

Classroom Behaviour and Moral Education in Primary Schools of Odisha: A Descriptive Study in the Context of NEP 2020

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Abstract

Moral education plays a vital role in shaping the behaviour and character of young learners, especially at the primary school level when foundational values are developed. Classroom behaviour, including respect, cooperation, empathy, and discipline, is strongly influenced by the values children internalise during these early years. In the Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasised the integration of value-based and holistic education to nurture responsible, compassionate, and ethical citizens. Against this backdrop, the present study was undertaken to examine the impact of moral education on the classroom behaviour of primary school students. The study adopted a mixed-method descriptive design, covering a sample of eight government primary schools in the Balikuda block of Jagatsinghpur district in the state of Odisha. The participants included 16 FLN teachers, 08 headmasters, and 40 Class III students, selected through random sampling. Data were collected using teacher and headmaster questionnaires, student interviews and behavioural indicators were analysed through percentages, mean scores, and thematic interpretation. The findings revealed that structured moral education significantly enhanced students' classroom behaviour. Improvements were observed in discipline, cooperation, attentiveness, teamwork, and respect for peers and teachers. Teachers also reported that activities such as storytelling, role-play, and discussions contributed to better value-based learning outcomes. The study highlights the practical need for consistent integration of moral education within school activities, supported by teacher training and parental involvement. The results reinforce the vision of NEP 2020, which positions moral education as an essential component of holistic child development.

Keywords: Classroom Behaviour, Moral Education, Perspective, Holistic Education, Foundational Values

Introduction

Education is not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the foundation for shaping values, attitudes, and behaviours essential for responsible citizenship. Moral education, particularly

at the primary level, nurtures habits of discipline, cooperation, and self-control, guiding children toward constructive classroom behaviour and life skills (Lickona, 1991). Globally, countries like

Japan, Finland, and Singapore integrate moral and character education into their curricula, emphasizing respect, responsibility, and compassion (Arthur et al., 2017). UNESCO also advocates for education that promotes peace, human rights, and ethical understanding, linking moral development with cognitive growth (UNESCO, 2015). Systematic moral education has been shown to enhance discipline, empathy, and cooperation, while a lack of structured instruction can lead to indiscipline and conflicts (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

In India, moral education at the primary level is often inconsistent, integrated indirectly into subjects, and overshadowed by academic pressures. NEP 2020 emphasises holistic, value-based education, promoting ethics, empathy, and constitutional values through experiential, activity-based pedagogies such as storytelling, role play, and discussions.

Against this backdrop, the present study examined the impact of moral education on classroom behaviour among primary school students in Balikuda block, Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha, addressing the gap in understanding its systematic implementation and measurable effects on student conduct.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the implementation of moral education through classroom activities, co-curricular programmes, and teaching practices in primary schools.
2. To analyse the impact of moral education on students' classroom behaviour, particularly discipline, cooperation, respect and participation.

Delimitations

The study focused on integrating moral education into foundational literacy and numeracy in selected primary schools of Balikuda block of Jagatsinghpur district in the state of Odisha, involving FLN teachers and Class III students as key participants.

Review of Related Literature

Moral and value-based education is widely recognised as essential for holistic schooling, with research linking explicit value instruction and social-emotional learning (SEL) to improved student behaviour, social skills, and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). Effective programmes combine moral reasoning with active practice, such as role-plays, discussions and community projects, rather than relying on ad hoc efforts (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1991). International frameworks, including UNESCO guidance, emphasize integrating values like respect, empathy, and ethical understanding into curricula, reporting that coherent, school-wide programmes improve classroom climate and cooperation (Arthur et al., 2017).

In India, NEP 2020 highlights the integration of ethics, human values, and socio-emotional learning across subjects using activity-based pedagogies (Ministry of Education, 2020). School-level practices such as storytelling, value-themed assemblies, role-plays, and community projects have shown promise in enhancing student discipline and cooperation. Teachers and headmasters play a key role in implementing these programs effectively, while parental involvement and a consistent school-wide values environment further

strengthen outcomes.

Despite these advances, gaps remain, especially in rural and semi-urban Indian contexts like Odisha, where limited empirical studies evaluate structured moral education's direct impact on observed classroom behaviour. Contextual factors such as teacher training, resources, cultural norms, and parental engagement significantly affect implementation. Focused primary-school studies combining observations, teacher/headmaster perspectives, and student outcomes are therefore needed to identify scalable practices that improve classroom behaviour in the Indian context.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design combined with a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the impact of moral education on the classroom behaviour of primary school students in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The descriptive framework helped capture existing practices and behavioural outcomes, while the mixed-methods orientation allowed the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby enriching the analysis.

Population and sample

The population of the study comprised primary schools in the Balikuda block of Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha. From this population, eight government primary schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness. The sample consisted of 16 FLN (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy) teachers (two from each school), 8 headmasters (one from each school), and 40 Class-III students (five from

each school). The students were selected randomly from the class attendance register using a lottery method to ensure an equal opportunity for selection. This multi-level sampling ensured adequate representation of teachers, administrators and learners.

Tools used for data collection

Two primary tools were employed for data collection.

1. **Questionnaire for Teachers and Headmasters:** A self-structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers to collect information regarding teaching strategies, school activities, curriculum integration, and challenges in implementing moral education. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and opinion-based items. Before final administration, the tool was reviewed by experts in education for content validity and was pilot-tested in a similar school setting to ensure clarity and suitability.
2. **Observation Checklist for Classroom Behaviour:** A structured observation checklist was developed by the researchers to assess students' classroom behaviour. The checklist included indicators such as discipline, cooperation, respect, participation, empathy, and ethical conduct. A three-point rating scale (Always, Sometimes, Never) was used to record behavioural responses. The checklist was validated through expert review and refined after pilot observation to ensure reliability and appropriateness for primary school students.

The combination of questionnaires and observation enabled the researchers to capture both educators' perspectives and actual

classroom behavioural practices effectively.

Procedure of data collection

Data were collected systematically using questionnaires and classroom observations. Necessary approvals were obtained from school authorities, and participants were informed about the study. Structured questionnaires were administered to FLN teachers and headmasters with clear instructions and sufficient time for responses. Classroom observations were carried out using a checklist to assess student behaviour, including discipline, engagement, cooperation, and ethical conduct, while ensuring minimal disruption to classroom activities.

Data analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires and behavioural checklists were analysed using percentage analysis and mean values to identify trends and patterns in responses. The quantitative data were tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

Qualitative data obtained from open-ended responses of headmasters, teachers, and classroom observations were analysed through thematic analysis following processes of data familiarisation, coding, categorization, and theme development. Recurrent themes such as storytelling, group activities, value-based discussions, cooperation, and discipline emerged during the analysis.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of both the implementation of moral education and its influence on classroom behaviour among primary school students.

Ethical considerations

Ethical protocols were carefully

followed during the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from teachers, headmasters, and parents of the students. Confidentiality of all respondents was strictly maintained, and responses were used solely for academic purposes. Care was taken to ensure that no participant, especially students, faced any discomfort or academic disadvantage due to their involvement in the study.

Results and discussion

The analysis is presented objective-wise, focusing on the implementation of moral education in primary schools, its influence on students' classroom behaviour, and the associated challenges. Data were systematically collected through structured questionnaires administered to FLN teachers and headmasters, complemented by classroom observations conducted using a checklist. The results are presented using tables, figures, and descriptive statistics, including mean values and percentages, to ensure clarity and precision in interpretation.

Implementation of moral education through plans and activities in primary schools

The implementation of moral education in primary schools was examined through the responses of headmasters and teachers. Findings highlighted strategies such as classroom discussions, storytelling, co-curricular activities, and value-based learning programmes, providing insights into their effectiveness and challenges in promoting moral education in line with NEP 2020.

Headmasters' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education

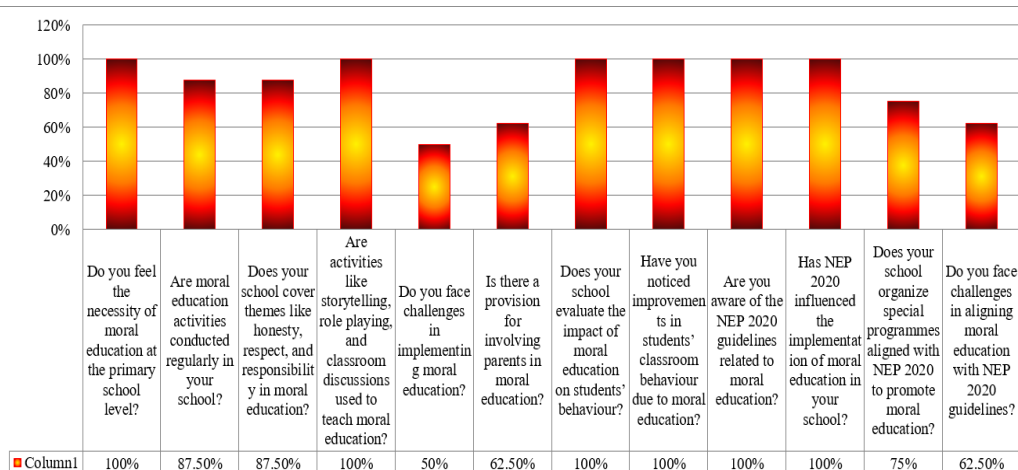
Responses from eight headmasters were collected to assess the implementation

of moral education in primary schools. The table below summarizes their views on its necessity, challenges, and the influence of NEP 2020, providing insights into the level of implementation and observed behavioural changes in students.

Table 1
Headmasters' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education

Sl No.	Indicators	No of respondents who said 'yes'	Percentage (%)
1	Do you feel the necessity of moral education at the primary school level?	8	100%
2	Are moral education activities conducted regularly in your school?	7	87.5%
3	Does your school cover themes like honesty, respect, and responsibility in moral education?	7	87.5%
4	Are activities like storytelling, role-playing, and classroom discussions used to teach moral education?	8	100%
5	Do you face challenges in implementing moral education?	4	50%
6	Is there a provision for involving parents in moral education?	5	62.5%
7	Does your school evaluate the impact of moral education on students' behaviour?	8	100%
8	Have you noticed improvements in students' classroom behaviour due to moral education?	8	100%
9	Are you aware of the NEP 2020 guidelines related to moral education?	8	100%
10	Has NEP 2020 influenced the implementation of moral education in your school?	8	100%
11	Does your school organise special NEP 2020-aligned programmes to promote moral education?	6	75%
12	Do you face challenges in aligning moral education with NEP 2020 guidelines?	5	62.5%
13	Mean Value	Mean No. of Respondents =7.00	Mean Percentage =85.00%

Figure 1
Headmasters' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education



All headmasters (100%) strongly supported the necessity of moral education and acknowledged its positive influence on students' classroom behaviour. Most headmasters (87.5%) reported that activities related to honesty, respect, and responsibilities were addressed regularly, with interactive approaches such as storytelling, role-playing, and classroom discussions widely practised (100%). These findings reflected the growing emphasis on value-based and participatory learning in primary schools.

However, 50% of the headmasters reported challenges such as time constraints, inadequate teacher training, and limited resources in implementing moral education effectively. Moderate parental involvement (62.5%) suggested that reinforcement of moral values outside the school environment was not always consistent. Although all headmasters recognised the influence of NEP 2020 on promoting moral education, 62.5% faced difficulties in aligning school activities fully with policy guidelines, possibly due

to limited institutional support and lack of structured implementation frameworks.

Further, 75% of schools organised NEP 2020-aligned programmes to strengthen moral values among students. The overall mean response rate of 85% indicated substantial implementation of moral education practices in primary schools, while also highlighting the need for enhanced training, resource support, and systematic planning for more effective execution.

Teachers' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education in Primary Schools

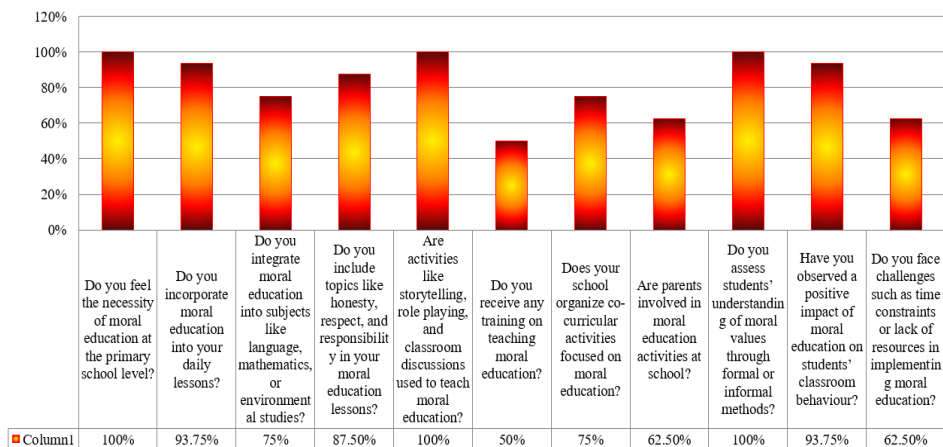
Responses from 16 FLN teachers were collected to assess the implementation of moral education. The table below summarises their views on its necessity, integration, teaching methods, challenges, and observed impact, providing insights into how moral education was incorporated into lessons, co-curricular activities, and assessments, as well as the challenges faced during implementation.

Table 2
Teachers' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education in
Primary Schools

Sl No.	Items	No of respondents who said 'yes'	Percentage (%)
1	Do you feel the necessity of moral education at the primary school level?	16	100%
2	Do you incorporate moral education into your daily lessons?	15	93.75%
3	Do you integrate moral education into subjects like language, mathematics, or environmental studies?	12	75%
4	Do you include topics like honesty, respect, and responsibility in your moral education lessons?	14	87.5%
5	Are activities like storytelling, role-playing, and classroom discussions used to teach moral education?	16	100%
6	Do you receive any training on teaching moral education?	8	50%
7	Does your school organise co-curricular activities focused on moral education?	12	75%
8	Are parents involved in moral education activities at school?	10	62.5%
9	Do you assess students' understanding of moral values through formal or informal methods?	16	100%
10	Have you observed a positive impact of moral education on students' classroom behaviour?	15	93.75%
11	Do you face challenges such as time constraints or lack of resources in implementing moral education?	10	62.5%
Mean Value		Mean No. of Respondents =13.00	Mean Percentage =82.00%

Note: Sixteen FLN Teachers from eight schools were included in the sample

Figure 2
Teachers' Responses on the Implementation of Moral Education in Primary Schools



All teachers (100%) strongly supported the necessity of moral education, with most (93.75%) incorporating it into daily classroom practices. A majority (75%) integrated moral values across subjects such as language, mathematics, and environmental studies, while 87.5% emphasised values like honesty, respect, and responsibility. Interactive approaches including storytelling, role-playing, and classroom discussions were widely adopted (100%), reflecting the use of participatory and activity-based methods in moral instruction.

However, only 50% of teachers had received formal training in moral education, which may have limited the effective implementation of certain behavioural and socio-emotional learning strategies. Moderate parental involvement (62.5%) also suggested that reinforcement of moral values beyond the classroom was not always consistent. Although 75% of schools organised co-curricular activities to support moral development, challenges such as time constraints and

limited teaching resources were reported by 62.5% of teachers, potentially affecting regular implementation.

All teachers (100%) reported assessing students' moral development, and 93.75% observed positive improvements in classroom behaviour. The overall mean response rate of 82% indicated substantial implementation of moral education practices in primary schools. Nevertheless, the findings highlighted the need for enhanced teacher training, stronger parental engagement, and improved institutional support to further strengthen moral education initiatives.

Impact of moral education on classroom behaviour among primary school students

This section analysed the impact of moral education on students' classroom behaviour, focusing on discipline, cooperation, engagement, and ethical conduct. Classroom observations using a structured checklist assessed student

interactions, responsibility, and respect, while teachers and headmasters provided insights into observed behavioural improvements. The findings highlighted the positive influence of moral education on students' attitudes, participation, and the overall learning environment.

Impact of Moral Education on Classroom Behaviour

Structured classroom observations

were conducted to assess the impact of moral education on students' behaviour. Using a checklist, student conduct was recorded for respect, honesty, participation, discipline, empathy and teamwork. The table below shows the frequency of behaviours categorised as Always, Sometimes or Never, highlighting the influence of moral education on students' overall conduct.

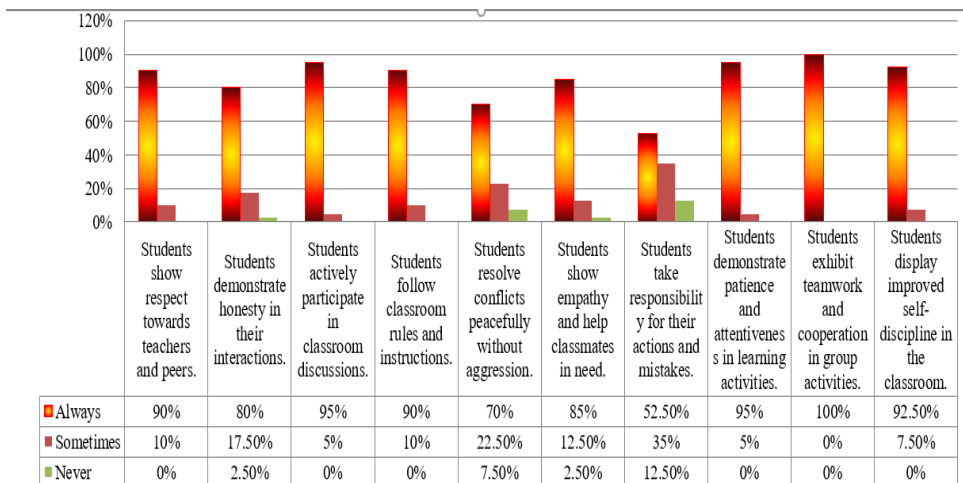
Table 3
Impact of Moral Education on Classroom Behaviour

SL No.	Behavioural Indicators	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	Students show respect towards teachers and peers.	36 (90%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)
2	Students demonstrate honesty in their interactions.	32 (80%)	7 (17.5%)	1 (2.5%)
3	Students actively participate in classroom discussions.	38 (95%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)
4	Students follow classroom rules and instructions.	36 (90%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)
5	Students resolve conflicts peacefully without aggression.	28 (70%)	9 (22.5%)	3 (7.5%)
6	Students show empathy and help classmates in need.	34 (85%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)
7	Students take responsibility for their actions and mistakes.	21 (52.5%)	14 (35%)	5 (12.5%)
8	Students demonstrate patience and attentiveness in learning activities.	38 (95%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)
9	Students exhibit teamwork and cooperation in group activities.	40 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

10	Students display improved self-discipline in the classroom.	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)	0 (0%)
Mean Value		Mean No. of Students=34.00 Mean Percentage =(85.00%)	Mean No. of Students=5.00 Mean Percentage =(12.50%)	Mean No. of Students=1.00 Mean Percentage =(2.50%)

Note: Forty Class III students from eight schools were included in the sample

Figure 3
Impact of Moral Education on Classroom Behaviour



The results showed that respect, participation, and teamwork were the most consistently observed behaviours, with 100% of students cooperating in group activities and 95% actively engaging in classroom discussions. Self-discipline (92.5%) and attentiveness (95%) were also frequently demonstrated, indicating a positive influence of moral education on classroom behaviour. Honesty (80%) and empathy (85%) were widely reflected among students, though occasional lapses were observed. Comparatively lower

scores in conflict resolution (70%) and taking responsibility for actions (52.5%) suggested that these behavioural aspects require additional reinforcement. This may be due to limited opportunities for students to practise independent decision-making and peaceful conflict management in classroom and home settings. Furthermore, insufficient parental reinforcement and the need for more focused teacher guidance in socio-emotional learning may have influenced these outcomes. Overall, a mean response rate of 85% indicated that

moral education significantly contributed to positive classroom behaviour, while continued emphasis on responsibility and conflict management could further strengthen its effectiveness.

Emerging themes on the implementation and impact of moral education

Open-ended responses from headmasters, teachers, and classroom observations highlighted several key themes regarding moral education. Respondents emphasised its importance in shaping students' values, with structured lessons, discussions, and storytelling being common methods. Improvements were noted in respect, honesty, and self-discipline, though some teachers questioned whether these changes persisted outside the classroom. Teachers recognised their role in modelling ethical behaviour but faced challenges such as time constraints, limited training, and insufficient teaching materials. Parental involvement was often limited, affecting reinforcement of values at home. While all respondents were aware of NEP 2020's emphasis on moral education, structured implementation varied across schools due to inconsistent guidelines and resource limitations. Value-based activities were introduced in some schools, but alignment with NEP 2020 remained inconsistent. The findings also highlighted the need for continuous reinforcement through practical, real-life applications. Overall, moral education positively influenced student behaviour, but addressing gaps in teacher training, standardised curriculum,

parental engagement, and policy alignment could further enhance its effectiveness in primary schools.

Major findings of the study

- **Support for Moral Education:** All headmasters and teachers strongly acknowledged the necessity of moral education and its positive impact on students' classroom behaviour.
- **Integration into School Activities:** Moral education was widely incorporated into daily lessons, co-curricular activities, and subjects such as language, mathematics, and environmental studies, using interactive methods like storytelling, role-playing, and discussions.
- **Impact on Student Behaviour:** Observations indicated improvements in discipline, cooperation, respect, empathy, participation, and teamwork. Students demonstrated higher attentiveness, self-discipline, and ethical conduct due to moral education initiatives.
- **Areas Needing Reinforcement:** Behaviours such as conflict resolution and taking responsibility scored lower, highlighting the need for further reinforcement and structured interventions.
- **Challenges in Implementation:** Teachers and headmasters reported time constraints, limited training, insufficient teaching resources, and moderate parental involvement as key barriers to effective moral education.
- **Influence of NEP 2020:** All

respondents were aware of NEP 2020 and acknowledged its influence on promoting moral education, although alignment with policy and structured implementation varied across schools.

- **Need for Continuous Reinforcement:** The study highlighted the importance of hands-on, real-life applications to help students internalize moral values beyond the classroom.
- **Overall Effectiveness:** Despite challenges, the mean response rates (82–85%) indicated widespread implementation and a significant positive impact of moral education on primary school students' behaviour, underscoring its role in holistic development.

Educational implications

- **Integration of Moral Education:** Schools should systematically integrate moral education into daily lessons, co-curricular activities, and assessments to promote ethical behaviour and holistic development.
- **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Regular professional development programmes are needed to equip teachers with effective strategies for delivering moral education and modelling ethical behaviour.
- **Curriculum Planning and Resource Support:** Structured guidelines, teaching materials, and interactive tools should be provided

to ensure consistent and effective implementation of moral education across schools.

- **Parental Involvement:** Schools should actively engage parents in reinforcing moral values at home through workshops, activities, and communication strategies.
- **Emphasis on Experiential Learning:** Practical applications, real-life scenarios, and participatory activities should be emphasised to help students internalize moral values beyond the classroom.
- **Alignment with NEP 2020:** Schools should ensure that moral education initiatives are aligned with NEP 2020's vision, promoting value-based education as an integral part of foundational learning.

Conclusion

The study indicates that moral education positively influenced primary school students' classroom behaviour, enhancing discipline, cooperation, respect, and empathy. While schools effectively integrated moral education through interactive methods, challenges such as limited teacher training, resource constraints, and inconsistent parental involvement were noted. Addressing these gaps and aligning practices with NEP 2020 can further strengthen the impact of moral education, fostering holistic development and value-based learning among students.

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