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## Investigation of moral maturity and tolerance trends of primary school students in terms of various variables

**Gokhan Sengun\***, Faculty of Education, Karamanoglu Mehmetbey University, Karaman 70200, Turkey

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### Abstract

Recently, morality and tolerance are among the most important concepts of education. The upbringing of morally mature children as tolerant individuals is a vital factor for individuals to develop a relationship. Moral maturity refers to the state of being competent in terms of moral emotion, thought, judgement, attitude and behaviour. A total of 43 boys and 151 girls from Altindag district of Ankara formed a sample group of 194 children. Personal Information Form, Moral Maturity Scale and Tolerance Tendency Scale were used in this study. The results revealed that according to the gender of the students, it is seen that there is a difference in tolerance acceptance, tolerance value and tolerance empathy levels. It is seen that girls' acceptance and tolerance empathy levels are higher than boys. It is seen that there is a difference in tolerance empathy levels according to the educational level of parents. It is seen that there is a difference in tolerance empathy and tolerance acceptance levels according to the working status of parents of students. According to the monthly income level of students' families, there was no significant difference between moral maturity, tolerance empathy, tolerance value and tolerance acceptance levels. This is thought to be due to the fact that most of the parents have a similar income level. According to the number of siblings of students, there was a significant difference in tolerance empathy and tolerance value levels. It was found that there was a relationship between students' level of moral maturity and tolerance acceptance level. It was found that there is a relationship between tolerance empathy, tolerance acceptance level and tolerance value of students.

**Keywords:** Moral maturity, tolerance.

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\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Gokhan Sengun**, Faculty of Education, Karamanoglu Mehmetbey University, Karaman 70200, Turkey. *E-mail address:* [gkhansengun@gmail.com](mailto:gkhansengun@gmail.com) / Tel.: +90-505-6637473

## 1. Introduction

Moral maturity enables an individual to feel any immorality and deviation in their conscience immediately in their emotions, thoughts, judgements, attitudes and behaviours. An individual with moral maturity is expected to be a trustworthy, responsible, respectful, fair, self-controlling, good person with empathy ability and above all a good citizen who complies with laws and rules. Tolerance is considered as a moral dimension based on equality, justice and respect and avoiding harm to others. An individual of moral maturity is expected to be a trustworthy, responsible, respectful, fair, self-controlling, empathy-capable good person and above all a good citizen who complies with laws and rules (Lickona, 1991).

It is seen in Kohlberg's own studies (Kohlberg, 1987) and in the studies of other thinkers in the field of ethics that Kohlberg's levels and stages of moral judgement development are also evaluated as levels of moral maturity (Holland, 1979). Today, tolerance is defined as one of the basic values that individuals' rights and freedoms are guaranteed, where individual freedoms are important and that individuals should live together with their differences. Tolerance is generally accepted as one of the democratic values. As a matter of fact, tolerance has become a concept which is mentioned in subjects such as values education, moral education, citizenship education, peace education and democracy education. Empathy is one of the three dimensions of the Tolerance Tendency Scale. In the literature, it is seen that the education given in the family is very important for the development of tolerance in children and the level of tolerance increases with age. This study investigated the moral maturity and tolerance tendencies of fourth-grade students in terms of various variables. The purpose of this study was to investigate the moral maturity and tolerance tendencies of fourth-grade students in terms of various variables.

## 2. Theoretical framework

According to Kohlberg, the vast majority of people are at the level of 'traditional morality olan, the second level of moral development in terms of moral maturity, and very few people can move to the highest level of moral maturity, the duzey post-tradition' level of morality. According to Kant, where Kohlberg was influenced by him, reaching the highest level of moral maturity requires the ability to judge actions according to universal principles (Habermas, 1982). It is seen in the studies that the parents have an effect on the personality structure and self-perception of their children. For this reason, as a result of the consistency of the parents' attitudes towards their children, children show consistent and harmonious behaviours, and if the parents' attitudes are not consistent, children may show inconsistent and discordant behaviours (Kaya, Bozaslan & Genc, 2012; Seven, 2008).

According to Kohlberg, the stages of moral judgement are a very good way of predicting moral behaviour. To behave morally at the highest level requires an advanced stage of moral judgement (Kohlberg, 1964). The personality structure of the children is shaped within the family and the children reflect the education they receive from their families to their environment. According to Lickona, moral maturity consists of three dimensions: moral emotion, moral thought and moral behaviour. Of these dimensions, moral behaviour, as a result of moral feelings and thoughts, states the level and level of moral maturity of individuals (Lickona, 1991). In this context, moral maturity and tolerance tendencies of children are shaped by family and society (Yaprak, 2007). Family's approach to the child plays an important role in the growth and development of the child (Kanak & Pekdogan, 2015).

## 3. Method

The research was conducted to investigate the moral maturity and tolerance tendency of fourth-grade students in terms of various variables. The model used in the research, the selected universe, and the information about how samples and data are collected and analysed are given below. The comparative relational survey model was chosen as a descriptive research technique. The research is a

descriptive study in screening type. Screening models are research approaches aiming to describe a past or present situation (Karasar, 2005).

#### **4. Participants**

Participants in this study consist of fourth-grade students attending public elementary schools in the Altindag district of Ankara in the 2019–2020 academic year.

#### **5. Data collection and analysis**

I applied these scales to the students attending public elementary schools in Altindag district of Ankara province in the fall semester of 2019–2020 academic year. I analysed the data by using SPSS 20.0 program. In the analysis of the data, *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlation tests were used. In this study, Personal Information Form, Moral Maturity Scale and Tolerance Tendency Scale are used.

#### **6. Research instruments**

##### **6.1. Personal information form**

The Personal Information Form developed by the researcher was used to collect information about the demographic characteristics of the students. While preparing the Personal Information Form, first of all, the objectives of the research were taken into consideration and various researches conducted in our country were examined. As a result of scanning the relevant literature and taking expert opinion, the main variables that are thought to affect the students' choice of the field were determined and the Personal Information Form was finalised. Personal Information Form of the student: gender, age, average income of the family, parental education level and so on. The students were asked not to write names on the Personal Information Form, and they were provided to respond more easily and sincerely.

##### **6.2. Moral maturity scale**

Moral Maturity Scale It is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 66 items and aims to measure the moral maturity levels of individuals. The validity and reliability data of the Moral Maturity Scale were obtained from 830 students randomly selected from Samsun central high schools in May 2007. In order to determine the validity of the Moral Maturity Scale, expert opinions were taken first. For the construct validity of the scale, factor analysis was performed and factor loadings of the items were collected in the first factor. In addition, item-total score correlation coefficients ( $p < 0.01$ ) were found to be significant. The criterion validity of the scale was assessed by the Determination of Values Test (DIT). The correlation coefficient between the DIT's trans-tradition level score (P) and the Moral Maturity Scale scores was found to be significant at 0.21 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Test–retest, test-quiz and Cronbach's alpha reliability control methods were used for the reliability of the Moral Maturity Scale. The test–retest reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.88, the test-half test reliability coefficient was 0.89, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.93. According to these results, it was concluded that the moral maturity scale was valid and reliable.

##### **6.3. Tolerance tendency scale**

As a result of the exploratory factor analysis of the Tolerance Tendency Scale, an 18-item measurement tool consisting of three sub-factors explaining 47.97% of the total variance was obtained. These sub-factors are 'value', 'acceptance' and 'empathy'. The internal consistency reliability coefficient calculated for the whole scale was 0.89: 0.86 for the first factor, 0.70 for the

second factor and 0.63 for the third factor. The test–retest reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.84: 0.83 for the first factor, 0.73 for the second factor and 0.82 for the third factor; the item-total correlations of the sub-scales ranged from 0.43 to 0.63 and it was found that all the differences between the averages of the 27% sub-parent groups were significant. As a result of the measurements made with the scale, it was observed that tolerance tendency of primary school students was higher, girls were more tolerant, tolerance tendency decreased as the level of class increased and students’ tolerance tendency increased as the level of education of mothers increased; it was determined that the education level of the fathers did not lead to a differentiation.

#### 6.4. Data collection, evaluation and analysis

The permissions of the scale used in the study were obtained by the researchers from the individuals who adopted the scale and did the validity and reliability studies. With the permissions obtained from Ankara Provincial Directorate of National Education, the application was realised in the fall semester of the 2018–2019 academic year and the data were collected. The schools, where the children of the sample group were present, were visited in advance, and the managers of the institutions were interviewed. Before introducing the application, the researchers introduced themselves to the children in the institutional setting. The scale and the personal information form used to collect data from children were administered to each child in a suitable and quiet environment in the classroom of their school. The data obtained from the study were analysed with SPSS 20 package program.

### 7. Findings

In this section, the statistical analyses of the data obtained in order to determine the demographic characteristics, moral maturity and tolerance tendencies of primary school students within the scope of the research were made, and the findings obtained were presented and interpreted in tables.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of students’ demographic information**

Variables	Categories	Study group	
		n	%
1. Gender of students	Girl	151	77.8
	Boy	43	22.2
2. Number of siblings	Single child	50	25.8
	Two siblings	119	61.3
	Three siblings or more	25	12.9
3. Parental education status	Primary school	3	1.5
	Secondary school	11	5.7
	High school	35	18
	University	120	61.9
	Masters	25	12.9
4. Parental workspace	Not working	68	35.1
	Worker	89	45.9
	Officer	37	19.1
5. Family income level	0–2,099 tl	6	3.1
	2,100–4,000 tl	32	16.5
	4,001 tl or more	156	80.4

Table 1 shows that 151 (77.8%) of the participants were girls and 43 (22.2%) were boys. According to the number of brothers and sisters, it was found that 50 (25.8%) were single children, 119 (61.3%) were two siblings and 25 (12.9%) were three brothers or more siblings. According to the parental education status, it was found that 3 (1.5%) were primary school graduates, 11 (5.7%) were secondary

school graduates, 35 (18%) were high school graduates, 120 (61.9%) were university graduates and 25 (12.9%) were masters graduates.

According to the parental working status variable, the number of the not working parents of the students was 68 (35.1%), the number of the working parents of the students was 89 (45.9%) while the number of working fathers was 37 (19.1%). According to the income level variable of the family of students, 6 (3.1%) of them reported that the income their family received was 0–2,099 tl, 32 (16.5%) of them said that the income their family received was 2,100–4,000 tl, 156 (80.64%) of them expressed that the income their family received was 4,001 tl or more. The finding indicates that the vast majority of the family of students has a high socio-economic level.

**Table 2. Moral maturity and tolerance tendency level by according to students’ gender ANOVA test results**

Variables	Gender	N	X	S	t	p
Moral maturity	Girl	151	197.78	11.67	1.147	0.25
	Boy	43	195.53	10.14		
Tolerance empathy	Girl	151	78.62	10.90	2.582	0.01**
	Boy	43	73.13	16.27		
Tolerance value	Girl	151	40.37	5.63	2.353	0.02*
	Boy	43	37.76	8.59		
Tolerance acceptance	Girl	151	21.11	3.89	1.258	0.21
	Boy	43	20.20	4.95		
Tolerance empathy	Girl	151	17.13	3.16	3.296	0.01**
	Boy	43	15.16	4.39		

In this study, according to Table 2, there was a significant difference according to tolerance empathy and tolerance value. As seen in this research, it can be said that tolerance empathy and tolerance value changes. Moral development is closely related to the individual’s spiritual development, mental development and personality formation (Kaya, 1993).

**Table 3. ANOVA test results tolerance empathy level according to the education level of parents of students**

Variables	Education level	N	M	S	F	p	
	Primary school	3	2.30	0.703	1.561	0.186	
	Secondary school	High school	35	1.22			0.018*
		University	120	1.11			0.045*
		Masters or Doctoral	25	1.27			0.055
		Primary school	3	2.12			0.339
Tolerance empathy	High school	11	1.22	0.018*			
	University	120	0.67	0.324			
	Masters or Doctoral	25	0.92	0.626			
	Primary school	3	2.06	0.509			
	University	11	1.11	0.045*			
	High school	35	0.67	0.324			
	Masters or Doctoral	25	0.777	0.777			

In this study, according to Table 3, there was a significant difference according to education level. As seen in this research, according to the education level of students’ family, who were secondary school and high school graduates, tolerance empathy changes.

**Table 4. ANOVA test results according to students' parents' working status tolerance empathy and tolerance acceptance level**

		Parent's Working status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	S
Tolerance Empathy	Not working	Worker	2.77	1.98	0.163
		Officer	6.68**	2.51	0.008
	Worker	Not working	-2.77	1.98	0.163
		Officer	3.90	2.40	0.106
	Officer	Not working	-6.68**	2.51	0.008
		Worker	-3.90	2.40	0.106
Tolerance Acceptance	Not working	Worker	1.49**	0.66	0.025
		Officer	1.87**	0.83	0.027
	Worker	Not working	-1.49*	0.66	0.025
		Officer	0.37	0.80	0.637
	Officer	Not working	-1.87*	0.83	0.027
		Worker	-0.37	0.80	0.637

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

In this study, according to Table 4, there was a significant difference according to parents' working status level. As seen in this research, according to parents' working status level, tolerance empathy and tolerance acceptance level changes.

**Table 5. ANOVA test results according to the tolerance value and tolerance empathy level of the number of siblings of students**

		Number of Siblings	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	S
Tolerance empathy	Single child	Two siblings	4.86*	2.08	0.02
		Three siblings or more	4.86	3.02	0.11
	Two siblings	Single child	-4.86*	2.08	0.02
		Three siblings or more	-0.008	2.71	0.99
	Three siblings or more	Single child	-4.86	3.02	0.11
		Two siblings	0.008	2.71	0.99
Tolerance value	Single child	Two siblings	2.41*	1.07	0.02
		Three siblings or more	3.62*	1.56	0.02
	Two siblings	Single child	-2.41*	1.07	0.02
		Three siblings or more	1.20	1.40	0.39
	Three siblings or more	Single child	-3.62*	1.56	0.02
		Two siblings	-1.20	1.40	0.39
Tolerance acceptance	Single child	Two siblings	1.39*	0.69	0.04
		Three siblings or more	1.02	1.01	0.31
	Two siblings	Single child	-1.39*	0.69	0.04
		Three siblings or more	-0.37	0.91	0.68
	Three siblings or more	Single child	-1.02	1.01	0.31
		Two siblings	0.37	0.91	0.68

In this study, according to Table 5, there was a significant difference according to Number of Siblings of Students. As seen in this research, according to the number of siblings of students, tolerance empathy, tolerance acceptance and tolerance acceptance level changes.

**Table 6. Relationship between moral maturity and tolerance empathy**

<i>N</i> = 194		Moral maturity	Tolerance value	Tolerance empathy	Tolerance acceptance	Tolerance empathy (sub-dimension)
Moral maturity	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.015	-0.058	-0.174*	0.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.841	0.420	0.016	0.726
Tolerance value	Pearson Correlation	-0.015	1	0.925**	0.720**	0.579**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.841		0.000	0.000	0.000
Tolerance empathy	Pearson correlation	-0.058	0.925**	1	0.881**	0.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.420	0.000		0.000	0.000
Tolerance acceptance	Pearson correlation	-0.174*	0.720**	0.881**	1	0.609**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.016	0.000	0.000		0.000
Tolerance empathy (sub-dimension)	Pearson correlation	0.025	0.579**	0.789**	0.609**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.726	0.000	0.000	0.000	

In this study, according to Table 6, there was a relationship between moral maturity and tolerance empathy level. Being a social being, communicating with other people and developing various forms of relationship requires the existence of a great deal of moral values (Hatunoglu, 2003).

## 8. Conclusions and discussions

According to the gender of the students, it is seen that there is a difference in tolerance acceptance, tolerance value and tolerance empathy levels. It is seen that girls' acceptance and tolerance empathy levels are higher than boys. It is seen that there is a difference in tolerance empathy levels according to the educational level of parents. It is seen that there is a difference in tolerance empathy and tolerance acceptance levels according to the working status of parents of students. According to the monthly income level of students' families, there was no significant difference between moral maturity, tolerance empathy, tolerance value and tolerance acceptance levels. This is thought to be due to the fact that most of the parents have a similar income level. According to the number of siblings of students, there was a significant difference in tolerance empathy, tolerance value levels. It was found that there was a relationship between students' level of moral maturity and tolerance acceptance level. It was found that there is a relationship between tolerance empathy, tolerance acceptance level and tolerance value of students. The individual is accepted to the extent that he or she adheres to the rules and values that the society accepts. It is important for the human being who cannot live alone that individuals are accepted in society, they can adapt to society, and they comply with some rules adopted by society (Ozkara, 2010).

## 9. Suggestions

In line with the results of this research, the following recommendations have been developed. It can be said that in order to develop moral maturity and tolerance trends of primary school students, it is necessary to provide a suitable environment at home and at school. What is important in strengthening students' perceptions of moral maturity and tolerance is to give the message that they



are qualified individually and as a group. Parents and teachers should educate students about moral maturity and tolerance.

In order to increase students' perceptions of moral maturity and tolerance, school principals need to set high but achievable goals, provide a regular and serious learning environment, and create appropriate conditions. Moral maturity and tolerance trends are based on individual influences, inspiring them, not disregarding their individual needs, and gathering them around certain common goals and visions. Finally, a qualitative study can be conducted based on moral maturity and tolerance about what can be done to improve students' perception of moral maturity and tolerance.

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