



## The Influence Of Communication Satisfaction On The Morality Of Vietnamese Secondary School Students

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**Citation:** Dr. Tran Thu Huong et al. (2024) The Influence Of Communication Satisfaction On The Morality Of Vietnamese Secondary School Students, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 3(4), 4326-4332

Doi:10.53555/kuey.v3oi4.2207

### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of communication satisfaction on students' morals. The participants were 243 secondary school students answering the questionnaire, with 94 qualitative answers about moral values. The results show that secondary school students in Vietnam are satisfied in communicating with students and teachers at an average level. Most of the participating in the present study believed that authority figures (fathers, mothers, grandparents, teachers) had a lot of influence on their thoughts and behaviors related to morality. Satisfaction in communication with other students and teachers positively correlated with all three ethical factors: students' perception of a good person, students' perception of their own morality, and factors affecting students' morality.

**Keywords:** secondary school students; communication satisfaction, moral values, moral development.

### INTRODUCTION

To become competent, virtuous citizens, children need opportunities to learn moral values. Morality is the determinant of one's behaviors, such as self-control, social behavior, sharing, and empathy (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). Kohlberg's theory of moral development suggests that young people's sense of morality is formed through their interactions with others (Kohlberg, 1976). In the adolescent stage, the child's world revolves around school and peers, so the values and conceptions of the child are mainly gained through the school, teachers and friends.

School has long been seen as a facility where children get prepared, both academically and morally, for their life in a society. It is a social organization in which there are many norms and values transmitted by the teachers. Besides parents, teachers are the people who have the biggest influence on children's development including academic achievement, social behavior, values and personality (Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011). The education of our time requires the teachers to take in charge not only the intellectual development, but also the moral and personality development of children. Teachers' behaviors and approaches are directly received and imitated by students, which places great responsibility on teachers. While aiming to provide students with knowledge an experiences, teachers become role models for students by their own behavior and attitudes. Moral education is always the long-term goal of education. Moral education is anything a school does to influence the way students think, feel, and act on issues of right and wrong (Kaur, 2015). The function of schools is to not only make people smart, but also make them nice (Kaur, 2015). Schools are set to achieve the goal of providing children and young people with a learning environment in which they experience the problems of everyday life, and by doing so, they receive models of ethical values and actions (Kaur, 2015). To do this, schools must act on a basic understanding of the factors that influence the development of children and young people. They must work with all social groups, including parents and community groups, with

appropriate programs serving children and young people. The role of school is also to provide an environment that challenges children's moral reasoning, and forces them to see the contradictions in their reasoning.

In the school context, the person who directly influences students is the teacher. Teachers are also major and important influencers in children's lives from the preschool years. Teachers help children understand values and personality traits, and they also mold students into desirable values both in the school environment and in society. Teachers are directly involved in teaching the right behavior and correcting the wrong behavior of students in the school. They also act as role models for students. Therefore, teachers' values will have a great influence on the moral development of children.

The fundamental feature of the student-teacher relationship is that students' emotions promote the development of relationships in the classroom (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Communication enables teachers and students to participate in instructional activities, facilitates social activity, and helps individuals coordinate actions (Kendrick & Darling, 1990). In fact, teachers spend more time in the classroom talking than students (McBride & Wahl, 2005) and what they talk about can either support or hinder the nature of the student-teacher relationship.

Communication satisfaction is the most obvious indicator of communication quality in relationships (Hecht, 1978b). Communication satisfaction also reflects high-quality relationships and is positively associated with relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and maintenance (Klein et al., 2009; Punyanunt & Carter, 2008). In the classroom context, communication satisfaction can be viewed as a perception of the outcome of the presence or absence of emotions between students and teachers, thus, student satisfaction after interpersonal interactions will affect the relationship between students and teachers (Prisbell, 1990). It can be seen that communication satisfaction is an essential component affecting the relationship between students and teachers. It is a positive response to achieving student-teacher relationship/communication goals, and it is related to students' feelings toward the teacher and the subject (Goodboy, Martin & Bolkan, 2009).

In general, studies on communication satisfaction, especially in students/adolescents, are not very popular. However, existing researchs on this issue have covered quite a few different aspects that help to elucidate the relationship of communication satisfaction with other factors (Rubin, Pearse & Barbato, 1988; Chen, 2002; Mansson & Lee, 2014).

Besides teachers and schools, interactions with peers also contribute to the moral and behavioral development of students (Djohari & Hernawati, 2018). Students' social and emotional development is strongly influenced by their peers (Allen, McGarland & Elhaney, 2005). Friends provide "role-play opportunities" and expose children to novel ethical behaviors (Hart, Atkins, Markey & Youniss, 2004). This influence begins in childhood and develops throughout adolescence. Having friends and relying on friends are natural, healthy, and important for children's development.

Thus, it can be seen that morality has a relationship with many different factors such as one's own behaviors, others' behaviors, relationships, as well as different aspects of morality. However, research on ethics with communication in general and communication satisfaction in particular on secondary school students is still a new issue that has not received much attention from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

## METHOD

### Study design

The study was designed in a cross section with a convenient sample group of secondary students in Vinh Phuc, Vietnam. All the data were collected in April, 2022. We contacted the administrators of secondary schools in the study areas, asked the administrators to connect with the form teachers of the classes, and through the form teachers, we sent to the invitations to participate in the study to the students. After receiving students' consent, we sent them the survey form and an envelope so that they could return the form upon completion to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of information, along with some fee for participating in the survey. The survey forms were collected through the form teachers.

All subjects were informed about the purpose of the survey and ensured the confidentiality of information. All relevant publications have been agreed.

### Participants

The research sample is a convenience sample consisting of 290 students in Vinh Phuc, Vietnam, of which 243 subjects are eligible to participate in the survey. Participants were disqualified if they provided insufficient data for analysis. Participants were asked to answer a questionnaire. In addition, of the 243 eligible participants, 94 responded to the self-completed qualitative question, of which 91 were usable.

The participants are 243 secondary school students aged from 12 to 16 with the mean age of 13.53 (SD = 1.13) with 117 girls (48.1%) and 126 boys (51.9%). They have an evenly distributed percentage of classes from grade 6 to grade 9. Most of the students had the latest semester's academic performance being quite good (54.7%) and average (37.4%), and very few students had good/excellent (2.5%) and weak academic performance (5.3%). The majority of the subjects had the latest semester's conduct being good (39.9%) and very good (35.4%), and very few had weak conduct (0.8%). Most of the subjects were not school /class officials (for example, class monitor) (87.7%); most of them have more than 3 close friends (69.5%) and very few have no close friends (2.1%).

## Measurements

### Student Communication Satisfaction Scale

The Student Communication Satisfaction Scale (SCSS; Goodboy, Martin & Bolkan, 2009) includes 24 items that measure student satisfaction in teacher-student communication. This study used the brief version with 8 items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). In the study of Goodboy et al. (2009), the Cronbach's alpha was 0.98 and in this study it was 0.87.

### Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory

Satisfaction in communication between students and students is measured by the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Scale (ICSI). The ICSI was developed by Hecht (1978a) to measure the level of communication satisfaction an individual feels when referring to an actual conversation. The ICSI has 19 items using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The reliability coefficient in the study of Hecht (1978a) was 0.93, and in this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.76.

### Questionnaire on students' moral awareness

Secondary school students' morality was measured using a self-report questionnaire developed by See (2018) to collect data related to students' perceptions of values, students' understanding of a "good" person and what they identify as key in the development of their own moral character. This study uses a set of questions 1 (excluding demographic questions) of See (2018) consisting of 49 items, of which 48 items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with answers from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree), and 1 open question "In one sentence, please tell me what 'virtue' means?"

This questionnaire consists of 3 sub-scales: the first sub-scale, including items from 1 to 21: Perception of good people; the second sub-scale, including items from 22 to 42: Self-perception: students' perception of their response to the characteristics of the first sub-scale; the third sub-scale includes items from 43 to 48: factors affecting the value and quality of students. The variables of the questionnaire have good total item correlation value and the full-scale Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91 and the subscales from 0.81 to 0.85, which meet the criteria for data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Descriptive statistics

Statistics describe student's satisfaction in communication with students, student's satisfaction in communication with teachers, students' perception of a good person, students' perception of morality of themselves, and the factors affecting students' morals are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables in the study**

N = 243	M	SD
Satisfaction in student-student communication	89.16	13.69
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication	40.89	9.19
Perception of a good person	3.73	0.45
Self-perception	3.49	0.48
Factors affecting the morality	3.62	0.51

The results in Table 1 show that secondary students' satisfaction in communication with other students is average and quite similar to the group of university students ( $M = 76.76$ ,  $SD = 13.11$ ; Ramsey, Knight & Knight, 2019). Also, the satisfaction in communication with teachers is at average level and quite similar to the group of university students ( $M = 40.35$ ,  $SD = 10.81$ ; Sidelinger & Bolen, 2016).

The study conducted Independent Samples T-test analysis to compare the average scores of communication satisfaction, perception of morality among groups of students by grade, the results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of communication satisfaction, perception of morality among groups of students by grade**

		M	SD	Sig
Satisfaction in student-student communication	Grade 6	89.97	12.16	F (3, 239) = 1.781, p = 0.151
	Grade 7	88.58	14.14	
	Grade 8	91.81	13.52	
	Grade 9	86.32	14.51	
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication	Grade 6	43.02	8.94	F (3, 239) = 1.658, p = 0.177
	Grade 7	41.03	10.38	
	Grade 8	39.66	8.30	
	Grade 9	39.95	8.87	
Perception of a good person	Grade 6	3.90	0.54	F (3, 239) = 4.733, p = 0.003
	Grade 7	3.69	0.43	
	Grade 8	3.72	0.39	
	Grade 9	3.60	0.38	
Self-perception	Grade 6	3.60	0.54	F (3, 239) = 1.414, p = 0.239
	Grade 7	3.48	0.55	
	Grade 8	3.44	0.39	
	Grade 9	3.45	0.41	

Factors affecting the morality	Grade 6	3.64	0.56	F (3,239) = 1.300, p = 0.275
	Grade 7	3.58	0.49	
	Grade 8	3.71	0.43	
	Grade 9	3.54	0.53	

The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between 4 grade groups in terms of students' perception of a good person ( $p < 0.05$ ), specifically, students in grade 6 think that a good person possesses more set of standards than students in grades 7, 8 and 9. Besides, no significant difference was found between grade groups in terms of satisfaction in communication with students ( $p = 0.151$ ), satisfaction in communication with teachers ( $p = 0.177$ ), students' perception of their own morality ( $p = 0.239$ ), and factors affecting student's morality ( $p = 0.275$ ).

### Factors affecting the morality of secondary school students

Factors affecting students' perception of morality

**Table 3. Factors that help students know how to be good people**

	M	SD
Mother	4.25	0.995
Father	4.21	0.971
Siblings	3.80	1.084
Grandparents	4.12	1.002
Friends	3.46	1.057
Teachers	4.09	0.982
School	3.84	1.055
People on TV	2.68	1.006
People at place of worship	2.79	1.071
No one	2.99	1.350

### Ghi chú. N = 243; M: điểm trung bình; SD: độ lệch chuẩn;

Overall, the results show that parents, grandparents, and teachers play a large part in helping students learn how to be good people. They also think that the influence of siblings, friends and school in supporting students to know how to be good people is not much. Among the influencing factors, people on TV, people at place of worship and "no one" were found to have little effect on supporting students to know how to be good people. This result is consistent with the theory of moral development of Kohlberg (1958), children at this age absorb the value from the role models of adult and obey the authorities.

### Students' views on moral values

The responses were analyzed according to eight characteristics based on values according to the Joseph Institute of Ethics and according to response meaning. One answer can have many different values. The values are named after the characteristics of the Joseph Institute of Ethics and the culture of Vietnam.

**Table 4. Values that secondary school students consider important**

Value	(n)	(%)
Courtesy/Politeness	12	12.37
Reliable/Responsible	11	11.34
Fairness/Integrity	15	15.46
The Good/Necessity	27	27.83
Caring/Support	16	16.49
Beloved	4	4.12
Neutral	6	6.18
Negative	6	6.18

Most secondary students still do not have a certain view of moral values. Most of them think that moral values are good qualities, necessary for a person and necessary for society (27.83%) but do not specify those good qualities. For example, students answered that: "Moral value is a good value that every human being should have"; "Moral value is the good value of each human being"; "Virtue is a very important and most valuable thing in every human being"; "Good personality and dignity".

Besides, values such as caring (16.49%), fairness (15.46%), politeness (12.37%), and reliable (11.34%) were also perceived by students as important values. Although the majority of students indicated good qualities related to moral values, but each answer usually included only 1 and at most 2 qualities. Hence, it can be seen that their views have not been comprehensive yet. Some of the answers could be mentioned such as: "In my opinion, moral values are: caring for others, respecting people older than you"; "When someone falls or is injured we have to help them, or when there is a pregnant person on the bus we have to give her the seat"; "Being an

honest person who always cares about others' feelings"; "Give back to those who have helped us. Be responsible to family, self and society".

In addition, some other values were also mentioned by students as being loved (4.12%), neutral (6.18%) and negative (6.18%). These are values that are not included in the values of the Joseph Institute of Ethics and they are not directly related to good qualities. Although being loved implies that people exhibit good qualities, it doesn't actually indicate that having those good qualities makes them likable. For example: "People with moral values will be loved and respected by everyone."

Some of the responses were also neutral, arguing that moral values do not include certain qualities but depend on an individual's point of view. For example, students think that: "In my opinion, what values are good depends on how each person thinks about it"; "Moral value is my own personality, and I understand what my moral value is for everyone around me". Or the answers can also go in a negative direction, such as feeling that moral values are not important, are determined by money: "Who have more money will have moral values. And now we don't need morality, just need money..."; "Moral value is frankly worthless, not worth a dime"; "Moral values are things that we don't see much anymore"

It can be seen that students' perspectives are quite diverse and also reflect a part of their own values. The fact that students' opinions on ethical issues have not yet formed clearly may be because the surveyed subjects live in rural areas, so the development of awareness, in particular, will be slower compared with other groups. Besides, some negative answers may be due to the influence of the media, which has partly led to distorted perception.

### The relationship between satisfaction in communication and students' moral awareness

Correlation analysis among satisfaction in students' communication with students and with teachers, students' perception of a good person, students' perception of morality their own morality, and the factors affecting the students' morality are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Correlation between qualitative variables**

	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfaction in student-student communication (1)	–				
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication (2)	0.332**	–			
Perception of a good person (3)	0.264**	0.347**	–		
Self-perception (4)	0.369**	0.380**	0.665**	–	
Factors affecting the morality (5)	0.288**	0.300**	0.366**	0.406**	–

The results of Pearson correlation analysis showed that students' perception of a good person had a statistically significant positive correlation with the satisfaction in communication between students and students ( $r = 0.264$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, students' perception of good people has a statistically significant positive correlation with satisfaction in communication between students and teachers ( $r = 0.347$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Students' perception of their own morality shows a statistically significant positive correlation with the satisfaction in communication between students and students ( $r = 0.369$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Students think that the more they meet the mentioned qualities, the higher are the satisfaction in communication between them and other students and vice versa. In addition, students' perception of their own morality has a statistically significant positive correlation with satisfaction in communication between students and teachers ( $r = 0.380$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Factors affecting student's morality have a statistically significant positive correlation with satisfaction in communication between students and students ( $r = 0.288$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which means the more factors students think that could affect their own morality, the higher is the satisfaction in communication between them and other students and vice versa. Similarly, the factors affecting student's morality have a statistically significant positive correlation with the satisfaction in communication between students and teachers ( $r = 0.300$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

In a previous study (Obiageli & Nasiru, 2021) conducted on schoolchildren in Nigeria, no significant association was found between peer influence and ethical behavior. And another study (Walker, Hennig & Krettenauer, 2000) in the United States, also conducted on adolescents/students, showed that interaction with friends has an effect on moral development. Satisfaction in students' communication with students can also be considered an aspect of peer interaction and influence. The results of this study show that the satisfaction in communication of students with students is positively correlated with all three ethical factors: students' perception of a good person, students' perception of their own morality, and students' perception factors affecting morality. This result is similar to the study of Walker, Hennig and Krettenauer (2000), and different from the study of Obiageli and Nasiru (2021). This may be due to cultural differences between Vietnam and Nigeria.

### Influence of communication satisfaction on students' morality

### **Influence of communication satisfaction on students' perception of good people**

The predictability of communication satisfaction to students' perception of good people is shown in Table 6. The results show that communication satisfaction has a significant effect on students' perception of a good person ( $F(2, 240) = 20.365, p < 0.001$ ), with  $R^2 = 0.138$ . 13.8% of the variation in students' perception of a good person is explained by the satisfaction of students' communication with students and teachers.

**Table 6. Influence of communication satisfaction on students' perception of good people**

	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Satisfaction in student-student communication	0.005	0.002	0.167	2.641	0.009	0.138***
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication	0.014	0.003	0.291	4.602	0.000	

Influence of communication satisfaction on students' perception of their own morality

The results in Table 7 show that satisfaction in communication has a significant effect on students' perception of their own morality ( $F(2, 240) = 32.003, p < 0.001$ ). Communication satisfaction could explain 20.4% of the variation in students' perception of their own morality.

**Table 7. Influence of communication satisfaction on students' perception of their own morality**

	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Satisfaction in student-student communication	0.010	0.002	0.273	4.484	0.000	0.204***
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication	0.015	0.003	0.289	4.758	0.000	

Influence of communication satisfaction on factors affecting student's morality

**Table 8. Influence of communication satisfaction on factors affecting student's morality**

	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Satisfaction in student-student communication	0.008	0.002	0.212	3.321	0.001	0.123***
Satisfaction in student-teacher communication	0.013	0.004	0.230	3.598	0.000	

The results show that communication satisfaction has a significant influence on the factors affecting student's morality ( $F(2, 240) = 17.944, p < 0.001$ ), with  $R^2 = 0.123$ . 12.3% of the variation in factors affecting student morality is explained by communication satisfaction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study was conducted to find out the influence of communication satisfaction between students and teachers and between students and students on moral awareness of secondary school students. In addition, the study also examines the moral awareness of secondary school students, especially students' views on moral values and influencing factors.

The results show that secondary school students in Vietnam have an average level of satisfaction in communication with both other students and teachers. Authorities (fathers, mothers, grandparents, teachers) have a lot of influence on children's thoughts and behaviors related to morality; Siblings, friends, and school have little influence on moral thinking and behavior. The view on moral values of the participants is still quite vague, most secondary school students think that moral values are good and necessary qualities of a human being and necessary for society, but have not yet clearly identified the moral values, and most of them only indicate one quality related to moral values.

The results also show that there is a significant difference between the grade groups in terms of students' perception of a good person, specifically, the 6th graders think that the good person possesses more criteria than students in grades 7, 8, and 9. The satisfaction in communication of students with both students and teachers is positively correlated with all three ethical factors including the student's perception of a good person, the student's perception of their own morality, and the factors affecting the student's morality. In addition, the satisfaction in communication of students with both students and teachers has a significant influence on all three ethical factors.

### **Funding source:**

The research was funded by Vietnam National University under grant number 501 QG.20.40.

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