

## DEVELOPING STUDENTS' MORAL REASONING SKILL THROUGH PERSONAL GUIDANCE

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### ABSTRAK

*The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of personal guidance in developing students' moral reasoning. To this end, a quasi-experimental study with non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design was applied. The data were collected using a moral reasoning questionnaire that consisted of three aspects, compliance, truth, and justice. The samples of the study were 66 8th-grade students of SMP N 2 Ciledug, recruited using purposive sampling technique. The result showed that personal guidance was effective in developing students' moral reasoning skill. The result of this study can be used as a basis to consider the development of guidance and counseling services, particularly personal guidance, for improving adolescents' moral reasoning skill.*

*Keywords:* Moral Reasoning, Personal Guidance

### INTRODUCTION

As an individual and social creature, a person often faces various situation and problems that contains moral dilemma, a situation or issue that requires individuals to consider a range of values in order to make an action decision (Slavin, 2011). Individuals are demanded to give an appropriate response so that their decision or behavior complies with the rule, norms, customs, and laws prevailing in the society. Individual's moral decision-making process when facing moral dilemma is affected by various factors, including the moral reasoning (Bartels dkk. 2015).

Moral reasoning occurs when an individual faces an event, reality, or problems that are related to moral dilemma (Abdolmohammadi dan Baker, 2006). Moral reasoning plays a pivotal role and

significantly affects the moral decision-making process (Zeidler 2005) (O'Flaherty dan Gleeson, 2014). Furthermore, it serves as a foundation of ethical behavior that complies with social and religious norms (Rose, 2012).

Proper moral reasoning skill allows individuals to consider a behavior in accordance with personal and social norms (O'Flaherty dan Doyle, 2014). As a cognitive skill, it is useful to address situations where moral dilemma exists (Gordon dan Heincke, 2013).

Moral reasoning may develop one's moral competency, a pivotal skill that allows children to distinguish the bad from the good, allowing them to prevent bad external influences (Borba, 2008). It is also useful in one's personal and social life (O'Flaherty dan Gleeson, 2014). s found in Candee &

Kohlberg's (1987) study, individuals with higher moral reasoning skills exhibit more consistency when facing situations with moral dilemmas (Horstink, 2012).

Moral reasoning is important for individuals, whether a child, adolescent, and adult, to survive. The empirical finding shows that when moral development is emphasized during childhood and adolescence period, individuals tend to be (1) confident and (2) cooperative person, (3) they understand how to properly behave in different situations, and (4) in the next life period, they maintain a healthy and balanced life, as well as (5) be able to show empathy (Astuti, 2014).

Moral reasoning predicts adolescents' delinquency, where adolescents with lower moral reasoning skill exhibit higher delinquency (Beerthuisen, Brugman, and Basinger, 2013). This is consistent with Kohlberg's assumption that despite various factors leading to adolescents' delinquency, high moral reasoning skill may at least hinder their delinquent behavior (Duska and Whelan, 1982). Accordingly, a proper moral measurement does not only address the visible moral behavior but also examines one's moral reasoning that underlies the behavior.

A survey on adolescents' moral reasoning skill using moral reasoning instrument on 230 students aged between 12-14 years old in SMPN 2 Ciledug, Cirebon regency, showed that 71% of the students' moral reasoning was categorized as high (autonomous moral reasoning), while 29% of them was categorized as moderate (semi-autonomous moral reasoning). This result indicate that an autonomous moral reasoning cannot be achieved by every individual in adolescence period. Whereas Piaget asserts that an autonomous moral development stage should be achieved during adolescence period (Duska dan Whelan, 1982). Moral reasoning is a cognitive skill developed to make a morality-related deliberation based on values and norms.

(Hidayat, 2013) Developed an effective group guidance with *halaqoh* mentoring to improve senior high school students' moral

competence. Meanwhile (Kasman, 2013) also develop a personal-social guidance that is effective to develop senior high school students' moral competence. However, studies that report intervention in guidance and counseling to develop early adolescent's moral reasoning in junior high school level are still limited. The existing studies are conducted with correlational and descriptive approaches, thus can only explain the relationship between moral reasoning and other variables.

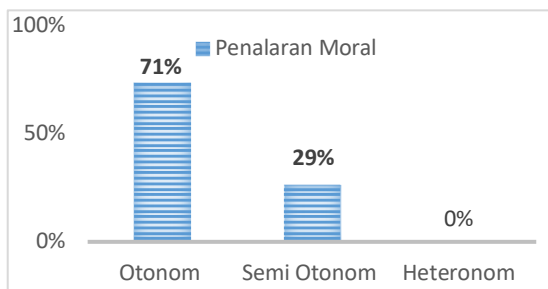
Accordingly, the present study aimed to find out a personal guidance formula that can be used to develop adolescents' moral reasoning in junior high school level. In this study, the discussion concerns with the importance of personal guidance in developing students' moral reasoning, which aims to help them solve their personal problems. In addition, the effectiveness of personal guidance in developing moral reasoning is also described.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was quasi-experimental study with nonequivalent control group design. The population of the study was 8th grade students in SMPN 2 Ciledug, Cirebon Regency in 2016/2017 academic year, comprising of seven classes with 230 students in total. The participants were recruited using purposive sampling technique. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire in the form of story. Each story provides three alternative answers, each of which reflected the participants' moral reasoning. This instrument was adapted from Piaget's (1948) moral reasoning instrument. The stories in the instrument was adjusted to the participants' need and characteristics. Once the data was collected, they were analyzed using Mann-Whitney formula.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis result showed that the majority of participants' moral reasoning was categorized as "autonomous". The data is displayed in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.*  
The Profile of Moral Reasoning

In general, the profile of participants' moral reasoning was categorized as "autonomous", it could be seen from their ability to put themselves in others' position, consider various reason to make a moral decision, awareness of the rule and adjustment, preference on punishment that can redress victim's damage and make the perpetrators aware of their fault and improve their behaviors. However, some students' moral reasoning was categorized as semi-autonomous. This indicates they were still doubt to put themselves in other people's position, they had not deliberated various moral reasons when making a decision and had not been fully aware that rules could be adjusted, and preferred punishment to redress victims' damage and made the perpetrators aware of their fault and improve their behaviors.

This study showed that some students had not possessed an ideal moral reasoning skill. Piaget (Duska dan Whelan 1982) argues that the level of autonomous moral reasoning should be achieved in adolescence period Since their moral reasoning develops along with the stages of cognitive development (Slavin 2011).

Junior high school students, according to Piaget, undergoes formal operational cognitive development where they are able to consider any possibility to solve a problem and are able to be responsible based on a hypothesis or proposition (Hurlock 1980). In other words, adolescents have been able to view their problems from various perspective and solve them based on a range of factors as the basis of their deliberation.

Out of seven classes of 8th grade in SMPN 2 Ciledug, five classes exhibit an autonomous moral reasoning, while the other two classes' moral reasoning was categorized as semi-autonomous. From theoretical perspectives, they had not achieved an autonomous moral reasoning. In this regard, Colby and Kohlber (Kurtines, Gewirtz, dan Soelaeman, 1992) suggest that changes in development during certain period of time may cover an improvement that determines the next reasoning stages. However, it is also followed by decreases in reasoning in pattern. This is supported by Colby and Kohlberg's (Kurtines dkk. 1992) finding that early adolescent (13-14 years old) exhibit a score that indicates that they are in stage 2 (instrumental relativist orientation) and stage 3 (interpersonal relationship orientation), while some of them are between stage 3 and 4. In general, the result of the present study showed most of adolescent were in transitional period.

Another factor that may influence one's moral reasoning is their passive social interaction, especially when individuals move from relatively-homogeneous environment to more heterogeneous environment. Martin Hofman (Santrock, 2007) explains that in a heterogeneous environment, individuals face various contradictions among moral concepts they have already received and experienced in family and home environment.. In this point, adolescents begin to recognize a set of belief and begin to be aware that their belief is only a part of other people's belief, which may influence their moral reasoning. In the same vein (Eisenberg, Zhou, dan Koller 2001) stated that moral reasoning develops along with one's age. When adolescents grow older, they may have better social interaction, empathy, and role-taking.

Moral reasoning development, according to Piaget, concerns with a gradual shift from heteronomous morality to autonomous morality (Nucci dan Narváez 2008).

Piaget found that the achievement of moral reasoning to autonomous stage last for a life-long and begins in 12 years old, indicated by one's ability to make

generalization, relates one moral rules to others, and progressively extend the moral rules to achieve universality (Duska dan Whelan, 1982).

Students with autonomous moral reasoning shows that they are free from heteronomous moral restraint because, from cognitive perspective, they have been mature. Accordingly, such students are able to see an action from different perspectives and can make deliberation based on their own responsibility. In this context, heteronomous restraint refers to a feeling of obligation to obey certain rules and unilateral respect, i.e., respect to adults' authority and rules.

Moral reasoning consists of three aspects, namely compliance, truth, and justice. Compliance aspect involves indicator of realizing rule as a free, adjustable decision and respecting the agreed rule, the score related to this aspect, based on the story of negligent behavior dilemma, was 85.4%. Truth aspect involves indicator of speaking truth, seeing intentions when making a decision. The score related to this aspect, based on the story of stealing and lying behavior dilemma, was 78.4%. Meanwhile justice aspect involves indicators of acting based on equal rights and responsibilities, agreeing punishment that can make perpetrators realize their fault and improve their behaviors. The score related to this aspect, based on the story of punishment and authority dilemma, was 80.3%. The truth aspect obtained the lowest score, while the compliance aspect obtained the highest score.

This supports Piaget's statement that truth, in the story of stealing and lying, is a complex and serious issue (Duska dan Whelan, 1982). Lying is children's innate tendency, especially when they are in heteronomous stage, thus it may attach to egocentric mindset. Moreover, Piaget states that moral realism in children related to a lie

may last longer than other behavior due to various factors.

Changes in students' moral reasoning skill, especially in experimental group, were indicated by the comparison between pretest and posttest score. Accordingly, it is necessary to monitor students' behavior in classroom in order to identify the changes in moral reasoning skill since behavior reflects one's moral reasoning (Setiono, 1982).

Students with semi-autonomous moral reasoning should be given a personal guidance to improve their moral reasoning. Students with ideal moral reasoning are able to deliberate any moral issues in accordance with their personal and social norms (O'Flaherty dan Doyle, 2014). Moral reasoning is important since it is useful to address situations where moral dilemma exists (Gordon dan Heincke, 2013). Moreover, individuals with high moral reasoning are needed in the working world (Lewis dan Young, 2000).

Moral reasoning may develop one's moral competency, a pivotal skill that allows children to differ the bad from the good. It is important to internalize moral reasoning skill to students, in addition to academic competence, since it is useful for their personal and social life (O'Flaherty dan Gleeson 2014).

The effectiveness of Personal guidance in developing students' moral reasoning skill. The personal guidance is considered effective when there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test score of experimental and control group. In this regard, the pretest score of experimental and control group was not significantly different, meanwhile there was a significant difference between experimental group and control group's posttest score. In other words, the intervention (i.e., guidance) given in the experimental group affects their score. The data is displayed in Figure 2.

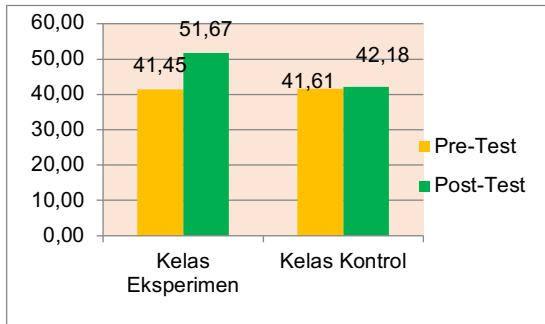


Figure 2.

### Pretest and Posttest Score of Experimental and Control Groups

Mann-Whitney test result on the pre-test score exhibited no significant difference between the two groups, the significance level (*Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)*) was  $0.954 > \alpha = 0,05$ , indicating that  $H_0$  was accepted and  $H_1$  was rejected. The result is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

### Mann-Whitney Test Result on Pretest Score

Class	N	Ranks		Statistical test	
		Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Post-Test
Experimental Group	33	50.00	1650.00	Wilcoxon W	561.000
Emotional	33	17.00	561.00	Z	-7,038
Total	66			Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	.000

The Mann-Whitney test result on the post-test score shows a significant difference between experimental group's and control group's score with significance level (*Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)*) of  $0.000 < \alpha = 0,05$ , indicating that  $H_0$  was rejected  $H_1$  was accepted. In other words, there was a significant difference between the two groups after the treatment was given. The following table 2 displays the analysis result

Table 2

### Mann-Whitney Test Result on Posttest Score

Class	N	Ranks		Statistical test	
		Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Post-Test
Experimental Group	33	33.64	1110.00	Wilcoxon W	1101.000
Emotional	33	33.36	1101.00	Z	-.058
Total	66			Asymp. p. sig. (2-tailed)	.954

## CONCLUSION

The result of the study indicates that personal guidance is effective to develop adolescents' moral reasoning in junior high school level. Moral reasoning skill plays pivotal role in adolescents to determine moral issues. For school counselors, the result of the present study could be used as the basis to consider developing a guidance and counseling service, particularly personal guidance, to develop moral reasoning skill. For future researchers, the result of this study could be used as a reference for future studies on moral reasoning and development of personal guidance.

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