

Unit 8

Self-Reliance

Introduction

You discussed several issues related to self-reliance, dependency and decision-making in the previous grades. In this unit, you will have further discussions on self-reliance and moral sensitivity; psychological, economic and social impacts of dependency, and dependency in a global context. You will also deal with the capacity for morally good decision-making.

Lessons

1. Self-reliance
2. Dependency
3. Self-reliance and Morally Sound Decision-making Capacity

Key words and concepts

- Consensus
- Dependency theorists
- Moral sensitivity
- Prestige
- Status

What you will learn

You will:

- recognize the difference between self-reliance and dependency.

A self-reliant disabled person



L E S S O N

1

Self-Reliance

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe the characteristics of a self-reliant person.
- be self-reliant.
- develop moral sensitivity to make good decisions.

Why is it important to be morally sensitive?

You learned the attributes of self-reliance in the previous grades. Self-reliant people have good self-awareness. They know their good qualities and weaknesses. They have their own views; devote their time and energy to earn their living from their own efforts and plan for their future. Self-reliant people have self-confidence and make good decisions about their lives as well as the lives of others.

The importance of moral sensitivity

Decision-making requires examining the pros and cons of the decisions that you make. You need to question the morality of your decision in order to take morally sound actions. One skill involved in making good moral decisions is sensitivity to moral issues. Moral sensitivity refers to care and consideration of issues related to right and wrong decisions or actions. Quite often you may act without

considering moral issues because you do not bother about the moral nature of the situation. Sometimes you may do the right thing without considering the moral dimension of your actions. This is right for any minor decisions that you make in everyday life. For example, if you tell a lie you may not consider the morality of the issue. But this is not always true. In many cases, making the right decision requires a real sensitivity to the moral dimension of the situation. We can make good decisions when we consider moral values such as honesty.

Moral issues surround us all the time. Many decisions we make have moral importance. Some people may ignore the moral significance of a situation thinking that the decision can be made based on the available facts. However, it is essential to be sensitive to the fact that many technical questions have important moral components. The decision made by medical doctors to prescribe for a particular condition involves making, not just a technical decision, but also a value judgment concerning the various issues, side effects and risks. A medical doctor should consider these things when he/she makes decisions related to abortion, or revealing the medical status of their patient who is diagnosed as having a chronic and deadly disease. With whom to communicate the status of HIV positive clients also requires the consideration of moral issues.

Self-Reliance

Sometimes people may ignore the moral importance of a situation giving priority to economic benefits. A business person may make decisions to maximize his profit without considering the moral

dimension of his decisions. Good examples in this regard are using child labour or increasing prices without justification.

CASE STUDY

Economic matters versus moral questions

Getu is a rich teff trader. He observes that the price of teff is rising in a particular year. Though he has stored several hundred quintals of teff, he decides not to sell because he predicts that the price would rise in the near future. Though he has bought 2000 quintals of teff with Birr 450 per quintal, he decides to sell the teff when the price rises higher.

He did not sell a single quintal of teff when the price rose to Birr 800 per quintal. He did not even change his mind when the price rose to Birr 1000 per quintal. He did not bother about the problems of the people who were suffering from shortages and the high price of teff and other food crops. Getu's stance was firm. He usually says, "This is business! I am a merchant. My aim should be making more and more profit. So I should wait until prices go higher!"

Getu started selling teff when the price reached Birr 1400 per quintal and managed to get Birr 950

profit from each quintal since he bought a quintal of teff with Birr 450.

Discuss the following questions as a class.

- Did Getu show moral sensitivity in his decision-making?
- Do you think that it is fair to make such a decision when fellow citizens suffer from shortage of food crops and high prices?
- What would happen if most of the teff traders made a similar decision in order to maximize their profits?
- There are some people who mix butter with bananas, dilute milk and adulterate food in other ways to maximize their profits. Discuss the negative impacts of these kinds of immoral decisions and actions?



Getu storing his teff

Self-Reliance

The following points are helpful to make morally good decisions.

Sensitivity to a range of considerations

Once an issue has been identified as having moral importance, the first and perhaps most important step is considering what should be taken into account. This includes:

- An awareness of the various parties who will be affected by the decision taken;
- Sensitivity to the range of values or principles which might be applied to the issue.

Discussion to build consensus

It is also important to discuss issues having moral significance. Discussing morally sensitive issues with other people has one good advantage. People around you may agree with your decision; or at least they may understand your decisions; or they may show you the different moral dimensions of the issue. Professionals working together would need these particular kinds of discussions to reach consensus.

The advantages of discussing moral issues with others are:

- **Short-term gain:** Involving others in our moral decision making means that other people can provide insight or experience that is different from ours. This helps us to make morally sound decisions.
- **Long-term gain:** We can improve the quality of our moral decision-making by listening to the reasons provided by others and seeing their point of view. We can often learn much from wise and experienced persons who make good moral decisions with some consistency.

Discuss these questions as a class.



- Why should you be concerned with the moral dimension of an issue?
- What is the advantage of considering the impact of our decisions and actions on other people and the community at large?

REMEMBER

- ❑ One skill involved in making good moral decisions is sensitivity to moral issues.
- ❑ Moral sensitivity refers to care and consideration of issues related to right and wrong decisions or actions.
- ❑ Many decisions, which have moral importance, should be based on moral values.
- ❑ Discussing moral issues with others can help to explore the different moral dimensions.

LESSON

2

Dependency

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe the consequences of dependency.
- struggle against dependency.

Some scholars argue that poor countries remain poor because of their dependency on rich and developed countries. What do you think?

You discussed the meaning of dependency and its impacts at the individual, community and national levels in the previous grades. In this lesson, you will discuss the psychological, economic and social impacts of dependency. You will also discuss the nature of dependency in the global context.

Impacts of dependency

People who live depending on others suffer from psychological problems. They lack confidence and suffer from feelings of inferiority. They fail to argue in support of their own position and cannot make free decisions. They refrain from forwarding their

ideas because they fear that other people would ridicule them and reject their ideas.

Dependent people who live on the support of others also develop the habit of long-term economic dependency. A person with good health and physical fitness may prefer to rely on his/her parents, friends and other people instead of working hard. You might observe some young people between the ages of 20 and 30 living on the income and assets of their parents and relatives. This kind of dependency has a negative economic impact on individuals and families that support them because the dependent ones make no contribution and may develop a dependency syndrome.

Dependency also has a negative impact at the country level. A country that has a large number of dependents cannot achieve rapid economic progress because its dependent citizens consume the surplus produced by its working citizens. The development of such a country would be retarded since it cannot convert some of its products into the capital that is necessary to promote its development.

CASE STUDY

A dependent young man

Mesfin was working in a government organization until he was fired as a result of misconduct and low performance. He was 29 when he lost his job. From then on he depended upon his parents for all basic

necessities, including pocket money. Though he had worked for more than 7 years, he had not saved money. His parents advised him to find work and continue his education in evening classes.

Dependency

Mesfin did not get any job because he did not want to be hired for menial work. His friends found him a job working as a guard at a private bank but Mesfin rejected it since he did not want to work as a guard. His parents found him a job working in

a furniture workshop so that he would get a chance to acquire woodwork skills. Mesfin did not want to be employed because it was manual labour. Mesfin developed the habit of asking his friends and other people for money and continued to live at the expense of his parents.

? What is the impact of having many dependent people in a particular community or country? Discuss as a class.

? Collect and discuss proverbs and sayings that appreciate and encourage hard working people and ridicule lazy and dependent persons.

In addition to its economic impacts, dependency has social impacts. A dependent person may not be socially accepted among friends and in the community. As members of society, we occupy a status or social position. Our status is associated with certain responsibilities, expectations, behaviours and prestige that influence our relationships with other people. For instance, we shoulder responsibilities and get a certain level of prestige as a result of our occupation.

Not all working people get similar prestige or respect. For example, while hard working farmers are highly appreciated, the lazy ones are ridiculed and less respected. Hard working farmers are appreciated through songs and proverbs. People give them leadership positions and other responsibilities because they consider them reliable and responsible. Indolent farmers depend upon others in times of food shortage. They occupy a low social position and are not considered as reliable and trustworthy. Idle people who lead their lives depending upon others are not considered as full-fledged members of society.

Dependency in the international context

The problems related to dependency are not limited to the individual or country. They also affect the relationship between poor and rich countries in the international context. Many scholars and development theorists argue that poor countries remain poor because their relationship with the rich and developed countries is characterized by exploitation and dependency. There are different explanations regarding the question: why do poor countries get poorer and remain dependent? Here are some explanations:

Profit extraction and dependency of poor countries

Countries that have not been able to industrialize at a fast pace have not been able to prosper. Even though most countries are no longer oppressed, more advanced countries control the market, and extract profits from poorer countries for themselves. Poor countries have lost the race and cannot benefit from trading in the international market.

Debt and dependency of poor countries

Debt is one of the major factors that makes poor countries poorer. Countries become more dependent when they have more debt. This situation allows

Dependency

the rich country that provides debt to dictate their interests on the recipient country. The debt acts as an obstacle for the development of the country in debt.

International market and dependency of poor countries

According to dependency theorists, poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries are a result of the dependency of poor countries on the rich ones of the western world. They argue that the world market favours the rich industrialized countries which import raw materials cheaply from poor countries and export industrial goods at high prices. Though the poor countries' economies have been integrated in the international market, they cannot compete in the world market equally with the wealthier countries. For instance, it is the wealthier countries that decide the prices of coffee, tea and other commodities produced by poor countries in the world market. The poor countries have no option other than accepting these prices because they have very limited bargaining power. Rich countries

exercise an indirect control over the poor countries' economies by controlling the international market. This means the system of the global market makes poor countries more and more dependent on rich countries.

Like dependent individuals who are unable to be treated equally, poor countries that are dependent on wealthy countries cannot maintain their relationship on an equal basis. They play very weak roles in influencing international politics and, as mentioned above, have weak bargaining powers. Poor countries are not completely free to formulate their policies independently because the powerful states may withdraw their support when the policies made by the poor countries do not suit their interests.

Discuss the following questions as a class.



- Evaluate the dependency of poor countries in the global context.
- How can you, as self-reliant and independent citizens, help to minimize the dependency of Ethiopia on developed countries?

REMEMBER

- ❑ Dependency has psychological, economic and social impacts. It negatively affects the lives of individuals and families and retards the development of countries.
- ❑ There are relations of dependency between poor and rich countries in the global context.
- ❑ Poor countries have a weak influence on world politics and economy.

L E S S O N

3

Self-reliance and Morally Sound Decision-making Capacity

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe how a self-reliant person makes morally good decisions.

Do you think that the decisions that you make in your daily life are morally sound?

Self-reliance and the importance of assertiveness and other good qualities of self-reliant people were discussed in Grade 11. The relationship between self-reliance and good decision-making ability was also discussed in the previous grade levels. In this lesson, you will discuss self-reliance and the ability to make morally sound decisions. There are a number of ways of making a decision with ethical considerations. We will look at three: ethical relativism, utilitarianism and rights approaches.

Ethical Relativism

This approach assumes that ‘ethical values and beliefs are relative to the various individuals and societies that hold them.’ There is no objective right or wrong and the issues are often matters on which people hold subjective opinions; ‘morality is simply a function of the moral beliefs that people have’. Therefore, people take account of the norms and views of their society when deciding what is right or wrong.

An example of this is the decision a person makes about inoculating their child against a disease. If

their community believes that this is best for the child, the parent will go ahead. If society suspects the motives behind inoculation, the parent’s decision would be affected.

Utilitarianism

This is another theory which considers the consequences of a particular decision. This is sometimes named the Greatest Happiness Principle as the outcome of any decision is expected to provide the most pleasure for the greatest number of recipients. ‘According to utilitarian moral theory, when we evaluate human acts or practices we consider neither the nature of the acts or practices nor the motive for which people do what they do. By utilitarianism we ought to decide which action or practice is best by considering the likely or actual consequences of each alternative.’

Using the same example, the decision would be made based on the fact that, if the inoculation appeared to save many more children than would be harmed by it, then it should be given.

The Rights Approach or Kant’s Moral Theory

The third approach is a non-consequential theory in that it is not the end result of an action that determines the decision, but whether the action itself is perceived to be right.

Self-reliance and Morally Sound Decision-making Capacity

'We may do what has good results, but if we do so for the wrong motive, then the act has no moral worth. However, it is not only the motive that counts for Kant. We must also do what is right. The act itself must be morally right. Both the act and the motive are morally relevant.

Using the example of inoculating a child, the decision here would be influenced by the belief that it is right to inoculate children against diseases,

even if the outcome results are damaging. Although the consequences of the action are out of the control of the parents, the motive to do what is believed is good for the child is the main consideration.

Source: MacKinnon B. (2001) Ethics

? Form groups and explore an issue; then make a decision considering the above philosophical approaches.

CASE STUDY

Denying the truth

The Nazi Germans launched their campaign of mass killing against the Jewish people during the Second World War. The following happened in 1940. Gundher was a citizen of Nazi Germany during that period. He was hiding three Jews in his attic. The German police came to his door and asked whether he knew the whereabouts of the three Jews. Gundher did not hesitate to lie because he wanted to save the lives of the Jews. He said: "I did not see them;

perhaps they have moved to the nearby town."

Discuss these questions as a class.

- ?**
- Do you think that Gundher's action is morally good? Why?
 - Do you agree that preventing harm is more important than telling the truth in such circumstances? Explain.

CASE STUDY

Telling the truth

Birtukan is a young woman who lives in Addis Ababa. One of her friends told her that he had killed a woman and that he was very regretful about it. Birtukan is called into the court to testify. She knows that if she tells the truth her friend will go to jail. The regret he showed suggests that he will never commit another crime if he is not sent to jail. Birtukan feels emotional strain when she goes to the court. She keeps asking herself: "Shall I tell the truth...?"

Discuss these questions as a class.

- ?**
- Do you agree that telling the truth is morally good?
 - What is the benefit of telling the truth in such a situation?
 - How do you think that telling the truth supports the system of justice?

Self-reliance and Morally Sound Decision-making Capacity

REMEMBER

- ❑ Self-reliance and the ability to make morally good decisions are interrelated.
- ❑ Self-reliance and assertiveness are good qualities that help people make morally sound decisions.
- ❑ Philosophers have identified different approaches to deal with moral issues. They include ethical relativity, the utilitarian approach and the rights/Kant's moral theory approach.

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, you have discussed self-reliance in relation to moral sensitivity, the impacts of dependency and making morally good decisions. The primary skill involved in making good moral decisions is sensitivity to moral issues. Many of the decisions that we make are related to moral issues.

Dependency has psychological, economic and social impacts. It negatively affects the lives of individuals and families and retards the development of countries. Some scholars argue that there are relations of dependency between poor and rich countries on a global context. Poor countries have very weak influence in world politics and economy.

We can make good decisions when we consider whether our decisions or actions have good or bad implications. Philosophers have identified different approaches to deal with moral issues: ethical relativity, the utilitarian approach and the rights/Kant's moral theory approach.

GLOSSARY

<i>Adulterate:</i>	The addition of a cheaper substance to food to increase its quantity.
<i>Consensus:</i>	A general or widespread agreement.
<i>Dependency theorists:</i>	Scholars who develop the theory of economic development that assumes that the poverty of poor countries is a result of their exploitation by wealthy countries.
<i>Moral sensitivity:</i>	The care, understanding or consideration of moral issues related to right and wrong.

UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

Part I – Short answers

1. What is the relationship between moral sensitivity and the skills of making morally good decisions?
2. What is the importance of considering the moral dimension of our decisions and actions? How do you explain the significance of moral sensitivity to fight immoral actions such as corruption?
3. How could the three different approaches solve the current global problems such as poverty and global warming?
4. Some scholars argue that poor countries in the world get poorer because the developed countries exploit them. Evaluate this idea.