



## **Kohlberg in Mumbai: Moral Reasoning of Twenty-first Century Indian Adolescents**

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### **Abstract**

“What makes a twenty-first century learner? Are adolescents today equipped with all necessary twenty-first century skills? How far is moral reasoning a significant ability in shaping the intellectual minds of a twenty-first century learner?” According to Gordon & Heincke (2013) the ability to reason morally is one of the important twenty-first century skills that today’s learner should possess in addition to cosmopolitanism and media literacy. In keeping with this view, “Kohlberg in Mumbai” is a quest to explore the moral reasoning skills of 13-year old Indian adolescents using American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg’s six-stage moral development model. Furthermore, the study investigated the influence of twenty-first century Indian culture onto the moral reasoning of five case students using the lens of five cultural dimensions proposed by Dutch social psychologist, Geertz Hofstede.

By analyzing the moral reasoning level of the case students, it was observed that culture did have an impact on the moral reasoning of twenty-first century learners. It concludes by recommending educators that, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of moral reasoning of twenty-first century adolescent learners, one need to be cognizant about following four aspects: the technological and media influences on them, their religious beliefs, their native language, and their emotional and psychological concerns.

**Keywords:** moral reasoning, Kohlberg’s moral development model, Hofstede’s five dimensions of culture, twenty-first century learner

## **Introduction**

Gordon & Heincke (2013) suggested that one of the significant skills a twenty-first century learner should possess is that of moral reasoning. There is an urgent need felt in today's educational system to foster moral reasoning abilities among youth to equip them for the citizenship of the twenty-first century (Halstead & Pike, 2006). Hence, for developing effective moral reasoning skills amongst the twenty-first century students, educators need to have a focused and a holistic approach. Relying on a single subject or course on moral education or ethics to educate morally literate individuals would only mean setting them up for failure (Hersh & Schneider, 2005).

Recent studies suggest that there is an extensive difference in the actual conduct of adolescents and their reported ethical values (Report Card on the Ethics of American youth, 2012). To diminish this difference, educators need to pay special attention to the moral reasoning of their students and the factors that affect their moral reasoning. Porter (2013) emphasizes the significance of moral education in lives of adolescents, as she believes that it plays a key role in their moral identity formation. Given the importance of educating twenty-first century adolescents with moral reasoning abilities, this study investigates the factors influencing the moral reasoning abilities of twenty-first century adolescent learners in Mumbai, India.

## **Research Line of Enquiry and Objectives**

“Almost all individuals in all cultures go through the same order or sequence of gross stages of moral development, though varying in rate and terminal point of development” (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 176).

The above-mentioned quote by Lawrence Kohlberg, an acclaimed psychologist who proposed a stage-based moral development theory, raises many questions on the moral growth of individuals with different life circumstances: Do people across different cultures and context have similar moral reasoning? Do they perceive what is morally right and wrong as the same? Does it take into consideration the twenty-first century changes affecting the lives and cognitive capacities of youth today?

These questions acted as springboard to explore the impact of culture and context on the moral reasoning of twenty-first century Indian adolescents. This paper divides the exploration into two major lines of enquiry – studying the applicability of six-stage model proposed by Kohlberg in twenty-first century Indian context and then analyzing the role of culture in influencing the moral reasoning of Indian adolescents using Hofstede's five cultural dimensions as a yardstick.

## **Background**

Recent studies on skills and knowledge of twenty-first century suggests that one of the significant skills that a twenty-first century learner should possess is that of reasoning morally towards the ethical dilemmas that arise in their daily lives (Gordon & Heincke, 2013). However, the question that arises is what makes a twenty-first century learner. Jacobs (2010) considers twenty-first century learners as “children of the globe, not just children of the neighborhood where they live” due to influences of internet and technology (p. 107). Then what role does

moral reasoning play in lives of such learners who are connected extensively to each other? How can educators equip 21<sup>st</sup> century learners to become morally literate citizens? Hence, an urgent need is felt for educators now to have a focused and a holistic approach to develop moral reasoning abilities of twenty-first century learners. This has become far more crucial in case of adolescents who are in the phase of identity formation (Erikson, 1968). To adopt a holistic approach, educators might have to study the factors that influence the moral reasoning abilities of their learners. Hence, this paper first attempts to define moral reasoning according to Kohlberg and then move on to study some of the important factors such as culture and context that have an impact on the moral reasoning of adolescents.

### **Moral Reasoning**

Lawrence Kohlberg, a renowned psychologist in the field of moral development, claimed that morality is more than mere conformity to moral rules. This is because his interest lied more in studying *how* people think morally rather than *what* they think (Carpendale, 2000). Kohlberg defined moral reasoning as “reasoning about dilemmas of conflicting rights...” (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hower, 1983, p. 91). Accordingly, Kohlberg studied the moral reasoning ability of eighty-four 10 to 16-year-old American males using his specially formulated moral dilemmas over a period of twenty years. Based on their responses, Kohlberg classified moral reasoning into three levels.

According to Kohlberg (1981), young children are at a pre-conventional level when their reasoning is egocentric and consequence-based. As they grow into an adult, they enter the conventional level wherein their moral decisions are based on society’s views and expectations of them. As one moves into the post-conventional level of moral reasoning, an individual’s perspectives takes precedence over society’s view as that individual starts considering himself or herself as a separate entity from the society. The details of each stage are as described in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Kohlberg's six stages of moral development

Level	Stages	Moral reasoning depends on...
<b>Level 1: Pre-conventional</b>	Stage 1: Obedience and punishment	direct consequences of the actions on themselves
	Stage 2: Self-interest	“what’s in it for me?” wherein the right behavior is based on what is in ones best interest while concern for others is limited to “you scratch my back and I scratch yours” attitude
<b>Level 2: Conventional</b>	Stage 3: Inter-personal accord and conformity	pleasing somebody and conforming to what is “good” for inter-personal relations
	Stage 4: Authority and social obedience	“one’s duty” and obedience to authority and following social rules
<b>Level 3: Post-conventional</b>	Stage 5: Social contract	socially agreed upon standard of individual rights that changes from society to society
	Stage 6: Universal ethical principles	abstract reasoning using an individual’s principles of conscience and universal ethics

### Kohlberg's Universality Claim

Kohlberg claims the universality of his findings in his own work by stating that people in all culture follow similar stages towards moral development as mentioned above. Accordingly, Walker & Moran (1991) studied the cross-cultural universality of Kohlberg's model by interviewing 52 Chinese and Canadian adolescent and adult respondents. They concluded that Kohlberg's model did have universal applicability; however on further analysis of the responses it was revealed that the model did not take into account the indigenous concepts fundamental to Chinese culture. Likewise, Baek (2002) conducted a cross-cultural study of 128 British and Korean children aged 7-16 years from which he deduced that Kohlberg's model in itself is insufficient to explain the moral reasoning of children. He suggests that it should consider the cultural influences, since that played a key role in the development moral reasoning of children.

This indicates that cultural influences do have an impact onto the moral reasoning of adolescents that Kohlberg's model fails to consider. However, now it is fundamental to define culture and with what lens is this paper adopting to study moral reasoning of twenty-first century Indian adolescents.

### Culture

Pioneering anthropologist E.B. Tylor defines culture as that *complex* whole which includes belief, *morals*, and any other *capabilities* and *habits acquired* by man (Young, 2008). This definition describes what constitutes a ‘complex’ called culture and refers to words such as *acquired capabilities* and *habits*. This indicates that culture has an impact on human cognitive

growth that is reflected in Hofstede's (1980) definition of culture: "the collective programming of the human mind..." (p. 25).

Given the 'complex' nature of the term culture, it was necessary to delimit it with certain relevant dimensions, which could be used in consolidating and analyzing the data that was collected. For this purpose, five cultural dimensions as proposed by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) were adopted. These dimensions, as described by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005), are as follows:

1. Power Distance Index (PDI): In any given society, PDI is dependent on the extent of centralization of power by an authoritative figure. They believe that it is the degree to which the members of that society accept the autocracy that is exercised by their leader.
2. Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV): Individualism pertains to societies where ties between individuals are loose and everyone in the family is expected to look after him or herself. In contrast, collectivism relates to strong cohesion between people in groups who continue to protect each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
3. Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS): Masculine cultures show characteristics particular to men such as being tough, assertive and striving for recognition; on the other hand feminine cultures depict features of being tender, modest, and concerned about quality of life.
4. Uncertainty/ Avoidance Index (UAI): People in a society with weak UAI negotiate each day as it comes and hence, have a natural tendency to feel secure and confident. On the other hand, a society with strong UAI tends to have people who are nervous and anxious due to the unpredictable nature of the future and hence feel insecure and avoid risk.
5. Long Term Orientation (LTO): This cultural dimension relates to the importance that members of a culture give to immediate benefits vis-à-vis delayed gratification of their material, social and emotional needs. Hence, a person from a culture of long-term orientation will seek for long-term benefits in lieu of short-term.

These dimensions were used as a lens to study the cultural implications onto the moral reasoning of the students under investigation. One of the reasons why Hofstede's dimensions were used is that it is one of the most widely used work among various researchers and whose initial study on culture had received 1036 citations (Sondergaard, 1994). However, this framework was adopted provisionally with a view to finding out whether it needs refining with respect to the study of moral reasoning of twenty-first Century Indian adolescents.

### **The Present Study**

Analyzing the previous research studies highlighted above, this research study sought to verify the assumption that there is a relationship between culture and moral reasoning. This enquiry is fine-tuned to investigate the significant role that Indian culture plays in the moral reasoning of twenty-first century adolescent learners. Furthermore, it investigates how effective are Hofstede's dimensions in studying the applicability of Kohlberg's model within twenty-first century Indian context.

## Methods

### Participants

For the purpose of this study, a Religious Education Class in Mumbai having twenty-five 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (aged 13-14 years) was selected. A curriculum that focused on ethics and moral values was taught to these students. The research study was carried out over a period of eight weeks. A purposive selection of the five case students was carried out to allow some degree of balance in terms of gender and socio-economic status as suggested by Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight (2006).

### Instrument

Kohlberg and his research team had formulated nine dilemmas for their study and divided it into three *Forms* (A, B, C) with three dilemmas in each. Considering the limited scope of this study of eight weeks, only *Form A* dilemmas were used with their accompanied set of probing questions prescribed by Colby & Kohlberg (1987). One of the three dilemmas that were used for this study is as follows:

“In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$400 for the radium and charged \$4,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about \$2,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, “No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it.” So having tried every legal means, Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife” (ibid, pp. 82-83).

Since the study evaluated the viability of Kohlberg's model in the Indian context, the structure of the dilemmas was not changed but the content was linguistically and contextually adapted to the Indian context. For instance, the name ‘Heinz’ was changed to ‘Harish’ and currency denominations and amounts were changed as well. Henceforth, these are referred to as “Modified Kohlbergian Dilemmas” (MKDs). White, Bushnell, & Regnemer (1978) found that there is no difference in the responses of the subjects when they are administered with such contextually adapted dilemmas. Hence, it is assured that adapting the dilemmas would not distort the findings of this study.

### Procedure

The study was taken through four phases as depicted in **Figure 1** below.

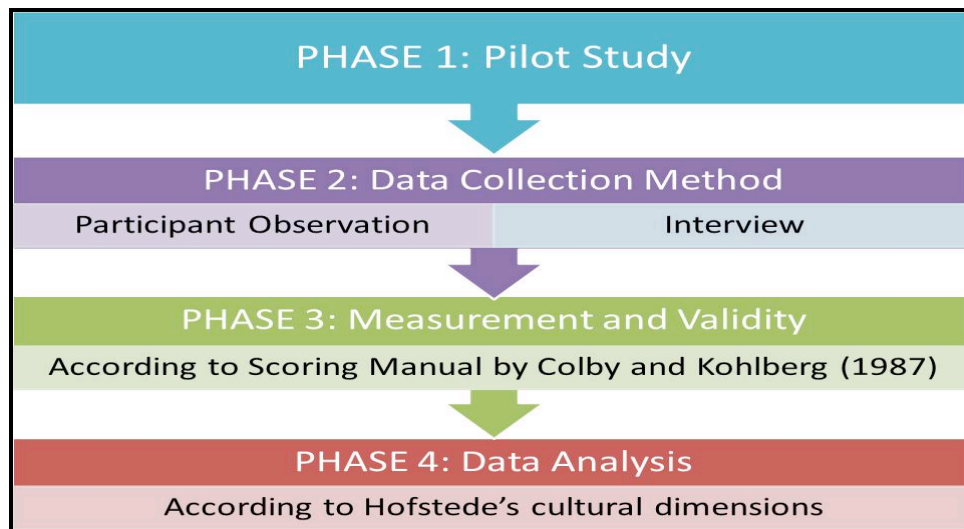


Figure 1 Phases through which the study was undertaken

#### PHASE 1: Pilot Study

As strongly recommended by Colby & Kohlberg (1987), a pilot interview of two 13-14 year old students was carried out using MKDs which were audio recorded. On studying the transcription of this recording, it was found that there was a need to clarify the MKDs further with reference to the amount of medicine which one pilot student did not feel was too exorbitant. It also gave insights into the role of researcher as an interviewer and how should a researcher probe so as not to enforce his/her moral judgment onto the case students.

#### PHASE 2: Data collection methods

In order to select the case students purposively, Heinz dilemma was discussed and recorded with all the twenty-five students. Based on the student observation and other factors (gender and socio-economic status) five case students<sup>1</sup> were selected. They were then interviewed on a one-to-one basis using MKDs and its related probing questions.

#### PHASE 3: Measurement and Reliability

The qualitative data collected in the PHASE 2 above was converted into quantitative scores through substantial amount of calculations and judgments. For this purpose, "Measurement of Moral Judgment, Volume II: Standard Issue Scoring Manual" by Colby and Kohlberg (1987) was used. According to this manual, *Global Stage Scores (GSS)*, which indicate the moral reasoning level of each student on the six-stage model, was calculated using a score-sheet. A sample score sheet is shown in **Figure 2** below.

<sup>1</sup> Two male and three female.

STANDARD SCORING SHEET					
Date _____					
Interview No./S name _____					
SCORED BY _____			Form A		
Dilemma III					
LIFE			LAW		
Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)	Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)
1	11, Property, (3)	3	9, 10	20, Law, (14)	3/4
2	17, Conscious, (11)	3	10	14, Law, (1)	3
2	27, Affiliation, (5)	4			
4, 5	9, Life, (13)	3			
6	37, Life, (17)	G-5			
Issue Score: 3			Issue Score: 3		
Dilemma III'					
MORALITY AND CONSCIENCE ISSUE			PUNISHMENT ISSUE		
Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)	Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)
3	16, Punishment, (9)	3	1	10, Law, (15)	2
			4	2, Law, (2)	1
			5, 6	22, Law, (14)	3/4
Issue Score: 3			Issue Score: 1/2		
Dilemma I					
CONTRACT ISSUE			AUTHORITY ISSUE		
Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)	Q#	CJ#/Norm & element	Stage (Notes)
6	18, Affiliation, (12)	3	2	21, Authority, (1)	4
7	22, Contract, (6)	3/4	8	25, Authority, (16)	4
			9	23, Authority, (10)	4
			10	16, Authority, (15)	3
Issue Score: 3			Issue Score: (4)		
Summated			Global Stage Score (GSS):		
1 1/2 = 1.5			(Stage with highest summated weightings)		
2 1/2 = 1.5			GSS 3		
3 2+3+2+2 = 9					
4 3 = 3					
5 1 = 1					

Guess Score

Figure 2 Sample score-sheet

This calculation involved identifying the *chosen issue*<sup>2</sup> for each MKD that the case student justified, which were circled. Hence, in the sample above the chosen issue was life for DILEMMA III, which is the Heinz dilemma. This shows that the case student favored life over law. Accordingly, the responses of students were matched with one of the various *criteria judgment*<sup>3</sup> depending specifically on what was answered by the case student. When a match was not found, a guess score was assigned to them, which is indicated in square brackets with the stage number preceded by the letter “G” as shown in the sample above. This guess score was the closest possible score that could match the *criteria judgment*. Furthermore, if the guess score was not possible, then the response was rendered as ‘unscorable response’, some of which have been discussed in the following sections.

<sup>2</sup> Each dilemma had two issues from which the respondent justified his/her choice of one of them. They were life vs. law, moral consciousness vs. punishment and contract vs. authority.

<sup>3</sup> The manual provides a list of probable responses that are numbered and divided as per the level of reasoning of that response. These probable responses are termed as criteria judgment. For further details, refer Colby and Kohlberg (1987).

#### PHASE 4: Data Analysis

Once the *GSS* was calculated, each response of the case student was analyzed in order to study the influence of culture on it. To do so, the five cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) were used. These dimensions acted as a lens to examine the moral reasoning of case students and study the aspects related to twenty-first century Indian culture apparent in those responses. After this analysis, certain additional aspects of context and culture were considered which held the possibility of providing a comprehensive framework of studying moral reasoning of twenty-first adolescents through Kohlberg's model.

#### Results and Findings

Using score-sheet and scoring instructions prescribed by Colby and Kohlberg (1987), the *GSS* for each case student was calculated as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Global Stage Scores of five case students

Sr. No.	Student Name <sup>4</sup>	GSS (1-6)
1	Student A	3
2	Student B	3
3	Student C	3/4 (Transitional)
4	Student D	3
5	Student Z	3/4 (Transitional)

It was found that there was a difference in the *GSS* for the specific age group of students under investigation as compared to Kohlberg's initial findings. While Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman's (1987) findings showed that American youth of ages 13-14 years fall under the transitional stage of 2/3, the findings of the current study with twenty-first century Indian adolescents indicated a higher stage (Stage 3 and Stage 3/4).

This discrepancy in the outcome leads one to question the factors that caused such differences. The probable factors that can be identified are as follows:

1. Gender: Kohlberg studied only male candidates in his study. However, Kohlberg, Gibbs and Lieberman (1987) assume that the sequence of stages found in his all-male study will also apply to female samples. This study, therefore, with two males and three females as case students, considered this premise as true.
2. Time: A factor of time might have also affected the differences in the *GSS* as Kohlberg's study was carried out in late 1980s while this study was undertaken four

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

decades later in the twenty-first century. Delaney (2011) claims that changes in time affect the social and intellectual development of human beings. This, in turn, affects their moral reasoning and hence, might have caused the difference.

3. Place: Finally, the study by Kohlberg was done in United States of America while this study was undertaken in Mumbai, India with twenty-first century adolescents. The difference in the *GSS* raises a possibility of national culture having an impact on the moral reasoning of the students.

Considering these three probable factors was useful in studying the first line of enquiry regarding applicability on Kohlberg's model in Indian twenty-first century context. It suggest that even though there were differences in the research context (time, place and case students – size and gender) between Kohlberg's and this study, Kohlberg's model was useful to some extent. It was useful in identifying the moral reasoning level of the twenty-first century Indian adolescents under investigation through well-prescribed scoring instructions. However, the difference in the *GSS* raised question about the influence of culture and context on these responses (as seen from the third factor above) which is analyzed in the following section.

### Impact of culture on moral reasoning according to the Hofstede's dimensions

**Table 3** summarizes the key findings derived by applying Hofstede's five cultural indices to the responses of the case students to the MKDs:

Table 3 Analysis of responses according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede's cultural dimension	Hofstede's claim for Indian culture	Evidence derived from responses of case students	Sample student responses to Heinz Dilemma
<b>PDI</b>	High	High. However, if applied to specific ethical decision making, this is not the case as evident in the sample response	<b>Student C:</b> [Heinz] should consult his father or any elder in his family to arrange for the money required. <b>Interviewer [I]:</b> What if they suggest him to steal? <b>Student C:</b> Then he should not follow that advice as it is not right
<b>IDV</b>	Low (High Collectivism)	High Collectivism	When Heinz's dilemma was discussed during the class time, Student D was in favor of law against saving the life of the wife as the other students in the class. On the contrary, she opted for saving the wife's life during one-to-one interview. On being asked why she gave two different responses she said that during the class, she did not want to be left out from what her classmates replied and hence, she responded the same as majority of students in the class.
<b>MAS</b>	Moderate	Moderately Masculine and Feminine	<b>Student Z:</b> [Heinz should not steal] because it will lead to his dishonor and even his wife will be disappointed with him...
<b>UAI</b>	High	High, wherein	<b>Student A:</b> ... situations [like the one Heinz was

		students sometimes resorted to religion as a means of avoiding uncertainty as evident in the sample response	facing] do not happen by warning someone beforehand ... everything has a reason ... No one except God is perfect...
<b>LTO</b>	High	High	<b>Student Z:</b> [Heinz] could have a good status in the society. If he follows the right path, nobody would blame his parents, his children would not be ashamed of him, and his wife will be proud [of him] ...

**Table 3** indicates that the responses of the case students were generally in alignment with Hofstede's claim for Indian culture. Hence, it was evident that there were traces of impact of Indian culture onto moral reasoning of Indian adolescents. However, a question that arises is how far can Hofstede's dimensions be appropriate in studying the Kohlberg's model?

### Discussion

While calculating the *GSS* for case students, some student responses were rendered 'unscorable' which did not match any of the *criteria judgment* prescribed by Colby and Kohlberg (1987). One such response given by Student A (as seen in **Table 3** above) was studied under Hofstede's dimension with high UAI. This shows that some responses, which were ignored by Kohlberg's model, were considered through Hofstede's dimensions and hence became subject to further investigation rather than being rejected. Moreover, some responses scored higher than Stage 3/4; however, after overall generalization, these high-level responses were overlooked as suggested by Kohlberg's scoring instructions. Nonetheless, these deviations provided valuable insights while studying the cultural impact on the moral reasoning of the case students. For instance, the response by Student Z (as seen in **Table 3** above) was a Stage 5 response, which showed the attitude of long-term orientation (LTO) according to Hofstede's definition.

To sum up, Hofstede's model provided a useful framework to analyze the moral reasoning of the case students and to study the impact of culture on it. It also took care of some of the responses, which were ignored by Kohlberg's model. However, it was found that the model failed to consider some important parameters specifically with reference to study of moral reasoning of twenty-first century Indian adolescents that are examined below.

### Research Implications

While approaching Kohlberg's model through Hofstede's lenses, it was found that as educators following factors ought to be taken into consideration while studying the impact of moral reasoning on twenty-first century adolescents in the light of national culture.

## A. Influence of Media and Technology

There were some notable responses by students, which showed an influence of media and technology onto the moral reasoning of the investigated twenty-first century learners. For instance, Student Z used a Bollywood<sup>5</sup> movie phrase such as '*main uske saath saat fere liya hu ...*' (I have married her giving her seven vows [according to Hindu marriage customs]). The student did so to emphasize the reason for saving his wife's life in Heinz's case. Student Z used these phrases to express what she meant by being moral and to justify her ethical decision of stealing.

Some case students even mentioned the use of Google as a means to rationalize their chosen issue for a particular dilemma, which is evident from the following response.

**Student C:** [Heinz] should not steal. Instead he should "google" and search for a similar medicine which is available at a lower cost in some other part of the world and then find if it is cheaper for him to ship it from there or not.

This response suggests how Student C is using a means of technology to rationalize her chosen decision of why Heinz should not steal. Educators, thus, need to be mindful that twenty-first century adolescents resort to the influences of media and technology in their lives in dealing with uncertainties of moral issues and in justifying their ethical choice. In teaching these students, educators will have to develop learner-centered as well as technologically equipped learning environment where they can thrive to think morally (Jacobs, 2010).

## B. Language:

The case students' interviews were 80-85% in Hindi<sup>6</sup>, which required translation in addition to transcription. In doing so, it was difficult to translate certain words as those words have different connotations in the English language. For instance, Student A used certain words such as *badnaami* that can have various corresponding meanings in English language.

**Interviewer:** Why Heinz should not steal medicine?  
**Student A:** *Kyunki uski badnami hogi aur wife bhi khush nahi hogi*<sup>7</sup> (because for this he will be discredited/dishonoured/infamed/shamed] and his wife will also be [disappointed/ unhappy/ displeased with him])

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<sup>5</sup> Similar to Hollywood in USA.

<sup>6</sup> Native Language of India.

<sup>7</sup> Hindi transliteration.

This and other such responses appeared to support the following proposition of Delaney (2011): ‘No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality’ (p. 137). This means that certain intricacies of a language are difficult to translate to another language, as those are specific to the social conditions and issues prevalent to that language.

Evidence shows that Hindi is one such language which does not have a separate word which maps directly onto the word ‘morality’ in English and the closest translation leads to a meaning which pertains to the societal norms (Sachdeva, Medin, & Singh, 2011). Since language plays a critical role in the expression of moral reasoning, morality heavily relies on it (Hare, 1952). Therefore, educators must take these nuances of language into consideration, while comprehending the moral reasoning of twenty-first century adolescents who might still be articulating their reasoning in their native language, which is not English.

### C. Religion:

It is argued from some perspectives that religion and culture are inseparable and that each is interdependent on the other (Parekh, 2000). While studying the impact of culture on moral reasoning, it was found that most of the case students referred to some or the other religious aspect while justifying their moral decision. Following is one such instance:

**Interviewer:** Why is stealing wrong?

**Student B:** It is because **God** commands us to follow the right path, [Heinz] is going on the wrong path if he decides to steal  
...

While studying the impact of culture using Hofstede’s model, there was no direct reference to religion mentioned under any cultural dimensions. This was evident from the response given by Student A (See **Table 3**) who concluded his moral reasoning by stating “No one except God is perfect.” Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) accredit such responses using religion as a means of avoiding uncertainty to societies where UAI is high. Hence, educators should be cognizant about the religious sentiments of their twenty-first century adolescent students, especially where UAI tendencies are high, while analyzing their moral reasoning using Kohlbergian dilemmas.

### D. Psychology:

There have been many critiques of Hofstede’s model claiming that its findings are based on individual responses and not everyone shares common psychological understanding of the national culture (Mcsweeney, 2002). This factor was foregrounded in the response given by Student B that revolved around home loans as his family was undergoing a financial crisis.<sup>8</sup> This was evident from his responses in which he had mentioned ‘house loan’ at least four times during the interview and from the fishbone diagram shown in **Figure 3** as alternative solutions for Heinz’s (here, Harish’s) dilemma.

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<sup>8</sup> Discovered later while having a personal talk with the student.

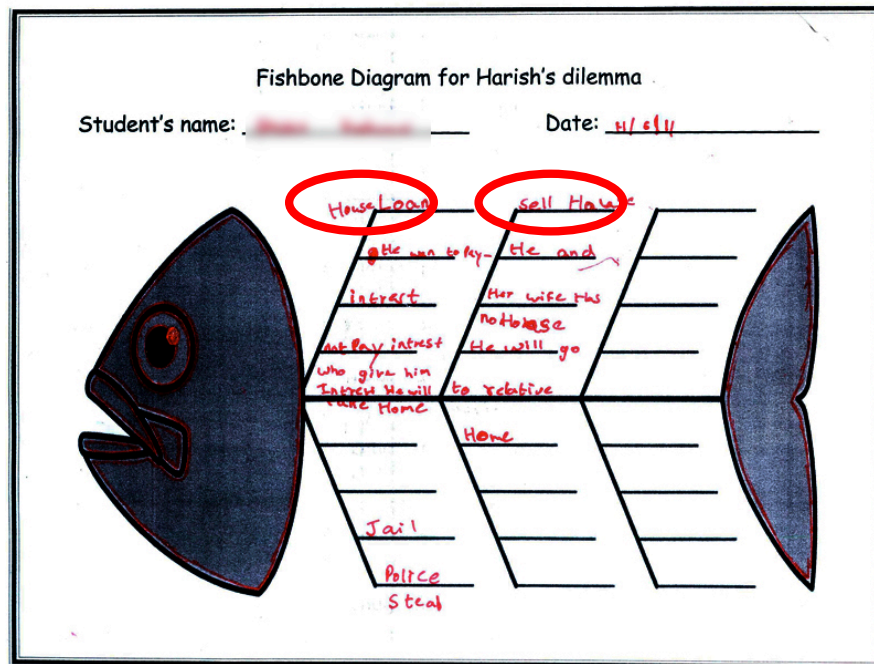


Figure 3 Fishbone diagram by a case student explaining the causes and effects of the possible alternatives for Heinz

This example suggests that while expressing their moral reasons, students might not only be affected by national culture but also gain their insights through some personal experiences or crises which occupy their mind while responding. Miller & Bersoff (1992) claimed that children do not passively receive the cultural norms in an unchanged form; rather they negotiate, transform, or create social or emotional meanings at a personal level through their interaction within this framework. Hence, educators need to be vigilant about the fact that although twenty-first century adolescents exercise different moral reasoning based on their context and culture, they personally reflect on their experiences and psychologically interpret the world around them to articulate it.

To sum up, one can argue that if Kohlberg's model is studied with respect to the culture and context in which it is investigated, then examining it through the lens of Hofstede's indices can prove to be an interesting study. However, for this framework to be more comprehensive, educators must consider the factors of technological and media influences, language, religion, and psychological concerns while investigating moral reasoning of culturally diverse twenty-first century adolescents.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that Kohlberg's model is applicable in the twenty-first century Indian context if the dilemmas are contextualized. However, the findings were different from that of Kohlberg's study. To find the reason for this difference, various factors were analyzed, specifically focusing on culture and context. This analysis led to justify the assumption as true that there is a relationship between moral reasoning of adolescents and their culture.

Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the student responses were analyzed that showed characteristics of twenty-first century Indian culture and brought some responses under its scanner which were rendered 'unscorable' by Kohlberg's model. Furthermore, some refinements for Hofstede's dimensions were discussed by suggesting the inclusion of factors such as media and technological influences, native language, religion, and psychological concerns. These refinements, if taken into consideration by educators, might provide a better lens to study the impact of culture on the moral reasoning of twenty-first century adolescent learners. Thus, it will help educators to equip these learners with an important twenty-first century skill as proposed by Gordon and Heincke (2013).

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