

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

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Lawrence Kohlberg a Psychologist belonging to the university of Harvard is known for putting forward a theory of the development of moral judgment in the individual right from the years of early childhood .He has based his theory of moral development on the findings of his studies conducted on hundreds of children from different cultures.

He differs from the popular view that children imbibe the sense and methods of moral judgment from their parents and elders by way of learning. According to him as soon as we talk with children about morality, we find that they have many ways of making judgments which are not internalized from the outside and which do not come in any direct and obvious way from parents teachers and even peers (Kohlberg, 1968).

Going further he clarified that internal or cognitive processes like thinking and reasoning also play a major role in one's moral development i.e the way children make moral judgment depends on their level of intellectual development as well as on their upbringing and learning experience.

For studying the process of moral development in human beings, kohlberg first defined moral development as the development of an individual's sense of justice.

One of the best-known theories exploring some of these basic questions was developed by a psychologist named Lawrence Kohlberg. His work modified and expanded upon Jean Piaget's previous work to form a theory that explained how children develop moral reasoning.

Piaget described a two-stage process of moral development while Kohlberg's theory of moral development outlined six stages within three different levels. Kohlberg extended Piaget's theory, proposing that moral development is a continual process that occurs throughout the lifespan.

In recent years, Kohlberg's theory has been criticized as being Western-centric with a bias toward men (he primarily used male research subjects) and with having a narrow worldview based on upper-middle-class value systems and perspectives.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

- . Pre-Conventional level**
- . Conventional Level**
- . Post-Conventional level**

The Heinz Dilemma: Kohlberg's Approach to the Study of Moral Reasoning

Heinz's wife was dying from a particular type of cancer. Doctors said a new drug might save her. The drug had been discovered by a local chemist, and the Heinz tried desperately to buy some, but the chemist

was charging ten times the money it cost to make the drug, and this was much more than the Heinz could afford.

Heinz could only raise half the money, even after help from family and friends. He explained to the chemist that his wife was dying and asked if he could have the drug cheaper or pay the rest of the money later.

The chemist refused, saying that he had discovered the drug and was going to make money from it. The husband was desperate to save his wife, so later that night he broke into the chemist's and stole the drug.

Students Reaction after Heinz Dilemma Experiment at different level

Level 1: According to students , Heinz should not have stolen the medicine because, Now he will be beaten by police.

Level 2: According to students , Heinz should not have stolen because now he will be called as a thief.

Level 3: Students said, Heinz did not commit any crime because he saved the life.

Level No.	Level	Stages
1	Pre Conventional Level	Stage 1 : The punishment and Obedience Orientation Stage 2 : The instrumental purpose orientation
2	Conventional Level	Stage 3 : Good boy Good girl Orientation Stage 4 : Social Order Maintaining Orientation
3	Post ConventionalLevel	Stage 5 : Social Construct Orientation

		Stage 6 : Universal Ethical Principle Orientation
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Pre Conventional Level (4 to 10 years)

- Morality of child is ego-centric in pre- conventional level.
- Morality of child is controlled/ Governed by outward authority.
- Child does not has ability of self thinking for his morality.
- Child cannot conclude any right and wrong himself.
- Child selects his morality on the basis of physical satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
- The morality of child is constructed by immediate response , immediate result, immediate effect not by indirect morality or result.
- The activity by which child receive physical satisfaction is considered to be moral and by which child receive physical dissatisfactions considered to be immoral.

Stages of Pre conventional level**Stage 1 : The punishment and Obedience Orientation**

In this stage , Child becomes obedient in order to avoid punishment. Child behaves under the authority of elders. In this stage child does not like to share his toys to anyone. he likes to play by himself.

Stage 2 : The instrumental purpose orientation

In Instrumental purpose stage, child assume himself responsible , only for that person who fulfil his

requirement. Child is very much possessive of his belongings . Child thought “You do this for me, I will do that for you”.

Conventional Level (10 to 13 years)

- Child imitate as it is traditional moral behaviours.
- Child cannot understand traditional moral values but imitate traditional moral behaviour as it is to achieve praise or to avoid excuse.
- The behaviour by which child is given praise is considered by child as a moral and behaviour by which child is given accuse is considered by the child as a immoral.
- Child is very much conscious about his group identities and social recognition.
- Tendency of socialisation is at the centre of moral development in conventional level.
- Child likes to share his toys.
- Child likes to be member of any group.

Stages of conventional level

Stage 3 : Good boy Good girl Orientation

In this stage , Child likes to be regarded as a good boy. He does not like to be addresses as aBad boy.Child likes to be called as a Good boy that’s why he seeks acceptance , praise and approval by social members .

Stage 4 : Social Order Maintaining Orientation

In Social Order Maintaining stage, child looks social orders, social structure as a permanent , unchangeable, universally valid, construct and child cannot accept any change in social rule and regulations, behaviours .Child

imitate social behaviour as it is , always tries to maintain them, ask other person to be followers of social orders .

Post Conventional Level (Age 13 or Later Childhood)

- Child can develop self constructed , self designed morality.
- Now , child can understand abstract aspect of morality.
- Child can perform abstractions of morality.
- Child can perform innerlization of morality.
- Child can understand universal aspect .
- Child can interpretate relative permanance of moral standard.
- Child has a tendency of revolt against traditional moral values.

Stages of Post ConventionalLevel

Stage 5 : Social Construct Orientation

In this stage , Child assumes social rule and regulation as a changeable . Now Child can understand that social orders of a contract they can change for the betterment of human life .

Stage 6 : Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

Child can understand universal significance of morality.

Criticism of Kohlberg moral development

1. Kohlberg made only extension of Piaget's moral development theory he given nothing new.
2. Kohlberg does not describe the male and female child characterisitics.
3. He made theory on child as a individual not on a group.

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