



AUTISM AND MORALITY DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

BACKGROUND

- Autistic individuals commonly experience differences in social cognition compared to neurotypical individuals
- Moral reasoning, which is a form of social cognition, may be atypical among autistic individuals
- Morality provides a guide for how to treat other people and coexist with them in society based on social norms and expectations
- Autistic individuals often exhibit difficulties in interpersonal interactions
- These challenges may stem in part from differences in moral development and reasoning

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by differences in social communication and social interaction and the presence of stereotyped or repetitive interests or behavior.(American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013)



DISCLAIMER



Autism is a spectrum. It affects individuals differently, and experiences may vary from person to person.



Autism can be analogous to both ethnicity and sexuality in terms of identity and social context.



This presentation is based on literature and properly referenced, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

NAVIGATING ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Autism can hinder moral reasoning and ethical decision-making due to challenges in comprehending social norms and expectations.
- Appropriate support and interventions are crucial to facilitate moral development while respecting the individual's autonomy and rights.
- **Applied Behavior Analysis** (ABA) therapy is often used as a treatment for autism but it may not promote genuine moral development or ethical decision-making.
- Instead of conforming to neurotypical behavior, I **strongly believe** that individuals with autism should be encouraged to embrace their **unique perspectives** and **individuality**.
- However, the differences in moral development between autistic and neurotypical individuals can lead to a **complex ethical paradox**.





ETHICAL PARADOX

PROBLEM STATEMENT

"The differences in moral development and the lack of policies that cater to their unique needs, individuals with autism face a systemic bias in the business world that hinders their growth and development."

DETERMINING THE PROBLEM

The ethical paradox arises when the expectations of social norms conflict with the individual's understanding or abilities due to their differences in moral development.

"Should the individual with autism be excused for their behavior, whereas a neurotypical person who inadvertently violates a boundary may be held responsible and face consequences?"

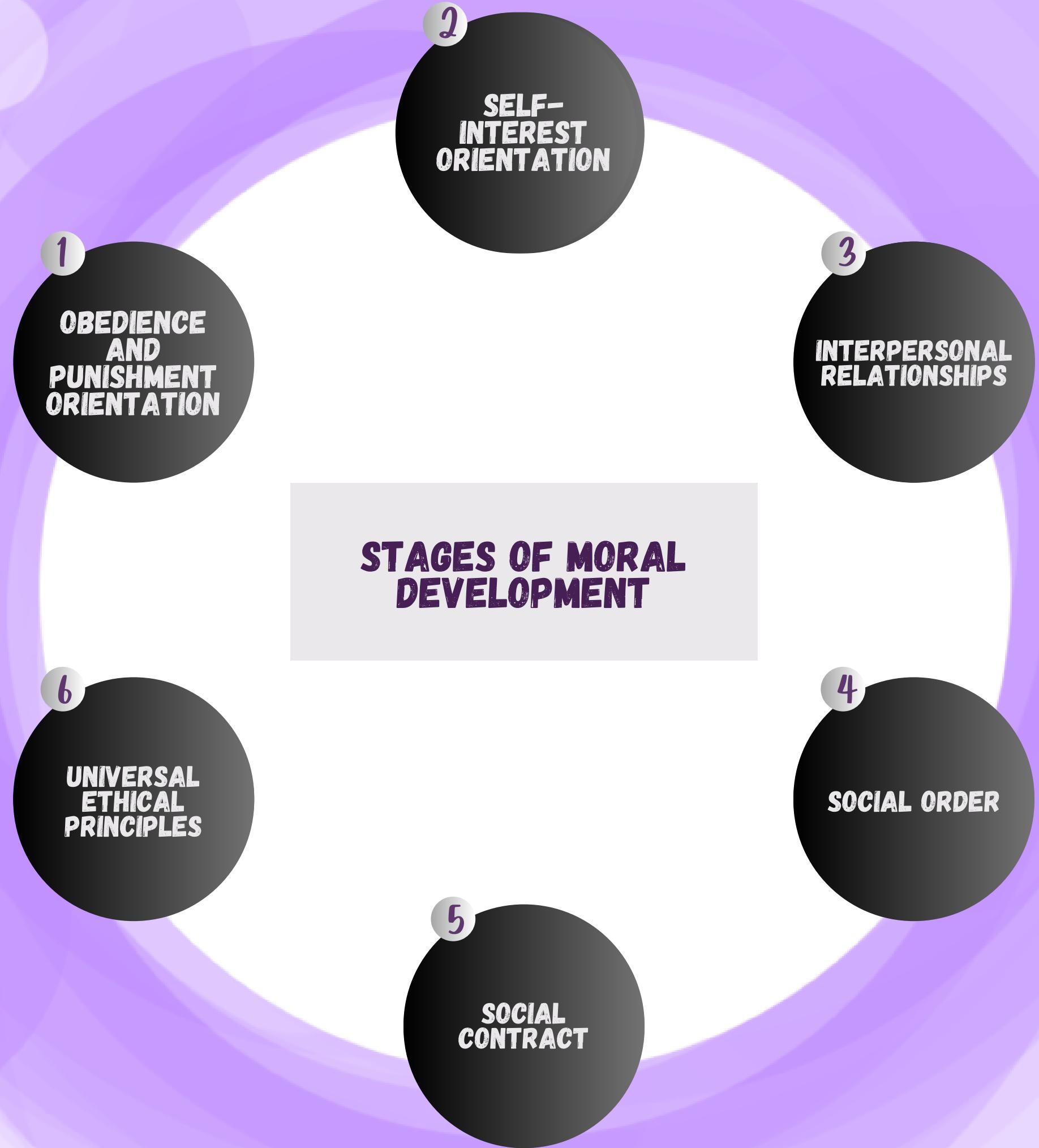
In order to understand this paradox in-depth, I shall link it with Kohlberg's theory of moral development in the following slides.



KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT



STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT



ANALYSIS

OBEDIENCE AND PUNISHMENT ORIENTATION

- At this stage, individuals focus on avoiding punishment
- They may obey rules only to avoid negative consequences
- This stage is common in children and is the basis of moral reasoning

DIFFERENCES

- This can lead to challenges in understanding the reasons behind certain rules or consequences
- They may focus more on avoiding punishment than on understanding the moral implications of their actions

ANALYSIS

SELF-INTEREST ORIENTATION

- Individuals make decisions based on what benefits them, regardless of others' needs or feelings.
- It is necessary stage as it helps individuals learn to advocate for their own needs and interests.

DIFFERENCES

- Difficulty understanding the impact of their actions on others.
- They may not understand how their actions could negatively impact others or may not be able to empathize with others' needs and feelings.
- This can lead to a greater focus on their own self-interest than on the well-being of others, which can be perceived as selfish or lacking in moral judgment by others.

ANALYSIS

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- A desire to please others and maintain positive relationships.
- Conform to social norms and rules
- They recognize that others have feelings and needs that are important and should be considered.

DIFFERENCES

- Struggle with social expectations and norms related to relationships
- Difficulty in conforming to social expectations and potential disregard for social conventions
- Individuals with autism may struggle with social communication and building relationships

ANALYSIS

SOCIAL ORDER

- Individuals focus on conforming to the laws and social norms of their community
- Individuals at this stage begin to recognize that different social systems and institutions may have conflicting rules and values, and may need to consider broader ethical principles in order to resolve these conflicts.

DIFFERENCES

- May disregard social norms that are not clearly explained or understood.
- Individuals with autism may struggle with understanding social norms and expectations, which could lead to challenges in conforming to social conventions and rules.

ANALYSIS

SOCIAL CONTRACT ORIENTATION

- Focus on mutual benefits of social relationships
- May consider broader societal values and principles

DIFFERENCES

- Struggle with social communication and understanding of others' perspectives
- Which could lead to challenges in understanding the broader societal values and principles
- A potential disregard for the mutual benefits of social relationships and the broader societal values and principles.

ANALYSIS

UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ORIENTATION

- Individuals develop a strong sense of personal ethics and morality that is not dependent on social norms or institutions.
- Focus on abstract ethical principles and ideals

DIFFERENCES

- May struggle to apply abstract ethical principles to real-world situations.
- May excel due to their strong sense of justice and fairness.
- A more principled approach to ethical decision-making, and may be highly motivated to do what is right based on their sense of morality.

TODAYS' BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

RESULT

Individuals with autism may not progress through the stages of Kohlberg's theory in the same way as neurotypical individuals.

These are some of the skills that autistic people struggle with, which are an essential requirement in todays' business environment:

Networking:

Networking is a crucial part of business, but it can be difficult for autistic individuals who may struggle with social skills, small talk, and interpreting social cues.

Professionalism:

Autistic individuals may struggle with some social norms related to professionalism, such as dress codes, office etiquette, and appropriate behavior in meetings or presentations.

Communication:

Autistic individuals may struggle with communication skills, including verbal and nonverbal communication, social cues, and interpreting emotions. This can make it challenging for them to work in teams or collaborate with others, which can be important in many business roles.

Some aspects of todays' business operations that have failed to be inclusive of the autistic minority.

Appraisals:

Appraisal processes may also fail to account for the challenges that autistic individuals face in navigating the workplace and building relationships, leading to unfair evaluations and consequences.

Promotions:

Promotion and assessment processes may favor communication styles, social behaviors, and cognitive abilities of neurotypical employees, which can exclude autistic individuals who have different strengths.

Recruitments:

In job interviews, candidates are often evaluated on their communication skills and social behaviors, which can be challenging for autistic individuals who may struggle with nonverbal cues, social reciprocity, and small talk.

IT'S ALL NOT SO GRIM FOR US

Autistic individuals can offer unique strengths to the business environment, such as **attention to detail, deep knowledge and focus, and innovative problem-solving skills**. In addition to the examples given, autistic individuals may **excel in roles that require repetitive tasks or adherence to strict guidelines**, such as accounting, auditing, or quality assurance. They may also have a **strong sense of ethics and may be more likely to prioritize honesty and transparency in their work**. By recognizing and leveraging these strengths, businesses can create a more diverse and inclusive workforce and tap into valuable talent that may have been previously overlooked.

In autistic individuals sometimes a lack of empathy and sympathy, in a business context can lead to more objective decision-making, free from emotional biases. Individuals with autism can analyze situations logically, relying on facts and evidence to arrive at solutions. For example, Individuals with autism may be less likely to be influenced by emotional appeals in negotiations and personal biases in hiring decisions.

There are many successful business leaders today who identify as being on the autism spectrum, including **Temple Grandin**, the **renowned animal behavior expert and advocate**, and **Steve Silberman**, a well-known **journalist and author**.

Some companies have implemented more inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations to support neurodiverse individuals, such as Microsoft's "**Autism Hiring Program**" and SAP's "**Autism at Work**" initiative.

ADDRESSING THE PARADOX

- Individuals with potential autistic traits can face challenges in the modern business environment due to the emphasis on social skills and communication.
- Encouraging and promoting campaigns in companies like SAP and Microsoft that provide inclusivity to individuals with autism can increase diversity in the workplace and benefit from their unique skills and perspectives.
- It is important to ensure that differences in morality do not lead to disparities in opportunities for success in the business world. By taking an individualistic approach and paying attention to the unique needs of autistic individuals, we can address the ethical paradox and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.



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**THANK
YOU**

Any Questions?