

The Level of Moral Competence among Sample of Hashemite University Students

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this study was to determine the level of students' about moral competence at the Hashemite University in Jordan. A total of 909 university students participated in the study by completing the moral competence questionnaire. Results indicated that university students showed a medium level of moral competence. Additionally, results indicated that there were significant differences in participants' level of moral competence based on the demographics of gender, academic level and academic performances. The study ends by suggesting a number of practical and theoretical recommendations for a number of stakeholders.

Key words: Moral competence • Integrity • Impression Management • Responsibility • University students

INTRODUCTION

Moral intelligence refers to the ability to apply ethical principles to goals, values and actions. However it has the potential to improve understanding of learning and culturally acceptable behavior. Moral intelligence is newer and less studied than the more established cognitive, emotional and social intelligences, [1-3]. [4] define moral intelligence as "the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles-like those embodied by the "Golden Rule"-should be applied to our personal values, goals and actions". Their construct of moral intelligence consists of four competencies related to integrity, three to responsibility, two to forgiveness and one to compassion.

Moral behavior is the result of at least four component processes: (1) identifying a situation as a moral problem, (2) figuring out what one ought to do and evaluating possible plans of action, (3) evaluating how the various courses of action serve moral and no moral values and deciding which action will be pursued and (4) executing the plan of action [5-8] (Rest, 1983).

To define the moral competence concept one has to understand how the term competence is defined in general. The concept of competence includes, at least, two levels: competence can be understood as a possession of any knowledge, as ability to reason on a certain problem. Competence can also be considered as an

experience in a certain sphere, ability to act, behave in a proper way [9] Weinert, 2001).

[10-11] defines three components of communication competence: 1) Self-competence, i.e. orientation in own communicative abilities and features, in own psychological potential; 2) Competence of communication partner is an orientation in psychological features and abilities of other people; 3) Competence of situation, i.e. adequate situation and its tasks recognition.

Moral competence refers to the orientation to perform altruistic behavior and the ability to judge moral issues logically, consistently and at an advanced level of development. Promotion of moral competence fosters the development of a sense of justice and altruistic behavior in adolescents. There are two key concepts of moral competence: altruism and moral-judgment development. For altruism [12] altruistic behavior refers to acts carried out voluntarily without expectation of a reward. Ma suggested that the most important goal of altruism is one of the following: increasing one's Darwinian fitness; facilitating the development of higher stages of cognition, morality, ego and so forth; assisting in attaining new psychological abilities; increasing the gratification of basic psychological and self actualization needs; and assisting in restoring and maintaining emotional stability. According to the theory of [13,14], moral judgment mainly refers to the delineation of rule and law orientation,

personal autonomy, moral conscience, social contract, basic rights and universal justice. There are three moral levels in [15] and each level consists of two stages. These six stages of moral development start with children blindly obeying an authority's commands in order to avoid punishment gradually develop into upholding the social law and carrying out one's duty to maintain social order and find fruition of a foundation of distinguishing right and wrong with the understanding of universal-justice principles.

[4] define moral principles as values that cut across all cultural boundaries. Lennick and Kiel argue that people overwhelmingly prefer to follow leaders who exhibit integrity, integrity being a universal human (extant across time and cultures) moral principle. Other moral principles they claim and attempt to measure in their Moral Competency Index are responsibility, compassion and forgiveness.

The process of decision-making plays a part in, or may even define moral competence. Accordingly, one have to take into consideration its five fundamental skills; structuring decisions, assessing beliefs, assessing values, combining these beliefs and values into coherent choices and having a meta-cognitive understanding of one's abilities. For each skill, performance can be defined in terms of either accuracy related to an external criterion or consistency among responses [16].

In the Kohlberg's theory of moral development framework the concept of moral competence is presented as a certain cognitive structure, i.e. a skill to argue on moral issues, to provide own grounds of a moral choice and to explain the situations containing moral dilemmas [17], 1994). Kohlberg defines moral competence as "the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral (i.e., based on internal principles) and to act in accordance with such judgments"[18-14-19-20-21].

Two basic components, causing process of understanding can be defined [9]. The first one-the goals of the subject of understanding and the second one-system, hierarchy of values and norms which the person counts comprehensible in a certain society.

Thus moral competence, as an object I examine, bases on norms, values, purposes, intentions, interests, motives, feelings etc. of moral situation comprehension and may be defined by its three components [9].

Self-competence-the ability to adequately perceive oneself as a subject of moral interaction, to realize one's interests, intentions, aims, motives, feelings and value definitions caused by moral conflict and possible ways of behaving in a situation involving a moral choice.

Competence in partner-an ability to perceive other individuals participating in that situation, to understand their aims, interests, motives, feelings, system of values and possible actions adequately.

Competence in situation-assumes an ability to have an integrated view of the situation, to analyze consequences of events, to comprehend the values and norms, which participants of that situation are guided by and to take into account all the peculiarities of the conflict and the individuals involved in it.

The studies about Moral competence in Brazil conducted by Bataglia (1998, [22] in addition to our pilot study (2001) showed that students in Brazil have lower moral competence scores (C-scores, MJT) when compared to students in Europe [23] but similar to students in Mexico. Taking a closer look to this problem, we came to the conclusion that the lower scores are connected to an interesting phenomenon: subjects presented different levels of moral competence according to the different dilemmas, part of the MJT. This phenomenon-denominated "moral segmentation"-was also observed by Moreno (2000) in Mexico, but was not reported in previous studies involving other cultures. In our sample, mean C-scores of 18,7 and c-score of 26,7 for the doctors dilemma and 39.5 for the worker's dilemma seems to indicate that students in Brazil could react similarly to those in Mexico.

Statement of the Problem: Moral competence refers to the affective orientation to perform altruistic behaviors towards others and the ability to judge moral issues logically, consistently and at an advanced level of development. Promotion of moral competence means fostering the development of justice judgment and altruistic behavior in adolescents. Moreover, moral competence is an area of research in Jordan that has been largely ignored. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to determine the levels of university students in Jordan regarding moral competence.

Research Objectives: The following research objectives were pursued in this study:

- To determine the level of moral competence among students at the Hashemite University;
- To determine the differences in students' related to moral competence based on gender, academic level and academic performances.

Significance of Study: The basic goal of this study is to determine the level moral competence among students at the Hashemite University.

In addition, this study is very important for many reasons: (1) Moral intelligence is newer and less studied than the more established cognitive, emotional and social intelligences, but has great potential to improve our understanding of learning and behavior (2). By developing greater moral intelligence, benefits to the universities and the society will result in organizations that are more positive, improved relationships and students who are both smart and good and value universal human principles and rights. (3) To development of the moral competence measure in the Jordanian environment.

Method

Population and Sample of Study: The population of this study consisted of (15230) undergraduate students, who were enrolled in the faculties of Hashemite University in the academic year 2012/2013, who represent all levels of study at (HU). For the purpose of this study, a random sample was chosen from the population, it consisted of (909) and their ages ranged between 18-22 years.

Instruments

Moral Competency Questionnaire (MCQ): The Moral Competency Inventory developed by Daniel and Benjamin (2010) contains 38 items descriptive of their types of moral competence (Integrity/ Honesty/ Authenticity (9) items, Impression Management (20) items and Responsibility (9) items). The items on a 5-point scale (1) Very Inaccurate, (2) Moderately Inaccurate, (3) Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate, (4) Moderately Accurate, (5) Very Accurate. A cronbach alpha of (0.73) was reported for the moral competence questionnaire. In terms of the moral competence dimension, a reliability estimate of (0.72) was reported for the integrity/honesty/authenticity and a (0.55) was reported for the impression management and a (0.66) was reported for the responsibility.

Instrument Translation Process: To ensure equivalence of meaning of the items and constructs between the Arabic and English versions of the Moral Competence Questionnaire, a rigorous translation process was used that included forward and backward translation, subjective evaluations of the translated items and pilot testing. The goal of the translation process was to

produce an Arabic version of the Moral Competence Questionnaire, with items that were equivalent in meaning to the original English version. The Arabic version of the Moral Competence Questionnaire was then pilot tested with a group of 30 students to collect feedback about instrument content and usage. The feedback from students emphasized that the instrument has both face and content validity.

Instrument Standardization: The Arabic version of the Moral Competence Questionnaire was tested with a sample of 30 students different than that of the study but withdrawn from the same population (the Hashemite University students). Reliability coefficients for the Moral Competence Questionnaire established for the eight scales as follows: integrity/honesty/authenticity (0.64), impression management (0.83) and responsibility (0.72). Based on the translation process and the reliability estimates, the Arabic-translated version of the Moral Competence Questionnaire seemed to be valid and a reliable measure for use with a Jordanian population.

Procedures: The instrument was administered to the participants in their regular classrooms by the researcher. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose and the importance of their participation in this study. In addition, the researcher assured the participants of the confidentiality of their response and that their response would be used only for research purposes.

Then, the question booklets were distributed and instructions were given to the participants on how to answer them. The participants' responses were scored by the researcher and were entered into the computer for statistical analysis. The data were analyzed using the SPSS package.

RESULT

The data collected from all participants were coded, entered onto the SPSS spreadsheets and analyses using software package SPSS version 17. Descriptive statistics for all variables in this study were examined using SPSS frequencies. The minimum and maximum values of each item were examined for accuracy of data entry by inspecting any out-of-range values. No out-of-range values were found. Missing subjects were not detected either. The results of the study are addressed by each objective.

Table 1: mean and standard deviations of students' multiple intelligence

Dimension	Items	Mean	SD
Integrity/Honesty/Authenticity	Am trusted to keep secrets.	4.46	.73
	Keep my promises.	4.36	.62
	Believe that honesty is the basis for trust.	4.59	.64
	Can be trusted to keep my promises.	4.27	.79
	Am true to my own values.	4.11	.90
	Lie to get myself out of trouble.	2.94	1.19
	Am hard to understand.	2.88	1.18
	Feel like an imposter.	3.90	1.22
	Like to exaggerate my troubles.	3.48	1.23
total		3.89	.94
Impression Management	Would never take things that aren't mine.	4.26	1.17
	Would never cheat on my taxes.	4.19	1.07
	Believe there is never an excuse for lying.	3.54	1.14
	Always admit it when I make a mistake.	3.78	1.02
	Rarely talk about sex.	3.73	1.25
	Return extra change when a cashier makes a mistake.	4.58	.79
	Try to follow the rules.	4.16	.92
	Easily resist temptations.	3.83	.96
	Tell the truth.	4	.87
	Rarely overindulge.	3.23	1.36
	Have sometimes had to tell a lie.	2.56	1.27
	Use swear words.	3.47	1.34
	Use flattery to get ahead.	2.77	1.26
	Am not always what I appear to be.	2.90	1.32
	Break rules.	3.63	1.21
	Cheat to get ahead.	3.71	1.17
	Don't always practice what I preach.	3.21	1.18
	Misuse power.	3.67	1.22
	Get back at others.	3.11	1.30
	Am likely to show off if I get the chance.	3.28	1.36
total		3.58	1.16
Responsibility	Try to forgive and forget.	4.01	1.07
	Like to be of service to others.	4.08	.96
	Act according to my conscience.	4.24	.87
	Anticipate the needs of others.	4	.86
	Take others' interests into account.	4.06	.78
	Am polite to strangers.	4.25	.93
	Am able to cooperate with others.	4.27	.74
	Appreciate people who wait on me.	4.39	.79
total		4.13	.91
Total		3.86	1

Results Pertaining to Objective 1: Objective 1 was to determine the level of moral competence among students at the Hashemite University. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to achieve this objective. Analysis of the data in the first question involved the tabulation of the mean of level moral competence. The total mean score was calculated based on student responses to each item in the selected scale using the 5-point Likert-type scale. Thus, the levels of moral competence were interpreted using the following categories: below 3 = low level; 3-4 = medium level; above 4 = high level. As can be

observed in Table 1, the mean for overall moral competence was 3.86, in terms of the moral competence dimension, a means of (3.89) was reported for the integrity/honesty/authenticity and a (3.58) was reported for the impression management and a (4.13) was reported for the responsibility. This result indicates that the students at the Hashemite University about moral competence rated as medium. Further, the lowest mean of moral competence was 2.56 and the highest mean was 4.59. This result reveals that items concerning moral competence were rated at a medium level.

Table 2: mean and standard deviations and t-test of student's moral competence (N male= 360, N female= 549)

Sex	Male		female		t	significant
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Moral competence	Mean	SD	mean	SD		
Integrity	3.75	.47	3.98	.48	-7.057	0.000
Impression management	3.46	.57	3.66	.54	-5.092	0.000
Responsibility	3.97	.60	4.25	.40	-8.264	0.000

*Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 3: The differences among the f academic performance groups on the levels of moral competence (N= 909)

Moral competence	Sum of squares	df	F	p
Integrity	Between groups	28.017	43.448	.000
	Within groups	194.529		
	Total	222.546		
Impression management	Between groups	35.398	41.844	.000
	Within groups	255.192		
	Total	290.590		
Responsibility	Between groups	5.291	6.792	.000
	Within groups	235.006		
	Total	240.297		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 4: The differences among the f academic levels groups on the levels of moral competence (N= 909)

Moral competence	Sum of squares	df	F	p
Integrity	Between groups	1.268	1.729	.159
	Within groups	221.277		
	Total	222.546		
Impression management	Between groups	3.202	3.361	.018
	Within groups	287.387		
	Total	290.590		
Responsibility	Between groups	11.276	14.852	.000
	Within groups	229.021		
	Total	240.297		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Results Pertaining to Objective 2: The second research question presented in the study asked if there were any differences by gender in the level of moral competence of participants. A *t*-test was run on each of the eight scales. A summary by gender of each scale is shown in Table 2. A significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was found on the level of moral competence. Female reported a significantly greater level of moral competence than male did.

On the other hand, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to identify whether the variances between the four academic performances of university students at the Hashemite University were equal or significantly different. Table 3 shows

that there were significant differences among the four academic performances in terms of their levels of moral competence.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to identify whether the variances between the four academic levels of university students at the Hashemite University were equal or significantly different. Table 3 shows that there were significant differences among the four academic levels in terms of their levels of moral competence in dimension (impression management and responsibility) and that there were no significant differences among the four academic levels in terms of their levels of moral competence in dimension integrity.

DISCUSSION

Moral intelligence is presented as the ability to methodically apply universal moral principles to one's ethics, objectives and dealings (Lennick and Kiel, 2005). One premise to such a definition is that morality is a priori, meaning individuals have an innate tendency to act with integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the level of moral competence of university students in the Faculties at the Hashemite University in Jordan. A sample of 909 students participated in the study by responding to the Moral Competence Questionnaire. As indicated in the results section, that the level of moral competence as medium. This result indicates that university students have not reached an acceptable level of moral competence. Duriez and Soenens (2006) found the people processing religious contents in a symbolic way show higher moral competence and tend to make a sharper distinction between moral arguments of the lower stages and higher stages of Kohlberg's model. Wankel, Stachowicz-Stanusch and Tamtana (2011) on 122 students from Poland, Indonesia and the United States of America. The researchers found that the average level of moral scales in the three countries were similar. Another strand of results regarding demographic variables reveals that gender, academic level and academic performance had effect on students' levels of moral competence. This result means the level of moral competence higher than the level of moral competence from male university students. My be due the nature of socialization society which restrictions on the female more than male, Nor *et al.*, (2012) found there is no difference between genders with regard to moral competencies. Further, as for the variable of academic performance and academic level, the results of the study show that whenever a high academic performance and whenever a student's progress in the academic level whenever a high level of efficiency moral and logical outcome.

From the theoretical standpoint, the following line of research is suggested for the future: (a) The university needs to have a better role to increase the effectiveness of students' moral competence through academic and training programmers.(b) the researcher recommend conducting other studies on other variables in different university.

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