1.12.1. Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory

- According to Kohlberg, the people progressed in their moral reasoning through series of stages. His theory is based on the foundation that morality is a form reasoning that develops in structural stages.
- ✓ The three levels of moral development, suggested by Kohlberg, are:
 - 1. Pre-conventional level;
 - 2. Conventional level; and
 - 3. Post-conventional level.

1. Pre-conventional Level

- ✓ The pre-conventional level of moral development is based on the desire to defive benefits for oneself.
- ✓ In the first level, individual behave according to socially acceptable norms, whice are taught mainly by parents and teachers.
- At this level, individuals are motivated mainly by their interest to avoid punishment or by their desire to satisfy their own needs, or by the external power exerted them.
- This is the level of development of all young children and some adults, who a unable to reach beyond a certain limit.

2. Conventional Level

- In the second level, the moral thinking and behavior of the individual a determined by the standards of their family, community, and society. That is, the norms or customs of one's family/community/society are accepted and adopted the ultimate standard of morality.
- At this level, individuals are motivated by the desire to please others and to me the social units' expectations, without bothering much about their self-interest.

"Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life so. Aim above morality. Be not simply good, be good for something." - Henry David Thoreau

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- Thus as per the second level, individuals give more importance to loyalty and close identification with others, than their own self-interest.
- Many studies of Kohiberg reveal that most adults are living at this level only.
- The second level of moral thinking is found in society generally. That's why it is named as 'conventional' level of moral development.

3. Post-conventional Level

- In the post-conventional level, the individuals are guided by strong principles and convictions, not by selfish needs or pressures from society.
- ✓ According to Kohlberg, these individuals are called as 'autonomous', because they think for/by themselves and also they do not believe that customs are always right.
- ✓ The people at this level want to live by general principles that are universally applied to all people. They always desire to maintain their moral integrity, selfrespect, and the respect of other autonomous individuals.
- Kohlberg felt that the majority of adults do not reach the post-conventional level.

Also Kohlberg believed that individuals could progress only through these stages one. by one. That is, they cannot 'jump' the stages. He also pointed out that the people at postconventional level have more moral development and hence the moral autonomy.

Table 1.1. summarizes the Kohlberg's levels of moral development.

Table 1.1. Kohlberg's levels of moral development

Level	Appropriate age range	Moral development
Pre- conventional	Birth to 9 years	 ✓ Self-centered attitude ✓ Willingness to avoid punishment ✓ Desire to gain reward
Conventional	Ages 9 to 20 years	 ✓ Respect for conventional rules and authority ✓ Willingness to please or satisfy others ✓ Importance to loyalty and close identification with others
Post- conventional	Over 20 years or may be never	 ✓ Thinking for and by themselves. ✓ Agreed upon universal general principles. ✓ Personal moral stands.

[&]quot;The progress of religion is steadily to its identity with morals. Strength enters just as much as the moral element prevails." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

1.12.2. Drawbacks of Kohlberg's Theory

There are certain drawbacks in applying the Kohlberg's theory to practical situations. They are:

- 1. How to judge, whether an individual belongs to first, or second, or third level?
 What are the criteria?
- 2. What is the exact stage to specify moral development or growth? How does one can say that the higher levels represent more advanced stage of moral maturity?
- According to this theory, only a few people reach the post-conventional level.
 Hence this theory does not record the path of moral development that the majority
 of people follow.

1.12.3. Carol Gilligan Theory

- Carol Gilligan, a former student and colleague of Kohlberg, has criticized Kohlberg's theory as male biased.
- She also charged Kohlberg that Kohlberg's studies were concluded with male samples only and also his approach is dominated by a typical preoccupation with general rules and rights.
- According to Gilligan, males have tendency to over-ride the importance of moral rules and convictions while resolving moral dilemmas; whereas females have tendency to try hard to preserve personal relationships with all people involved in a situation.
- Also Gilligan felt that men mostly focus their attention on content of the problem, whereas women focus their attention on the context i.e., situation of the problem.
- Gilligan refers her context-oriented emphasis on maintaining personal relationships as the ethics of care, and contrasts it with Kohlberg's ethics of rules and rights.

1.12.4. Gilligan's Levels of Moral Development

Based on her own studies, Gilligan reconstructed the Kohlberg's three levels of moral development, as given below:

1. Pre-conventional level

- This is almost the same as Kohlberg's first level.
- That is, in this level an individual is concerned with self-centered reasoning.

2. Conventional level

- ✓ This level differs from Kohlberg's second level.
- According to Gilligan, women will not hurt others and have a willingness to sacrifice their own interests in order to help others.