

Experiences and Perceptions of Teachers and Parents about the Impact of the Moral Education Program Implementation in Dubai Schools

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Abstract

Children are born as a blank slate, they need adults' guidance to survive in their societies. From the old times, the major mission of schools was to equip students with both intellectual and moral values. The United Arab Emirates UAE acknowledges the role of Moral Education in helping young children to develop their own values and beliefs. To build a sustainable society based on respect, tolerance and ethics and to develop the next generation of leaders who are actively productive in their communities, the Moral Education policy was introduced in the UAE private and public schools for the 2017-2018 academic year. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of the implementation of the Moral Education policy in Dubai schools. A qualitative research design was used in this study. Teachers' data was collected through a qualitative survey to explore their experiences and perceptions about the impact of the Moral Education policy in Dubai. On the other hand, interviews were used with parents for data collection. The research findings revealed that there is a lack of parents' involvement with children's academics, which is an essential factor for the effective implementation of the Moral Education program. Also, the study indicated that the Moral Education program is on the right path towards building students' character traits and preparing more responsible individuals who have a sense of morality and appreciation of the UAE culture and other cultures.

Keywords: Moral Education, Character Education, K-12 schools, private schools, public schools, Dubai.

1. Introduction

Moral Education is an initiative launched under the directive of his Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. This initiative is born out in line with the UAE 2021 vision of creating a knowledge based economy, preserving UAE heritage and providing wellness and social well-being of citizens and residents. The Moral Education program is an innovative curriculum that resulted from a cooperation among Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, UAE Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Education Council, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court and Knowledge and Human Development Authority (Uaecabinet, 2018).

The Moral Education program is premeditated as consecutive units taught from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Moral education is mandatory this academic year 2017/2018 for all UAE private and public schools from grade 1 to 9 to be also implemented on grades 10, 11 and 12 starting next academic year (Faisal, 2017; Moral Education, 2017). The program aims to actively engage parents and community through creating a holistic school environment that encourages collaboration among students, teachers and parents.

The Moral Education program aims to produce positive global citizens, prepare children to make moral and sound decisions and deal with the diversity of cultures that enriches the UAE society, equip them with universal principles and values, prepare a new generation of responsible youth who are productive in their communities and positively improve others' lives (Moral Education, 2017; Shireena, 2017).

The Moral Education program in the UAE is based on four pillars (Moral Education, 2017):

1. **Character and morality:** This curriculum is intended to prepare students for adult life and build their character traits such as: honesty, self-confidence, discipline, perseverance, tolerance, resilience and respect of others and their differences. Students will also be equipped with the foundation of ethics to build a strong sense of morality.
2. **The individual and the community:** Good citizens contribute to their community and thrive to make positive changes in their societies. Students will be equipped with the skills that will enable them to be active members in their community. They will be aware of the importance of helping others and building strong familial and interpersonal relationships.
3. **Civic studies:** For all students either Emiratis or expats, it is crucial to comprehend the UAE political system. Students will be aware about their rights and responsibilities. They will learn about the government's structure and judicial processes in UAE.
4. **Cultural studies:** Moral Education aims to introduce students to the UAE's shared human culture and the world culture and enable them to preserve the heritage and appreciate the global wealth culture.

Due to the changes in the society structure, the concept of traditional families has faded; in the sense that the parents' traditional authority has declined and students are learning from other sources and have other role models (Wardekker, 2001). This is one of the reasons why Moral Education is taught in schools nowadays.

Moral and Character Education are important to build individuals' character (Kane, 2015).

Moral Education aims to enhance students' positive attitudes and values. By teaching Moral Education, schools can cultivate those positive values and nurture new values such as: national identity, integrity, responsibility, perseverance, empathy, caring, justice, acceptance of differences and other cultures (Education, 2012; Kane, 2015; Moral Education, 2017).

All UAE schools introduced this year (2017/2018) Moral Education as a mandatory subject. Schools have the freedom to choose the steps they see right to achieve the subject goals. No formal exams will take place but students will be assessed in the classroom through formative and summative assessments about their personal progress related to values and civics (Moral Education, 2017). Also, students' development and progress will be taken in consideration for the inspections by authorities.

Teachers received the proper training to implement the Moral Education program. For instance, according to Clive Pierrepont (2017, cited in Faisal, 2017), director of communications at Taeleem, all Taeleem schools have received the required training to teach Moral Education. He confirmed that the schools have started to map the curriculum against their current school program; besides, school principals and heads of schools also received internal training before the start of the year.

Schools have an electronic version of the Moral Education book which gives the freedom for teachers to develop the desired instruction. Fatima Belrehif (2017, cited in Faisal, 2017), CEO of KHDA's Dubai School Inspection Bureau, stated that there is a flexibility in teaching Moral Education and that schools can chose the guidelines that they see convenient for their curriculum. Also Moral Education teachers are assigned by schools and are required to allocate one hour a week for the subject. However the question is: are the teachers well prepared to implement this policy and make the desired impact from the program?

School and Teachers' Role:

For a successful implementation of the Moral Education policy, schools are responsible about creating a learning environment where positive values are reinforced. All the school staff and teachers must act as role models for the students. Also the school policies and rules must reflect the taught values and principles. Teachers should have a clear understanding of the students' cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. They should enhance the positive values in students and help them acquire the required skills. Teachers should model the moral behavior they are teaching because they have the biggest impact on students (See & Arthur, 2011). In addition, teachers should introduce activities that strengthen the relation among the school, students, families and the community (Velea & Farca, 2013).

Parents' Role:

Today, schools are replacing parents in providing moral guidance to children (Polly, 2008; Wardekker, 2001). Thus, parents should at least assist schools and give strong parental support to schools for an effective implementation of the Moral Education policy (Lickona, 1988). Parents should make their kids aware of the importance of moral values. They should also identify the personality traits and values they want their kids to develop and maintain a good relation with the school to follow on their kids' progress and challenges.

Purpose of the study

The Moral Education program has 4 pillars: character and morality, the individual and the community, civic studies and cultural studies. The new Moral Education program seeks to develop individuals who can be successful global citizens, contribute to their communities and deal with the mixture of beliefs and cultures that coexist in the UAE

through exploring the impact of the implementation of the program. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore parents' and teachers' perceptions about the impact of the Moral Education program on children's beliefs, behaviors and attitudes.

Research questions

1. This observational research study is aiming to answer the below research questions:
2. What are the parents' perceptions about the Moral Education program impact on their kids' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences about the impact of the implementation of Moral Education in the school?
4. What challenges are hindering Moral Education teachers from achieving the desired impact of the Moral Education program?

Significance and relevance of the study

Moral Education is a new policy in the UAE. Thus, there is a lack of studies in the UAE about Moral Education and its impact on students. For this reason, this study will be as a baseline for future studies related to Moral Education in the UAE and may be in the Gulf Region.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

2.1 History of Moral Education

Character or Moral Education is an old field that existed since a very long time. People always thought about how to raise their kids and the coming generation. Thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle have always thought about how to raise children to become better citizens (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Power, 2008). They both were concerned about the need of educating moral responses that finally helps to create virtuous characters (Power, 2008). Moral Education was defined as efforts to develop the moral cognitive structures of children. It was linked to Jean Piaget's (1965) constructivist psychological framework and later on associated to Lawrence Kohlberg (1971).

According to Power (2008), Character Education is not a new concept in the American education or even in history. He argued that moral lessons were a subject found in many old textbooks. In the 1960s and 1970s, public schools were forced to integrate Moral Education to produce citizens who can thrive in the industrial and scientific era. The focus of Moral Education was about rights and freedom. A new practice was introduced called 'values clarification' which means that the teacher's job is to teach students how to clarify their values instead of enforcing specific values on them. In 1980s, Moral Education came to the picture again after there was an increase in crimes, drug use and other antisocial behaviors (Power, 2008). Lickona (1991, cited in Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006) argued that this comeback of Moral Education was due to the drop of the public education quality. Lickona (1994, cited in Goss, 2014) described the situation as a crisis of character. He showed some statistics about the serious problems the society was undergoing, such as the increased number of youth violence and crimes. According to Lickona the violence among male youth in the United States has increased by more than 300%, while the violence among girls has also tripled. Berkowitz and Haynes (2007) were also concerned about the crisis of character. They argued that the focus of schools is on standardized tests while there is a negligence to the development of students' character. As a result, Moral Education or Character Education was seen as a solution to the increased youth problems.

2.2 Conceptual Analysis

Moral Education vs. Civic Education and Personal Education

Moral Education is considered as an umbrella for diverse tasks such as “moral socialization”, which is the nurturing of students values to have good moral judgments (Nord & Haynes, 1998). Another task of Moral Education is related to the intellectual resources provided for students to make informed decisions and judgments about moral matters. Winch and Gingell (2004) claimed that Moral Education is about the relationship between right and wrong and the ability to distinguish between the two actions; while Personal Education is the ability to create one’s own personality and self-realize him/herself. Civic Education, On the other hand, is about understanding one’s rights and making sound decisions in the society’s political processes. Winch and Gingell (2004) said that no Personal or Civic Education can take place without Moral Education. Thus, Personal Education and Civic Education are parts of Moral Education.

Moral Education vs. Spiritual/Religious Education

Spiritual Education is very important in enabling character development (Satyanarayana & Madhavan, 2016). In Satyanarayana and Madhavan (2016) study aiming to explore the relevance of Spiritual and Moral Education in endorsing human excellence, they stated that spirituality is aligned with religion. They used Spiritual Education and Moral Education together in their study, which shows that Spiritual/ Religious Education is part of Moral education.

Moral Education vs. Character Education

Regarding Character Education, Berkowitz and Bier (2004) said: “Character is the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent. In other words, character is multifaceted. It is psychological. It relates to moral functioning” (p. 73). Berkowitz and Bier (2004) stressed on the sense of morality in their definition of Character education. Lickona et al. (2002) believe that Character Education endorses fundamental ethical values as the foundation of a Moral Character. Also, Huitt, W. (2004) used the term Moral Education and Character Education interchangeably in their article “Moral and Character Development” to refer to the same thing.

Moral Education vs. Values Education

Moral Education and Values Education were used either interchangeably or in close connection in many articles for instance, Leming (1981) in his study “Research on the Curriculum Effectiveness of Moral/Values Education” demonstrated that Moral Education and Values Education are interconnected, where Values Education is more about values clarification while Moral Education is more about moral development which comes after the value clarification.

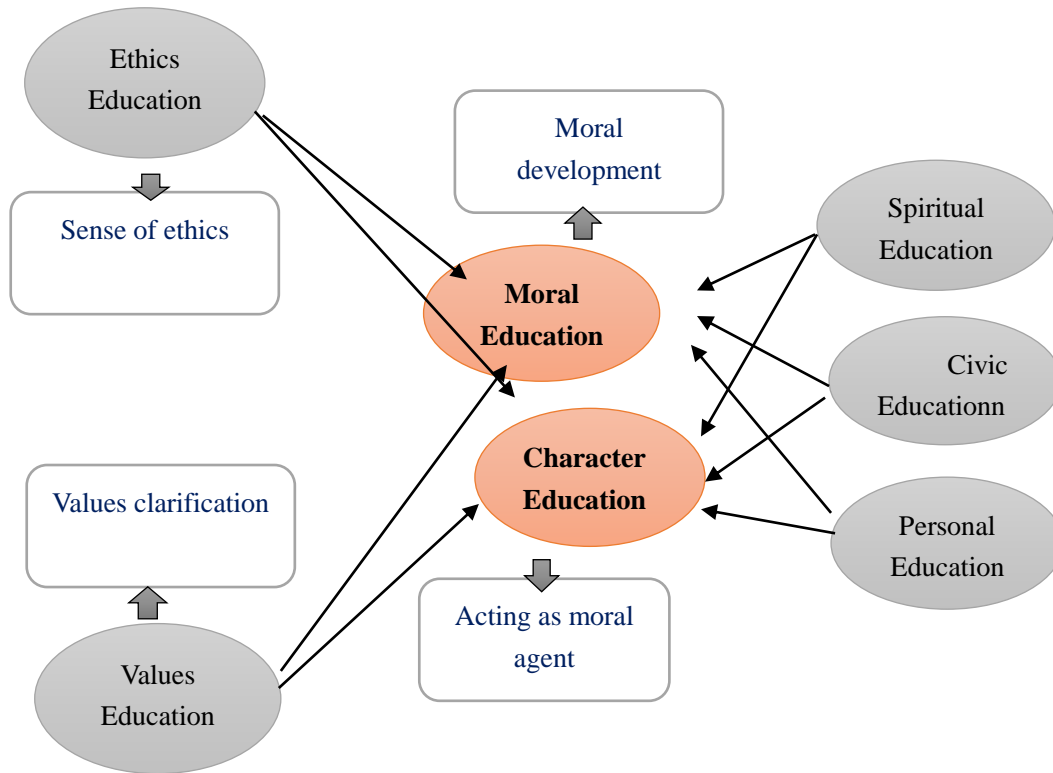
Character Education vs. Care Ethics

Noddings (2002) argued that Care Ethics is an alternative to Character Education. The Ethics of Care or Ethic Education is considered relational and interpersonal. He also added that Character Education is more direct than Ethics of Care.

From the above definitions, we can understand that there is an interconnection between all of the terms: Moral Education, Character Education, Values Education, Ethics Education, Spiritual Education and Civic Education. The diagram (Figure 1) below illustrates how all these terms are related.

In this study both terms Moral Education and Character Education will be used to refer to the same thing.

Figure 1: Diagram of concepts related to Moral Education



2.3 Literature Review

The Impact of Moral Education on Student Behavior, Discipline and Moral Development

Previous literature confirmed the positive impact of Moral Education on students' behaviors, attitudes and beliefs. In a quantitative study conducted in 25 Chinese middle schools, the findings indicated that the Moral Education course was successful and that students interact positively with the moral instruction (Hu, 2010). Moral Education also enhances the social and emotional learning. A meta-analysis study of 213 schools confirmed that Social and Emotional Learning programs SEL have positive impacts on the student development (Durlak et al., 2011).

A study conducted on a rural middle school (grade 5-8), which is facing big discipline issues, to determine the impact of the Character Education program on students' academics, discipline and attendance. The study used data that covered five year period (pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages). The results revealed that Character Education has a positive impact on students' attendance, discipline and academic progress (Goss, 2014). Besides, in a longitudinal study for the period of 4 years in five school districts, researchers explored the effect of Character Education program (Skaggs & Bodenborn, 2006) to find out that there is a clear

improvement in the students' character-related behavior. For instance, there was a decrease in the drop out and suspension rates in some schools. Also, there was an examination to the levels of implementation of the Character Education program. Accordingly, the study, results showed that there was more improvement in the lower suspension rates and character driven behavior in the schools with more fully implemented Character Education program. Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) claimed that these improvements are a result of the embracement of the program by the school staff. They stressed on the importance of the role of the staff and the community for the effective implementation of the Character Education program.

The Impact of Moral Education on Student Academic Achievement

In Berkowitz and Bier's study (2005), the effects of Character Education was explored. It was concluded that Character Education affects all the students' moral developmental as well as learning outcomes. In addition, Moral Education showed that it doesn't only impact the students' personality, but also it enhances their academic achievements. For instance, in a study conducted on 651 schools to examine the relationship between Character Education implementation and students' academic achievement in elementary schools, the findings showed that there is a positive correlation between Character Education in schools and student academic achievements (Benninga et al., 2003). Another study conducted by Berkowitz and Bier (2005) showed that Character Education has positive impacts on students and that this effectiveness is more seen after years of the program accomplishment. However, they stressed on the fact that the program should be well planned and not implemented haphazardly to achieve the desired outcomes.

The Indirect Impact of Moral Education on Students Moral Development

Other studies showed that Moral Education for parents can indirectly affect students. For example, Royal and Baker (2005) investigated the effects of the Moral Education program on the elementary school students' parents. The study was a quasi-experiment on 18 parents who participated in Deliberate Psychological Education program which intends to improve the parents' moral judgment which will indirectly influence the kids' moral development. The findings showed that the Moral Education program enhances moral judgment of parents which can in return improve the kids' moral development.

Summary and Theoretical Framework

From the literature review, we can sum that Moral Education is effective in building moral character, bettering students' behavior, improving students' academic achievement, improving moral judgment and minimizing attendance and discipline issues. This study explores the impact of the Moral Education program as per the UAE context through a pure qualitative design study. The researcher adopted an interpretivist approach in analyzing the study results; because qualitative research is a type of social inquiry based on the constructivist and interpretivist approach that insinuates that people make sense of their world through interpretation of meaning (Schwandt, 1994). As per interpretivism, the researcher is a social actor who focuses on meaning making and is obligated to appreciate people differences (Saunders et al., 2012).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

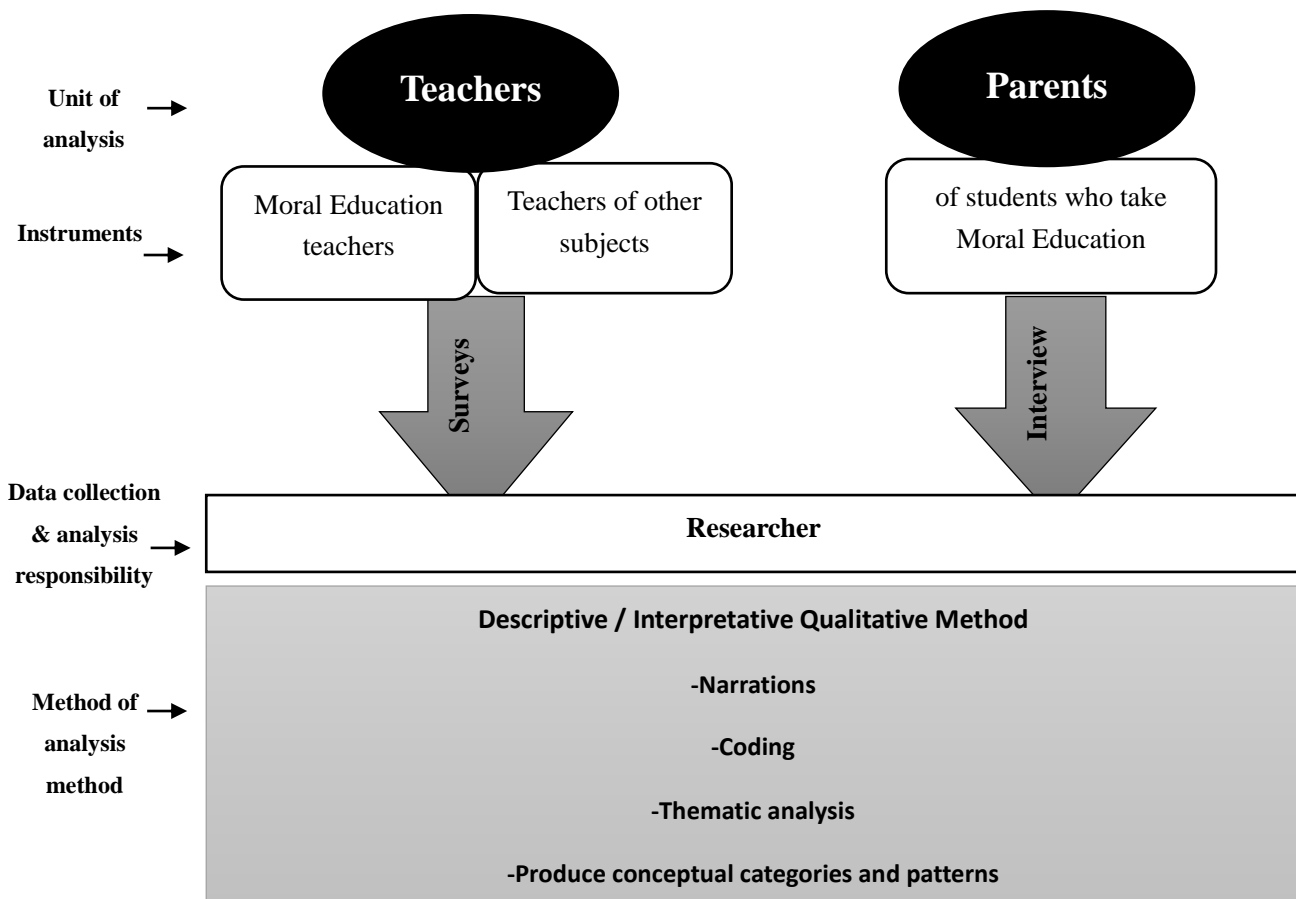
Since it is more effective to use qualitative approach to gather data about perceptions, this study used a non-experimental observational qualitative design to explore the perception

of teachers and parents about the Moral Education policy implementation impact in Dubai schools. In non-experimental research, the researcher cannot control or manipulate the subject or variables; thus, the researcher depended only on interpretations and interactions to make purely descriptive conclusions.

A convenience and snow-ball sampling was used to recruit participants. This type of sampling is used to ease the data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used for parents and are analyzed using categorizing and mapping. The interview questionnaires have a pre-determined set of questions that allow for discussion and exploration of new ideas and themes. The semi-structured interviews were used because they allow a two way communication with parents and give them freedom to express their views (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Also, the researcher has the possibility to change the order of questions as per the situation and convenience. For teachers, a qualitative survey (open ended questions) was used to generate themes and categories.

The Diagram (Figure 2) below demonstrates the data collection and analysis procedure to answer the research questions:

Figure 2: Data collection and analysis procedure



3.2 Data Collection Method

This study used two different data collection instruments to answer the study research questions. An interview questionnaire for parents as well as a survey questionnaire for Moral Education teachers and another one for other subjects' teachers were developed specially for this study. After consulting the Moral Education policy principles, goals and criteria, the questionnaires were designed especially for this study to cover 4 categories. Both the interview and survey questionnaires are categorized into 4 main categories that represent the 4 pillars of Moral Education: Character and Morality; The Individual and the Community; Civic Studies and Cultural Studies. The interview as well as the survey questions are designed to collect information about the new developed behaviors, attitudes and changed beliefs of students after taking the moral education program. Both teachers and parents were asked precise questions to know if students have demonstrated certain behaviors such as honesty, resilience, respect, social responsibility, interpersonal relations, respect to other cultures and citizenship. Participants were also asked open questions that gives them the chance to express their opinion and draw the attention to other issues that the researcher might not be aware of. Moral education teachers were asked additional questions regarding the obstacles that hinders them from achieving the desired impact of the moral education program and the recommendations they suggest for a better implementation of the Moral Education program.

The interview questionnaire is a semi-structured questionnaire that initially consisted of 12 structured questions. While the qualitative survey for Moral Education teachers comprises of 13 items and the survey for other subjects' teachers of 11 items. Most of the questions are open ended questions that require explanation and elaboration. In addition, the three used data collection instruments start by a general section to gather demographical information about participants and to identify the school type (public or private) and the grade level (primary, secondary and high school).

The interviews were administered by face to face and by telephone. Regarding the teachers' surveys they were either hard copies delivered to participants by hand or by email.

3.3 Piloting the Data Collection Instruments

To refine the interview and survey questionnaires, two teachers and one parent were consulted prior to the study. Piloting the test gave an indication about the time needed to complete the questionnaires and helped modify the questions to be clearly understood by participants.

3.4 Trustworthiness of Data

Using two sources of data from two different groups of participants is considered as triangulation which strengthens the validity and the trustworthiness of the study data. Also getting data from different sources helps reduce the bias (Denzin, 2017). In this study the researcher obtained data from three different groups of participants: parents, Moral Education teachers and other subjects' teachers. Also another type of triangulation is used in this study, which is the methodology triangulation. The researcher used both surveys and questionnaires as data collection methods to gather data and answer the research questions (Patton, 199).

3.5 Sampling and Population

Participants were both from public and private schools. They were recruited using a convenience and snow-ball sampling method. The distribution of participants was as

follows:

Participants	Number	Private schools	Public schools	Females	Males
Moral Education teachers	5	3	2	3	2
Other subjects' teachers	7	2	5	2	5
Total	12	5	7	5	7
Parents	5	4 kids	1 kid	5	0
Total	5	4	1	5	0

From the 12 teachers, 7 of them are males, while only 5 are females. 5 from the teacher participants are teaching in private schools while 7 of them are teaching in public schools in Dubai. However, all the 5 parent participants are females.

Sites of data collection

Teachers were given the surveys either by hand or email and were asked to return them back within 7 days. Interviews were conducted with parents either by face to face or by telephone according to their convenience.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Educational research is mainly about people and data related to people, thus ethical considerations are a must (Punch, 2005). For this study, all participants were asked permission for their voluntary participation before conducting the study. The researcher explained the purpose, objectives and methodology of the study to all participants and informed them about the voluntary nature of the study and that they can withdraw at any time. Also, all participants were informed that their responses are confidential and anonymous. The researcher faced an ethical issue which is related to the language of the data collection instruments. Some parents do not speak or understand English. To deal with this issue, the researcher translated the questions to parents in Arabic and made sure that the meaning did not change and that the parents clearly understood the questions. Also, the researcher made sure to translate the Arabic interview responses of parents to English with preciseness without altering the meaning.

3.7 Data analysis and Research Findings

The goal of this research was to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and parents about the Moral Education program implementation impact in Dubai schools. The researcher tried to answer the following research questions:

- 1- What are the parents' perceptions about the Moral Education impact on their kids' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors?
- 2- What are the teachers' perceptions and experiences about the impact of the implementation of Moral Education in the school?
- 3- What challenges are hindering Moral Education teachers from achieving the desired impact of the Moral Education program?

The below table illustrates the generated themes from the qualitative surveys and

interviews:

<i>Main category/ moral education pillar</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Sub Category/theme</i>	<i>Global Theme</i>
1.Character and morality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -more discipline in the class -a decrease in violence -respecting each other -accepting other points of views -more caring about school furniture and properties -a decrease bullying. -a decrease in wrong behavior in the classroom -Try to make sound decisions 	Strong sense of morality	<p>Local:</p> <p>New generation of responsible an moral youth</p> <p>Global:</p> <p>Global citizens who are aware of the shared human experience</p>
2.The individual and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -accept differences and each other -more polite to each other -desire to help others -trying to come up with initiatives to help poor people -are eager to be productive in the society 	Active community members	

<p>3.Civic studies</p>	<p>-more interest to learn about their rights and responsibilities -started gaining general knowledge about their rights and citizens and expats</p>	<p>Citizenship and political awareness</p>	
<p>4.Cultural studies</p>	<p>-more understanding of UAE culture and other cultures - more interested to be part of traditional and cultural events -more interest in the Arabic culture</p>	<p>Appreciation of the global wealth cultures</p>	

3.8 Interpretation of findings

Research Question #1: What are the parents’ perceptions about the Moral Education program impact on their kids’ beliefs, attitudes and behaviors?

Most of parents didn’t even know that their kids are taking Moral Education classes this year. One of the mother declared:

I only know that my daughter is taking Islamic studies... isn’t that Moral Education?

There was only one participant (mother) who had information about the Moral Education program and that was because she is working in the educational field. The lady said:

Yes for sure I know about Moral Education... I work at the MoE and I knew that it was launched this year and last year as a pilot.

After giving the parents some information about the Moral Education program, the majority argued that they noticed few positive changes in their kids’ behavior and attitudes. For instance, some parents said that their kids ask questions related to religion and charity and made several suggestions about helping other needy people. One of the mothers noted:

My son in grade 6 lately has mentioned that he will start to put all his clothes in a big carton so as so give to needy people at the end of every month.

Research Question #2: What are the teachers’ perceptions and experiences about the impact of the implementation of Moral Education program in the school?

In general, teachers’ perceptions were high and they claimed that they are witnessing

positive changes in the students' behavior. The greatest majority believed that students became more respectful to each other and more disciplined inside the classroom. A teacher said:

Yes, I noticed that the students are more respectful to each other. At least they try to show some ethical values.

Also, teachers argued that students are developing a stronger sense of morality, willingness to be active members in their community, political awareness and appreciation of the UAE culture as well as other cultures. However, some teachers stated that 60 minutes per week for Moral Education is not enough and recommended more sessions for Moral Education classes to be more effective. On the other hand, Moral Education teachers recommended to give students the opportunity to apply what they are learning and not to focus only on the theoretical part to benefit more from the program and make a greater impact on students.

Research Question #3: What challenges are hindering Moral Education teachers from achieving the desired impact of the Moral Education program?

Moral Education teachers argued that they are facing various obstacles that hinder them from being more effective in achieving the desired outcomes of the program. For instance, most of them said that they have big numbers of students in the classroom which requires lot of time and does not permit everyone from contributing. Teachers also lack resources to be creative in delivering the instruction. Furthermore, Moral Education teachers asked for more flexibility to teach the subject in the sense that they should not depend only on the curriculum. Some Moral Education teacher noted:

Moral education teacher (1): we need flexibility in teaching Moral Education, using textbooks is not enough... such subject depends more on interaction and authentic experiences to learn, not memorization.

Moral education teacher (2): we need a variety of learning resources to demonstrate to students what we mean, we also need time, 1 hour a week is not enough for such a subject.

4. Conclusion

“It takes a whole village to raise a child” an African proverb which stresses on the role of the community and parents to make a positive impact on a child and prepare him/her for adult life. Today, parents became less involved in building and shaping morals and values in their kids. With the rise of violence and wrong behavior in schools, schools took the responsibility of teaching those values to the kids to prepare them to become good adults in the future. However, parents are still playing an important role in the success of the Moral Education program. As per the study findings, I should argue that the Moral Education program in Dubai schools has failed to achieve one of its goals which is involving parents and the community. Most of the parents participating in the study did not even know that their children are taking Moral Education classes, which shows the lack of parental involvement with the child's academics.

Nevertheless, teachers perceive that the Moral Education program has achieved its goal of building character traits and equipping students with universal principles and ethical values. Teachers see that Moral Education program succeeded in making two major types of impact on the students' behavior and attitudes. The first impact is on the local level, in the sense that the students are developing into more responsible individuals who can make sound and moral decisions. The second impact is on the global level. According to the teachers, students are developing a sense of global citizenship and

appreciation of the global wealth cultures.

Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The study is delimited to the emirate of Dubai only, so generalizations cannot be made to other areas. The non-experimental nature of the study is also considered a limitation, because non-experimental studies do not gather data of post-treatment and do not confirm the impact of a certain variable. Also using non-randomly selected groups may affect the generalizability of the study. Convenience sampling is unpredictable and may lead to hidden biases (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

Recommendations and Implications for Further research

This research study has implications for future research. Since Moral Education is a new program and has not been studied before in the UAE. And since change in human behavior does not happen quickly and takes time, I suggest to conduct a longitudinal study that measures the impact of Moral Education on students' behavior, attitudes, beliefs as well as academic achievement. I also suggest a study that examines the relationship between the moral education and the number of ethical issues in the school, for instance, violence, bullying, crimes and racism. It is also recommended to repeat the study with a larger random sample using more in depth qualitative methods such as observations and focus groups.

This study should inspire educators to focus on moral education in shaping the students' character and improving their behavior. The study should also draw the attention of policy makers to provide assistance and professional development to educators to deliver a quality program that is aligned with the UAE educational vision. Policy makers, decision makers and educators should place more emphasis on moral education in fostering students' moral development to solve issues related to discipline, values and behaviors such as violence, bullying and racism.

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