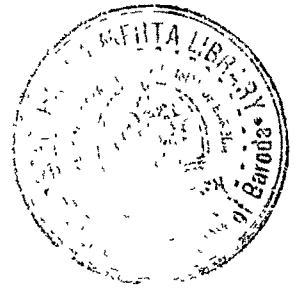


INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE



Morality predominantly refers to the aspects concerning the everyday life events and behaviour of individuals in order to attain the standards of one's culture. It specifically implies normative and ethical behaviour, judgement and decisions of individuals and group. According to Eckensberger (1994a) there are three types of normative behaviours with different types of interpretation and understanding: personal concerns, conventions and morality. Personal concerns are private idiosyncratic and subjective, while conventions are obligations based on cultural consensus, acquired through the process of socialization. Morality refers to what is considered as "naturally or intrinsically good or bad". Although morals consider the interests of people, they also refer to human rights in general, and to individual rights and obligations too. Morality includes therefore the standards of justice, welfare of mankind and avoidance of harm. The values such as care and concern for others, respecting elders, honesty and trustworthiness helping others in need, speaking socially approved language, being fair to others are some of the examples of moral orientation.

Since early years all these three aspects are observable in children's interactions in different situations in the preschool and at home. Each culture has its priorities and a major goal of the socialization process is communicating the ethical standards and shaping and facilitating the "good" or appropriate behaviour in children. There are certain universals across cultures, however specific values and behaviour regarded as desirable vary among cultures. The variation is more with regard to the interpretation of standards of behaviour or specific values, based on the cultural meaning and connotation.

The everyday life experiences and interactions of children within and outside home lead them to understand other's ideas and beliefs and based on that they build their own concept and in turn develop their personal standards of conduct. These interactions enable them to realize from early years the correct and incorrect behaviour, right and wrong action and good or bad behaviour. The encouragement of certain action and behaviour will help them understand whether to repeat a particular behaviour. During this process children will develop the ability to transfer their learning from one situation to the next.

Smetana (1995) mentions that morality is recognized to be multifaceted and it entails complex interactions among feelings (affect), thinking (cognition) and decisions (actions). Literature indicates that emotional, cognitive and behaviour components are interrelated thus constituting three facets of morality. Further, 'morality is constituted, considered and decided in the minds of people and morality is based on reason (Haan, Aerts & Cooper, 1985, p.54, as quoted in Walker, 1988).

Cross cultural research examining interpersonal obligation against justice obligations have revealed significant differences between the choices made by American and Hindu Indian children and adults regarding moral dilemmas (Movis & Ross; 1999). In this regard Miller and Bersoff (1992) found that more than 80% of Indian school children and adults endorsed interpersonal considerations in judging these issues while little more than a third of U.S. school children and adults endorsed such considerations.

Turiel (1998) remarks that the findings about young children showing positive moral emotions and actions towards others indicate that the foundations of morality are established in early childhood. Further, it was reiterated that young children's moral feelings are positive and they form relatively complex

judgements that are not based on extrinsic features as pointed out by Piaget and Kohlberg.

The recent emphasis on the researches in the area of moral development indicate a shift in trend as the focus is to study positive behaviours such as sharing, helping, cooperating, and performing prosocial or altruistic acts rather than studying only the negative behaviours performing prosocial such as stealing, lying, doing wrong deeds, controlling of aggressive behaviours, examining the feelings of guilt. Thus in the contemporary scenario it is pertinent to take a broader view and understand the development of morality in a more comprehensive manner.

Considering the determinants of prosocial behaviour and socio moral reasoning primarily bring forth two major influences namely biological and environmental. The biological predisposition to respond with empathy is evident in human beings according to some researchers, as human are biologically prepared to engage in prosocial behaviour. Also some researchers mention that there are individual differences in the socio moral behaviour as a result of genetic reason. The literature further reveals that prosocial children are generally better at regulating their emotions and impulses than other children. It is evident that the comforting behaviour is

associated with physiological self regulation as indexed by measures of heart rate (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie & Murphy, 1996).

The environmental factors such as family, mass media and cultural beliefs customs and practices, tend to influence children's behaviours in terms of sharing, empathizing, being altruistic in varying proportions. The beliefs about morality and appropriate behaviour also have their basis in the religious and philosophical thoughts with deeper roots in one's culture and spiritual literature.

The Theoretical View Points

The knowledge of moral development is derived by most early childhood educators from the cognitive developmental theories of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969).

Piaget's Theory

Piaget (1932/1965) defined morality, in general, as a set of rules and viewed the morals of a person as respect for these rules. Piaget considered the development to progress from heteronomous to autonomous reasoning. In this theoretical assumption the development of moral judgement is a movement from reasoning oriented towards external rules to that governed by inner standards

Kohlberg's Theory

Kohlberg formulated his theory based on Piaget's approach. In Kohlberg's conceptualization, the development occurred in stage like fashion in a rigid sequence which was non reversible. Also moral content was considered as universal, explained logically rather than biologically (Eckensberger & Zimba, 1997). In this theory the highest moral categories may not exist in all the cultures. But the stages found in one culture are local adaptations which means that they are adequate for the solution of relevant conflicts arising in a particular culture.

Further Eckensberger and Zimba (1997) remark that the dilemmas in Kohlberg's studies were western in orientation and one should consider moral judgements in relation to other cognitive domains. Also religious beliefs, factual aspects, socio economic situation and various emotional considerations also influence one's moral judgement and action. The child rearing practices and encouragement from parents also influence the development of morality. Infact in the contemporary context in India, the media, school and its policies, social issues concerning gender and other cultural practices too affect one's thinking and the approach for moral issues.

The theories concerning children's development highlight that children below six years of age were considered as "pre-moral" because their judgement of moral violations are based on compliance with parental authority referred as heteronomy by Piaget, avoiding punishment, called obedience orientation by Kohlberg or the absence of a sense of conscience or the superego. Which according to Freud did not emerge until four to six years of age (Zahn – Waxler & Kochanska, 1990; Killen, 1991)

The other theories which are relevant for the present study are Turiel and Shweder's theory. These are more current theoretical views and they provide good insights in understanding morality in the contemporary context.

Turiel's Theory

Turiel and colleagues strongly believed that moral development unfolds as a series of progressive differentiations among different domains of social knowledge i.e., morality, social conventions and personal concerns. Morality in this case refers to what is considered as "naturally" or "intrinsically good or bad". Morals basically consist of standards of justice, general welfare and the avoidance of harm. While both social conventions and personal concerns are context dependent

These conventions are obligations which are based on the cultural norms or consensus, while personal concerns are more subjective

Ecknesberger and Zimba (1997) mention that cross cultural studies excluding India and partly Israel have supported Turiel's claim of domain specificity. However in reality it is difficult to find behaviours that are exclusively personal, moral or conventional. The interpretation of behaviour may vary in different cultures. In other words, a behaviour considered personal in one culture may be a moral issue in another culture

Thus Turiel's consideration of social knowledge provides adequate stimulation for researchers to conceptualize the understanding of morality. It is also observed that often these categories tend to coexist and are merged. Thus the early childhood educator's concern may not perhaps be resolved through Turiel's theory

Schweder's Theory

The social communication theory of Schweder et al (1987) assumes that the development of social knowledge is, based on "other – dependent thinking rather than on self construction. While Criticizing Turiel's theory, Schweder et al (1987) mention

that it underplays the significance of explicit communication and other forms of socialization in the development of social knowledge. The social communication theory considered that morality is acquired by children through communication of cultural judgement and ideology, with those people who guard the moral order.

In the Indian context too this assumption is useful because India follows an oral culture. Children interact with family members, peers and teachers in the school and through everyday life experiences, discover what is right or wrong, good or bad and which aspects of behaviour are acknowledged and reasons for its acceptance. In this way children develop the normative standards or rules for the evaluation of individual's action and the nature of social interactions.

Individualism – Collectivism and Morality

The individualistic and collectivistic orientation of individuals is governed by the culture to which one belongs. These variations in one's way of thinking have implications for moral reasoning. Indians consider the social responsibilities as moral issues while Americans consider them to be a matter of personal decision (Miller, Bersoff and Harwood, 1990). The common observation is that in the collectivist context the goal is usually

group harmony. Therefore there is a tendency to avoid conflicts and in case of conflict, the resolution pattern is such that it protects the interest of the family and the society at large.

In the collectivist societies cooperation is more prevalent and it is encouraged from the early years as against competition. The communication too is contextually bound and the feeling of inter-dependence is nurtured in children.

In this relation it is also pertinent to understand morality and autonomy, the two key aspects of children's social life. Morality refers to the principles of how one should treat others and behave in the culturally appropriate ways. Autonomy refers to the goals of individual. It is therefore necessary to know the relationship between morality and autonomy within one's social context.

Autonomy is often considered in relation to individualism within one's cultural context. Western cultures are oriented to autonomy and individualism, and non-western cultures are thought to be oriented to the group and collectivism (Schweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987, Triandis, 1989, 1990). According to Killen and Turiel (1991) there is a need for a substantive reexamination of the relationship between morality and

autonomy as they are the central concepts in moral development. Children learn to appreciate other's view points and perspective as they get wider exposure and in the naturalistic setting through play experiences

Smetana (1995) mentions that there is a clear hypothesis that structures of thinking interact with features of the environment to produce differentiated moral and social concepts. The basic understanding of morality develops during the second year of life as evident from observational studies of the family (Dunn and Munn, 1985, 1987; Smetana 1989). Also there are similar findings from the results of interview studies with very young children, which reveal that children begin to distinguish moral and social concepts during the fourth year of life. Smetana and Braeges (1990) point out that early domain distinctions are related to children's language development. Also there are studies which suggest that affect may be important in the early development of social concepts. (Arsenio, 1988). But the studies are needed to find out the role of affect in moral development

Morality in the Indian Context

Morality is constructed within the cultural framework as it is influenced to a major extent by the religious and spiritual

philosophy of one's culture or subculture. Cultural norms about the importance of harmony among people and social responsibility clearly differ across cultures and subcultures (Stevenson, 1991).

Specifically in the Indian context it is found that Hindu Indian culture forwards a broader and more stringent duty based view of social responsibility than American culture. (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990), Also it has been reported that Hindu Indian school aged children and adults tend to focus more on non responsiveness to others' needs in discussing moral conflicts and they view interpersonal responsibilities as justice related obligations (Miller & Bersoff, 1992). The Americans in contrast tend to view personal responsiveness and caring as less obligatory and a matter of personal choice, especially when friends and strangers rather than parents and children are potential recipients (Miller, et al, 1990). These findings indicate the strong cultural emphasis on individual rights.

The cross cultural studies concerning the prosocial moral reasoning of children and adults from non western, nonindustrial cultures may differ considerably from that of people from western cultures In everyday life others' physical

and psychological needs, costs for prosocial behaviour and pragmatic concerns are important

It is also relevant to note that since culture tends to differ considerably in valuing behaviour and qualities of individuals at different ages, it is quite difficult to draw comparative picture. The prosocial behaviour is manifested by Hindu Indians because of reciprocity considerations as more moral than do American adults (Miller & Bersoff, 1994). In some cultures individual rights gains and achievements are valued more while in others helpfulness and social responsibilities are emphasized more.

Morality and The Hindu Ideology

Morality is a process which continues throughout an individual's life in the Hindu life context. The base of moral foundations is rooted in early years and it is believed to guide the moral development in the later years. Morality is thought as a 'dharma' which is a natural law and it upholds and sustains the cosmos. Menon (2003) explains that Dharma is thought to be ideal justice made alive and there is a convergence between moral and natural orders a coincidence of what is and what 'ought to be'. Thus the domains like conventional and moral are

not distinct as there is no distinction between social and the natural moral orders.

Further, the Hindu moral code defines a universal goal—moksha—which means escape from the cycle of rebirth that Hindu philosophy strongly advocates. In this relation, non attachment and self refinement are the subsidiary goals. Menon (2003) also interpretes the moral code as goal based rather than duty based as evident in the coherent framework of Hindu moral understanding. It is also further explained that in order to achieve one's goal an individuals needs to perform one's duty meticulously. Thus morality is not universalized but it varies according to context as well as different stages of life. The factors such as gender, occupation, family role, caste to which one belongs, the phase of one's life determines one's own moral code. Finally in Hindu ways of thinking, what exists is by virtue of its existence, also good and true (Menon, 2003). Usually children acquire their moral sense through observing and actually experiencing and participating in the cultural events along with the family members.

In the contemporary context in India, it is self evident that morality is based on individual's thinking about various issues in the socio political fabric with which one is surrounded. This

thinking is influenced by the family background, the philosophy of one's life and various other social, cultural, economic, religious and spiritual aspects. These issues may be in conflict with one's orientation and emotions on the one hand and moral considerations on the other. Since early years parents begin to guide children and impress upon them what is right and wrong, good or bad. In other words children begin to understand what is the "done thing". These parental philosophies and practices would play a vital role in the development of morality. It is assumed that various competencies of children in their processes of development will enable them to create an understanding about their personal needs, conventional expectations and family rule systems and moral judgements and decisions. The everyday life experiences at home, in the neighbourhood and in the preschool environment will facilitate this understanding. Children would have opportunity for such experiences in the free play situations as they would interact with peers and experiment various strategies to achieve their goal. In this process adult intervention at appropriate time would provide scope for children to realize correct and incorrect action. The literature indicates that when parents and teachers use inductive reasoning with children, they are better able to grasp and later practice what is suggested for future action.

Morality as a construct though complex in nature begins to have its roots since the early years

Sharing behaviour and morality

The studies concerning prosocial behaviour consider sharing as an important indicator for analysis. The sharing behaviour including sharing of objects, space, adult's attention, giving personal belongings to peer, taking turns with toys and play equipments, Babcock, Hartle and Lamme (1995) reported that children shared on 75 different occasions (18%). Children also shared in creative and manipulative centres where the resources were limited. The findings further revealed that children transferred learned sharing behaviour acquired at centers with abundant supplies to centers with limited resources.

In a study on Greek children of preschool age it was found that sharing, cooperating, helping and comforting were observed in young children in quite high percentages rated from 48% to 77% (Kakavoulis, 1998). However in another study to determine the relationship between preschooler's moral reasoning about altruistic moral conflicts and their sharing, helping and comforting in a naturalistic environment, moral reasoning was differentially related to various types of prosocial behaviours.

Specifically in this study, children's spontaneous sharing was significantly, negatively related to hedonistic reasoning and positively related to need oriented reasoning (Eisenberg & Hand, 1979) The reasons however are not self evident according to authors.

Moral reasoning and Prosocial behaviour

The researches have indicated some link between moral reasoning and children's behaviour. In this regard Krebs and Van Hesteren (1994) argued that advanced stages give rise to higher qualities of altruism as they give rise to greater social sensitivity, stronger feelings of responsibility. It is evident that when researchers have assessed children's moral reasoning about dilemmas involving helping or sharing behaviour, generally moral reasoning is associated with some measures of prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg, Carlo et al 1995) In addition, those children reasoning at developmentally mature levels are less likely than children reasoning at lower levels to express that they would discriminate between persons close to them and others when deciding whether they intend to help (Ma, 1992, Eisenberg, 1983)

There are also observational studies which indicate that children tend to share greater with their close peers in the

preschool free play context. The nature of the prosocial behaviour enacted seems to be a critical variable. In observational studies, prosocial moral reasoning most often has been significantly related to preschool spontaneous sharing behaviours rather than helping behaviours or prosocial behaviours shown in compliance with 'peers' request (Eisenberg & Gialanza, 1984). These behaviours are low cost like help peers pick up dropped objects and play materials.

There are personality factors too which may play a positive or adverse role in demonstrating linkages between prosocial behaviour and moral reasoning. Other factors such as temperament, moods and the state of emotionality too may influence socio moral acts of young children. In order to understand the emergence of precursors of morality, these considerations may provide useful insight. Another common observation is that children tend to help others whom they like. It is often found that children share or help friends or liked peers more frequently than less liked peers (Buhrmester, Goldfarb and Cantrell, 1992, Ma & Leeing, 1992). In another study it was reported that even children as young as 4 or 5 years or in elementary school report more sympathy toward an acquaintance (Costin and Jones, 1992). In this relation Birch

and Billman (1986) mention that prosocial behaviour among friends also appears to be motivated by loyalty, consideration of reciprocity, obligations and the fact that friends more often ask for sharing or help. The Context too influences whether children share more with friends than with other peers. Thus there are multiple individual and situational factors influencing behaviours of children in the early years within the socio moral domain of development. The values, goals and needs of individuals for prosocial moral reasoning with reference to self and others plays a significant role. In the early years, these aspects are also influenced by the social conventional and family rules, philosophy of home and preschool and the standards of behaviour within one's cultural framework.

The studies in the area of perspective taking too reveal that at 2 or 3 years of age children increasingly become aware that other's feelings are independent of and sometimes differ from their own. Their prosocial actions therefore reflect an awareness of others' unique needs and situation. It is also evident that with increase in age children's moral reasoning becomes more abstract, relatively less self oriented and increasingly based on values, moral principles, and moral emotions (Carlo, Eisenberg and Knight, 1992; Carlo Keller,

Eisenberg, Panchco and Loguercio, 1996; Eisenberg, Miller Shell, McNally & Shea, 1991)

Also most of the developmental research from the domain specific perspective has focused on changes with age in children's ability to distinguish morality from other social concepts. Children's ability to distinguish the domain becomes more stable with increase in age and it is applied to a broader range of social events. The literature reveals several studies indicating age related differences in children's moral reasoning, qualitative reorganization in moral reasoning have been neglected (Smetana, 1995)

The researches with gender in focus have found that prosocial moral reasoning in young children do not indicate sex differences. In elementary school and beyond, the girls use more of sophisticated type of prosocial moral reasoning than do boys (Carlo, et al, 1992, Eisenberg, Carlo, et al 1995, Eisenberg, Miller, et al. 1991) However, the findings with reference to gender are fairly inconsistent especially in case of younger children

The journey through the literature on the socio moral domain of development and prosocial behaviour draws attention to the

methodological aspects. It is important to realize and note that in last two decades, greater number of researches especially regarding sharing and conflict resolution behaviours indicate the trend of observational studies, often in the naturalistic environments. However, there are also studies which include experiments and various types of tasks in the laboratory settings. The studies focusing on moral reasoning also include children's responses to stories and anecdotes. The investigator acknowledges the richness of the literature due to variety in measures. However the concern is to be able to know the emerging trend which sometimes contradicts with other studies. This concern is more pronounced in case of those studies which examine the precursors of morality such as sharing, conflict behaviour and resolution processes, perspective taking and standards of behaviour with focus on gender and age.

The methodological differences too are likely to influence the findings of the studies concerning morality and young children. In this regard Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) reiterate that a combination of personal characteristics or parenting practices may have more potent effects than any single variable. Another important realization has emerged through the review of literature that the studies regarding prosocial behaviour and

socio moral aspects of development need to be viewed in an integrated manner to create a more comprehensive understanding. This would enable a greater fit between the two areas of research namely prosocial development and morality in the early years. According to Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) greater integration across content areas and across disciplines would have broad benefits.

Morality and Conflict resolution

The development of morality is influenced by the competencies of children in resolving conflicts in their everyday interactions with peers and family members. Killen and Nucci (1995) mention two types of social exchanges. The first one examined how children resolved conflicts between their self interests and the needs of others in peers exchanges. In peer conflicts children are required to assert their own needs and also attend to the needs of others to have a fair or caring outcome. These types of conflicts contain autonomy and also morality, indicating reciprocal relationship between autonomy and morality.

Secondly the interactions with adults were analyzed to understand how children indulged in exchanges. Specifically it looked at children's attempts to differentiate their areas of choice or discretion from behaviours that fall within the

authority or interest of others (Killen and Nucci, 1995). In this case, conflicts arise due to the authorities attempt to regulate child's behaviour. There is conflict with the child's personal domain and establishment of autonomy. Ladia (2004) reported that the common reason for conflict with parents was when parent's decision mismatched with children's need. In this study gender difference too was evident because parents of boys indicated greater occurrence of conflicts when there was a mismatch of decision.

Thus through social interactions children's process of conflict resolution needs to be analyzed. The literature clearly reveals that active involvement in conflict resolution will provide opportunities to children to develop social and moral knowledge as it calls for dealing with other's perspective and reconsider one's own view point (Berkowitz, 1985; Daman, 1983, Shantz, 1987 and Piaget, 1932). Thus analysis of conflict resolution would provide deeper insight about the emergence of morality.

The researches regarding how children resolve conflicts has involved little empirical scrutiny although it has significance in human development. (Killen & Nucci, 1995). It is essential to study the nature and sources of conflicts, the resolution strategies used by children, the role of adults and peers and the

conclusion of conflicts in the naturally occurring free play situations.

The most common form of conflict between young children occurs from object disputes like sharing toys, followed by structuring activities such as role playing and few conflicts arise from physical harm or aggression. Killen and Turiel (1991) observed that object disputes and physical harm have been referred to as "moral" due to the presence of victim, while there are other conflicts stemming from social coordination or social order, which do not involve a victim. In this relation, the conflicts which occur as a result of object disputes are constructive from a moral view point because such disputes can be negotiated through social interaction. (Killen & Nucci, 1995)

In another study Eisenberg-Berg, Haake, & Bartlett (1981) found that children who were told they were owners of objects, possessed them longer, also they were more likely to claim their ownership, whereas nonowners gave away sooner. The moral qualities mainly focus on the rights of others

The conflicts tend to take constructive or destructive course depending upon the orientation of children, their personalities the issues generating conflicts the socio cultural context and

the underlying philosophy of the preschool. According to Deutsch (1994) most conflicts are mixed – motive conflicts in which the groups involved have cooperative and competitive interests.

The longitudinal study by Duun and Muun (1987) was regarding the types of justifications mothers and siblings used during conflict episodes at home. The findings revealed that the use of justifications increased with age from 18 months to 36 months. Children gave reasons concerning their own feelings and consequences of actions and others' feelings. Thus Killen and Nucci (1995) note that morality and autonomy coexist in early development and it is important to conceptualize autonomy as an integral part of morality

An important indicator of the role that conflict plays in moral development is how a conflict is resolved. The different types of resolutions documented in young children's conflict exchanges are compromise, bargaining negotiation, reconciliation, appealing to adult, retaliation and retribution in physical and verbal forms, topic dropping, changing to a new activity and adult intervention (Hay, 1984; Shantz, 1987, Killen & Turiel, 1991, Shantz & Hartup, 1992)

In the observations of children's conflicts and resolution method, Killen and Turiel (1991) reported that the adults intervened in conflicts stemming from physical harm upto 60% which was maximum as compared to any other type of moral conflict. The conflicts arising due to social order were largely resolved by adults and rarely by children. While conflicts about object disputes were mainly resolved by children. Further, Nucci and Turiel (1978) observed how adults intervened in children's naturally occurring transgressions in the preschool and found that their methods varied depending on the type of transgression. It was interesting to know that children responded to moral transgression more often than with social conventional ones. It is requiring further examination whether it is because of adult's explanations to moral acts or children understand the intrinsic consequences of moral transgressions earlier than social conventional ones.

It is also relevant to note that the perception of morality is in terms of the cultural orientation. In the non Western cultural context autonomy is non-existent and the individual is not emphasized and the non-western morality is oriented to the group (Shweder, 1991). However, the study of Japanese preschool aged children in a day care classroom in Tokyo

reports that both group and individual are emphasized in different ways in the Japanese culture (Killen & Sueyoshi, 1994). This finding is apt in the context of the present study as the methodology was mainly observations of children in the free play situation. This study further reported that in the Japanese preschool, teachers intervened the least in children's conflicts. Also when they intervened in 18% conflicts, 16% involved explanations from the adult while only 2% involved command and rule statements. According to Killen and Sueyoshi (1994) this was a remarkable approach as the teachers were able to use explanations even with a large preschool class size with 25 children and a single teacher.

The resolution of conflict is influenced by the cultural expectations, values of individuals and families. The culture establishes the symbolic meaning of actions, defining a type of action as appropriate or inappropriate, respectful or disrespectful, friendly or hostile, praiseworthy or blameworthy (Deutsch, 1994). The cultural orientation is established in the early years. It is also evident that the cultural assumptions acquired in childhood often have heavily laden emotional views of good and bad, resulting in strong reactions.

In relation to conflict, Piaget (1965) and Gilligan (1982) reported that male and female orientations to moral conflict take two forms. Piaget (1965) mentioned that female's solutions to hypothetical situations of conflict between moral principles were less likely than males to stress legal elaborations and more likely to stress tolerance and Gilligan (1982) mentioned that females stressed on maintaining relationships within intimate social groups. Both Piaget (1965) and Gilligan (1982) found males to display a moral orientation inclined toward the principles of justice and they stressed on considering the interests of society at large. The findings of another study suggest that there may be a continuum of responses to conflict, ranging from avoidance of conflict to aggressive or heavy headed responses, with males dealing with conflicts directly and females dealing more indirectly (Miller, Danaher and Forbes (1986)

Thus the analysis of conflicts among young children reveal their constructions of morality and autonomy. At this juncture it is pertinent to note that autonomy is an integral part of morality and morality and personal autonomy are interrelated, coexisting aspects of social functioning that operates throughout the life span of individuals in all cultures. (Killen and Nucci, 1995).

Also theoretically conflicts tend to have a two way reciprocal thinking as they play key role in the acquisition of concepts in development. Therefore conflict resolution is important for the construction of knowledge. It also requires assertion of one's own needs and attending to other's needs to arrive at fair or caring outcome.

In this regard Jones and Nimmo (1999) being influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky reiterate that knowledge is constructed in social interaction out of disequilibrium. They strongly advocate that the task of conflict resolution is the continuing discovery of rules and relationships within which one can collaborate, engage in productive conflict, enjoy various differences and create productive changes together. Adults need to lead children to the process of conflict resolution rather than cutting it short through power by a stronger individual or group. Further Steinberg (2000) stresses that it is within teacher's power to facilitate safe and fair conflict management, increased cooperative behaviour, and therefore good feelings about the self. They emphasized peer interactions, supportive encouragement and guidance from adults, enabling children to experience fairness toward everyone.

The role of Early childhood programs on children's socio moral behaviours

The everyday events and interactions of children with adults and peers is likely to play an important role in the actions and behaviour of children. An interesting initiative should be to know the school context through the observations of children in the naturalistic setting. The occurrence of behaviour will also be affected by the layout and organization of the classroom environment and the extent to which teachers facilitate free play. Also the quality of interaction and vividness in experiences is likely to moderate the degree and type of influence of preschool on children's behaviour, attitude and social perspective taking.

It is evident that children classified as securely attached to their current and first preschool teachers were rated as more considerate and empathetic with unfamiliar peers than were children classified as having an insecure and ambivalent relationship with their teachers, (Howes, Matheson and Hamilton 1994).

There was longitudinal test of the effects of the Child Development Projects (CDP) and the program was used with a cohort of students who began in kindergarten and continued

through eighth grade (Solomon, Battlestich and Watson (1993) The measures of prosocial reasoning and conflict resolution were obtained each year. It was found that in kindergarten comparison students reasoned higher than CDP children but CDP children reasoned at higher levels from first grade onwards Also CDP students evidenced higher conflict resolution scores than comparison group, indicating consideration of others' needs and reliance on the use of compromise and sharing

In an observational study of Chinese kindergarten sittings, the Chinese appear to place greater emphasis on helping and sharing In such classrooms the play equipment too is designed to facilitate cooperative interaction through games, songs, dances Also there is a conscious effort as children's books, stories and drawings too encourage helping and sharing behaviours. Thus the proportion of cooperative acts observed in kindergarten classes in Beijing, China was significantly higher than in Canadian kindergarten classrooms (Orlick, Zhoue & Partington, 1990).

The recent work in the classroom context reveals that young children can resolve interpersonal conflicts by using variety of problem solving strategies However the early childhood

teachers report an increase in the number of children coming to school angry, aggressive or lacking the social skills to get along with classmates (Adams, 1998). A careful analysis of children's behaviour and interactions with peers and adults in the regular program would create deeper insight about the pattern of selected early indicators of morality. These early childhood settings offer opportunities to children to learn and practice fundamental problem solving skills which may be for personal gain, to meet the social conventional expectations or for prosocial moral reasons. This depends upon individual children, their competencies and perspective taking abilities.

Specifically with reference to prosocial behaviour Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) emphasized on the quality of early schooling and supportive relationships between children and their teachers which have been associated with the development of prosocial behaviour. It is valid to point out that the quality of high interaction should be of a standard and it should be a regular and an integral part of the program. Also when an intervention is specially designed it should be for a longer period to enable the actual impact of the program on a complex aspect of socio moral behaviour

Standards of Behaviour

The present study aimed to know the perceptions about the standards of behaviour of children from parents and teachers through interviews. Most current researches are considering two features as crucial in the development of moral understanding, irrespective of one's theoretical approach : the first being children's understanding of the standards and rules of their social world and second children's growing understanding of the feelings of others who share their social world (Duun, 1987).

Kagan (1984) believes that as cognitive and affective abilities mature and experiences with significant adults occur, one invents and believes in a set of moral principles. These principles take their first form as standards which arrive from several sources such as adult approval and disapproval, of children's behaviour, children's attainment of goals and a feeling of satisfaction, children's concern for others due to developing ability to empathize with others in distress and their identification with adults (Buzzelli, 1992). For example any kind of disapproval from parents is one source of standards children begin to realize children aspire to have warm relationship with parents and therefore they strive for their approval.

In this regard Kagan's and Lamb's research emphasize the maturational processes in the development of moral understanding. Further Kagan considered the appreciation of standard as universal process "built into" each individual and with certain valued virtues, one develops being dependent on the social context in which we live (Kagan, 1984). Also Lamb (1991) emphasizes the role of emerging abilities in cognition, language and affective expression which provide "maturational preparedness" supportive of children's increased sensitivity to moral events around 17 to 18 months of age.

Later children have scope to develop these standards in the preschool context too and the philosophy of the program would facilitate greater understanding of moral and social conventional rules. The early childhood educators play a central role in creating an enabling environment for children. The researches in the previous decade by DeVries, Peese – Learned, and Morgan (1991) document how early childhood curricula and the role of adults create sociomoral atmosphere in the classrooms. An atmosphere which may encourage or discourage interactions which would support children's moral understanding in the early years. It was found that in comparison with the DISTAR program and an eclectic program,

children in the constructivist classroom based on piagetian assumptions about children as active learners showed more cooperative behaviour with one another. They also used more negotiation strategies for solving conflicts.

Perspective Taking

The Theory of mind research deals with various mental states of children such as thinking, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, desires and knowledge. Children's understanding about the mental world depends largely on their age. These mental states are linked to each other and to perceptions and actions or behaviours experienced by children. Further at age 3½ to 4 years, the mental representational conception of the child's mind develops. So people act on the basis of their representations or beliefs rather than how the world is.

The preschool children also have difficulty in appearance and reality distinction. The children are in transition at 3 to 4 years of age in understanding that their visual or mental representation is different from the reality.

There are several researches in the area of theory of mind which bring forth interesting aspects of children's thought processes. Coombs (1994) remarked that Flavell on the basis

of several studies seemed to imply that children do not act in a way which conveys that they have an ongoing mental life. In turn, due to this lack of understanding about other's thought processes, it may interfere with the child's full sense of self.

In the everyday real life experiences children often acquire knowledge about events hearing conversations of people around them, observing others participate in events, exposure to the events on television and through stories. In other words children do not necessarily acquire knowledge by directly experiencing the event. Rudy and Goodman (1991) report that young children were more influenced by whether they were participants or by observers in comparison with younger children especially when their resistance to misleading questions was assessed.

The literature indicates and it is commonly assumed that perspective taking skills increase the likelihood of individuals identifying, understanding and sympathizing with others' distress or need (Batson, 1991, Eisenberg, Shea, Carlo & Knight, 1991). Also children may have "theories" about others internal states that they use to infer how others feel (Eisenberg, Murphy and Shepard 1997).

Many studies use a single measure of perspective taking abilities or prosocial behaviours. Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) aptly comment that it is preferable to use more reliable indexes of perspective taking created by aggregation across measures.

The measures of perspective taking need to match with the children's comprehension and expression of socio moral behaviours. The match between the type of perspective taking skills assessed and the type of level of understanding seems to strengthen this relationship thus promoting prosocial behaviour in the given context (Carlo, Knight, Eisenberg and Rotenberg, 1991).

Role of parents in the development of morality in early years.

The contemporary literature in the area of human development emphasizes the active role of children themselves in constructing their understanding and knowledge about their environment. However directly and indirectly adults influence children's behaviour. Also parents take the responsibility to teach moral behaviours to children at an early age through modeling, directions and a good quality interaction and induction.

The goal of effective parenting is to lead children to the internalization of cultural values or social standards at developmentally appropriate levels. Parents have their own philosophy of life and expectations from children which will guide them about different course of action about child rearing. Every culture rewords the learning and acquisition of its own approved pattern, encouraging certain type of personality characteristics and socio moral understanding.

At this juncture it is also necessary to reflect about the parental investment as the conception of parenting will influence parents' decisions about priorities for guiding children. In this regard Keller (1999) described parenting as an intergenerational transmission mechanism of psychological characteristics and the reproductive styles. Thus parental investment is introduced as a part of life histories which specifies the optimization of reproductive success in terms of inclusive fitness. These investment decisions are influenced by contextual, parental and children's characteristics.

According to Clutton – Brock (1991) evolutionary approaches too emphasize the role of parents in their children's behavioural development and view parenting as an investment that parents allocate individually and differentially to their offspring (c.f.

Keller 1999) refers to two aspects to investment decisions. The first being parental behaviours in terms of physical, social and psychological care which contribute to the reproductive success of the offspring. The second, investment in a particular child compromises the opportunities for parents to invest in other children. It should also be noted that the socio economic background of parents, gender, birth order and age of children, the social group to which one belongs affects the style and pattern of interaction from early years. Further Keller (1999) cites Trivers (1974, 1985) and Paul and Volland (1997) and mentions that parent offspring conflicts, therefore can be seen as the result of an inherent genetic interest conflict. This is novel and an interesting way of understanding children's conflicts especially with parents. However this conceptualization about parental investment in relation to the development of morality requires empirical studies within the specified theoretical paradigm.

The literature on socialization of mothers' beliefs regarding preschoolers social skills highlight some interesting aspects. One major task of socialization is to prepare children for socially accepted situations that are characteristic of the culture in which they are to survive and thrive (Harkness & Super,

1995; Le Vine, 1974). On the basis of this notion, the socialization goals and strategies of parents may vary according to the characteristics of the particular culture

In a recent study Japanese and US mothers' conceptions of behavioural characteristics were examined and it was found that mothers in both cultures emphasized social cooperativeness and interpersonal sensitivity (Olson, Kashiwagi, Crystal, 2001). However there are differences in the ideologies of these two cultures. For example in North American culture, prosociality and cooperation including sharing, helping, and caring or taking responsibility for another person are considered important social skills as they tend to have implications for the quality of social engagement and interpersonal relationships (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, & Chapman, 1983).

The Chinese culture follows Confucian ideologies which traditionally gave importance to behaviours that promote the harmony and Cohesiveness. Cheah (2002) pointed out that one important belief underlying Chinese Confucianism is that the well being of individuals depends upon the results of collective effort.

In another study Ho (1986) surveyed parental attitudes on child rearing. The findings revealed that characteristics of children such as love for others, is group oriented and cooperative, respects elders, has good manners and is obedient were rated by parents as highly important in a "good" child. Also Fung (1999) mentioned that any kind of failure to bring up a child properly is considered to be a poor reflection on parents, thus bringing disgrace to the family, the ancestors in the system of interlocking responsibility extending over generations. These types of social conventional considerations received higher priority in Chinese mothers. The principle of Chinese childhood socialization is of setting a life long foundation for the child and there is provision of specific instructions regarding proper conduct (Ho, 1989). Thus increasingly the recent literature reveals several studies concerning Chinese ideologies. In a more recent study Cheah (2002) found that mothers attributed the importance of sharing and helping most frequently to moral, followed by Social Conventional, and then Developmental reasons. While Eisenberg and Hand (1979) had found that children considered the act of sharing with others as significantly related to moral reasoning, whereas helping behaviours were related only to general sociability.

The studies regarding mother child conflict reveal that it might be an important arena in which emotional and moral understandings are also constructed (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992). The major reasons for conflict between young children and their mothers indicate child's noncompliance and parent's insistence on discipline, day to day routines, following of rituals, eating meals, playing with neighbours most times and conflicts concerning interaction with siblings, especially older sibling. Eisenberg (1992) mentioned that besides child non compliance, attitudinal or factual assertions and parent's failure to comply with children's requests also leads to disagreements.

Theoretically, the renewed interest in Vygotskian theory has helped to realize that verbal conflict may play a significant role in children's social cognitive development. Both Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (1990) mention that children construct mental representations of their social world through the social interaction with caregivers of which conflict has a large share. Further Rogoff (1990) considers this as a process of co construction in which parents and children create shared meaning in which language plays an important part.

Also conflict frequently centers on issues concerning behaviour and on moral, social and family rules (Dunn, 1988, Dunn and

Munn, 1985, 1987). Conflict also provides a rich context for children's conscience development. Laible and Thompson (2002) state that the use of clear and extensive explanations by parents in conflicts concerning rules and moral issues, along with the discussion on emotion, is likely to facilitate children's early conscience development. Further this study indicated that gender was also a potent predictor of children's level of socioemotional and sociomoral development at age 3. Also other studies showed consistent findings in relation to gender (Kochanska, 1995, Oppenheim Nir, Ende (1997) Girls consistently scored higher than boys on behavioural internalization (Laible and Thompson, 2002).

Another angle also highlighted interesting view points. It is likely that children not only create the contexts in which conflict occurs, by deciding which parental demands are resisted and negotiated, but it also seems likely that the strategies children use in conflict also influence the tactics that parents use in conflict (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997)

Turiel (1998) draws attention to the fact that the family influences on children's moral development go beyond the effects of parental disciplinary practices. Also the structure of family interactions is another important influence, specially

because it relates to fairness in arrangements among males and females. In the Asian context and especially in the Indian context even in the contemporary times often grandparents also participate actively in child rearing processes. In a study conducted at the laboratory nursery school Chetan Balwadi it was found that in many families parents looked after the educational and extra curricular activities in terms of making specific decisions about children while grand parents contributed in recreational aspects, providing home remedies and supporting parents : in giving sanskars to children (Shastri, & Pathak, 1995).

Thus the role of parents, grand parents, siblings and other family members vis-à-vis the development of morality from early years is reciprocal and interdependent on one another. There are individual differences mainly in the extent and quality of interaction of family members with children. Several theorists suggest that social interactions within the family foster moral development (Piaget 1932/1965, Turiel, Smetana and Killen, 1991, Youniss, 1981). Also there is need in the literature to examine various rules used in everyday conversation as well as practice in the home situation. It is relevant to note that with reference to the present study too, social rules used by mothers

and siblings can be seen as part of an ongoing scaffolding process in which the appropriateness of individual behaviours and broader family practices are continually negotiated (Miller & Goodnow, 1995, Rogof, 1990)

The major highlights which emerge from the review of literature is presented below.

- Morality refers to intrinsically good or bad naturally occurring behaviour, reactions and actions. There are three types of normative behaviours mainly personal concerns, conventions and morality (Ecknesberger, 1994). These behaviours are observable since early years in children's interactions.
- Morality is multifaceted and it entails complex interactions among affect, cognition and decisions which imply feelings, thinking and actions (Smetana, 1995).
- The cross cultural research examining interpersonal obligation against justice obligations have revealed significant differences between the choices made by American and Hindu Indian children regarding moral dilemmas with Hindus endorsing interpersonal obligations (Miller & Bersoff, 1992).
- Young children show positive moral emotions and actions towards others, thus indicating the foundations of morality in early childhood. Young children form relatively complex

judgement that are not based on extrinsic features, contrary to Piaget and Kohlberg's assumptions (Turiel, 1998).

- Recent shift in trend indicates the focus of research on studying positive behaviours such as sharing, helping and performing altruistic acts within the socio moral domain
- Morality is acquired by children through communication of cultural judgement and ideology, with those people who guard the moral order (Schweder, et al 1987).
- In the collectivist context the goal is group harmony and there is tendency to avoid conflicts the resolution protects the interest of family and society.
- Morality is constructed within the cultural framework as it is influenced by socio, economic, religious and political philosophy In the Indian context Hindu culture focuses on duty based view of social responsibility (Miller, Bersoff and Harwood, 1990).
- In the Hindu ideology morality is a process which continues throughout an individual's life. The focus is on goal based moral code children learn and acquire moral sense through observation and participation in the cultural events with the family (Menon, 2003).

- Sharing and conflict resolution are two important indicators of morality.
- The early childhood programs play a vital role, giving opportunities to children to experiment and practice fundamental problem solving skills in free play situations.
- Children begin to indicate that they are able to take other's perspective as early as 2 or 3 years of age.
- Most current researches consider two features as crucial in development, the first being children's understanding of standards and rules of their social world and children's growing understanding of the feelings of others who share their social world (Dunn, 1987; Buzzelli, 1992)
- Parents play a significant role in the development of morality in early years. The goal of effective parenting is to lead children to the internalization of cultural values or social standards at developmentally appropriate levels.
- Recent trends in conflict literature reveal that children create their own context for conflicts by deciding which parental demands are resisted and negotiated. In turn the strategies children use in conflict also influence the tactics that parents use in conflict (Kuczynski, Marshall and Schell, 1997)

Rationale of the study

With this backdrop the study is designed to understand the developing context of young children's morality with focus on the every day life experiences in the preschool and home setting specifically in relation to morality.

There is dearth of literature regarding the precursors of morality specifically in terms of universal and relativist aspects. The present study attempts to draw insight regarding the precursors of morality with reference to young children from the early child development perspective. There is scope to examine the early indicators of morality within the socio moral domain of development especially in the Indian context with special reference to the families residing in Gujarat.

Children begin to have grasp of justice as early as three years of age in which they distinguish moral rules from social conventions. However, the literature indicates that this dichotomy is less pronounced in non-western culture. Hence it would be interesting as well as, justified to study the selected precursors of morality such as sharing, conflict resolution, perspective taking and standards of behaviour with an indigenous orientation.

Objectives

1. Identifying and examining the emerging precursors of morality at 3 years to 4 years of age in terms of;
 - a. sharing behaviour
 - b. conflict resolution
 - c. perspective taking
 - d. standards of correct and incorrect behaviour
2. Examining the perception of preschool teacher regarding the role of adult in facilitating the development of morality in young children in the preschool context with special reference to sharing and conflict resolution
3. Examining parents' perceptions, expectations and strategies used for the development of moral standards in early years.

Conceptual Framework

The review clearly acknowledges the role of genetic dispositions and biological processes – Maturation in influencing good or bad naturally occurring behaviour, reactions and actions, i.e. Morality. The role of social environment creates individual's personal experience, the parental beliefs, role of family members, the influence of interaction with peers, the preschool environment and the role of teacher, the gender

role and media together create the social context of developing individual. Morality is constituted, considered and decided in the minds of people. The biological processes and the social environment interact leading to morality. Currently the studies regarding emergence of children's morality in social interactions emphasize the need for understanding as to how the culture contributes to the meanings children give to their social experiences. This in turn influences children's construction of morality and sense of personal autonomy (Killen & Nucci, 1995). It focuses on social relationships and perspective taking in children.

Further this interaction leads to two views of morality i.e., morality as a conceptual a developmental system that is distinct from other types of social knowledge. Morality is multifaceted and it entails complex interactions among feelings (affecty) thinking (cognition) and decision (action). On the other hand morality as a domain of social knowledge mentions three dimensions namely morality, social convention and psychological knowledge which are hypothesized to coexist from early childhood (Smitana, 1995). Even young children apply moral criteria in prototypical moral events

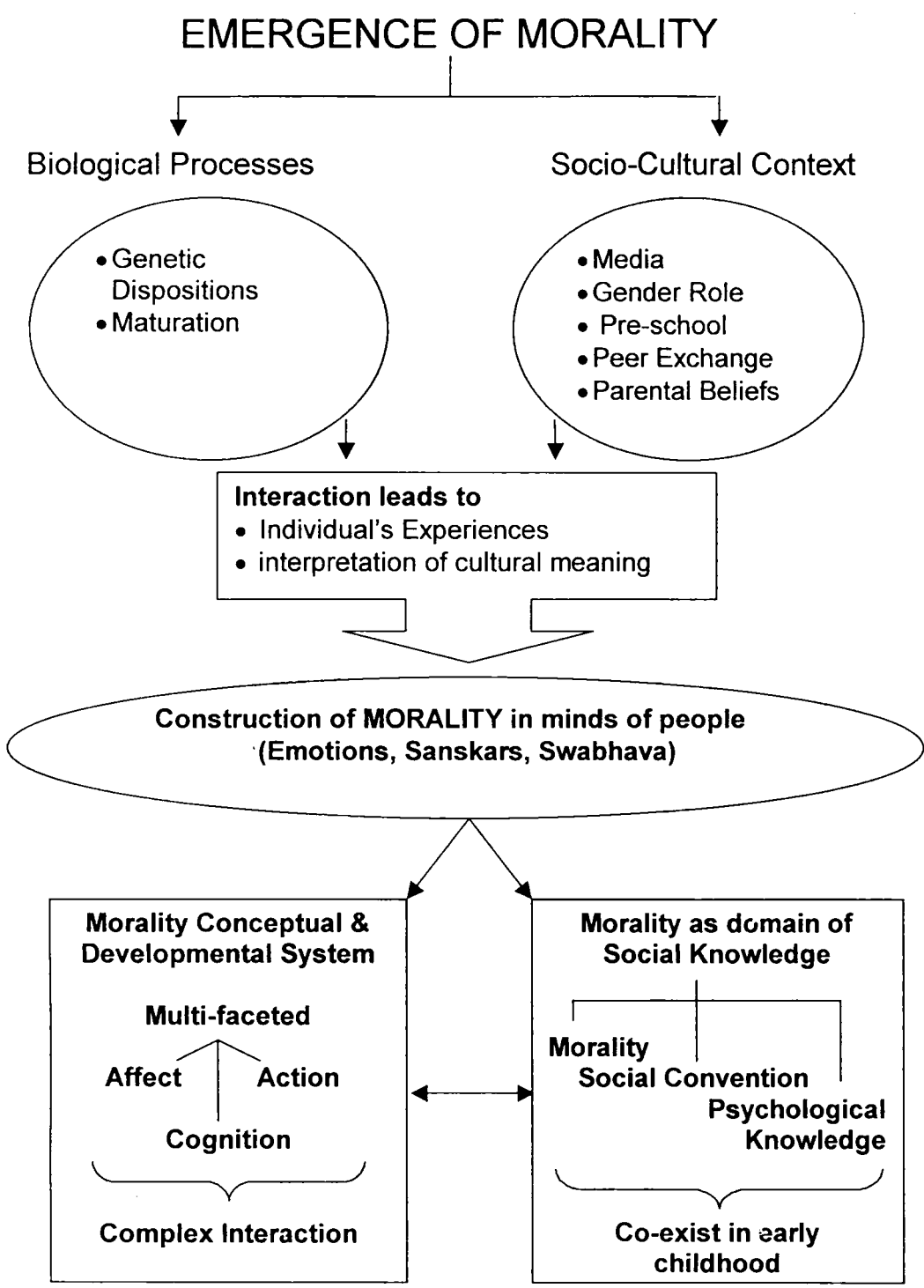


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Note : Turiel (1983), Schweder (1987), Smetana (1995), Sri Aurbindo

The developing competencies of children and the domain specific aspects of social knowledge interact and lead to the development of a natural moral sense in the natural course resulting into moral understanding and moral practices.

Operational Definition

1. Sharing

Sharing is giving or offering an object or play material, space, equipment and attention of adults or peers through mutual agreement by child in focus and the peer or peers who desire and express the need to access or acquire it through request or demand in verbal or non-verbal forms

2. Sharing adult's attention

When the focus child is involved in any activity or conversation with adult, the peer tries to get attention of adult through verbal or non-verbal behavior and in turn adult tries to attend his/her demand and focus child accepts it and allows adult to respond

3. Sharing space

It occurs when the focus child gives space by shifting, allowing peer to squeeze in during his/her ongoing activity.

4. Conflict

An episode in which the action of child is opposed by the peer during interaction in the free play situation, leading to disagreement.

5. Conflict resolution

The strategy used to resolve interpersonal issues, disagreements and problems by focus child and peer.