment that promotes kindness, cooperation, and respect for others. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for continuous improvement in teacher training and educational materials to strengthen the quality of moral and ethical education. Only through collaborative efforts between families, schools, and society can we nurture a generation that upholds human values, contributes positively to their communities, and acts with moral integrity.

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