

MORALITY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL CATEGORY AND CHARACTERISTIC OF A PERSON

Turumbetova Zamira Yusupbaevna

PhD, Associate Professor, Department of General Pedagogy and Psychology
Karakalpak State University, Nukus, Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan

Abstract

This article deals with the notion of morality as a core psychological category and a fundamental characteristic of human personality. The study examines how moral values, norms, and principles are internalized within an individual's psychological structure and how they manifest in behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal interactions. Theoretical perspectives from developmental psychology, moral philosophy, and social psychology are integrated to understand the formation and functioning of morality throughout different life stages. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the psychological mechanisms that influence moral development, such as empathy, conscience, and moral reasoning, as well as the role of environmental factors like culture, family, and education.

Keywords: Morality, psychological, category, fundamental, characteristic, human personality.

Introduction

Morality plays a vital role in shaping individuals' identities, guiding behavior, and maintaining societal harmony. In the context of psychology, studying morality helps uncover how ethical principles become internalized and drive decision-making processes. Understanding morality from a psychological standpoint is essential not only for educational and developmental purposes but also for addressing behavioral issues, promoting prosocial behavior, and building emotionally intelligent and socially responsible individuals. In today's increasingly complex and multicultural world, insights into the psychology of morality are crucial for fostering tolerance, justice, and mutual respect in society.

For several decades, psychology has tended to define morality either as an individual's actions assessed in light of established social and moral standards, or as any action driven by ethically sound intentions and emotions. However, both the behavioral and emotional viewpoints on moral behavior have recently been questioned by the cognitive-developmental approach. This approach argues that a true understanding of moral behavior requires examining the cognitive and structural components behind human actions. Therefore, psychological interventions should not only focus on fostering moral emotions but also perhaps more importantly address the cognitive dimensions of moral conduct. The external-effects perspective classifies a person's behavior based on societal norms, laws, or rules, which assumes that such classifications rely on shared traits across members of a group or population [11].

In many fields and topics of study, social psychology tends to focus on social categories as the main basis for explanation. However, this heavy reliance on categories can cause researchers to overlook the broader context that influences people's thoughts and behaviors. As a result, social psychology theories may become limited in both scope and practical relevance. In this article, we



encourage researchers to look beyond rigid categories and instead place greater emphasis on context in their theoretical approaches. To support this shift, we introduce alternative frameworks such as social constructionism, assemblage theory, and dynamic systems theory that already contribute valuable insights to social psychology research. While we do not provide an exhaustive review of context-focused work, our aim is to underline the value of moving away from category-based or seemingly universal models. A more context-sensitive social science must take into account psychological, structural, and material conditions, their interrelations, and how they evolve over time [12].

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's socio-economic climate of change the issue of spiritual and moral revival in the upbringing of the younger generation has become more relevant than ever. Core human values such as morality, ethical viewpoints, and especially the moral orientation of students are increasingly important. Unfortunately, we often observe signs of moral decline among youth—such as loss of values, cruelty, rudeness, substance abuse, and rising crime rates. These issues raise serious concerns for teachers, parents, and educational psychologists alike. In light of these challenges, the need to foster spiritual and moral values among children and adolescents becomes a critical task. Young people require not only social protection but also psychological and pedagogical support from both family and school. Society today calls for well-educated, morally grounded, and creative individuals who are capable of self-determination, self-discipline, personal development, and responsible decision-making. Morality has long been a subject of study across various disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and psychology. From a psychological perspective, morality is often conceptualized not only as a social construct but also as an integral part of personality development and human behavior regulation.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Morality in Psychology. One of the foundational psychological theories of moral development was proposed by Jean Piaget [8], who studied how children develop moral reasoning through interaction and play. According to Piaget, children progress from a heteronomous moral orientation, where rules are fixed and imposed by authority figures, to an autonomous moral orientation, where they recognize the mutual nature of rules and morality.

Building on Piaget's work, Lawrence Kohlberg [6] developed a stage theory of moral development that outlines six stages grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Kohlberg emphasized the role of cognitive development and moral reasoning, rather than specific behaviors, as key indicators of moral maturity. However, Kohlberg's model has faced criticism for its gender and cultural bias. Carol Gilligan [3] argued that Kohlberg's theory prioritized justice-oriented morality (more common among men) while neglecting care-based morality (more prevalent among women), emphasizing empathy and interpersonal relationships.

2. Morality as a Personality Trait. Morality is also studied as a stable psychological characteristic embedded within personality. Blasi [2] proposed that moral identity—how central morality is to one's self-concept—plays a significant role in predicting moral behavior. This view aligns with the personality-integrity perspective, which sees moral actions as extensions of core personality traits such as honesty, empathy, and conscientiousness. More recently, researchers such as Narvaez [7] introduced the integrative ethical education model, which combines cognitive,



emotional, and social factors in moral development, highlighting the multifaceted nature of morality as a personality construct.

3. Neuropsychological and Emotional Aspects of Morality. Recent advances in neuroscience and emotional psychology have explored the biological underpinnings of moral decision-making. Studies by Greene et al. [4] using fMRI have shown that moral judgments involve emotional processing in areas like the amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex. This supports Jonathan Haidt's [5] social intuitionist model, which claims that moral judgments are often intuitive and emotionally driven rather than rational.

4. Morality and Social Influences. Social and cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping moral norms and behaviors. According to Bandura's [1] theory of moral disengagement, individuals may rationalize unethical behavior depending on situational factors and social learning. Social environments, peer groups, and family influence the internalization of moral standards, suggesting that morality is not just an individual trait but also a social phenomenon.

Morality, as a psychological category, encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, interacting with personality traits, identity, and social context. The multidimensional nature of morality makes it a rich area for psychological research, blending developmental, social, personality, and neuropsychological perspectives.

DISCUSSION

According to A.A. Guseinov, the concepts of "morality" and "ethics" (moral) are closely interconnected [14]. Morality is seen as the highest goal, serving as the foundation that enables all other objectives and lies at the core of human activity. Ethics, on the other hand, represents the value-based foundation of human culture, with its key categories being goodness, duty, and conscience—traits that define a person as an individual. N.E. Shchurkova [16] views personality as someone who becomes an individual through socially moral relationships, asserting their sense of self within a social context. Leading modern psychologists such as A.G. Asmolov, L.S. Vygotsky, V.V. Davydov, A.N. Leontiev, and D.I. Feldstein [14]; [18] believe that a person is not born with personality, but rather becomes a personality through development and active participation in life. This formation occurs within a personality-oriented system of education, particularly in the settings of family and school. The terms "moral and spiritual upbringing" and "moral and spiritual development" are frequently used in both academic and practical contexts today and are defined in various ways. In this research, we rely on the definition offered by N.I. Boldyrev, who describes moral and spiritual education as the intentional development of moral awareness, the cultivation of moral feelings, and the formation of ethical behavior skills [14]. It is no coincidence that Sh.A. Amonashvili [17] emphasizes several key humanistic principles in moral and spiritual upbringing, including:

Loving the child;

Humanizing the educational environment;

Understanding the child from within—seeing life through the child's eyes.

Scholars such as Sh.A. Amonashvili, N.D. Nikandrov, V.A. Slastenin [14]; [18], and others emphasize that spiritual and moral education and personality development is a complex and multifaceted process. Spiritual and moral development also plays a crucial role in the open social space of supplementary education institutions, which provide significant opportunities for the



intellectual, creative, and personal growth and self-improvement of children and adolescents, as well as for their timely socialization. All of this is particularly important in the context of today's rapidly developing society, which is undergoing both qualitative and quantitative changes affecting every area of human life.

CONCLUSION

Thus, morality represents a fundamental psychological category that reflects an individual's internalized system of values, norms, and principles guiding behavior within a social context. As a psychological characteristic, morality is not innate or static but develops through complex interactions between personal experiences, cultural influences, and cognitive-emotional development. This study has shown that moral development begins in early childhood and evolves through various stages, influenced by factors such as family upbringing, education, social environment, and individual reflection. Cognitive theories, such as those proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg, emphasize the role of reasoning in moral judgment, while affective approaches highlight the influence of emotions like empathy, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, morality functions as a key component of personality, shaping how individuals make decisions, interact with others, and evaluate right from wrong. It not only influences behavior but also serves as a core part of self-concept and identity. Understanding morality as both a psychological process and a personal trait allows psychologists, educators, and parents to better support the moral development of individuals and contribute to a more ethical and responsible society.

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