**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**

**"EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT" DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

*Summary of the doctoral thesis*

# The contribution of religious education to the development of the moral profile of pupils in secondary education

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**KEYWORDS AND SYNTAGMS:**

• **Moral behavior**

• **Moral consciousness**

• **Moral education**

• **Religious education**

• **Moral profile**

•**Moral values**

This paper comprises two parts. The first part refers to the theoretical foundation and is composed of three chapters. The second part of the doctoral thesis concerns the empirical research of the thesis and contains a number of three chapters.

In the Introduction of the doctoral thesis, the motivation for choosing this topic to be studied is argued along with the information about the results reached. It is important to point out that this theme expresses pre-adolescent moral development from a Christian perspective.

In the first part, in the first chapter DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORAL PROFILE OF THE STUDENT, we considered the morality presented as a phenomenon. In this sense, many definitions of morality have appeared, among which we mention: "Moral is a real, collective and individual phenomenon, which includes both the norms that regulate human relations and human types of activities, as well as all the manifestations that are performed, in different degrees and modalities, under the sign of these norms or commands, manifestations subject to collective and individual appreciation "(T. Cătineanu, 1982, p. 11). From this definition it follows that morality is a collective and individual phenomenon. From this point of view we can say that the moral phenomenon can be expressed both personally (through moral conscience) and socially through the relationship between the student (because he is talking about) and the social environment. This is also reported in the Holy Scripture: "It is not good to be man alone; to help him in his own way "(Acts 2:18). We notice, therefore, that man has always lived in society, because he is a social being. Over time, several systems of morality have been developed together with their representatives, including: utilitarians (T. Hobbes, J. Bentham, J. S. Mill); evolutionists (H. Spencer, W. Wundt); formalists and idealists (Kant, I. G. Fichte); naturalist (J. J. Rousseau, L. Feuerbach, J. M. Guyau); beautician (J. W. von Goethe, F. Schiller, A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, O. Wilde); positivists (A. Comte, E. Durkheim); pragmatists (W. James, J. Dewey) and the like. We will stop in approaching the moral systems, at the Christian Moral. It has as representative the Savior Jesus Christ. Christian morality has a set of fixed norms, based on a system of teachings whose supreme foundation is the will of God, known from the supernatural revelation. The Christian morality is thus the Moral of the Gospel which, of course, is the Moral of the Kingdom of God, having as its basic teaching the love of one's neighbor.

From a cognitive point of view, in the development of morality in preteens, courage has an important aspect. Some authors believe that this aspect engenders creative thinking (A.H. Maslow, 2008). From a psychological point of view, a contribution in the development of morality has a volitional and affective side. It is considered that first the will characterized by deliberation appears on some purposes after which the affective side appears.

A particular aspect that I have addressed concerns the stages of moral development after L. Kohlberg. The author based on Heinz's dilemma develops three levels of morality:

Level 1 preconventional morality 4-10 years; Level 2 Conventional morality 10-13 years; Level 3 Postconventional morality 14 years. At each level, it assigns two stages:

Stage 1 refers to submission to authority, to avoid punishment; Stage 2 refers to fairness. For example, X's behavior leads to behavior similar to Y. If X is hit by Y, then Y will hit X. And at this preconventional stage, children behave and make decisions in a certain way because they are perceived. to be individuals in the singular way and not necessarily the members of the society; Stage 3 refers to close relationships, relationships that help us to know the needs of the other and to offer her help; Stage 4 refers to the law and its observance in society; Stage 5 refers to a moral society in which there is a common good; Stage 6 refers to respecting the dignity of each one.

The moral character is expressed by will and behavior. A strong moral character is highlighted by a strong will. In addition to the will, affectivity is also involved as a component of the character, which highlights the human sensitivity we have and how we respond to the needs of others.

Moral consciousness comprises three components, namely the affective component, the cognitive component and the volitional component. From a cognitive point of view, the moral consciousness refers to informing the student about the moral values. with its purpose. Moral religious consciousness can also be translated by the voice of God in man, expressed by the bad opinion for what I have done.

Another aspect addressed in this first chapter concerns the Development of moral judgment after Jean Piaget with the four stages of development: the stage of sensory motor birth-2 years; Pre-operative stage 2-6 years; Stage of concrete operations 7-8 years; Stage of formal operations 12-12 years.

It is important to remember the moral behavior because it is tested in the second stage of the research. By behavior the student expresses his moral conduct. In expressing the moral behavior is the empathy and the pro-social behavior, of which some authors who have been concerned about this type of behavior by elaborating certain studies affirm that behind such behavior there is no personal gain, being practiced on their own initiative. through a voluntary act (N. Einsenberg, 1987).

N. Einsenberg (1986), studies the type of behavior of the child in relation to the others and identifies certain categories:

a) The hedonistic orientation, which appears in pre-school and small school children, strictly follows their own pleasure, without being interested in others;

b) The orientation towards the needs, which appears in the preschoolers and more in the small schoolchildren, but although they have a poor social language, they are focused on the need of the other;

c) Orientation for approval and interpersonal relations, which appears to the young students and to the high school students, refers to what a person could do well from a social point of view;

d) Self-reflexive empathy orientation, is present in preteens and even adolescents; it is characterized by sympathy and sincerity;

e) Transition orientation, it is present in young people and adults; it is characterized by the need for protection, and the ideas are still unstable;

f) The orientation of the strong internalization, is present in some young people and adults; it is characterized by assuming responsibility and by internalizing true moral values.

In the second chapter THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORAL PROFILE OF THE STUDENTS BY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, it expresses the need for a religious education in the school. This discipline has had different moments in history. In the communist regime religion as a discipline of study was forbidden. Since 1990, this discipline has been reintroduced in schools, trying to make its contribution in terms of moral development of the student.

As a component of the school curriculum, the specialists in the field have tried to approach three directions in teaching this discipline:

a) Monoconfessional curriculum, where all students regardless of confession participate in the hour of orthodox religion, being the majority religion.

b) The inter-denominational curriculum, where each student has the opportunity to choose to participate in the religion hour of which the confession belongs.

c) The secular curriculum, in which all students would participate regardless of confession. This type of approach would provide purely historical information about existing cults without spiritual experience.

The relationship between the Church-Family-School wants to express the fact that it is necessary for the co-operation of the three institutions for a religious education aims at the moral development of the student and the love for his neighbor.

In the third chapter, METHODS OF DEVELOPING THE MORAL PROFILE OF THE STUDENTS IN RELIGION LESSONS, we considered specific methodological approaches in teaching Religion; methods of knowing the religious reality, through which the student has direct

contact with the liturgical life; the specific methods of moral education religious, and reading was one of the methods used in the experimental part; expository teaching methods and interactive and active-participatory teaching methods supported by contemporary pedagogy that militate on a student-centered education. The method of the didactic game was used in the experimental intervention program.

The second part of the thesis concerns the empirical research: THE CULTIVATION OF MORAL VALUES BY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE EXPRESSION OF THEM IN BEHAVIORAL PLAN. APPLICATIONS TO STUDENTS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL. It comprises a number of three chapters.

In Chapter IV, RESEARCH DESIGN, I answered the research questions:

1. Can applying an educational program centered on play and reading activities cultivate moral values for students in the secondary school, such as honesty, honesty, kindness, fairness?

2. What is the utility of using the intervention program in the formation of the moral competences of the students in the secondary school cycle, appreciated by the prism of the subscale outsourcing of the behaviors?

3. What is the utility of using the intervention program in the formation of the moral competences of the students in the secondary school cycle, appreciated by the prism of the subscale internalizing the behaviors?

4. What is the utility of using the intervention program in the formation of the moral competences of the students in the secondary school cycle, appreciated by the prism of the subscale identifying the behaviors?

5. What is the usefulness of using the intervention program in the training of the specific moral competences of the students in the secondary school cycle, appreciated through the integration subscale of the behaviors?

6. Does the environment of origin of the students (urban and rural) influence the development of their moral behaviors, in the context of applying the intervention program, on the four levels of expression (externalization, internalization, identification, integration)?

7. To what extent does the denominational school contribute to a better formation of the moral competences of the students in the secondary school, expressed through pro-social behavior?

The purpose of the research refers to the investigation of the development of moral behaviors (manifested by values such as honesty, kindness, honesty, fairness, justice, etc.) by carrying out the intervention program for students in the secondary school (6th and 7th grade) religion hours.

The research objectives are:

O1. Implementation of a set of intervention activities in order to develop the moral behavior in students, appreciated on the four levels: Outsourcing, Internalization, Identification, Integration.

O2. Identification and measurement of moral behavior on the four levels (subscales: external, internal, identification, integration), both in the experimental group and in the control group in pre-intervention and post-intervention.

O3. Measuring the internalization of moral values in students, both in the experimental group and in the control group, by applying the MVIQ questionnaire.

O4. Designing the intervention activities in order to develop the moral behavior with the four subscales (outsourcing, internalization, identification, integration), for the experimental group through fairness, honesty, kindness.

O5. Applying the intervention activities in order to obtain an improvement of the moral behavior in the students expressed by internalizing the moral values.

O6. Identifying a relevant educational model from the Christian perspective.

The general hypothesis is: The application to the students from the secondary school (the 6th and 7th grades) of an intervention program, which includes a set of play and reading activities, can contribute to the optimal development of the specific skills in the program. school for Religion discipline regarding moral values and behaviors.

There are 4 specific hypotheses:

1. There is a causal relation between the use of the intervention program and the development of the specific competences for the students from the secondary school (the 6th and 7th grades) in the Religion discipline, regarding the manifestation of the moral behaviors appreciated through the four subscales (outsourcing, internalization, identification, integration).

2. The progressive development of the moral behaviors in the students of the secondary school (the 6th and 7th grades), participants in the intervention program, is influenced by the environment of origin (urban and rural).

3. There is a progressive development, by applying the intervention program, the moral behavior of the students, appreciated through the four subscales (externalization, internalization, identification, integration), according to gender (male and female).

4. The intervention program determines a gradual increase of the four subscales (outsourcing, internalization, identification, integration) to the students from the secondary school

coming from the denominational school, as compared to the students coming from non-denominational schools.

The independent variable refers to the intervention program

The dependent variables are:

1. The level of development of students' moral behaviors, expressed through the four levels (subscales) of the research tool (MVIQ): externalization, internalization, identification, integration. Thus, through the behavior the students express assumed moral values such as fairness, honesty, kindness, honesty.

2. Specific competences developed by the discipline of Religion, regarding the moral behaviors controlled by punishment or reward. Students will acquire competences for assuming responsibilities towards themselves and others, by referring to moral-religious values (fairness, mercy, gratitude).

3. Specific competences developed by the discipline Religion, regarding the moral behaviors controlled by feelings or evaluations such as shame, pride, self-esteem, guilt. The students will acquire competences for manifesting the critical reflection towards the responsibilities assumed in the personal and social life by referring to the moral-religious values (kindness, humility).

4. Specific competences developed by the discipline Religion, regarding moral behaviors regarding the assumption of personal goals and values. Students will acquire competences to formulate personal opinions regarding the application of moral-religious norms in personal and social life, in relation to civic norms (honesty, justice, truth, responsibility).

5. Specific competences developed by the Religion discipline, regarding the mutual assimilation of identities with other aspects of one's own. Students will acquire competences for identifying benchmarks and morally desirable models, from a personal and social point of view (honesty, fairness, forgiveness).

The subjects participating in our study are 272, they come from schools in Bihor county. The control group comprises 100 subjects and 172 subjects are part of the experimental group.

The methods used in our research are:

- analysis of legislative and curricular documents;

- survey based on questionnaire;

- the method of the pedagogical experiment;

- statistical methods of data collection / interpretation.

The MVIQ research tool (The Internalization of Moral Values Questionnaire) is composed by S. A. Hardy & L. M. Padilla-Walker. The questionnaire tracks and analyzes the moral behavior of the students and comprises four subscales:

- outsourcing subscale, the behavior controlled by punishment or reward;

- The internalization subscale, refers to the behavior controlled by feelings / evaluations such as guilt, shame, pride, self-esteem;

- Identification subscale, the behavior shown towards the values and personal goals;

- integration subscale refers to mutual assimilation identifications with other aspects of self.

We have three stages of research:

- Establishment stage;

- Experimental stage;

- Post-experimental stage.

Chapter V refers to research data. This chapter presents the data of the empirical research in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages. Thus, in the pre-experimental stage we have data and averages between the experimental group and the statistically insignificant control group, which can be seen in the presented table and histograms:

Table no. 1 Means and standard deviation for the control group and the experimental group at the four subscales (externalization, internalization, identification, integration) in the pre-experimental stage

| Subscale | Group | Media | Standard deviation | Subjects |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Externalization | Control | 3,19 | 0,609 | 100 |
|  | Experimental | 3,29 | 0,781 | 172 |
| Internalization | Control | 3,18 | 0,628 | 100 |
|  | Experimental | 3,32 | 0,715 | 172 |
| Identification | Control | 3,18 | 0,586 | 100 |
|  | Experimental | 3,26 | 0,687 | 172 |
| Integration | Control | 3,11 | 0,651 | 100 |
|  | Experimental | 3,23 | 0,793 | 172 |
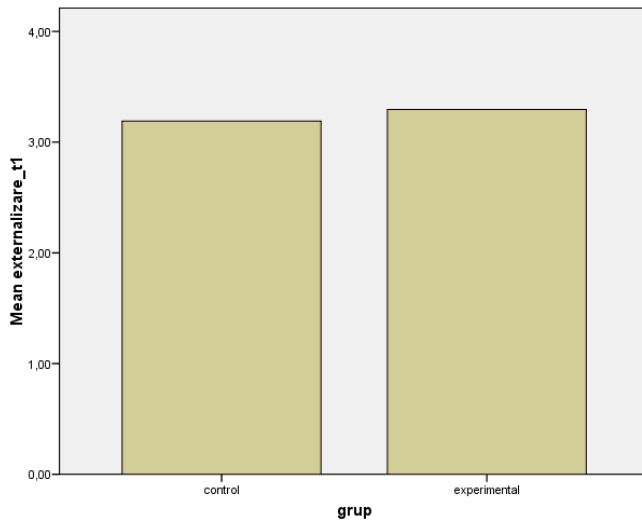
Figure no. 1 The control group and the experimental group in the pre-experimental stage at the outsourcing subscale



Figure no. 2 The control group and the experimental group in the pre-experimental stage at the internalization subscale
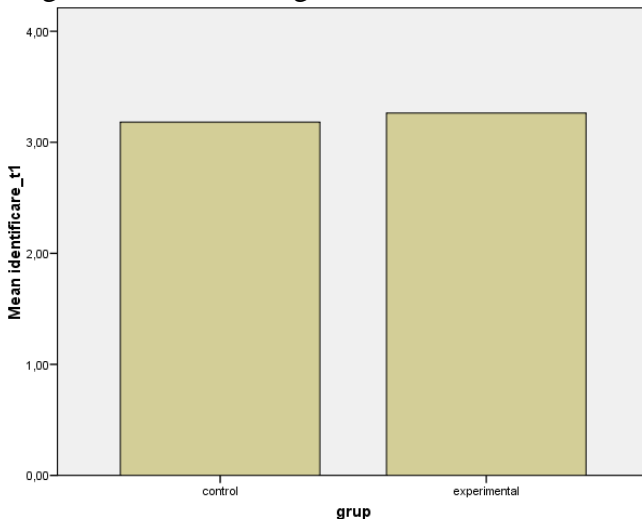


Figure no. 3 The control group and the experimental group in the pre-experimental stage at the identification subscale
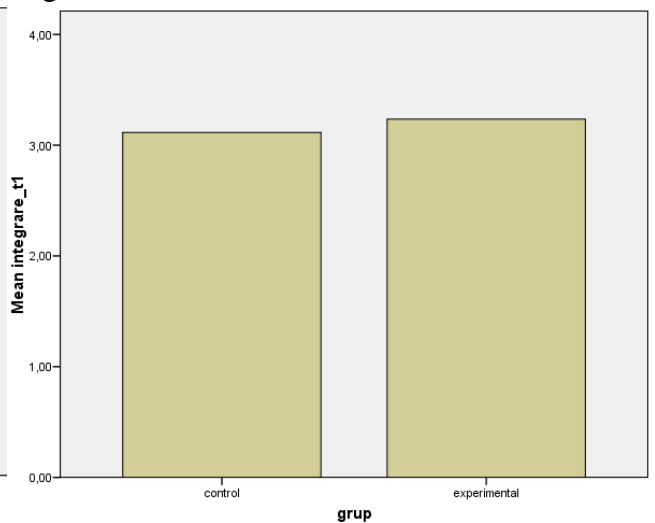


Figure no. 4 The control group and the experimental group in the pre-experimental stage at the integration subscale

In the post-experimental stage, the data of the control group and the experimental group are presented by the following histograms:
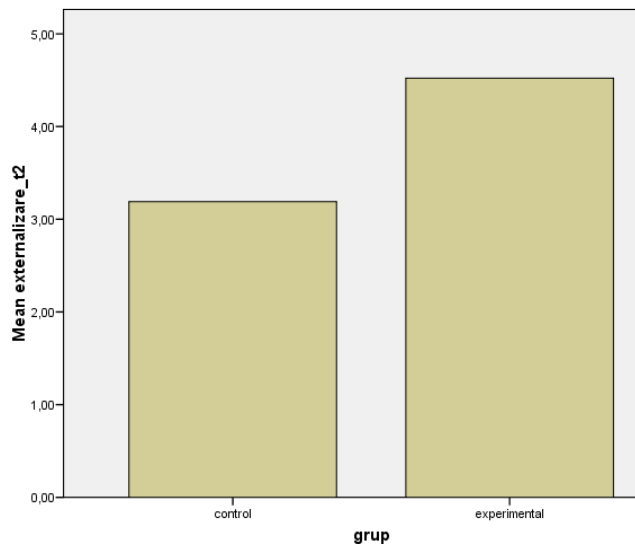


Figure no. 5 The control group and the experimental group in the post-experimental stage at the outsourcing subscale
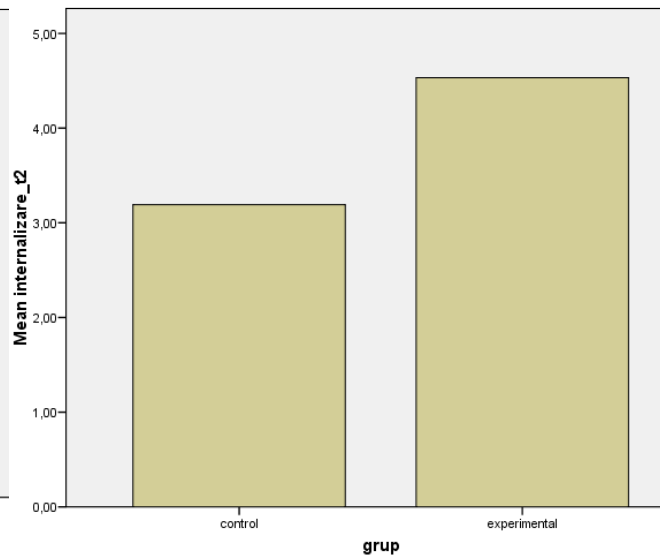


Figure no. 6 The control group and the experimental group in the post-experimental stage at the internalization subscale
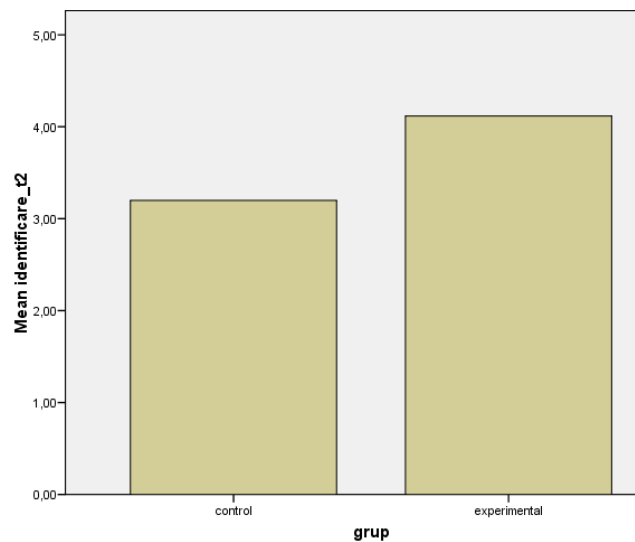


Figure no. 7 The control group and the experimental group in the post-experimental stage at the identification subscale



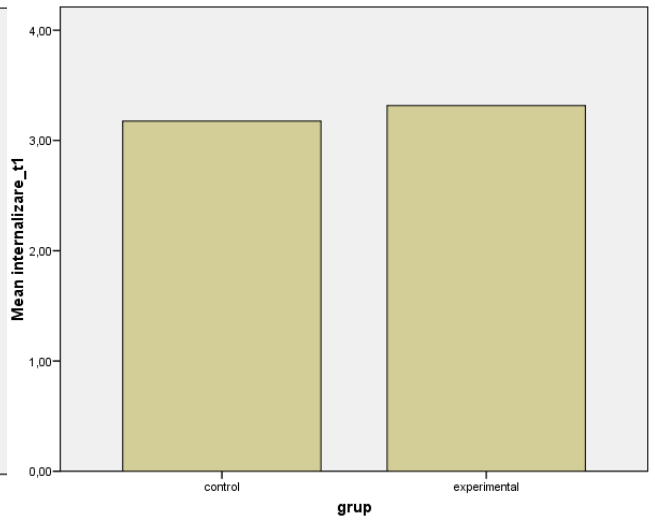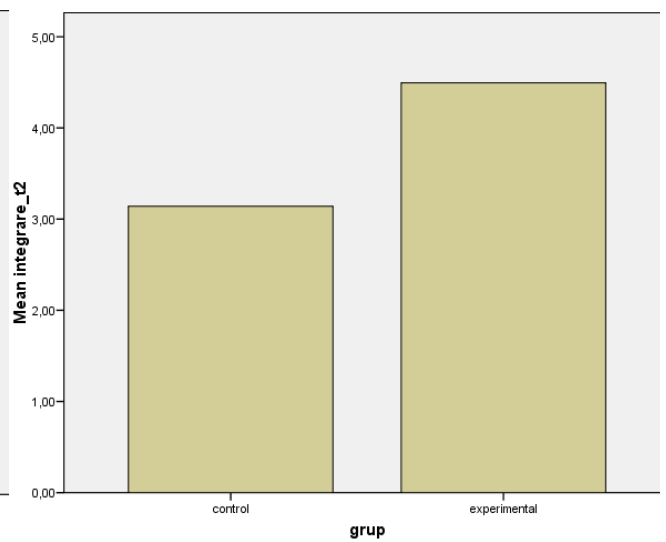Figure no. 8 The control group and the experimental group in the post-experimental stage at the integration subscale

In chapter VI, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS OF STATISTICAL PROCESSED RESEARCH OBTAINED IN PRETEST AND POSTTEST TO THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP, the following comparative analyzes are presented:

1. The results of the comparative analysis for the experimental group and the control group in the pre-experimental stage and the post-experimental stage, after which we validate the general hypothesis according to which: Application to the students from the secondary school (grade VI and grade VII) of a program of intervention, which includes a set of play and reading activities, can contribute to the optimal development of the specific competences in the school syllabus for the Religion discipline regarding moral behavioral values.

In the histograms presented below, the evolution of the two groups can be observed (the experimental group and the control group).
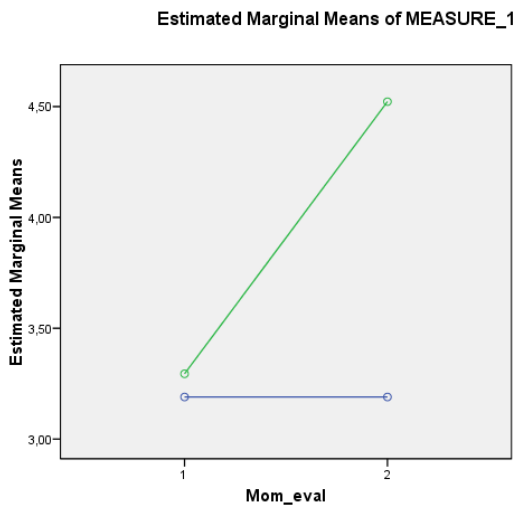


Figure no. 9 The difference between the two groups regarding the intervention for the outsourcing subscale
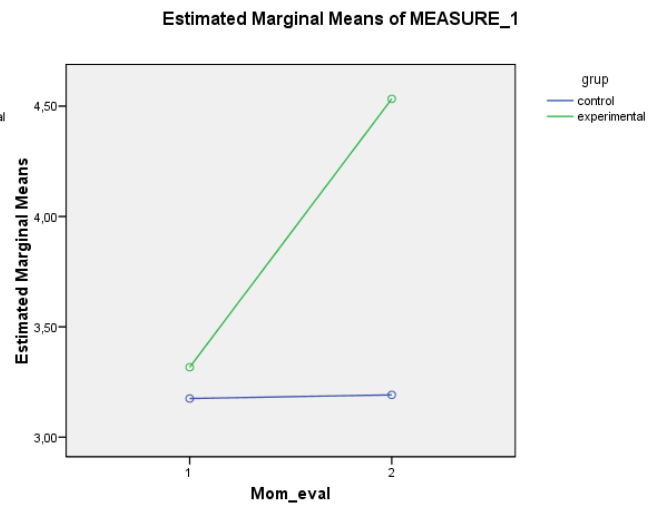


Figure no. 10 Difference between the two groups regarding the intervention for the internalization subscale
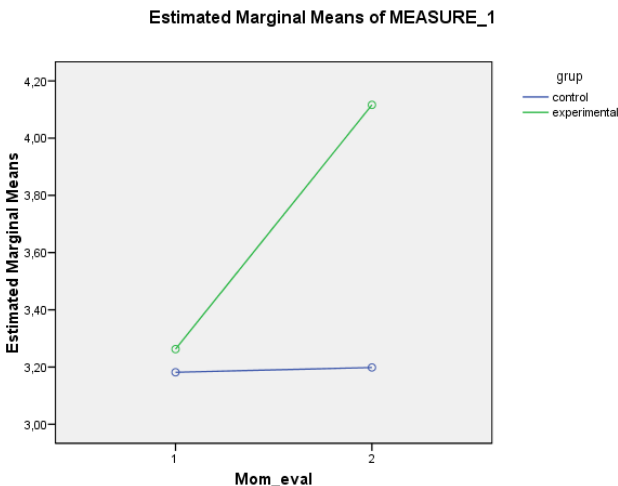


Figure no. 11 Difference between the two groups regarding the intervention for the identification subscale
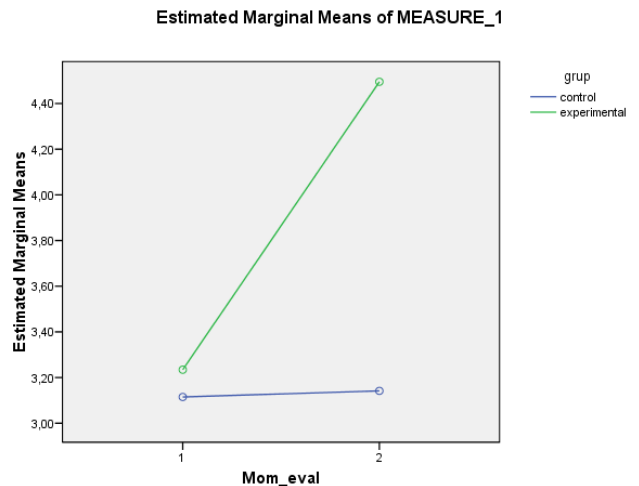


Figure no. 12 The difference between the two groups regarding the intervention for the integration subscale

1. Analysis of the comparative results in the experimental group and the control group according to the environment of origin in the preexperimental and postexperimental stages, after which we validate the specific hypothesis, according to which: Progressive development of moral behaviors in students in the secondary school (sixth and seventh grade), participants in the intervention program, is influenced by the environment of origin (urban and rural).

2. Analysis of the comparative results in the experimental group and the control group according to gender (male - female) between the pre-experimental stage and the post-experimental stage, after which we validate the specific hypothesis, according to which: There is a progressive development, by applying the intervention program, of the behavior student morale, appreciated through the four subscales (externalization, internalization, identification, integration), by gender (male and female).

3. The results of the comparative analysis in the experimental batch in the posttest between pupils from the confessional school and pupils from the non-denominational school, after which we partially support the specific hypothesis, according to which: The intervention program determines a progressive increase of the moral behavior appreciated on the four subscales (outsourcing, internalization) , identification, integration) in the students from the secondary school who come from the denominational school, compared to the students who come from non-denominational schools.

Regarding the correlation analysis, in the following table the correlations between the subscales from the pre-experimental stage and the post-experimental stage can be observed:

Table no. 2 Partially correlational data for the experimental group having as control variables gender, environment, age, confession, nationality, class, at the subscales externalization, internalization, identification, integration

| Group | Control variables | T1 Subscale | T2 Subscale | r              /p (correlation) |
|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Experimental | Gender, Environment, Age, Confession, Nationality, Class | Externalization | Externalization | r= .233; p <.00 |
| | | | Internalization | r= .222; p <.00 |
| | | | Identification | r= .160; p <.03 |
| | | | Integration | r= .266; p <.00 |
| | | Internalization | Externalization | r= .201; p <.00 |
| | | | Internalization | r= .214; p <.00 |
| | | | Identification | r= .142; p <.06 |
| | | | Integration | r= .223; p <.00 |
| | | Identification | Externalization | r= .208; p <.00 |
| | | | Internalization | r= .123; p <.11 |
| | | | Identification | r= .141; p <.07 |

|  |  | Integration | r= .153; p <.05 |
|  |  | Externalization | r= .153; p <.04 |
|  | Integration | Internalization | r= .147; p <.05 |
|  |  | Identification | r= .113; p <.14 |
|  |  | Integration | r= .240; p <.00 |

Regarding the path analysis, following the statistical data processing with the help of the AMOS 24 test, the variable that influences the data in the future is the environment. This is reinforced by the table below:

Table no. 3 Share of regression in the structural model regarding outsourcing, internalization, identification, integration at the middle and class level

|  |  | Estimation | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The causal model of externalization | externalization_t2< environement | ,257 | ,063 | 4,094 | *** |
|  | externalization_t2<--gender | ,132 | ,094 | 1,409 | ,15 |
|  | externalization _t2<---class | ,032 | ,094 | ,341 | ,73 |
| The causal model of internalization | internalization_t2<--- environement | ,244 | ,064 | 3,830 | *** |
|  | internalization_t2<--- gender | ,091 | ,095 | ,957 | ,33 |
|  | internalization_t2<---class | ,106 | ,095 | 1,115 | ,26 |
| The causal model of identification | identification_t2<-- environement | ,148 | ,051 | 2,933 | ,003 |
|  | identification _t2<--- gender | ,106 | ,076 | 1,401 | ,16 |
|  | identification_t2<---class | ,161 | ,076 | 2,129 | ,03 |
| The causal model of integration capacity | integration_t2 <--- environement | ,226 | ,066 | 3,439 | *** |
|  | integration_t2 <--- gender | ,217 | ,098 | 2,221 | ,02 |
|  | integration_t2 <--- class | ,087 | ,098 | ,892 | ,37 |

The limits that I faced in order to carry out these researches are:

- number of students. There is a variant according to which the data would have been more representative if a larger number of subjects had been used;

- creation of an intervention program with specific contribution of the religion class to the development of the student's moral profile, which will be more expressive and comprehensive;

- access to schools. Given that the experiment was conducted during the school year, in order to complete the intervention program, it was necessary for teachers to restructure the teaching material to be supported in the classroom. As future directions of research, we can consider:

- application of the intervention program to a larger number of subjects;

- development of the intervention program so that we can compare the students who had as activity the teaching game with the students who had as reading activity;

- introducing a greater number of hours with the role of counseling, based on the communication, knowledge and self-knowledge of the students;

- expanding the research to include parents and teachers.

In conclusion, I could say that I tried to synthesize as much information as possible about religious education, moral-religious education, moral education. I have emphasized moral behavior as a result of religious education. The didactic methods used in the intervention program were reading, didactic play, role play, forum theater. A special activity was the introduction of counseling activities to the student classes. In other words, I have tried to emphasize the important role of religious education in school.

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