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## **Ethics: A Study on the Role of Ethics Education in Today's Society**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Moral education is an essential aspect of modern education. The teaching of values distinguishes right from wrong, and these values ultimately guide our behaviour and intentions towards those around us. The importance of moral education in today's society can be determined through its goals. Moral education aims to distinguish between what is universally accepted as correct and what is accepted as wrong, determine an individual's character, and eliminate or minimize vices such as jealousy and greed. , while building a positive attitude and developing self-confidence. Social progress and development also mean ethical issues are even more necessary, and ethical education is urgent. Social external problems and internal ethics must always accompany and support each other. Moral education helps individuals make moral judgments, empathize, and live responsibly towards society. It creates a harmonious environment by encouraging respect and tolerance between ethical relationships that adults and children must guide and educate. It counteracts negative influences by reinforcing moral values; it protects the family, society, and especially the school. It assists students in building a solid moral compass, enabling them to withstand peer pressure and make wise decisions. To do this, we need to be proactive. In short, moral education is essential to modern education, helping individuals distinguish right from wrong, develop a positive attitude and live responsibly in society. It is a tool that can help individuals build a solid moral compass and make informed decisions.

Keyword: Ethics, Ethics Education, Society, Human, School, Student, Life...

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### **CONTENT**

In the modern era, human beings have to face many challenges and competitions in life. They need knowledge, skills, and moral qualities to live happily and successfully. But how do you form and develop those qualities? That is the role of moral education. Moral education is the process that helps human beings perceive, evaluate, and choose the correct behaviour according to the standards, principles, and values of the morality of society. Moral education is also the process of nurturing the conscience, compassion and social responsibility for human beings. Moral education occurs not only in schools but also in families, communities, and society.

Moral education has a crucial role in today's society. Some reasons are that moral education helps humans distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, and respect and respect others. This contributes to creating a civilized, peaceful and cooperative society. Moral education helps human beings develop self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. It enhances the capacity and confidence of human beings, allowing them to cope with the difficulties and changes in life. Moral education helps human beings understand, empathize with, and help others. This contributes to building a fair, equal and united society. Moral education helps human beings protect and promote the nation's cultural, traditional and historical values. This contributes to maintaining and developing the identity and pride of the country. Thus, it can be said that moral education is an indispensable factor in the modern education system.<sup>1</sup> Moral education helps human beings become good citizens and good people. Moral education is a source of inspiration and motivation for human beings to overcome the barriers and challenges in life, contributing to building a better society.

Moral education is a necessary process that aims to form and develop good moral qualities for students, helping them to live civilly, integrate and contribute to society. Moral education includes the following contents: Concept of morality: Morality is the standards and principles that regulate the behaviour and relationship of human beings with each other and society. Morality is the good qualities of human beings according to the moral standards of a particular class. Nature of moral education: Moral education transforms the system of moral norms from the external demands of society on individuals into the internal demands of individuals, into the beliefs, needs, and habits of the educated person. "Nowadays it seems that moral education is no longer considered necessary. Attention is wholly centered on intelligence, while the heart life is ignored." - George Sand.<sup>2</sup> Objectives and tasks of moral education: Moral education aims to form and develop good moral qualities for students, helping them to live civilly, integrate and contribute to society. The task of moral education is to convey, explain, illustrate and practice the norms, rules, and principles of morality in life.

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<sup>1</sup> Singer, Peter, *A Companion to Ethics*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> George Sand. <https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/moral-education.html>.

Methods of moral education: Methods of moral education are the ways and measures to implement moral education for students. There are many methods of moral education, such as teaching, discussion, exercise, participation in social activities, art, sports, practice, simulation, games, storytelling, reading books, watching movies, writing essays, evaluation, encouragement, praise, criticism, correction, guidance, counselling, conflict resolution, cooperation, competition, listening, observation, reflection, self-awareness, self-regulation.

In today's modern society, human beings, machines, and money have significantly impacted society's moral behaviour. The consequences that society has and is bearing are corruption, exploitation, theft, murder, robbery or a more organized way of terrorism. Among those threats, schools are also facing an alarming problem: the improper behaviour of the students of the current generation in the era of technology.

Children are the future of society. Every child needs to enjoy the best education environment regarding moral qualities and lifestyle to develop positive behaviours and attitudes to become perfect, practical people for society. "We must have moral education in the schools, anti-bullying programs, but this does not mean programs to feminize boys." - Christina Hoff Sommers.<sup>3</sup> Because, after all, the ultimate goal of education is not a place to train bright minds to become engineers, doctors or teachers but to create people with knowledge expressed through civilized, emotional and responsible lifestyles. In addition, children need to be educated in morality so that when they grow up, they will have a solid psychological foundation with a firm will to resist and repel social evils.

Nowadays, many schools have also started to study the causes of moral decline in students' lifestyles to develop appropriate solutions. Morality is not only knowledge that is taught in subjects called "Ethics" or "Civic Education", but it needs to be transmitted in many forms with many different subjects such as language, literature, science, ... Especially, in this education career, the dedication of generations of teachers in the human cultivation career cannot be lacking. They will be the ones who connect and bring moral values closer to learners in the most effective way. Let's join hands to build and create a bright future for the next generation with the most basic, core environment - moral education.

There are many methods of moral education for students, depending on the objectives, content and specific circumstances. One popular method nowadays is the teaching method, which is the traditional method used to convey knowledge, principles, and rules of morality to students. This method is often used in ethics lessons or activities such as flag salutes, class activities, and team activities. Discussion method: This interactive method is used to stimulate, develop and exchange opinions, views, and attitudes on ethical issues. This method is often used in group activities or cases related to ethics. "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." - Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>4</sup> Practice method: This experiential method is used to train, reinforce and test the qualities and behaviours of students' morality. This method is often used in practical activities, such as organizing visits, picnics, volunteer activities, extracurricular activities, festivals, and traditional culture.

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### **What are the challenges of moral education in today's society?**

In today's society, moral education is facing many significant challenges. Some of the main challenges are:

Moral values are eroded due to the influence of pragmatism, materialism, and hedonism. Many people ignore traditional moral values, live recklessly, compete, abuse freedom, violate the law, and lack responsibility for themselves, their families and society.

There is a lack of attention, focus, and consistency in moral education from influential factors such as family, school, and society. Many families do not have the time, knowledge, or style to educate their children morally. Many schools only emphasize teaching and evaluating academic results and do not care about moral and civic education for students. Many agencies, organizations, and associations do not have activities, programs, or environments to morally educate their staff, members, workers, or civil servants.

The complexity, diversity and rapidity of science, technology, economy, culture, and society development. Many people do not have the awareness or skills to absorb, use and control the achievements of science and technology in a helpful, responsible and ethical way. Many people cannot adapt and contribute to international integration and globalization. What solutions are needed to improve moral education in today's society?

To improve moral education in today's society, there needs to be consensus, unity, motivation and cooperation of all relevant factors. Some essential solutions are:

It built and implemented a comprehensive, scientific, effective, and appropriate moral education policy that suits society's reality and trends. The policy of moral education needs to have the participation, contribution and feedback of the stakeholders such as the state, the school, the family, the society, the political and social organizations, the scientists, the teachers, the writers, the journalists, the leaders, the exemplary figures.

They strengthened and enhanced the role, responsibility, and style of the factors of moral education, such as the family, the school, and the society. The family must be the first and most crucial place to educate children on morality. Parents need time, knowledge, skills, love, care, listening, guidance, advice, and role models for children. The school needs to be the second and principal place to educate students on morality. Teachers need competence, morality, passion, creativity, flexibility, coordination, evaluation, reward, and student discipline. Society needs to be the third and supplementary place to educate morality for the people. The agencies, organizations, and associations need activities, programs, and environments to educate morality for cadres, members, workers, and civil servants.

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<sup>3</sup> Christina Hof Sommers. <https://www.quotesofquote.com/2023/08/isolated-15-selected-quotes-from.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. <http://aquotation.com/quote/theodore-roosevelt/educate-man-mind-morals-menace.html>

“Moral education, as I understand it, is not about inculcating obedience to law or cultivating self-virtue, it is rather about finding within us an ever-increasing sense of the worth of creation. It is about how we can develop and deepen our intuitive sense of beauty and creativity.” - Andrew Linzey.<sup>5</sup>

Innovating and developing moral education's content, methods, forms, and means. The content of moral education needs to have a harmonious combination of traditional and modern moral values, national and international moral values, and joint and specific moral values. The methods of moral education need to have a reasonable combination of traditional and modern techniques, direct and indirect methods, and theoretical and practical methods. Moral education must be diverse, rich, attractive, interesting, close, friendly, and easy to absorb. The means of moral education need to exploit, apply, and control the achievements of science and technology, especially information technology—in a conscious, respectful and ethical way.<sup>6</sup>

Moral education is a necessary process to form and develop the personality, qualities and ethical behaviour of human beings. Moral education has many benefits for individuals and society, but it can also encounter some harm if it is not implemented reasonably and scientifically.

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### **Some benefits of moral education are:**

Moral education helps people be aware of moral values and act according to justice, fairness and humanity. Moral education allows people to develop their full potential strengths and contribute to the progress and prosperity of the country. According to the Confucian idea of human education, Moral education helps people maintain essential social relationships, such as king-subject, father-son, husband-wife, siblings, and friends. Moral education helps people live for others, family, and community with solidarity, patriotism, and environmental protection. Some harms of moral education are:

Moral education can be exploited to propagate distorted ideologies, unscientific views, and moral values unsuitable for society's reality and needs. Moral education can cause homogenization, lack of creativity, criticism, and respect for diversity and difference in human beings. Moral education can lead to contradictions and conflicts between traditional and modern moral values and between the moral values of different regions, ethnic groups, and religions. Moral education can cause passivity, dependence, lack of initiative in learning and working, and lack of responsibility for oneself and society.

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### **The role of moral education:**

First, morality is one of the methods and essential aspects to adjust the behaviour and lifestyle of human beings, that is, the adjustment voluntarily, consciously, not forced, ... the adjustment goes from minimum to maximum in all human behaviour. Human beings create many methods to adjust behaviour, such as law, politics, religion, and culture, ... but there is no method to change behaviour as widely as morality. As long as human beings exist, the social relationship of morality remains. For all activities and behaviour of individuals to be consistent with the requirements of social progress, it is necessary to adjust morality. History has proven this: all the moral traditions of the Vietnamese people from ancient times: filial piety, courtesy, benevolence, patriotism, and love for people... to the present day, it is still passed on, and the next generation is still implemented. Moral personality is only a part, a factor of morality, and it is only the totality of virtuous qualities of personality such as needs, emotions, beliefs, knowledge, ideals, and moral abilities, ... formed in a historical-specific way, expressed, implemented in all living activities of oneself as an individual.<sup>7</sup>

Second, morality will contribute to promoting or hindering the development of society. Morality - as a form of social consciousness - affects society's and economic life. It contributes to promoting or slowing economic growth. If the impact is in the same direction as the existence of society, then it will enable the existence of society in general, the mode of production in particular. At this time, the positive qualities of workers' personalities are announced; the relationship between people will become more friendly and friendly, and society will develop more harmoniously. If the impact is opposite to the development and progress of society, then it will hinder the development of society. In addition, this impact can have two simultaneous effects, promoting social development in one aspect and restricting it in another. Moral personality includes honest emotion, ethical belief, knowledge, and ideals. These aspects are only applied in life when applied thoroughly; they are expressed through practical abilities and qualities, thereby saying each person's ethical skills and qualities.

“A man's ethical behaviour should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties and needs; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.” - Albert Einstein.<sup>8</sup>

Third, morality expresses the noble humanistic and human values. It humanizes human beings and human society. In society, if people are self-conscious, know how to live for each other and others, learn how to love, have a "heart" and give in, help, and share ... then that will be a civilized society—excellent and many humanistic, humanitarian values. Moral personality also expresses humanistic human values, but an honest personality has a social nature. Moral personality has two aspects: positive and negative. On the positive side, it helps one to adjust ethical behaviour to achieve humanistic, humanitarian values.

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Linzey. <http://www.ivu.org/people/quotes/lawmoral.html>

<sup>6</sup> Singer, P., *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Einstein. "Personal Quotes/ Biography". [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com).

On the contrary, the negative side is when people want to attain truth, goodness, and beauty, and they have ambition, they will use many different tricks to achieve. Not only that, but a negative moral personality affects social aspects. It makes moral values fade, and human beings' honest personalities deteriorate.

According to Marx and Engels, human beings had been active before founding the theories and principles, including philosophy and ethics. That is, they had produced the material resources necessary for life. The social consciousness of human beings is a reflection of the social existence of human beings. Different forms of social consciousness depend on the mode of reflecting social existence and the specific impact on social life. Ethics is also a form of social consciousness that reflects a separate field in the social reality of human beings. And just like the views of philosophy, politics, art, and religion, they are of the nature of the superstructure. The socio-economic system is the source of this view that changes according to the basis that gave birth to it. For example, Adapting to the feudal system, based on the exploitation of the serfs tied to the land, is the morality of the serfdom system. Adapting to the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of wage workers, is the morality of the bourgeoisie. The socialist system creates a morality that expresses the cooperative relationship based on the comradeship and the mutual assistance relationship of the socialist workers liberated from exploitation. Thus, the emergence and development of morality, ultimately, is a process determined by the development of the mode of production.

"Morality is a method of regulating human behaviour: Humans have created many methods to regulate human behaviour: customs, traditions, religion, law, morality... In terms of morality, the evaluation of human behaviour according to moral standards and rules is expressed in concepts of good and evil, honour and disgrace, justice and injustice. In any historical era, people are evaluated in this way. The concepts of good and evil, standards and rules of human behaviour change from one century to another, from one nation to another. And in a class society, it always represents the interests of a certain class. The standards (norms) and moral rules are the requirements of society or a certain class for the behaviour of each individual. It includes the behaviour of individuals towards society (towards the homeland, the state, their class and the enemy class...) and towards others. Public opinion of society, or a class, nation recognizes certain moral standards and rules. Here, the individual's concept of his duty to society and others (behavioural standards) is the premise of the individual's moral behaviour. Being a member of society, people must receive certain education about moral consciousness, an evaluation of their behaviour and in certain circumstances also suffer the reproach of conscience... Individuals must transform the demands of society and their manifestations into needs, purposes and interests in their activities. The manifestation of this transformation is the individual's behaviour complying with prohibitions, encouragements, and standards in line with the demands of society... Therefore, moral adjustment is voluntary, and morality is the choice of man."<sup>9</sup>

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### **The origin and nature of morality:**

Morality is a form of social consciousness that originates from social existence, human relationships with nature and relationships between people in life.

Morality is a system of society's viewpoints, concepts, principles, standards, and values, so morality belongs to the spiritual realm of social life. It reflects social existence. Morality was born and developed due to the need to regulate the relationship between individuals and the joint activities of people in all areas of social life. The moral relationship expresses the human relationship, first of all, the relationship in production. The economic basis of society determines the moral consciousness of society. As the material life of society changes and society progresses, moral concepts, principles, and standards also vary and are increasingly perfected. Therefore, morality is a phenomenon with social history. At different historical stages, in other classes, there are different views on good and bad, good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, conscience and consciencelessness, duties, responsibilities, etc. In history, there is the morality of primitive society, the morality of slave-owning society, the morality of feudal society, the morality of capitalist society, and the morality of socialist society.

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### **The nature of morality.**

The characteristic of morality is the conscious and voluntary capacity of human beings for the Good. The natural law of the existence and development of human society requires people living in the community to adhere to the principles and standards set by society to regulate their relationships. There are many social norms, among which are the principles and norms implemented voluntarily to regulate the relationship between this individual and other individuals and society for human happiness and social progress. These are called moral principles and norms.

Human moral activity is an activity that includes consciousness and behaviour for the Good. At the same time, moral activity is an activity that is voluntary and self-conscious. Voluntariness and self-consciousness are characteristics of human society. Self-consciousness means understanding that one's work benefits society and the desire to act for that benefit. Voluntariness is to perform actions not because of external compulsion but due to the subject's self-consciousness. Animals with instinctive living activities cannot have the social nature and self-consciousness of humans. Voluntariness and self-consciousness are closely related, forming one of the foundations of human freedom. The moral consciousness of conscience, honour, self-esteem, etc., has a high level of voluntariness and self-consciousness, allowing people to self-determine, thereby acting freely. That is the adequate power of morality.

Moral education is an indispensable factor in the formation and development of humans. It not only helps people understand more about good values but also helps them know how to behave correctly in society. For individuals, moral education helps them develop comprehensively, not only intellectually but also in terms of personality. It allows people to recognize moral values that distinguish right from wrong and good from evil. At the same time, moral education also helps people know how to behave correctly, respect others, and contribute to building a civilized, progressive society. For society, moral

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas W. Yacek, Mark E. Jonas, Kevin H. Gary, *Moral Education in the 21st Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2023.

education helps build a civilized, peaceful society. A society with morality is one where everyone respects each other, respects the law, and contributes to community building. Moreover, moral education also helps prevent moral degradation, contributing to the protection of traditional cultural values.

Human morality: "Good moral character is essential for individuals and society. Here are some reasons: Personal development: Good morals help individuals develop compassion, benevolence, and self-esteem. It helps us become better people, living a more meaningful life. Building relationships: Good morals help us build and maintain good relationships with others. It helps us become good friends, neighbours, and citizens. Creating a better society: When everyone adheres to moral principles, society becomes fairer and more peaceful. Morality helps us build a society where everyone is respected and has the right to live a happy and peaceful life. Supporting decisions: Good morals help us make the right decisions based on fairness, honesty, and respect. Building trust: When we act morally, we build trust in personal and professional relationships. This trust is the foundation of all successful relationships. Therefore, good morals not only help us become better people but also help build a better society. Morality is an indispensable part of human life. This issue is significant globally today: prosperous countries or fair societies, thriving families all thanks to the moral values of each person."<sup>10</sup>

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**Reference:**

1. Douglas W. Yacek, Mark E. Jonas, Kevin H. Gary, *Moral Education in the 21st Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2023.
2. Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.
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9. Theodore Roosevelt. <http://aquotation.com/quote/theodore-roosevelt/educate-man-mind-morals-menace.html>.

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<sup>10</sup> Barry Chazan, *What is Moral Education*, This chapter is based on chapter 5 "The Moral Situation" in B. Chazan and Jonas Soltis, editors.(1973). *Moral Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.