

A STUDY ON MORAL COMPETENCIES OF STUDENT TEACHERS

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to study moral competencies of student teachers from university of education. Quantitative research design and descriptive survey method were taken in the present study. A total of 1093 (males=430, females=663) student teachers were selected as the participants from three universities by using simple random sampling technique. As research instruments, Moral Competencies Inventory (MCI) of Lennick and Kiel (2011) was adapted and applied. The results showed that mean score of moral competencies of student teachers was satisfactory because observed mean score of moral competencies was greater than theoretical mean score. There was no significant difference by gender. By grade, significant differences were occurred in moral competencies at ($p<.01$) and ($p<.001$), fourth year student teachers were higher than third year and second year. By University, significant differences were found in moral competencies, student teachers from University (1) were lower than University (2) and University (3) at ($p<.001$) and ($p<.01$). By father's education and mother's education, there were significant differences at ($p<.05$) and ($p<.05$).

Keywords: Moral, Competencies, Moral Competencies, Student Teachers

Introduction

In building a peaceful and justice society, critical thinking, social responsibility and moral competencies were needed to have for everyone. The reason is that human cannot live alone in society with the help of each other. Ma (2012) defined moral competence as emotional inclination to do altruism behaviors toward others, and the ability to judge the issues and moral dimensions in a logical and consistent way, and in advanced level of growth and development. Kohlberg (1984) indicated that the moral competence is the ability to make decisions and moral provisions based on internal principles, and acting in line with those provisions, and that the most prominent elements of the moral competence are the goals of the subject, and the hierarchy of values and standards that the individual considers it understandable in a specific community. Moral competence is based on the standards, values, goals, objectives, interests, motives, feelings and moral situations. Brytting (2002) sees that the moral competence is the ability to integrate cognition, actions and ideas into a comprehensive unit, in addition to the ability to understand the choices and actions, and self-understanding as an independent entity. Jormsri, Kunaviktikul, Ketefian and Chaowalit (2005) add that the moral competence requires knowledge, familiarity and commitment to values, and it indicates the individual's ability to recognize and realize that feelings affect what is good or not good in situations, then those feelings appear in making decisions and doing deed. Most countries in the world have been emphasized moral development of student teachers who built the future nation by educating and cultivating their students.

To evaluate whether student teachers have moral competencies or not is important for teacher educators. Therefore, this paper is useful and effective to a certain extent for education society.

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Purposes of the Study

The main aim was to explore moral competencies of student teachers from Universities of Education. The specific objectives were to investigate into moral competencies of student teachers by gender, grade, University, father's education, and mother's education.

Definition of Key Terms

Moral Competencies : refers to the affective orientation to perform altruistic behaviors and the ability judge moral issues logically (Ma, 2012).

Students Teachers : Student teachers are a college, university or graduate student who is teaching under supervision of a certified teacher in order to qualify for a degree in education (Wikipedia, free encyclopedia).

Review of Related Literature

Moral competencies refer to the affective orientation to perform altruistic behaviors and the ability judge moral issues logically (Ma, 2012). Moral competence is that fostering the development of justice judgment and altruistic behaviour in adolescent.

Most theories agree that moral competence not only how people think about moral dilemmas and solutions, but also thinking about moral behavior and socially acceptable behavior. Psychologists pointed out the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that raise rate of the moral reasoning and moral behavior and emotional assimilation and empathy, taking into account the point of view of the other party (Park & Peterson, 2006). Moral behavior has been defined based on the inner side and accepted moral principles, rather than the external social norms (Lind, 2008).

Lennick and Kiel (2011) adopted four competencies to investigate moral competence. These four moral competencies are integrity, responsibilities, compassion and forgiveness.

Four Moral Competencies

Integrity: According to the Merriam- Webster dictionary, the word "integrity" is defined as a firm inclination to a code governing moral values (Daly & Caputi, 1987). Children are taught to embrace the truth as the best option when confronted with choices. The habit of acting consistency with believe, values and principles, standing up what is right, telling the truth and keeping promises can improve integrity of moral competencies (Narvaez, 2010).

Responsibility: Responsibility influences positive character (Sivanathan & Cynthia Fekken, 2002). Taking responsibility for personal choice, admitting mistake and failures embracing responsibility for serving others are taken into account for developing responsibility of moral competencies (Coles, 1998).

Compassion: Compassion is of importance in moral competencies (Beheshtifar, Esmaeli & Moghadam, 2011). Compassion looks beyond the normal physical eye, where, instead of judging situations and people solely on the way they appear, one gets to learn that there is more than meets the eye thereby, shifting criticality to the distinctive features aside the physical ones that define individuals (Coles, 1998).

Forgiveness: Forgiveness entails letting one’s own guard down and being able to look beyond other people’s actions and mistakes. According to Enright (1998) forgiveness is the readiness to accept the shortcomings of other people and tolerating them despite the wrong that was committed Lennick and Keil (2005).

Method

Sample of the Study

By using simple random sampling technique, student teachers were selected from Universities of Education (Sagaing University of Education, Yangon University of Education and University for the Development of the National Races of the Union). A total of 1093 student teachers (430 males and 663 females) were participated in this study.

Instrumentation

To collect relevant data of the study, moral competencies inventories by Lennick and Kiel (2005) which is based on four moral competencies was used to measure moral competence. It composed of four moral competencies: (16) items of integrity, (12) items of responsibilities, (4) items of compassion, (8) items of forgiveness and totally (40) items. In pilot test, reliability coefficient of Cronbach’s alpha was .891.

Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers

Variable	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Moral Competencies	1093	58	200	150.92	15.520

Table 1 showed that mean score for moral competencies of student teachers was higher than that of theoretical mean score. Hence there is satisfactory level of moral competencies.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Components of Moral Competencies of Student Teachers

Components	No of Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean%	<i>SD</i>
Integrity	16	26	80	60.74	75.93%	2.84
Responsibilities	12	15	60	45.86	76.44%	1.36
Compassion	4	4	20	15.02	78.08%	2.25
Forgiveness	8	13	40	29.29	73.23%	2.01

Table 2 showed that mean% of compassion was the highest (78.08%) and that of forgiveness was the lowest (73.23%) among all components.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Gender

Variable	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Moral Competency	Males	430	151.57	16.381	1.115	1091	1.115
	Females	663	150.50	14.932			

Table 3 showed that mean score of male student teachers were slightly different from that of females. To see clearly, independent sample *t* test was conducted. The result showed that there was no significant difference between male and female in moral competencies ($p > .05$). It may be said that there was no gender effect on moral competencies because they may had same idea to act morally and had learnt moral education to a certain extent. It was consistent with the finding of Nor, Zaihairul and Ayu (2012).

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Results of Independent Sample *t* test for Components of Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Gender

Components	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Integrity	Males	430	60.64	7.279	-.404*	1091	.021
	Females	663	60.81	6.170			
Responsibilities	Males	430	46.17	5.258	1.576	1091	.819
	Females	663	45.66	5.221			
Compassion	Males	430	14.96	2.418	-.615	1091	.065
	Females	663	15.05	2.261			
Forgiveness	Males	430	29.79	4.212	3.103	1091	.354
	Females	663	28.97	4.265			

* The mean difference is .05 level ($p < .05$)

Table 4 showed that mean score of females were a little higher than that of males at integrity and compassion components and males were a little higher than that of females at responsibilities and forgiveness components. To see clearly, independent sample *t* test was conducted. It showed that there was significant difference between males and females at component of integrity ($p < 0.05$). It can be said that male student teachers had higher level of integrity because it may be most of the male were cultivated to have integrity as a man more than female by adult since childhood. The other components were not significant differences between males and females.

Table 5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Grade

Variable	Grade	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Moral Competencies	2nd Year	306	150.46	14.137	93	194
	3rd Year	303	146.94	14.308	58	199
	4th Year	484	153.70	16.509	76	200

Table 5 showed that mean score (153.70) of fourth year student teachers of moral competencies had highest level among other student teachers and that of mean score (146.49) of third year student teachers had lowest level of mean score among them. In order to see whether there were significant differences in student teachers moral competencies by grade, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The results of analysis were displayed in table 6.

Table 6 Result of ANOVA for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Grade

Moral Competencies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	8597.361	2	4298.681	18.416	.000
Within Groups	254425.554	1090	233.418		
Total	263022.915	1092			

Table 6 showed that there was significant difference in student teachers’ moral competencies by grade at ($p < .001$). It showed that student teachers differ in moral competencies by grade. To see more clearly how student teachers’ moral competencies differ in relation to their grade, Post Hoc Test of Game Howell Test was conducted.

Table 7 Result of Game Howell Test for Multiple Comparisons for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Grade

Variable	(I) Grade	(J) Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Moral Competencies	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	3.514**	.007
		4 th Year	-3.243**	.009
	3 rd Year	2 nd Year	-3.514**	.007
		4 th Year	-6.757***	.000

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level. ($p < .001$)

***The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level. ($p < .01$)

Table 7 showed that fourth year student teachers had higher level of moral competencies than second year and third year student teachers because mean difference were (-3.243) and (-6.757). There were significant difference by grade at ($p < .01$) and ($p > .001$). Second year student teachers had higher level of moral competencies than third year student teachers. Because mean difference was (3.514), there was significant ($p < .01$). It may be fourth year student teachers had more maturity and more experience than the other two.

Table 8 Mean and Standard Deviation of Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by University

Variable	University	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Moral Competencies	University 1	286	147.76	15.823	.936
	University 2	387	152.63	15.886	.808
	University 3	420	151.50	14.666	.716

Table 8 showed that mean score of moral competencies of student teachers from university (2) had highest among them and student teachers from university (1) had lowest mean score of moral competencies among them. In order to see whether there were significant differences in student teachers’ moral competencies by university, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The results of analysis were displayed in table 9.

Table 9 Result of ANOVA for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by University

Moral Competencies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	4136.890	2	2068.445	8.709***	.000
Within Groups	258886.025	1090	237.510		
Total	263022.915	1092			

Table 9 showed that there was significant difference in student teacher's moral competencies by university ($p < .001$). It showed that student teachers differ in moral competencies by University. Then, to see more clearly how student teachers differ in moral competencies in relation to their University, Post Hoc test of Game Howell method was conducted.

Table 10 Results of Game Howell Test for Multiple Comparisons of Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by University

Variable	University (I)	University (J)	MD(I-J)	p
Moral Competencies	University 1	University 2	-4.875***	.000
		University 3	-3.742**	.005

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level

***The mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level

Table 10 showed that student teachers from University (1) had lower level of moral competencies than student teachers from University (2) and University (3) because the mean difference were (-4.875) and (-3.742). There were significant at ($P < .001$) and ($p > .05$). It may be said that their background condition such as knowledge of how to act morally, locality where they come from and especially family in which they brought up were different. One reason was that most of the student teachers in this university come from un-peaceful township.

Table 11 Mean and Standard Deviation for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Father's Education

Group (1) father had Post Graduated level, Group (2) father had Graduated level, Group (3) father had Basic Education level and Group (4) father had Literacies level.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Moral Competencies	Group (1)	16	145.31	21.969	5.492
	Group (2)	221	150.00	14.248	.958
	Group (3)	707	152.09	15.036	.565
	Group (4)	149	147.32	17.991	1.474

Table 11 showed that Mean score 152.09 of Moral Competencies of student teachers of Group 3 had the highest among them and student teacher of Group 1 had the lowest mean score 145.31 of moral competencies among them. In order to see whether there were significant differences student teachers' moral competencies by father education, One Way ANOVA was used. The result of analysis was displayed in table 12.

Table 12 Result of ANOVA for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Father’s Education

Moral Competencies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	3603.657	3	1201.219	5.043**	.002
Within Groups	259419.258	1089	238.218		
Total	263022.915	1092			

Table 12 showed that there was significant difference in student teachers’ moral competencies by father’s education ($p < 0.01$). It showed that student teachers differ in moral competencies by father’s education. Then, to see more clearly how student teachers differ in moral competencies in relation to their father’s education, Post Hoc test of Game Howell Test was conducted.

Table 13 Result of Game Howell Test for Multiple Comparisons for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Father’s Education

Variable	(I) Father’s Education	(J) Father’s Education	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Moral Competencies	Group (3)	Group (1)	6.782	.984
		Group (2)	2.099	.424
		Group (4)	4.779*	.015

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 13 showed that student teachers of Group (3) had higher level of moral competencies than student teachers of Group (4) because mean difference were (4.997). There were significant at ($p > .05$). It may be said that Group (3) fathers in this research more educated to train their children to have ideas to behave morally since childhood.

Table 14 Mean and Standard Deviation for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Mother’s Education

Group (1) mother had Post Graduated level, Group (2) mother had Graduated level, Group (3) mother had Basic Education level and Group (4) mother had Literacies level.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Moral Competencies	Group (1)	25	153.12	14.644	2.929
	Group (2)	209	152.51	13.900	.962
	Group (3)	698	151.16	15.250	.577
	Group (4)	161	147.48	18.201	1.434

Table 14 showed that mean score 153.12 of moral competencies of student teacher of Group (1) had highest among them and student teachers of Group (4) had lowest mean score 147.48 of moral competencies among them. In order to see whether there were significant differences student teachers’ moral competencies by mother education, One Way ANOVA was used. The results of analysis were displayed in table 15.

Table 15 Result of ANOVA for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Mother's Education

Moral Competencies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	2597.216	3	865.739	3.620	.013
Within Groups	260425.699	1089	239.142		
Total	263022.915	1092			

Table 15 showed that there was significant difference in student teacher's moral competencies by mother Education at ($p < 0.05$). It showed that student teachers differ in moral competencies by mother education. Then, to see more clearly how student teachers differ in moral competencies in relation to their mother education, Post Hoc test of Tukey HSD method was conducted.

Table 16 Result of Tukey HSD Method for Multiple Comparisons for Moral Competencies of Student Teachers by Mother's Education

Variable	(I) Mother Education	(J) Mother Education	MD (I-J)	Std. Error	p
Moral Competencies	Group (4)	Group (1)	-5.642	3.324	.326
		Group (2)	-5.034*	1.622	.011
		Group (3)	-3.679*	1.352	.033

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 16 showed that students teachers of group (4) had lower level of moral competencies than student teachers of Group (2) and group (3) because mean difference were (-5.034) and (-3.679). There were significant at ($p < .05$). It may be said that group (4) mother in this research cannot educate well to have idea that concern morality and to behave morally their children since childhood.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This section was conclusion for research finding and suggestion for this study. Firstly, the participants in this study had satisfactory level in their moral competencies because their observed mean score was higher than above the theoretical mean score. Next, there was no significant difference by gender. It may be said that it was good situation because it showed that they had same opportunities to learn knowledge of how to conduct consistent with moral behaviour. According to the grade of participant, fourth year student teachers had higher mean score than that of third year student teachers and second year student teachers had higher level of mean score than third year student teachers. It may be said that some third year student teacher come from education colleges and they were not familiar with most of their class mate and they may not have taking care of other person. It may be one reason to reduce the moral competencies. Familiar with each other is to improve compassion, because according Jone's moral intensity theory proposed that immoral conduct depend on proximity with victims. By University, University (1) had lower level of moral competencies than University (2) and (3). It can be said that most of the student teachers of University (1) come from the township in which they cannot live peacefully because their regions were influenced by terrorist and so they feel

insecurity and do not believe other people around him currently. Nevertheless, their observed mean score was higher than theoretical mean score and it showed that their moral competencies level is high and satisfactory. By father's education, student teacher of Group (3) had higher level of moral competencies than student teachers of Group (4) because mean difference were (4.997). There were significant at ($p<.05$). It may be said that Group (3) fathers in this research already had educated to train their children more than Group (4) father to have ideas to behave morally since childhood. By mother's education, student teachers of Group (4) had lower level of moral competencies than student teachers of Group (2) and Group (3). There were significant at ($p<.05$). It may be said that Group (4) mother in this research cannot educate to have idea that concern morality and to behave morally their children since childhood.

In a country, living peacefully together is depended on citizens of this country. The individual needs to have higher level of moral competencies. To reach this level, they should be taught and trained during childhood. To have higher level of moral competencies, they should have integrity, responsibilities, compassion and forgiveness.

To improve integrity, children should be taught to embrace the truth as the best option when confronted with choices. This is done not only through verbalization but also by modeling, where the adult chooses the truth at all times, thus creating a dynamo effect as children are imitators. Children need to learn to stand by what is right all the time in preparing them what to expect. This approach enhances development of a good character. Essentially, integrity entails keeping promises. Parents and teachers should note that in order to bring up virtuous children, they should also commit to keep promises they have made. To upgrade responsibilities, taking responsibility for person choice, admitting mistake and failures, embracing responsibility for serving others are needed to be taught them. Moreover, actively caring about others is to develop compassion for moral competence. Another factor to improve moral competence is forgiveness. To enhance forgiveness, they are needed to get the habit of letting go off one's own mistakes and letting go off other's mistakes. So these habits should be taught to the children. These duties which enhance the moral competencies are responsible for all adults especially parents and teachers.

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