A Study of Moral Behavior of University Students

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to explore the moral behavior of university students. The study was quantitative in nature, and the survey method was used for data collection. The population for this study consisted of all graduate and undergraduate students (1500) of Lahore Leads University. The sample consisted of 320 Lahore Leads University undergraduate and graduate students who were chosen at random. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of demographic variables, and the second part consisted of students' moral behavior. SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. In inferential statistics, independent samples t-test and One-way ANOVA were used to find out the significant differences among demographic variables.

Introduction

Education gives people the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Knowing the degree to which our pupils' behavior exhibits moral qualities as a result of our academic success is crucial (Beiranvand & Bayat, 2022). The education sector is considered responsible for developing students to be moral and ethical beings as much as possible. Every nation allocates resources for establishing educational institutions to not only transfer knowledge and develop skills necessary to survive and make progress in all fields of life but also to sensitize students about morality and ethics. Now, the question is how much students are exhibiting morality in their academic and non-academic behavior. It is very important to investigate whether educational institutions are inculcating morality in students or not in Pakistan. This study explored the level of morality among university students (Nabavi, 2012).

Moral development is so important that every anthropologist has talked about the phenomenon of moral growth (Tronto, 2020). Morality is essential to human existence. Numerous incidents of a young person attending higher education institutions becoming involved in crimes, including rape, theft, and murder, have been documented. Patience, honesty, discipline, fraternity, fidelity, and kindness are lacking in many educated persons. In the current educational environment, this is the question that requires attention. The primary cause of all of these issues is the removal of moral education. The goal of moral education is to assist students in becoming responsible, caring, and honest people. People's lives are greatly impacted by how they respond to certain situations (Tronto, 2020).

There is a general resurgence of interest in religious, moral, and spiritual education. When a nation attempts to preserve its traditional characteristics by establishing strict guidelines for students in that country's traditional religion, it requires a highly explicit and constrained framework (Shariff, 2015). According to Article 31 of the Constitution of the

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Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamic principles and values, as enshrined in the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet MUHAMMAD (PBUH), shall be protected, upheld, and promoted (National Educational Policy, 1998-2010). Numerous social issues in society show gaps in students' ethical growth despite these conscious attempts to give a demanding and moral education.

The focus has been on 'parental socialization' of children's moral attitudes and behavior from the beginning. The latter focuses on assessing positive behavior and "foreseeing singular contrasts" in positive development from a variety of perspectives, such as situational circumstances, training, subjective processes, and emotion forms. This problem is concealed by assumptions about the common characteristics of all people. This common property of universal characteristics and morals was expressed and expanded by Maududi (1948) in his book. The accompanying focus from his book must be included in this audit in order to understand the concept of all-inclusive qualities because moral sense is innate in humans and has evolved over time to become the norm for proper behavior, favoring some traits while objecting to others. Even though this typical limit may vary from person to person, human standards have generally found some ethical traits to be excellent and declared others to be terrible.

It is made clear that some broad characteristics are considered important without the need for a caste or religious proclamation. Despite individual differences, people may be lucky or unlucky to have unintentionally shifted toward these principles (Thornberg, 2009). According to Maududi (1948), "pride, limitation, neighborliness, and affability have all been considered as real parts of excellence throughout the ages, though highbrow character, bad conduct, and impoliteness have never discovered acknowledgment as great good characteristics." Each network and society recognizes those who are capable, sociable, supporting, honest, dynamic, fair, striking, and gallant, while miscreants, lawbreakers, barbarians, unfaithful, lazy, and liars are seen with disgust and disdain. This set of criteria and attributes defines the behaviour that members of the network are expected to exhibit; it distinguishes between what is deemed "great" and what is deemed "awful." Furthermore, inside personal networks, these rules are considered universals that apply to everyone, everywhere; the code of ethics is a way to judge the conduct of others and to condemn people both inside and outside of one's community. According to Timm (2000), the code of behaviour that people exhibit in a group setting is a profound trait. People have different ideas about what is good and bad, and they prefer other people to do to them what they do to them. It is not a personal ability at all. The training must be completed in its entirety. It includes a person's major life events, thoughts, interactions, and many other aspects of his activity. It involves negotiating in a public setting. Ethical excellence is the ability to act morally and to avoid passing judgment.

Conceptual Framework
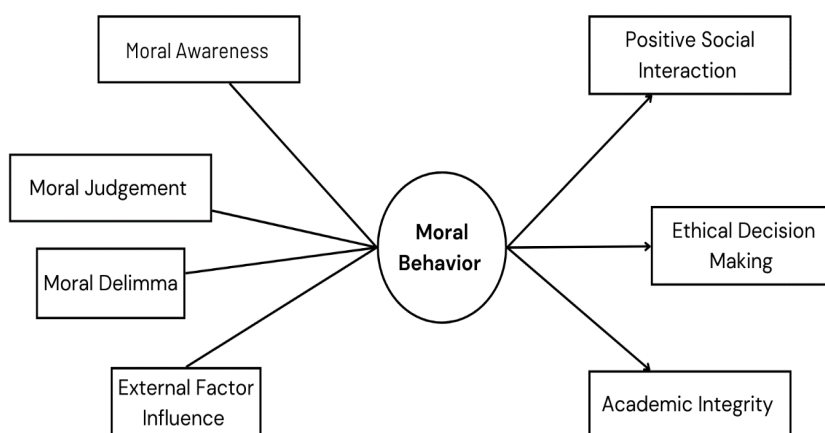
Note: Moral Awareness, Moral judgement, Moral Dilemma and external factor are the variables that influence the moral behavior of university students which leads to positive social interaction, ethical decision making and academic integrity of university students.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were the following:

1. To identify the level of moral behavior among university students.
2. To examine the factors influencing moral behavior in university.
3. To explore the difference in moral behavior among male and female university students.

Research Questions

1. What was the level of moral behavior among university students?
2. What are the factors that influence moral behavior in the university?
3. What is the difference in moral behavior between male and female university students?

Significance of the Study

The study of moral behavior among university students holds immense significance as it sheds light on the ethical foundations of future leaders, professionals, and decision-makers. Universities are not merely institutions of academic learning; they are also spaces where individuals develop their values, principles, and character. Exploring moral behavior in this context helps educators, policymakers, and psychologists understand the ethical challenges and dilemmas faced by students in their formative years. Insights gained from this research can inform strategies to nurture integrity, empathy, and social responsibility among young adults.

This study is particularly relevant in the context of rapid technological and social changes, which often blur ethical boundaries. University students are exposed to diverse ideologies, cultural influences, and digital platforms, all of which can impact their moral judgments and behavior. By examining how students navigate these influences, the research can contribute to the development of targeted interventions, such as ethics education programs, mentorship initiatives, and institutional policies that promote moral growth.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can have a broader societal impact. Understanding the moral behavior of students can help create a more ethically conscious generation, capable of making decisions that prioritize collective well-being over self-interest. This research can also guide parents, educators, and community leaders in fostering environments that encourage ethical reasoning and actions. Ultimately, the study bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world applications, ensuring that moral development remains a cornerstone of higher education.

Research Method

The study was quantitative, and data was gathered by using the survey approach. In descriptive research, demographic characteristics are examined. This approach places more emphasis on the "what" of the study topic than the "why" of it (Bhat, 2019). The population for this study consisted of all graduate and undergraduate students (1500) of Lahore Leads University. The study's sample consisted of 320 Lahore Leads University undergraduate and graduate students who were chosen at random.

Instrumentation

Self-developed questionnaire was used for collected data. The questionnaire was consisted of two parts. First part was consisted of demographic variable and second part was consisted of students' moral behavior.

Data Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to compute the data. The mean, standard deviation, and frequency were determined using descriptive statistics. The independent samples t-test was employed in inferential statistics to determine if demographic factors (gender) differed significantly. To examine the differences between the demographic variables (age and qualification), a one-way ANOVA was used.

Results
Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Regarding Moral Awareness

S#	Statements	Mean	SD
1	I can usually tackle ethical issues in a given situation.	4.21	.59
2	I am aware of how my values impact the decisions I make.	4.18	.67
3	When I do something that is ethically wrong, I feel bad.	4.15	.73
4	I act morally and fulfill my duties.	4.17	.66
5	I am aware of when someone else's behavior might be harmful	3.73	.72

1. Respondents (M=4.21, SD=.59) were strongly agreed with the statement "I can usually tackle ethical issues in a given situation".
2. Respondents (M=4.18, SD=.67) strongly agreed with the statement, "I am aware of how my values impact the decisions I make."
3. Respondents (M=4.15, SD=.73) were strongly agreed with the statement "When I do something that is ethically wrong, I feel bad".
4. Respondents (M=4.17, SD=.66) were strongly agreed with the statement "I act morally and fulfill my duties".
5. Respondents (M=3.73, SD=.72) were agreed with the statement "I am aware of when someone else's behavior might be harmful".

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents regarding Moral judgment

S#	Statements	Mean	*SD*
6	It is acceptable to defend myself with violence in case of danger.	3.96	.98
7	Lying is acceptable if it protects someone's feelings.	4.21	.65
8	I should always keep promises, even if it causes other harm.	3.95	.92
9	It is justifiable to cheat on an exam if there is a lot of pressure.	3.95	.90
10	When I conflict with someone in a debate, I stay quiet.	3.88	.88

6. Respondents (M=3.96, SD=.98) were agreed about this statement, it is acceptable to defend myself with violence in case of danger.
7. Respondents (M=4.21, SD=.65) were strongly agreed about this statement, lying is acceptable if it protects someone's feelings.
8. Respondents (M=3.95, SD=.92) were agreed about this statement, I should always keep promises, even if it causes other harm.
9. Respondents (M=3.95, SD=.90) were agreed about this statement, it is justifiable to cheat on an exam if there is a lot of pressure.
10. Respondents (M=3.88, SD=.88) were agreed about this statement, When I conflict with someone in a debate, I stay quiet.

Table 3
Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Regarding Moral Behavior

S#	Statements	Mean	SD
11	I try to treat everyone equally.	4.10	.62
12	I think I am a moral person.	3.88	.60
13	I often think about my personal values and how they influence my decisions.	4.06	.39
14	Everyone, in my opinion, has the right to keep personal opinions.	4.05	.35
15	I realize how my voice impacts other people	4.05	.55

11. University students (*M*=4.10, *SD*=.62) strongly agreed with this statement: I try to treat everyone equally.
12. University students (*M*=3.88, *SD*=.60) agreed with this statement: I think I am a moral person.
13. University students (*M*=4.06, *SD*=.39) strongly agreed with this statement; I often think about my personal values and how they influence my decisions.
14. University students (*M*=4.05, *SD*=.35) were strongly agreed with this statement, everyone in my opinion, has right to keep personal opinions.
15. University students (*M*=4.05, *SD*=.55) strongly agreed with this statement; I realized how my voice impacts other people.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Regarding External Factors Influence

S#	Statements	Mean	SD
16	I believe peers help to resolve conflicts among university students.	4.10	.40
17	My religious beliefs have a major impact on my moral decisions.	4.02	.42
18	I think that social media has an impact on moral behavior.	3.94	.56
19	I believe that family values affect my moral choices.	4.01	.36
20	I believe that the academic environment encourages discussion morality.	3.95	.45
21	I believe that my cultural experience emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity.	3.98	.40

16. Respondents (*M*=4.10, *SD*=.40) were strongly agreed about this statement, I believe peers help to resolve conflicts among university students.
17. Respondents (*M*=4.02, *SD*=.42) were strongly agreed about this statement, my religious beliefs have a major impact on my moral decisions.
18. Respondents (*M*=3.94, *SD*=.56) strongly agreed about this statement, I think that social media has impact on moral behavior.
19. Respondents (*M*=4.01, *SD*=.36) were strongly agreed about this statement, I believe that family values affect my moral choices.
20. Respondents (*M*=3.95, *SD*=.45) were agreed about this statement, I believe that academic environment encourages discussion morality.
21. Respondents (*M*=3.98, *SD*=.40) were agreed about this statement, I believe that my cultural experience emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity.

Table 5

Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Regarding Moral Dilemma

S#	Statements	Mean	SD
22	If I witness a crime, I have a moral obligation to report it, regardless of the consequences.	3.97	.51
23	I think it is acceptable to bend the truth in order to protect someone's emotions.	4.06	.48
24	I believe stealing food from a hungry child is justified.	4.07	.35
25	I think it's normal to cooperate with one's values for my personal benefit.	4.02	.47
26	It is acceptable to punish an innocent person if it prevents a serious crime from being committed.	3.97	.49

22. Respondents (*M*=3.97, *SD*=.51) were agreed about this statement, If I witness a crime, I have a moral obligation to report it, regardless of the consequences.
23. Respondents (*M*=4.06, *SD*=.48) were agreed about this statement, I think it is acceptable to bend the truth in order to protect someone's emotions.
24. Respondents (*M*=4.07, *SD*=.35) were agreed about this statement, I believe stealing food to a hungry child is justified.

25. Respondents (*M*=4.02, *SD*=.47) were agreed about this statement, I think it's normal to cooperation one's value for my personal benefit.
26. Respondents (*M*=3.97, *SD*=.49) were strongly agreed about this statement, it is acceptable to punish an innocent person if it prevents a serious crime from being committed.

Table 6
Independent sample t-test identifies differences in university students' moral behavior regarding gender.

Gender	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*Df*	*t*-value	*Sig.*
Male	140	105.88	6.24	318	3.06	.002
Female	180	103.80	5.87			

Table shows that independent sample t-test identifies the difference of male and female respondents regarding moral behavior. Result shows that there was significant difference between male (*M*=105.88, *SD*=6.24) and female (*M*=103.80, *SD*=5.87), *t* =3.06, *p*= .002, university students regarding moral behavior.

Table 7
One-way ANOVA identifies the differences in university students' moral behavior regarding qualification.

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	97.66	3	32.55	.86	.45
Within Groups	11841.88	316	37.47		
Total	11939.55	319			

The table shows the one-way ANOVA that identifies the differences in respondents regarding moral behavior regarding qualification. Results indicated that there was no significant difference *df* (*319*) = .86, *p*=.45 in students about moral behavior regarding qualification.

Table 8
One-way ANOVA identifies the differences in university students' moral behavior regarding age.

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	188.59	3	62.86	1.69	.16
Within Groups	11750.95	316	37.18		
Total	11939.55	319			

The table shows the one-way ANOVA that identifies the differences among respondents regarding moral behavior regarding age. Results indicated that there was no significant difference *in df* (*319*) = 1.69, *p*=.16 in university students regarding moral behavior regarding age.

Discussion
Moral behavior among university students is a topic of significant importance, as it shapes not only their academic integrity but also their overall contribution to society. Universities are microcosms of larger societal dynamics, where individuals with diverse backgrounds converge, bringing varied moral perspectives and values. This discussion delves into the factors influencing moral behavior among university students, the challenges they face in upholding moral standards, and the implications for educational institutions.

The moral behavior of university students is influenced by a combination of personal, societal, and institutional factors. Personal values, often shaped by family upbringing and early education, play a foundational role in guiding moral decision-making (Kohlberg, 1981). For instance, students raised in environments emphasizing honesty and accountability are more likely to adhere to ethical standards. Societal influences, such as peer pressure and cultural

norms, also significantly affect students' moral choices. Peer groups, in particular, can either reinforce or challenge an individual's moral convictions. A study by Borsari and Carey (2001) highlights how peer norms strongly impact behaviors such as academic dishonesty and substance abuse. Institutional factors, including university policies, leadership, and campus culture, are crucial in fostering an environment conducive to moral behavior. Clear codes of conduct, accessible support systems, and exemplary leadership can encourage students to act ethically (McCabe et al., 2001). Despite the presence of influencing factors, university students often face challenges in maintaining moral behavior. The pressure to succeed academically and professionally can lead to ethical compromises, such as plagiarism and cheating. A survey by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) found that nearly 68% of university students admitted to some form of academic dishonesty during their studies (ICAI, 2020).

Additionally, the transition from adolescence to adulthood often involves a re-evaluation of moral values. This developmental phase can create conflicts between personal values and societal expectations, leading to moral ambiguity. Furthermore, the prevalence of digital technologies has introduced new ethical dilemmas, such as cyberbullying and the misuse of information, complicating students' ability to navigate moral issues effectively.

Universities have a critical role in shaping students' moral behavior by creating environments that prioritize ethical development. Integrating ethics education into curricula can provide students with frameworks to evaluate and resolve moral dilemmas (Noddings, 2002). Workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs can further reinforce ethical awareness. Moreover, fostering a sense of community and accountability on campus can mitigate issues like academic dishonesty. Initiatives such as honor codes, combined with consistent enforcement, have been shown to reduce unethical practices among students (McCabe et al., 2001).

Recommendations

Recommendations of the study were the following:

1. A qualitative study about the effect of religious education on the moral behavior of the students might be helpful for teachers to adopt appropriate strategies to inculcate the moral values in the classroom.
2. On the basis of the findings of the study universities might incorporate courses and workshops that explicitly focus on moral reasoning, ethical dilemmas, and the practical application of moral values.
3. Further research may explore the reasons behind gender differences in moral behaviour, with targeted interventions to ensure that all students benefit equally from moral education.
4. Religious and moral concepts may be incorporated into the content of subjects in university education.
5. Initiatives such as cultural exchange programs, diversity workshops, and open dialogue sessions might foster a deeper understanding of tolerance's societal importance as findings show seminars and related workshops helps them to seek morality.
6. Embrace and respect the diverse cultural, social, and individual backgrounds of peers and faculty members. Avoid discriminatory language or behavior, promoting inclusion and equity in all interactions.
7. Take responsibility for personal actions and decisions, both within and outside the university environment. Adhere to university policies and codes of conduct, seeking guidance when in doubt.
8. Engage in community service or activities that promote social good, align with ethical values, and avoid participating in harmful or exploitative practices, whether directly or indirectly.
9. Regular assessments of academic integrity policies and ethical training programs might be conducted to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in shaping moral behaviour.
10. It is recommended that researchers conduct this research by employing interviews and participant observation.

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