CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews three instruments that are generally used in studying moral development. They are Moral Judgement Interview (MJI) by Colby et al. (1987), Defining Issues Test (DIT) by Rest (1979) and Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF) by Gibbs, Basinger and Fuller (1992). The review also discusses the relevance of these instruments to this research study.

Moral Judgement Interview (MJI)

Moral Judgement Interview (MJI) has been developed by Colby et al. (1987) as an instrument to determine the moral stages using Kohlberg's theory of moral development. This instrument is formerly known as the Moral Judgement Scale (MJS) developed by Kohlberg in his earlier studies (1958).

The MJI instrument uses a series of moral dilemmas to probe the moral reasoning of the respondents (Colby et al. 1987). There are nine moral dilemmas in the MJI and they are presented in the form of stories. An example of these dilemmas is given in the following:

> In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered the drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2000 for a small dose of the drug.

The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife is dying and asked to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it". So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store and steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19)

The respondents are to resolve the dilemma by giving reasons to probe questions such as:

(a)   Should Heinz have done that? Was it actually wrong or right?

(b)   Is it important to do everything one can to save one's life?

The reasons given are then matched with the criterion judgement in the Moral Judgement Interview Manual (Colby et al. 1987) and then staged accordingly (see p. 3).

According to Gibbs (1992), the moral dilemmas in the MJI help the respondents to make decisions on moral issues. The moral dilemmas can be easily administered and used to study group moral development for any age groups. These moral dilemmas can also be administered in writing or through oral interview (Colby et al. 1987).

However, the MJI has some weaknesses. According to Gibbs et al. (1992) the texts in the moral dilemmas are "lengthy" and the respondents may be confused if the texts are too long. This will perhaps affect the researchers' findings because the respondents may not be able to understand the text. Furthermore, weaker students will have difficulty in understanding the moral dilemmas, regardless of

whether they are administered orally or in writing. Martin, Shafto, and Van Denise (as in Damon, 1977) reported that researchers and respondents using the oral form are found to be biased in their decisions. This is possible because the results can be influenced while the researcher is conversing or giving hints to the respondents. In view of this, the objectivity and validity of the MJI will be affected.

Nevertheless Snarey (1985), reported the use of MJI in 45 cross-cultural longitudinal and cross-sectional studies in 27 cultural areas. In his review, although he reported the universality of the stages of moral reasoning he also found that the scoring system fails to identify some important reasoning that are evident in other cultures, particularly in non-western cultures.

It has also been argued that the hypothetical dilemmas in the MJI are also found to be irrelevant to practical life (Damon, 1977). For example in the Heinz Dilemma, Damon (1977) argues that it is not suitable to ask the respondents whether to steal or not to steal because stealing is a serious offence according to the law. In view of this, it is suggested that the moral dilemmas should reflect our daily life as well as relevant to children (Damon, 1977).

In addition Gibbs (1992) has also pointed out that a researcher using the MJI could perhaps have difficulty in assessing the scoring because the manual to the answers consists of several hundreds of pages. This implies that the researcher needs to read the assessment manual which is time consuming (Gibbs, 1992). To

overcome this problem, in 1979, Rest introduces the Defining Issues Test or the DIT as another way of measuring moral judgement.

Defining Issues Test (DIT)

The Defining Issues Test (DIT) is an instrument developed by Rest (1979) to measure moral development as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Rest's Theory of Moral Development

Stage	Description
1	Morality of obedience
2	Morality of instrumental egoism and simple exchange
3	Morality of interpersonal concordance
4	Morality of law and duty to the social order
Principled (5 & 6)	Morality of societal consensus
	Morality of non arbitrary social cooperation

In Rest's model on moral development he reclassified Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6 to principled stage of moral development. In short, there are 5 instead of 6 stages of moral development. In measuring these 5 stages of moral development, Rest constructed The Defining Issues Test (DIT). It is an objective measure of moral reasoning. It consists of two version – short version and long version. The short version consists of two sets with three dilemmas in each set. The first set

consists of "Heinz and the Drug", "Escaped Prisoner" and "Newspaper". The second set consists of "Student take over", "Webster" and "Doctor's dilemma".

The long version consists of all six dilemmas. In the DIT instrument, the respondents are presented with a set of standardized alternative solutions to moral dilemmas and are asked to rate and rank these alternative solutions. For example, in each dilemma the respondents are required to read the dilemma and give ratings from seven to twelve questions.

According to Rest, (1979) the DIT can be group-administered and easily scored because the respondents who perform the test only need to circle the answer given as opposed to open-ended questions in the MJI. Rest (1979) also argued that, the DIT has the advantage of the procedure and method in collecting and scoring of the data. The respondents are only required to tick the answer after reading the structured text given. The scoring can then be analysed by using computer and the University of Minnesota can make comparison of respondent's responses available. In short, the scoring in the DIT is not considered to be fair.

However, it has been pointed by Gibbs et al. (1992) that the DIT instrument cannot really measure the moral development of academically weak respondents although it is a multiple choice rating system. The weaker respondents will justify the answer without reading the moral dilemmas presented. This is because the text given is either too difficult or too lengthy for their level of understanding. In fact, Rest (1979), himself acknowledges that the DIT cannot be used for all academic

levels. It is rather difficult to administer the test to younger students and others with limited reading capacities (Basinger & Gibbs, 1987). In view of this difficulty in answering the questions, there is a possibility the answers given do not reflect the real stages of moral reasoning (Blasi, 1980; Gavaghan, Arnold & Gibbs, 1983).

Furthermore, two of the six moral dilemmas are perhaps not suitable in our Malaysian cultural context and with secondary school students. The "Webster" dilemma touches on racial issue while the "Student-Take-Over" dilemma is about the university students protesting and consequently leading to the students running the university administration. The unsuitability of the dilemmas was found to be so by Park and Johnson (1984) who omitted these two moral dilemmas in their research after considering the social culture in Korea. The two dilemmas were also omitted by Jeevajothi (1997) in the study on the moral reasoning of Malaysian students.

In conclusion, although the DIT overcomes some problems of the MJI it has not resolved the problem of the complexity of the text or dilemmas in measuring moral development. This complexity of the moral dilemmas however has been overcome by the Sociomoral Reflection Measure – Short Form (SRM-SF). This is developed by Gibbs, Basinger and Fuller which is called the Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM) and later developed into the Sociomoral Reflection Measure – Short Form (SRM-SF) in 1992.

Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF)

The SRM-SF is an instrument used to measure moral development based on Gibbs et al. theory of moral development (see p. 9). Gibbs et al. (1992) first developed the instrument called Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM). The SRM consists of two moral dilemmas and 15 questions. The SRM was then developed into a simpler and shorter version called Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF). According to Gibbs (1992), the SRM-SF was developed because some younger respondents found the SRM format to be rather confusing and difficult to perform.

Unlike the MJI and DIT which consist of moral dilemmas, the SRM-SF is without them. It is made up of 11 questions. The questions are about contract and truth, affiliation with parents and friends, life, property, law and legal justice (see Appendix A). In each of the questions, the respondents are required to state the importance and then write down the reasons for their decisions. For example:

Question 1:   Think about when you've made a promise to a friend of yours. How important is it for people to keep promise, if they can, to friends?

Circle one: very important   important   not important

WHY IS THAT VERY IMPORTANT/NOT IMPORTANT

(WHICHEVER ONE YOU CIRCLED)?

(Gibbs et al. p. 150)

The answers given by the respondents will be then checked with the SRM-SF manual (Gibbs et al. 1992). In the manual, there are twenty possible solutions to each question asked. The researcher needs to match the respondents' answer and score them according to the manual. Subsequently the answer are then staged according to the answers given.

As stated in the SRM-SF (Gibbs et al. 1992) the SRM-SF is comparable to the MJI and DIT in terms of reliability and validity. The test retest correlation of Gibbs sample which consists of 509 subjects, is r (234) = 88. P < 0.0001 (Gibbs et al. 1992). Furthermore, Gibbs stated that the data collected from this sample represents a wide range of ages which also includes public school students from 4th, 6th and 8th grades and high school. In view of this, the instrument can be considered reliable to be used in any study with secondary students.

The SRM-SF resolves the problem of presenting moral dilemmas either orally or in written form. There is no empirical research to show that moral dilemmas are necessary to study moral development (Gibbs, 1992). In fact Gibbs et al. (1992), argued that most researchers in moral judgement methodology assume that a moral dilemma is essential to accomplish a valid, standard moral judgement measure but no one has investigated that assumption in empirical research (p. 37).

The SRM-SF can be carried out in groups. It is less time consuming to score than the MJI or DIT (Gibbs, 1992). The scoring in the SRM-SF is easy and can be self-trained. According to Gibbs et al. (1992), it takes trained rater about 20

to 25 minutes to score an SRM-SF protocol as compared with the MJI or DIT which needs a few days. In addition, Gibbs et al. (1992) argued that even those inexperienced and unfamiliar with moral development can validate the scoring with an average time of 30 minutes per protocol and the scoring in the SRM-SF only needs two other raters who are familiar with moral development to validate the scoring.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the review indicates that the SRM-SF would be the most suitable instrument for this study because firstly, it is comparable to the MJI and the DIT in terms of reliability and validity. Secondly, it is easy to carry out self training and it is less time consuming while administering this instrument which can be carried out in groups. Thirdly, the scoring can be easily matched with the SRM-SF manual. Fourthly, the two levels of moral development (immature and mature level) would be more realistic in measuring the moral development of Malaysian students as research reviewed have shown that the matured level in Kohlberg's scheme, was hardly attainable as compared to the SRM-SF (see p. 10, pp. 14 - 17). Lastly, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no research conducted in Malaysia using this instrument in Malaysian cultural context. It is thus for these reasons that the SRM-SF was used in this study on moral maturity of Malaysian students.