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An Investigation of Youth Moral Judgment and Its Relation with the Family Structure and Feature

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Abstract

Moral problem lies in what the rights and responsibilities of each person can be against others. some organizing and harmonizing methods have been created for interactions regarding the growth of social groups, customs, and norms, where on the parties institutionalize moral in groups. Indeed, moral focuses on the fact that how strong social benefits and responsibilities and shared lives can be divided equally. Psychologists describe moral growth from various methods. The main objective of the present case study is to investigate the level of moral judgment in youth and its relation with family structure and features. In this regards, 200 high school students (male and female) of Mashhad schools were examined and the obtained data was processed in SPSS software. The research findings revealed a significant positive relation between the level of moral judgment of youth and residence location.

Keywords: Moral judgment; Family structure; Youth; Socialization

Introduction

Moral was the main issue to define and develop social relations and sciences conveyed moral science to various generations. The greatest theorists of the 20th century considered moral as the key concept of social growth. As Mc-dougall (1908) stated, the main problem of social psychology is to moralize individuals through society. According to Freud (1930), guilt feeling is the most important problem of cultural growth and evolution. The recent events including civil rights movement, women movement, students` protests, objections against Vietnam`s war, bribery in large businesses, and inner-city riots in summer or in electricity cut off have increased public interests in moral . By the way, during the recent years, the value of mutual dependency of political, economic and ecologic systems of the world has been revealed.

Piaget, the Sweden psychologist, Kohlberg, one of his advocates were the first scientific researchers studied moral. As Piaget claimed, the principles of organizing social experiences in the mind of child differ from the principles governing adults` mind. So, he used the phrase of “child`s world” and “adult`s world” frequently. In fact, by using the se concepts, he notified the difference of mechanisms, structure and concepts governing child`s mind and adult`s mind and draws the attention of his contemporary theorists to this important subject. After him, Kohlberg enriched the stages of moral judgment introduced by Piajet in terms of time and content and introduced various scientific methods to evaluate the subject of moral. Generally, the works done by Piaget and Kohlberg provided the underlying base of cognitive-developmental theory since they believed that moral bias in child`s mind will be changed from objective moral into subjective moral based on time past and growth of children and acquiring social awareness. But on the other hand, many theorists disregard moral formation from cognitive-developmental view and consider moral equal with

socialization. For example, Durkheim considered moral development as the synonym of socialization and believed that moral behavior of child is formed as other behaviors through observational learning, modeling as well as punishment and reinforcing responses in social experiences.

As mentioned before, in psychological researches, researchers were focused on growth and development of three basic components of moral including cognitive, behavioral and emotional components, the relation between them, and their role in internalizing process. Each of above mentioned schools emphasizes the role of factors such as culture, family, school, and peers in moral formation. But there are different opinions regarding the amount of these factors effect and their relation. The main task of each culture in socializing is to transfer moral criteria, forming and reinforcing good behaviors although certain behaviors and values such as seeking justice may be considered good by various cultures. However, all communities have a specific system of principles about good and bad and children are expected to learn them and experience guilt feeling derived from violating them and satisfaction due to following them. As child grows up, he/she focused on internalizing social criteria increasingly leading to self-controlling at the time of external factors` absence. Such change from external factors into personal emotions and belief criteria is the base of moral behavior which is called internalization. Most of psychological schools acknowledge its importance; for instance, Freud believed that moral behavior and guilt feeling is experienced when one person violates from moral criteria and also based on social learning theory, the principle of leaning, classic and actor conditionalizing and imitation are the source of acquiring all social behaviors such as moral and self controlling (Hatrington, 1986).

But as stated earlier, society makes use of various entities to transfer its criteria and socialize people. For example, peers group, especially after elementary school, is one of the most effective and stable sources of moral roles of children. Children in peers group, due to natural and self stimulated situation, are placed in the richest interactional conditions but among many social factors affecting child`s social training, family is of a fundamental importance, undoubtedly. During the primary years, relation with parents is the only relation of child. Interaction and emotional relation between infant and parents shape expectations and interactions of child in future social relations. Cultural attitudes, values and beliefs are refined by parents and presented to child in a selected way. Characters, attitudes, social-economic class, religious beliefs, and education of parents influence presenting cultural values and their criteria to children.

The method of Piaget to investigate the level of moral judgment in children

Piaget had a clinical method to investigate the level of moral judgment in children. His clinical method is the contour between simple observation method and empirical method and is a trend which is established between tester and trial in all conditions, whether in fully verbal situation or in cases that trial are asked to perform by some equipments. The base of the method is always constant. Trial should consider tow basic conditions in all aspects during his/her clinical inspections of child`s arguments and judgments: trial`s thinking should spontaneously followed step by step, any deviation and damage to natural thinking process of child should be avoided. Therefore, trial neither is restrained in an inflexible framework nor expresses scattered and unrelated materials. Each of trials' responses makes tester to design new questions and in this case, psychologists try to get a specified opinion from trial on each point while remover any superficial aspect from trial`s mind (Karimi, 2008).

To evaluate the level of moral judgment, Piaget create various stories with some questions at the end of the story and answering them involves informed moral judgment. The story of action motivation, the story of believing in natural justice, and the story of selecting the type of punishment can be mentioned as the examples of Piaget`s stories to measure moral realism.

Investigating the relation between cognition and moral transformation

Most of the opinions expressed by Piaget and Kohlberg regarding the relation between cognition and moral transformation have been allocated to evaluate various types of tests and inspections. Piaget and Kohlberg studied objective moral and subjective moral and focusing on intention and the way of achieving higher moral transformation stages associated with cognitive transformation. They believed that moral judgment is based on cognitive structures of transformation and as growing, child changes his/her attention from material results to intention of act, and such change involves higher cognition about the concept. Lerner and Macra in America and recently Logran in England concluded that achieving subjective moral is increased by the increase of age. Boehm and Nass confirmed the findings reported by Piaget and Kohlberg indicating that focusing on intention is increased from the age of 9. Testing 6 to 9 years old children done by Boehm revealed that more educationally gifted children showed earlier transformation from objective moral to objective moral compared with led gifted or socially weal children (Karimi, 2008).

McGann, J. G. (2007) reported the correlation between intelligence and moral transformation. Also, Hart, Shorne and May revealed the relation between stealing and cheating and intelligence and other studies confirmed such finding. Lajevardi, A. (2009) retested the findings reported by Kohlberg in various conditions and inter-cultural situations of communities. Thunert, M. W. (2006) asserted that children are transformed not due to external reinforcements but for curiosity emerging cognitive structures. Regarding German children, Zarenk stated that “moral values are rarely considered by children (5-14 years old) being tested. At the scale of cognitive transformation of the first half-time to abstract intelligence and apparent logic, he observed such response even in 9 years old ones: if you lied one time, no one will believe in your words anymore. Zarenk believed that such responses are lie due to worrying about the offending consequences not for respecting to the necessities of maintaining mutual trust. All these findings imply that moral judgment transformation are appeared along a series of cognitive structures and each stage, shape, design, and structure has its own specific feature. The most obvious reason to prove such claim is the changes of structures taken place in the way of children`s argument appropriate with cognitive structure changes.

Methodology

Applied methodology in the present study has been in kind of non-experimental method. Non-experimental method refers to a systematic empirical-oriented study, in which researcher have not direct control on independent variables, since they have been occurred previously or can’t be manipulated originally. Based on simultaneous changes of dependent and independent variables and without direct interference in regard with relations between variables, inference would be resulted.

Since the main objective of the present study has been investigation of relation among predictor variables including (residential area, size of family, parents’ education, age of parents while marriage, income level of family, and religious orientations of adolescents) through focusing on moral judgment level, and knowing this issue that the topic is in domain of non-experimental studies, the present study has applied statistical method of multiple regression in order to assess mentioned relations. In fact, applications of the method are as follows: “study of effects of more than one predictor variable on a criterion variable using principles of correlation and regression”.

Statistical population

Population of the present study included all girls and boys of high school in of first, second, and third educational grades in Tehran.

Sample size

Sample included 200 high school children, among which 100 students were male and 100 were female.

Sampling method

Since applied population in the present study was selected from separated categories and it was impossible to have direct access to required elements, cluster sampling method was applied for this purpose.

Data collection method

The preset study has applied "Moral Judgment Test". The mentioned test has been provided in order to investigate evolution of moral orientations and moral judgment by (Ma). Psychometric properties of the mentioned test by (Ma) have been confirmed and proved empirically in 1982, 1988, and 1989. For example, reliability of scores in this test through using method of "re-run" in a 100-person sample of Hong Kong has been from 0.64 to 0.84 with mean value of 0.70 (Ma, 1988; quoted from Ma, 1992). Scores of moral evolution test have been in significant correlation with scores of moral judgment test such as defining issues test; although its relation is less significant with scores of personality, intelligence, and cognition. In addition, there was a positively significant correlation between orientation of moral criteria in moral evolution test and scores of moral judgment in inter-cultural study in Hong Kong, China, and England, which has revealed some part of important characteristics of internal structure of the test.

Moral evolution test includes 5 puzzles as follows:

A) A lost bag

B) A sinking boat

C) A puzzle of doctor

Results and Discussion

Obtained results from significance test of regression analysis of variable "residential area" in level of 1% has been equal to 4.383 and has been significant in predicting scores of moral judgment. It means that regression coefficient of mentioned variable is significantly different from 0. Since standard error of regression coefficient (0.004) is less than standard deviation (0.071), prediction of the study has been accurate and valid. Hence, equation of moral judgment based on mentioned variable would be as follows:

(y) = 0.019 + (-0.029) (residential area)

Table1: relevant descriptive data of 4-fold areas of Tehran

Residential areas	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Deprived area	50	0.053	0.065	0.009
Medium area	50	0.022	0.069	0.010
Traditional medium area	50	0.000	0.075	0.011
Rich area	50	-0.003	0.062	0.009

According to table1 and due to assessment of mean values, one can find that deprived area with mean value of 0.053 and standard deviation of 0.065 has been higher than other areas in terms of moral judgment and following it respectively medium area with mean value of 0.022 and standard deviation of 0.069 and traditional medium area with mean of 0 and standard deviation 0.075 have been placed. Finally rich area with mean value of -0.003 and standard deviation of 0.062

has been placed after all. In fact, mean value of moral judgment in experimental group of rich areas has been lower than others and hence, answer of the first question is positive and a significant relationship is observable between two mentioned variables.

Table2: prediction of moral judgment based on variable "size of family"

Predictor variable	Mean	Standard deviation	DF	F-value	Significance level of f	R	R^2	b	Standard error	Standard error of discrimination	t-test	Significance level of t
Size of family	0.020	0.070	2-179	15.667	0.01	0.270	0.137	-0.026	0.066	0.008	-3.338	0.01
Constant value								0.005				

According to table 2, correlation coefficient (R) of predictor variable of family size with moral judgment of trials has been equal to 0.370. This value shows that 0.137 (R) of relevant variance for scores of moral judgment can be predicted based on variable "size of family". Significance test of regression with DF of 2-197 has been equal to 15.667, which has been significance in confidence level of 1%. It means that variable "size of family" could enhance scores of moral judgment in samples significantly. Obtained results from significance test for regression discrimination coefficient of variable "size of family" has been equal to -3.338 in confidence level of 1%, which can be significant with coefficient of -0.026 in predicting moral judgment. It means that regression coefficient of mentioned variable is significantly different from 0, since standard deviation and regression discrimination coefficient (0.008) is significantly less than standard deviation (0.070). Hence, the prediction has been accurate and valid. Equation of moral judgment based on mentioned variable would be as follows:

(y) = -0.026 + 0.005 (size of family)

Table 3: relevant descriptive data of variable (size of family)

Residential areas	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Families with 3-5 members	126	0.024	0.069	0.006
Families with 6-10 members	74	0.012	0.071	0.008
Total	198	0.020	0.070	0.005

In assessment of descriptive data, mean values and standard deviations of two groups respectively are as follows: 1- families with 3-5 members mean value (0.024) and standard deviation (0.069); 2- families with 6-10 members mean value (0.012) and standard deviation (0.071). According to mentioned results in table3 and comparison of mean values, one can find that those

trials in small size families have higher level of moral judgment than those trials in crowded families. Hence, obtained descriptive-inferential results would provide a positive answer for question 2 of the present study "whether there is a relationship among level of moral judgment of adolescents and based on their family size or not?" The results can also indicate significant relationship between two mentioned variables.

Table 4: prediction of moral judgment based on variable "education of parents"

Predictor variable	Mean	Standard deviation	DF	F-value	Significance level of f	R	R^2	b	Standard error	Standard error of discrimination	t-test	Significance level of t
Father's education	0.018	0.071	3-196	14.706	0.01	0.429	0.184	-0.025	0.064	0.007	-3.341	0.001
Constant value								0.071				

According to table 4, correlation coefficient (R) of predictor variable "parent's education" with moral judgment of trials has been equal to 0.429. This value shows that 0.184 (R^2) of relevant variance for scores of moral judgment can be predicted based on variable "father's education". Significance test of regression with DF of 3-196 has been equal to 14.706, which has been significance in confidence level of 1%. It means that variable "father's education" could enhance scores of moral judgment in samples significantly. Obtained results from significance test for regression discrimination coefficient of variable "father's education" has been equal to -3.338 in confidence level of 1%, which can be significant with coefficient of -0.025 in predicting moral judgment (t=-3.342). It means that regression coefficient of mentioned variable is significantly different from 0. Since standard deviation and regression discrimination coefficient (0.008) is significantly less than standard deviation (0.070), the prediction has been accurate and valid. Equation of moral judgment based on mentioned variable would be as follows:

(y) = -0.026 + 0.005 (father's education)

Table 5: relevant descriptive data of variable (father's education)

Father's education	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Illiterate- writing and reading literacy	57	0.025	0.017	0.008
Complete elementary school				
Complete guidance school or diploma	94	0.021	0.069	0.007
Post-diploma- BA- MA and higher education	30	-0.010	0.073	0.013
Total	200	0.018	0.071	0.005

According to table5, those trials that their fathers had been in education level of (Illiterate-writing and reading literacy), with mean value of 0.025 and standard deviation of 0.071, are in higher level of moral judgment, comparing to other two groups. Other groups respectively are follows: trials with diploma and complete guidance school education fathers have had mean value of 0.021 and standard deviation of 0.069; those trials with post diploma, MA, BA, and higher education fathers included mean value of -0.010 and standard deviation of 0.073. In fact, the more the literacy of fathers is, the less the score of moral judgment in trials would be.

Table 6: relevant descriptive data of variable (mother's education)

Mother's education	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Illiterate- writing and reading literacy	74	0.025	0.071	0.008
Complete elementary school				
Complete guidance school or diploma	96	0.021	0.069	0.007
Post-diploma- BA-MA and higher education	30	-0.010	0.073	0.013
Total	200	0.018	0.071	0.005

According to table5, those trials that their mothers had been in education level of (Illiterate-writing and reading literacy), with mean value of 0.025 and standard deviation of 0.071, are in higher level of moral judgment, comparing to other two groups. Other groups respectively are follows: trials with diploma and complete guidance school education mothers have had mean value of 0.021 and standard deviation of 0.069; those trials with post diploma, MA, BA, and higher education mothers included mean value of -0.010 and standard deviation of 0.073. In fact, the more the literacy of fathers is, the less the score of moral judgment in trials would be. Present descriptive and inferential results have provide positive answer for the question of the study "whether there is significant relation between moral judgment of adolescents and their parent's education level?" obtained results have also revealed a significant relationship between the mentioned variables.

Conclusions

Through investigating obtained results from multiple regressions in regard with relationship between residential area and moral judgment level, it was clear that correlation between the two mentioned variables has been equal to 0.297 and discrimination coefficient of it has been equal to 0.088. This coefficient would indicate that 0.088 of relevant variance for scores of moral judgment could be predicted based on variable "residential area". Statistical significance test has been also significant in level of 1%. It mean that variable "residential area" could enhance scores of moral judgment of trials significantly; although descriptive data indicate that scores of moral judgment of trials in deprived areas have been higher than scores of trials in other areas. Other areas have been also as follows: respectively medium area with mean value of 0.022 and standard deviation of 0.069; traditional medium area with mean of 0 and standard deviation 0.075 have been placed; and rich area with mean value of -0.003 and standard deviation of 0.062. Now the question would be raised that how properties deprived areas include that have higher moral judgment level than other areas? It

seems that in these areas, because of limited area of houses and social and economic situation of parents, children spend most of their time out of home and play with their peers and friends. As a result, they would be in more interaction and communication than other children and this can be effective in their thinking about moral issues. In this regard Piajet believes that learning of rules and regulations would be provided through games. For example, in a study by Watts, S. and P. Stenner (2005), they have recognized different types of proper patterns among neighbors. In their study on two deprived and rich areas, children in rich areas used to live in expanded area of their home and mostly are away from their friends and meeting their friends would be impossible for them. In these areas, families and parents would conduct their children toward predetermined social activities, instead of making their children participate in unplanned games and meetings with their friends. On the contrary, in deprived areas, children live close together and in these areas games are self-motivated and various and rarely are organized and programmed. Hence, social interactions and moral challenges in these areas is more than other areas (Hatrington, 1986). Therefore, according to obtained results from the study, the first question of the study has had positive answer and there is a significant relationship between residential area and moral judgment level.

Question No.2 of the study has been as follows: whether there is a significant relation between size of family and moral judgment of adolescents? Assessing relevant data would indicate that there is a correlation of 0.37 between the two mentioned variables and discrimination coefficient has been equal to 0.137. This indicates that 0.137 of relevant variance of moral judgment could be predicted based on size of family. Significance test of 1% indicates that there is a significant relation between the two mentioned variables. Through assessing descriptive data one can find that trials in small families include higher level of moral judgment, comparing to those trials in big families. Studies indicate that increase in No of children in a family can lead to change in attitude of parents about training children and conditions of growing of them. In families with more children, especially more than 6 children, functions of family would be determined clearly and parents would not be able to leave many children free, since it can lead to anarchy in the family and there would be no enough time for acceptable explanations. (Hatrington, 1986)

Moreover, Zakersalehi, G. (1999) has conducted a study on role of parents in formation of moral judgment in adolescents and have indicated that level of moral judgment of parents and their interaction style with moral issues could have direct effect on their children's moral judgment level. It seems that high level of scores in trials in regard with moral judgment in small families can confirm accuracy of mentioned studies. In fact, in small families, there is sufficient time and opportunity in order to discuss about moral issues with children.

Question No.3 of the 3 studies has been related to relation between education level of parents and moral judgment level in adolescents. Obtained data from the studies indicate correlation of 0.429 and discrimination coefficient of 0.184 between them. Significance test of regression in confidence level of 1% can confirm that there is significant relation between the two mentioned variables. According to descriptive data, trials that their parents were in low educational level had higher scores in moral judgment, comparing to trials that had high educated parents. It seems that in parenting styles, economic and social conditions of low educated parents, there are effective factors in moral judgment such as 1- focus of these parents on sacrifice and dedication more than self-love 2- undesired economic situation of family can make children enter work area since early ages and gain high social cognition (contrary to high educated parents that their children would enter work area usually after graduation from university) this kind of cognition would be required for good understanding of moral issues.

Question No.4 of the present study has been related to investigate relationship between marriage age of parents and moral judgment level. Obtained results from the study indicate

correlation of 0.451 and discrimination coefficient of 0.203. The mentioned coefficient indicates that 0.203 percent of relevant variance of moral judgment scores could be predicted based on marriage age of parents. Statistical significance test has been also significant in confidence level of 1%. According to descriptive data, those trials that their fathers were got married in ages 25-27, and those trials that their mother were got married in ages 15-25, had higher moral judgment level than other trials that their parents were before and after these ages. In order to prove mentioned finding, one can state that old parents would not have reflective responses and would not be able to do their tasks in regard with training their children in proper manner. As a result, such parents would not be able to prepare for a healthy life based on social values and rules.

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