INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING (IJEPC)

EXPLORING MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING IN CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES: A STUDY OF TEACHING ETHICS AND AKHLAQ IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Usman Jaffer[1], Che Mohd Nasril Che Mohd Nassir[2], Mohamed Ayaaz Ahmed[3], Rahmah Ahmad H. Osman[1]*, Nur Hidayati Mohd Darwis[4], Nur Syaqirah Natasha Mohamad Yusaini[4], Siti Sarah Rusli[4], Siti Zulaikha Zul Alam[4], Muhammad Afiq Ikmal Yusof[4], Ilham Syahmi Shahrul[4]

[1] AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: jafferu@iium.edu.my; rahmahao@iium.edu.my

[2] Department of Anatomy and Physiology, School of Basic Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), 20400 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia.
Email: nasrilnassir@unisza.edu.my

[3] Southern Ambition 473 CC, 7764, Cape Town, South Africa
Email: ayaaz@reamz.co.za

[4] Kulliyyah of Pharmacy, International Islamic University Malaysia, 25200, Kuantan, Pahang Darul Makmur.
Email: nurh7791@gmail.com, qirahtasha02@gmail.com, sitisarahrusli273@gmail.com, zulaikhas153@gmail.com, rfix44@gmail.com, syahmi4802@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Abstract:

This study investigates the moral development and comprehension of ethics and akhlaq (moral virtues) in children with learning disabilities, particularly focusing on the influence of educational practices and environmental interactions. Utilizing a sample of 15 primary schoolers from Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Kuantan, aged 8 to 12 years, with disorders like autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia, the study employs the Piagetian method, children evaluation, and teacher assessments to explore ethical understanding and behavior. The research integrates principles from Islamic teachings, Western ethics, and developmental psychology, particularly drawing on theories from Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, and Bandura. Findings reveal nuanced moral perceptions among the children, with their judgments in given scenarios

reflecting a combination of autonomous morality and the age-related cognitive shift in understanding actions based on intentions and consequences. The study also highlights the effectiveness of creative and adaptive teaching methods, including psychomotor activities, in enhancing moral understanding in children with learning disabilities. Teacher evaluations indicate the impact of school curriculum and individualized teaching methods on instilling ethical values. Despite its limited sample size and challenges in maintaining a controlled environment, the study provides valuable insights into the moral development of children with learning difficulties, suggesting the need for tailored educational strategies and community involvement in moral education. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of ethical development in special needs education and underscores the importance of considering cognitive, social, and environmental factors in teaching ethics and akhlaq to children with learning disabilities.

Keywords:

Single Mothers, Health Self-Care, Finance, Social Support

Introduction

Ethics and akhlaq, though they appear synonymous in their literal definitions, actually embody significant differences that are pivotal in the realms of moral philosophy and behavioral science. Ethics, a term derived from the Greek word 'ethos' meaning character, involves a systematic approach to analysing and discerning between right and wrong. This analysis is based on reason and often reflects societal norms and legal standards (Aristotle, 350 BCE). In contrast, akhlaq, an Arabic term, refers to innate peculiarities, natural dispositions, temperaments, and characters, deeply rooted in Islamic philosophy and theology (Al-Attas, 1995). Akhlaq is more than just behaviour; it embodies morality as it encompasses beliefs and inherent understandings translated into practices and behaviour. In Western ethics, represented by philosophers like Immanuel Kant, moral principles are seen as universal, transcending cultural and religious boundaries and often relying on human reason and rights (Kant, 1785).

In the Islamic tradition, ethics and akhlaq are intertwined yet distinct, playing a crucial role in shaping individual and societal conduct. The Quran, Islam's holy book, emphasizes good ethics (akhlaq) as a fundamental essence, asserting that genuine morality is a hallmark of ideal Muslims (Quran 16:90). Islamic scholars like Al-Ghazali have elaborated on these concepts, advocating for a balance between outer conduct and inner intentions, emphasizing that ethical behavior stems from a purified heart (Al-Ghazali, 1105). This view is echoed by contemporary Islamic scholars like Tariq Ramadan, who argue that Islamic ethics transcend mere legalistic interpretations, advocating for a holistic approach to morality (Ramadan, 2004).

The understanding of ethics and akhlaq is crucial in the development of a healthy society. Aristotle's virtue ethics emphasizes the development of good character traits, arguing that a virtuous person will naturally act in morally appropriate ways (Aristotle, 350 BCE). In the Islamic context, this translates to a society where individuals strive for moral excellence, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the community.

When considering special needs children, characterized by unique requirements and attention, the comprehension of ethics and akhlaq can be challenging. They may face difficulties in understanding complex moral concepts due to physical, cognitive, or developmental

limitations. However, as developmental psychologist Jean Piaget noted, children, regardless of their abilities, develop moral understanding through interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1932). This interaction can be fostered through adherence to social and cultural norms, legal principles, and religious beliefs.

Piaget's theory of moral development, which aligns with the constructivist approach, asserts that the interaction between action and intellect shapes moral concepts. According to Piaget, children move from a stage of Heteronomous Morality, where rules are seen as fixed and external, to a stage of Autonomous Morality, where they understand that rules are based on mutual agreements and can be negotiated (Piaget, 1932). In the context of akhlaq, this development can be seen as moving from an external adherence to moral norms to an internalization of these values, reflecting the Islamic emphasis on intentionality in moral actions (Al-Ghazali, 1105).

In the educational context, particularly for special needs children, the role of teachers and the learning environment is critical. Lev Vygotsky's social development theory highlights the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting that learning is a socially mediated process (Vygotsky, 1978). This is particularly relevant in teaching ethics and akhlaq, as it underscores the importance of the teacher's role in guiding and facilitating moral discussions and activities. Additionally, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a framework for understanding how different environmental systems impact a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory suggests that to effectively teach ethics and akhlaq to special needs children, one must consider not just the immediate learning environment, but also the broader social and cultural contexts in which the child is situated.

To aid special needs children in understanding and learning about morals and ethics, creative and adaptive teaching methods are necessary. These methods can include drawing, colouring, role-playing, and puzzle-solving, which not only engage the children but also cater to their diverse learning needs (Howard Gardner, 1983). Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences suggests that children have different kinds of intelligences and learning styles, and that teaching methods should be adapted accordingly (Gardner, 1983).

This study aims to evaluate akhlaq and fiqh in relation to social skills and basic knowledge by observing behavioral interactions among teachers and classmates in a special needs setting. The study will look at how different environments and teaching methods influence the development of moral reasoning and ethical behaviour in special needs children. The role of positive role models, as highlighted by Albert Bandura's social learning theory, is also crucial in this context (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's theory suggests that children learn social behaviors by observing and imitating others, making the behavior of teachers and peers especially influential.

The study of ethics and akhlaq, especially in the context of special needs education, is a multifaceted endeavor that requires an understanding of various philosophical, psychological, and educational theories. By integrating these theories, this project aims to provide an analysis of how ethics and akhlaq can be effectively taught to special needs children, thereby contributing to their moral development and overall well-being. This project aims to evaluate akhlaq and fiqh concerning social skills and basic knowledge by observing the behavioural interactions among teachers and classmates. The diverse behaviours exhibited by each child are influenced by their environment, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the

learning materials implemented for special needs children during class sessions. Positive role models play a pivotal role in shaping the akhlaq of children, highlighting the need for thoughtful consideration in educational practices.

Methodology

Sample size

The study was concerned with primary schoolers from Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Kuantan. The observation and data collection were done during the visit which involved 15 students, ranging from 8 to 12 years old, with learning disabilities.

Data Collection Procedure

The permission was granted by the school authority which allows us to do the observation, storytelling, and colouring in an allocated time of three hours. All 15 students were evaluated individually for Piagetian Evaluation. The storytelling was told in Bahasa Melayu and those stories were adjusted to the common culture in Malaysia with the aid of visualised pictures to help the kids understand the story. The responses from the students were recorded since open-ended questions were asked during this session. During the colouring session, the responses of the students in the controlled environment were collected by calculating the frequency of similar responses. Open-ended questions were asked to the teacher that is responsible for teaching these students to collect observations from the teacher's perspectives.

Assessment

Piagetian Evaluation

This evaluation is conducted during the storytelling session which comprises four scenarios. These scenarios are being told to the students until they understand the situation.

The subjects should be made to retell the tales before being questioned. To determine whether a child has grasped a story, look at how he or she retells it. The first scenario involves two girls in different situations that are related to clumsiness: i.a.) There was once a little girl who was called Maryam. She wanted to give her mother a nice surprise and cut out a piece of sewing for her. However, she didn't know how to use the scissors properly and cut a big hole in her dress. i.b) A little girl called Mawar went and took her mother's scissors one day when her mother was out. She played with them for a bit. Then because she didn't know how to use them properly, she made a little hole in her dress.

The second scenario involves two different circumstances of stealing: ii.a) Ali had a little friend who kept a bird in a cage. Ali thought the bird was very unhappy, and he was always asking his friend to let the bird out. But the friend wouldn't. So one day when his friend wasn't there, Ali went and stole the bird. He let it fly away and hid the cage in the attic so that the bird would never be put in it again. ii.b) Siti stole some sweets from her mother one day that her mother was not there, and she hid and ate them up. For the first two scenarios, two queries are posed in relation to each of these story pairs: Are all of these kids equally at fault, or who is naughtier, and reasons why they think so.

Children Evaluation

Three parameters have been set to evaluate the children's behaviour through some activities. Firstly, their consideration value was observed during a colouring activity, where two kids would have to pick between coloured crayons and coloured pencils. They were then assessed if they are willing to share the same paper to colour. Secondly, the evaluation of communication skills when the kids interact with outsiders. This can be determined when we, as outsiders, approach them and see how they respond to us. Lastly, to know the responsibility of the children, notably to pack up the stationery after using it.

Teacher Evaluation

An interview for responding to a few pertinent enquiries evaluates the ethics and *akhlaq* of special needs children's needs from the teachers' viewpoint. There are three main points to be catechized to the teacher. To begin, the query concerns a kid's response to an instruction or prohibition. Following that, how does the teacher integrate school curriculum and ethics into one component, and finally, potential approaches to dealing with misbehaving students.

Analysis

Piagetian Method

The first scenario deals with consequences of clumsiness that involve adults' surroundings. The students need to compare between two kinds of clumsiness with significantly different levels of consequences. The students' judgement of those two stories, whether based on the severity of material damage or considering the intention of the clumsy kids in the story, are to be determined. The second scenario is about stealing in which students' ability to identify selfish stealing acts or well-intentioned stealing acts. Whether the students are paying attention to the act of stealing solely or the motive behind the action.

Children Evaluation

During the colouring activity, we will see how considerate they are with their partners in choosing between those two coloured pencils and coloured crayons since they are only allowed to choose one. In addition to that, we will also see if they are willing to colour the paper together or decide to do it on their own. Next, to observe the children's interaction during the colouring session, either they will treat us nicely or give us the silent treatment, or they would love to do the colouring activity together. After we finish the colouring activity, we will ask the kids, "What should we do next?" to evaluate their responsibilities after using the stationery. If they pack them up after using them, then we can say that they are responsible for keeping their places neat and clean. If they ran off and left the stationery right after using it, it would represent the opposite behaviour. All those proposed parameters are set to reach the conclusion that *akhlaq* is the nature of a human being.

Teacher Evaluation

The first question of the interview is to find out about the behaviour of kids on a daily basis since the teachers are familiar with them. Next, the school curriculum may influence the kids' ethics and *akhlaq*, considering their comprehension and maneuverability. Following that, the third question asks for methods to help children perceive ethics better.

Results

This section consists of 3 parts which are Piagetian method, children evaluation and teacher's assessment. The Piagetian method and children evaluation parts record the answers from 15 students with learning disabilities mainly autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. Meanwhile, the teacher's evaluation includes data from the teacher who was interviewed.

Part 1: Piagetian Method

Table 1 Scenario 1 Responses.

Who is the naughtiest?	Maryam	Mawar
Total respondent	3	11
Why? [Open ended] ***Record most repeated answer/ unique answer from them**	Accidentally cut the dress	Playing with scissor
	Make a bigger cut	Cut mother's dress
		Intentionally cut mother's dress
Comment	One student did not respond during the interview session because he felt uncomfortable and afraid of the people that he had just met.	

Table 1.1 Scenario 2 Responses.

Who is the naughtiest?	Ali	Siti
Total respondent	2	13
Why? [Open ended] ***Record most repeated answer/ unique answer from them**	Freed the bird from its cage	Siti was stealing
		Stealing food
		Didn't want her mother know her mistake
		Quietly take the food
Comment	All students answered the question.	

Part 2: Children Evaluation

Table 2 Sharing Pencil Colour Responses.

Sharing colour pencil/ crayon	Sharing	Not sharing/ Tantrum
Total respondent	13	2

Table 2.1 Children's Interaction Responses.

Real time engagement	Good interaction	Not responding	Bad interaction
Total respondent	15	0	0

Good interaction: Responding and communicating enthusiastically with assessor Not responding: Ignoring the assessor.
Bad interaction: Tantrum behaviours

Table 2.2 Packing Up Stationary Responses.

Packing up stationary	Understood the assignment	Did not understand
Total respondent	9	6

Part 3: Teacher Assessment

Piagetian Method

In the initial scenario, two instances depicting varying consequences of clumsiness were presented in the stories of Maryam and Mawar. Maryam, while attempting to surprise her mother, inadvertently cut a substantial hole in her mother's dress. In contrast, Mawar, in a playful act with scissors, cut a minor hole in her mother's dress. The severity of the consequences, denoted by the size of the hole, became the focal point for the students' judgments. A consensus emerged among the majority, branding Mawar as the naughtiest due to her intentional and careless act with the scissors. Alternatively, some students considered Maryam naughtier, emphasizing the unintentional yet more significant damage inflicted. Notably, a student refrained from judgment, citing a lack of clarity in assessing the two situations. Interestingly, most students demonstrated a tendency to evaluate based on the initial intention of the girls rather than the material damage severity. A minority, however, adopted a perspective centered on the size of the inflicted damage, deeming Maryam's clumsiness as more egregious than Mawar's.

Moving to the second scenario, it presented two situations involving different intentions behind stealing in the stories of Ali and Siti. Ali stole his friend's bird to set it free, believing the bird to be unhappy, while Siti clandestinely took sweets from her mother. The majority of students unanimously pointed to Siti as the naughtiest, emphasizing her overt act of stealing sweets and the secretive consumption without her mother's knowledge. In contrast, a minority of students attributed the label of naughtiness to Ali, highlighting his act of stealing to liberate the bird.

Significantly, most students exhibited an ability to discern the selfish nature of Siti's stealing, while a smaller group failed to recognize the well-intentioned motive behind Ali's actions. This suggests that, for the majority, the assessment of stealing extends beyond the act itself to consider the underlying motives behind such actions.

Children Evaluation
In the vibrant context of the colouring session, the conduct of 13 students stood out, exemplifying exceptional cooperation as they willingly shared the colouring paper with their partners. In a harmonious display, these students not only comfortably chose their preferred colour pencils but also engaged in collaborative decision-making, consulting their partners on the hues to use for the cartoon images printed on the paper. This collaborative spirit underscores the commendable cooperation skills exhibited by children with special needs, aligning with findings by Mohd Nor, Roslan, and Drajat Manpan (2020).

Contrastingly, the remaining seven students chose solitude over shared creativity, exhibiting discomfort and distancing themselves from their peers. Regrettably, boredom set in for some of these isolated individuals, a phenomenon frequently noted in children with attention-deficit disorder (ADHD) and associated cognitive challenges, as highlighted by Golubchik et al. (2020).

The results showcase the exceptional ability of all learning-disabled children to engage positively with outsiders. From the outset of the ice-breaking activity, they displayed enthusiasm and attentiveness, responding well to instructions delivered with the assistance of teachers. Transitioning to the colouring task, their decision-making process regarding the use of coloured pencils or crayons reflected contentment rather than defiance. Communication flowed seamlessly during the activity, with the children sharing information comfortably, resembling ordinary children at first glance.

However, deeper interactions revealed areas of non-comprehension, such as challenges in choosing which part of the drawing to colour or determining suitable colours for plants and flowers. Some children also faced difficulties in writing their own names and class information, indicative of common challenges associated with learning disabilities. This emphasizes the need for enhanced working memory skills, aligning with Alloway and Carpenter's (2020) recommendation for early detection and specific interventions to improve working memory, considering its pivotal role in both personal behavior and academic performance.

As the colouring session concluded, attention turned to observing the children's actions regarding the orderly packing of stationary. Upon providing clear instructions – "What do we need to do after colouring? We need to pack up the stationary, right?" – observations varied. Nine children demonstrated a commendable sense of responsibility by willingly and efficiently packing up the stationary and returning it to the facilitator. In contrast, six children neglected the directive, opting to engage in play with friends and leaving the stationary scattered on the floor. This divergence in behavior serves as a valuable indicator of the children's varying levels of responsibility, a crucial aspect given the challenges in cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior abilities that individuals with intellectual disabilities often encounter, as highlighted by Hoffman and Muller (2022).

Teacher Evaluation

In addressing the first query regarding the daily behavior of children, the teacher provided insights into the distinctive attitudes exhibited by students, intricately tied to the nature of their disabilities. Notably, those with hearing impairments were highlighted for their commendable attitudes and ease of management. In contrast, the teacher acknowledged the challenges posed by younger students, particularly those in Year 1 and Year 2, who grapple with learning disabilities. Despite initial difficulties, a positive shift in behavior was observed in students with learning disabilities, underscoring the transformative impact of continuous exposure and guidance from teachers. The teacher's elucidation accentuates the pivotal role of different disabilities in shaping the behavior and attitudes of students.

Addressing the second question regarding the influence of the school's curriculum on ethics and behavior, the teacher delineated two distinct approaches. The first, a direct method, involves dedicated subjects, namely Islamic Teachings and Self-Management, explicitly designed to instill ethics and akhlaq in students. These subjects, integrated into the curriculum, play a crucial role in shaping the ethical framework of students throughout their daily lives. The second, an indirect method, relies on teachers imparting ethical guidance at the outset of classes. While seemingly spontaneous, this method empowers teachers to remind students consistently about akhlaq and ethics in their daily lives. The dual approach emphasizes the multifaceted strategies employed within the curriculum to nurture a holistic ethical foundation. In response to the final question concerning methods to enhance children's understanding of ethics, the teacher highlighted the effectiveness of integrating enjoyable activities into the learning process. Recognizing the students' affinity for engaging and dynamic learning experiences, the teacher specifically emphasized the positive impact of psychomotor activities. These activities involve bodily movements, ensuring active participation, especially for students with learning disabilities. The incorporation of psychomotor activities emerged as a valuable strategy for facilitating a more accessible and engaging approach to ethics education.

This approach acknowledges the tendency of students, particularly those with learning disabilities, to experience boredom with traditional teaching methods, such as reading and writing.

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the moral development of children with learning difficulties, challenging preconceptions and emphasizing the crucial role of early influences and education in shaping behavior.

From birth, the innate knowledge about akhlaq becomes an integral part of human nature, subject to application or neglect in individual behavior. From the outset, it is important to recognize that every individual possesses an innate understanding of akhlaq or moral virtues, which is subject to nurturing or neglect (Al-Ghazali, 1105). This innate moral compass is influenced by a myriad of factors including cognitive abilities, social contexts, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. For children with learning difficulties, these factors play an even more significant role. Despite their physical, mental, and intellectual impairments, these children demonstrate a remarkable ability to grasp and apply moral concepts, as seen in the study's findings. This observation is supported by the work of developmental psychologists like Kohlberg, who posited that moral reasoning develops through a series of stages and is influenced by cognitive development (Kohlberg, 1984). The multifaceted development of

children, influenced by factors such as knowledge base, cognitive capacity, social context, cultural background, and religious beliefs, underscores the complexity of shaping behavior in this demographic. Despite the predicted physical, mental, and intellectual impairments of all 15 children in the study, it is evident that these challenges should not serve as an excuse for underestimating their capacity to genuinely comprehend and apply akhlaq, facilitated by parental guidance and academic instruction.

The research findings reveal intriguing nuances in the children's moral perceptions. The majority identifying Mawar as the naughtiest in one scenario and Siti in another showcases a focus on circumstances rather than observable consequences. This aligns with the development of autonomous morality, especially prevalent in children aged 10 to 12, who exhibit moral reasoning that considers the motivation behind actions, not just the repercussions. It is noteworthy that even among 8 and 9-year-old children, Maryam and Ali were identified as the naughtiest in a different scenario, aligning with Piaget's theory emphasizing the age-related shift in understanding wrongness based on observable consequences.

The study's application of Piaget's moral development theory provides a framework for understanding the children's responses. Piaget argued that as children grow, their moral reasoning evolves from a focus on obedience and punishment to a more advanced understanding of intentions and consequences (Piaget, 1932). This progression was evident in the study, where children's judgments varied based on their age and developmental stage. Older children displayed a more nuanced understanding of moral situations, focusing on the intentions behind actions rather than just observable outcomes. This aligns with Piaget's stages of moral development and is further supported by recent studies in developmental psychology that emphasize the role of cognitive maturity in moral reasoning (Turiel, 2015). Beyond the Piagetian framework, the study delves into the behavioral observations, highlighting the significant impact of cognitive processes on learning and comprehension. Children with learning disabilities, facing impaired learning processes, comprehend morality at a slower pace compared to typical children. This underscores the importance of acknowledging cognitive growth, including planning and abstract reasoning, in parallel with moral development. The observed behavior of all 15 children during the study suggests positive engagement, joviality, and enthusiasm in interactions with instructors and assessors. The successful management of their attitudes by teachers emphasizes the crucial role of the environment in instilling morality and akhlaq. Positive role models, as well as gentle and considerate communication, emerge as essential elements in creating a conducive learning environment.

Children with learning disabilities often face unique challenges in their cognitive processes, impacting their moral comprehension and reasoning. The study highlighted that these children might require more time to process and understand moral dilemmas. This observation aligns with findings in neuropsychology, which suggest that learning disabilities can affect various cognitive functions including memory, attention, and problem-solving skills (Pennington, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to recognize these cognitive challenges and adapt teaching methods accordingly, ensuring that moral education is accessible and effective.

The study also emphasizes the significant role of environmental factors, particularly the influence of teachers and educational settings, in shaping the moral development of children with learning disabilities. Vygotsky's social development theory posits that learning is a social process, greatly influenced by interactions with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978).

This theory underscores the importance of positive role models and supportive educational environments in fostering moral development. Moreover, the incorporation of psychomotor activities as a teaching strategy reflects the principles of experiential learning proposed by Kolb (1984), which suggests that learning is enhanced when students are actively engaged in the process.

The teacher's insights underscore the ongoing challenges in managing younger students with learning disabilities, emphasizing the need for continuous exposure to positive attitudes and effective teaching methods. The acknowledgment of varied cognitive development rates among these students underscores the importance of tailored educational approaches, including psychomotor activities, to engage them actively in the learning process. These challenges underscore the need for tailored educational approaches that account for the varied cognitive development rates among these students. This is in line with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which advocates for educational practices that cater to the diverse learning styles and abilities of students (Gardner, 1983). Furthermore, the study's findings on moral relativism and realism highlight the importance of community involvement in reinforcing moral concepts, suggesting that a collaborative approach involving parents, teachers, and the broader community is essential for effective moral education.

The study's findings regarding moral relativism and realism align with age-related patterns, emphasizing the need for community involvement to enhance children's understanding of morality. The positive behavior exhibited during the study is attributed to ongoing exposure and education from parents, teachers, and the school curriculum. The study emphasizes the importance of completing primary education for these exceptional children, allowing their cognitive development to progress to the concrete operational stage.

While these insights provide valuable perspectives on morality in children with learning difficulties, the study's limitations, including a small sample size and challenges in establishing a controlled environment, should be considered. Future research with larger sample sizes, focused studies on specific disability groups, and a more controlled environment would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of moral development in this demographic.

The observational study under review offers a comprehensive analysis of the moral development of children with learning difficulties, unveiling critical insights that challenge existing assumptions and highlight the intricate interplay of early influences, education, and individual characteristics in shaping moral behavior. This discussion seeks to delve deeper into these findings, expanding upon the nuances of moral development in this unique demographic.

Limitations
This study, while providing valuable insights into the moral development of children with learning difficulties, acknowledges several limitations that may impact the reliability of the obtained results.

Small Sample Size
The study's sample size was limited to 15 students due to restrictions imposed by the school, preventing the inclusion of grade 1 students. The exclusion of these students, known for challenging behavior, might limit the generalizability of findings. Future studies should aim

for larger sample sizes to enhance statistical robustness and allow for more comprehensive insights.

Observation Study
The students included in this study were those with learning disabilities who could comprehend instructions. This limited selection might have introduced an artificial element to the observation, potentially skewing the results. Furthermore, the partial lack of cooperation and focus during story-telling sessions could impact the accuracy of data collected. Subsequent research should consider a more diverse representation of students with learning disabilities.

Simultaneous Studies and Lack of Controlled Environment
Conducting studies simultaneously with other groups may have hindered the establishment of a fully controlled environment. This lack of control could have contributed to inaccuracies in responses obtained. Future research should prioritize exclusive study sessions with meticulous control over environmental variables to ensure data reliability.

Heterogeneous Grouping of Students
The school's grouping of students included a mix of those with learning disabilities, hearing disabilities, and both. This heterogeneity may have restricted the focus of assessors in collecting targeted responses. Future investigations should consider more homogenous grouping to allow for specific insights into distinct disability categories.

Recommendations for Future Studies
To address the identified limitations, it is recommended that future studies aim for larger sample sizes to enhance the depth of insights. Conducting separate studies with distinct disability groups will enable a more focused examination. This approach ensures a controlled environment, reducing potential confounding factors.

Ethical and Akhlaq Exploration in Intellectual Disabilities
While this study touches on ethics and akhlaq in children with learning disabilities, there is a specific call for more in-depth exploration, particularly in children with intellectual disabilities. Future research should dedicate focused attention to this specific subgroup to unravel their unique understanding of akhlaq, providing a more nuanced understanding of morality in diverse learning contexts.

Conclusion
The exploration of ethics and akhlaq among special needs children within this community, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, has yielded positive outcomes. Utilizing the Piagetian method, it was observed that a significant majority of 11 students exhibited the ability to comprehend stories and judiciously determine which characters were at fault. Conversely, a smaller group of 3 students made choices without considering the underlying intentions or motives, shedding light on varying cognitive processes.

In the assessment of children's behavior through the coloring activity, a fundamental parameter for gauging akhlaq, a notable trend of positive cooperation emerged. All students demonstrated commendable collaboration both with outsiders and their peers, displaying a keen understanding of the instructions provided by the instructor. This collective engagement serves as evidence that akhlaq is an inherent aspect of human nature.

Teacher evaluation proved instrumental in providing deeper insights into the behavioral dynamics of these special needs children. The distinct disabilities of the students were identified as significant influencers shaping their attitudes and conduct. Two distinct teaching methods, namely the direct and indirect approaches, were identified as valuable tools for imparting ethical and akhlaq values. The randomness associated with the indirect method, wherein teachers provide guidance and reminders sporadically, underscores the flexibility required in catering to the diverse needs of these children.

Moreover, the revelation that psychomotor activities are preferred by these children highlights a valuable and effective pedagogical tool to instill ethics. The dynamism and movement inherent in psychomotor activities serve to captivate the attention of these students, mitigating the risk of boredom often associated with conventional teaching methods.

This study thus provides a nuanced understanding of the ethical and akhlaq development among special needs children, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. The multifaceted evaluation methods employed shed light on the intricacies of their cognitive processes, interpersonal dynamics, and receptivity to different teaching approaches. Moving forward, educators and researchers can leverage these insights to tailor interventions that not only accommodate but also enhance the ethical and akhlaq development of special needs children within diverse learning environments.

Acknowledgements

References

Abel, T. (1941). Moral judgments among subnormals. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 36*(3), 378–392.

Alloway, T. P., & Carpenter, R. K. (2020). The relationship among children's learning disabilities, working memory, and problem behaviours in a classroom setting: Three case studies. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 37*(1), 4–10. https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2020.1

Al-Ghazali. (1105). *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.

Cherry, K. (2022). The 4 Stages of Cognitive Development. *Verywell Mind; Dotdash Meredith.* https://www.verywellmind.com/piagets-stages-of-cognitive-development-2795457

Daniel, M., J. Romate, Rajkumar, E., Allen Joshua George, & Abraham, J. (2022). Cognitive style and working memory among adolescents with specific learning disability. *11*(1), 196–196. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1556_21

Drajat, M., & Nor, M. R. M. (2020). The Models of Character and Akhlaq Education for Special Needs Children in an Inclusion School. *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman, 24*(1), 1-16.

Donald D. R., Lazarus, S., Peliwe Lolwana, & Patricia Myers Smith. (2010). *Educational psychology in social context: ecosystemic applications in Southern Africa*. Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books.

Golubchik, P., Manor, I., Shoval, G., & Weizman, A. (2020). Levels of Proneness to Boredom in Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder On and Off Methylphenidate Treatment. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology, 30*(3), 173–176. https://doi.org/10.1089/cap.2019.0151

Hofmann, V., & Müller, C. (2022). Challenging behaviour in students with intellectual disabilities: the role of individual and classmates' communication skills. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 66*(4), 353–367. https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12922

Kagan, J. (2019). What Is a Special Needs Child? *Investopedia*. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/specialneedschild.asp

Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*. Harper & Row.

Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice-Hall.

Laws of Malaysia Online Version of Updated Text of Reprint Act 685 Persons with Disabilities Act 2008. (2014). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/86297/117930/F139356912/MYS86297.pdf

P., J., Piaget, J., & Gabain, M. (1932). The Moral Judgment of the Child. *The American Journal of Psychology, 47*(3), 523. https://doi.org/10.2307/1416357

Pennington, B.F. (2009). *Diagnosing Learning Disorders: A Neuropsychological Framework*. The Guilford Press.

Turiel, E. (2015). *Moral Development*. In R.M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science*. Wiley.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.