Morality : A step towards Identity formation during adolescence

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Abstract

This paper aims to review the literature on morality; study and find out the important factors influencing the morality in early adolescence; Early adolescence is a stage which is described as the period of life, typically occurring between the ages 10- 15 years, in which youth undergoes a rapid physical, cognitive, and social transformation. Early adolescence has been viewed as a period tremendous upheaval, or "storm and stress" for children. Moral development has been conceived of as the increase in such internalization of basic cultural rules. Morals has been considered as the set of virtues , ideals and values, sanctioned by society which becomes an integral part of individual self through the process of development . Morality is concerned with adhering to "manners" and "approved conduct" by an individual. Adolescents at this particular age have a need for the guidance of good values to build up their character and to groom up their personality;   parents play a dominating role in shaping the morality of adolescents of this particular age group; The perspective of good and bad, right and wrong , are primarily imbibed through the adolescent's parents. Peers also play an important role in grooming up their wellbeing. This paper aims to study and find out the important factors influencing the morality in early adolescence and how the present moral beliefs and values influence their moral behavior.

Keywords: Morality, role of parents; family; media ; peers, approaches to morality

1.Introduction

Early adolescence is a stage which is described as the period of life, typically occurring between the ages 10- 15 years, in which youth undergoes a rapid physical, cognitive, and social transformation. Early adolescence has been viewed as a period tremendous upheaval, or "storm and stress" for children. At no other time during the course of development are people more susceptible to the influence of peers than during early adolescence.

For generations, morality was the central category for defining social relationships and development, and the social sciences were termed "the moral sciences". Morality has been defined as a set of universal principles constituting a value system to which most individuals subscribe. It has been defined as conscience, as a set of

cultural rules of social actions which have internalized by the individual.

It has been conceived that morality as the increase in such internalization of basic cultural rules. Morals are considered as the set of virtues , ideals and values, sanctioned by society which becomes an integral part of individual self through the process of development . Morality is concerned with adhering to "manners" and "approved conduct" by an individual. These are conceived as perspectives of pertaining to "right" and " wrong", "good in conduct" by the adolescents, it is also categorized with distinction between "good and evil" between "proper and improper actions".

2. Objectives:

1. To find out the factors influencing the morality of adolescents.

2. To understand how the beliefs and values influence the behavior of adolescents.

2.1. Objective 1. To find out the factors influencing the morality of adolescents.

a) Concept of Morality:

Development of morality has been concerned with rules and conventions about what people should do when they have deal with other people. First part of morality has to do with how one thinks or reasons about moral issues, the another aspect moral development concerns how one actually or behave and the third aspect has to do with how one feels after the moral decision has been taken.

b) Factors:

- Morality of an adolescent is always promoted by the factors which influences them in their environment. Studies of family socialization have demonstrated that parents have a tremendous impact on their children's development. Parents play a fundamental role in the children's transition from childhood to adulthood; in the development of their basic social, religious, and political values, and in encouraging them to adopt prosocial actions and empathetic responses to those in distress (Mc Devitt, Lennon, and Kopriva, 1991).

- A number of family factors correlate significantly with moral learning: The degree of parental warmth, acceptance, mutual esteem, and trust shown the child; the frequency and intensity of parent teen interaction and communication; the type and degree of discipline used; the role models parents offer the child; the independence opportunities the parents provide.

- Another aspect which influences the adolescent is parental acceptance and trust. One of the most important aid to moral learning is a warm accepting relationship of mutual trust and esteem between parents and adolescent (Hoge , Petrill, and Smith, 1982).

Recent study interest involving parental monitoring focuses on adolescent's voluntary disclosure (Cumsille et.el , 2010). Adolescents are more willing to disclose

information to parents when parents ask adolescents questions and when adolescents' relationship with parents is characterized by a higher level of trust, acceptance, and quality (Daddis & Randolph, 2010; Keijsers & others, 2010). Researches have found that adolescents' disclose to parents about their whereabouts, activities and friends is linked to positive adolescent adjustment (Laird & Marrero, 2010; Laird, Marrero, & Sentse, 2010; Smetana, 2008).

All adolescents want their parents to like them approve of them and accept them in spite of faults. Adolescents do not want to feel that they have to be perfect before they receive their parent's approval. No adolescent can thrive in atmosphere of constant criticism and disapproval (Vangelisti, 1992).

Ideally, adolescents need both family acceptance and family control (Kurdek & Fine, 1994). Researches study found that family bonding, family flexibility, and parental support were positively related to adolescent family life satisfaction, whereas parental punitiveness was negatively related to

adolescent family life satisfaction (Henry, 1994).

Parental concern and support acts as another influencing agent of morality in adolescence. Adolescents want their parents to be interested in what they are doing and give moral and emotional support when necessary (Northman, 1985; Windle & Mille – Tuzauer, 1992; Young, Miller, Norton, & Hill, 1995). Adolescents especially resent parents who are so

involved with their own activities that they do not have time for their children are not around when they are needed (Jensen & Borges, 1986) Guidance through parents is also a necessary agent for enhancement of moral development.

Researches generally indicates that parental explanations and reasoning (induction) are strongly associated with adolescents' internalizing ethical and moral principles. To talk with adolescents is the most frequent disciplinary measure used and the one considered best for the age grow

(Smith, 1983).

2.2. Objective 2: To understand how the beliefs and values influence the behavior of adolescents.

2.2.1.Effect of parenting on Child

The authoritative but democratic home, where parents encourage individual responsibility, decision making, initiative and autonomy but still exercise authority and give guidance, has a positive effect upon adolescents (Lamborn et. al., 1991). Through a research it shows that adolescents whose parents are accepting, firm, and democratic earn higher grades in school, are more self-reliant, report less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Steinberg et al., 1991).

Inconsistent or sporadic parental control also has a negative effect on adolescents (Parish & McCluskey, 1992). Adolescents become insecure and confused when they lack boundaries and clear guidelines. (Ferrari & Olivette, 1993).

Child rearing practices by parents also play a determining role for adolescents who gain

most in moral development have parents who encourage moral discussions and who create a supportive atmosphere by listening sensitively, asking clarifying question, presenting higher level reasoning, and using praise and humor. In contrast to parents who lecture, use threats, or make sarcastic remarks have youngsters who change little or not at all (Walker & Taylor, 1991a). In sum, the kind of parents who facilitates moral

Reasoning uses an authoritative approach that is verbal, rational and that promotes a cooperative style of family life.

Freedom and control given by the parents is a major aspect of parenting. Parents play an important role in allowing the adolescents to choose a correct path or wrong path. Parents play an important role in adolescent moral development (Laursen & Collins et.al, 2009). Although adolescents are moving towards independence, they still need to stay connected with families (Hair & others, 2008). The national longitudinal study on Adolescent health of more than 12,000 adolescents found that those who do not eat dinner with a parent five or more days a week had dramatically higher rates of smoking, drinking, getting into fights, and initiation of sexual activity (Councilof Economic Advisors, 2000).

There is a correlation of parents and adolescent conflict, the type of discipline that parents use has an effect on conflict (Johnson, Shulmar & Collings, 1991). Authoritarian discipline results in more conflict with parents than does a democratic approach to guidance.

1.2.2. Relationship with Parents

Relationship with parents during adolescence, and the degree of conflict and openness of communication are grounded largely in the emotional closeness developed in childhood: and adolescent relationship with parents, this in turn, sets the stage for the quality of the relationship with a partner in adulthood (Overbeek. Stattin. Vermulst, Ha. & Engels, 2007).

Autonomy and attachment with the parents relates to the development of morality among adolescents. Adolescents' ability to attain autonomy and gain control over their behavior is acquired through appropriate adult reactions to their desire for control (Laursen & Collins, 2009; McElhaney & others, 2009).

As the adolescent pushes for autonomy, the wise adult relinquishes control in those where the adolescent can make reasonable decisions, but continues to guide the adolescent to make a reasonable decisions in areas where adolescent's knowledge is more limited. Adolescents gains the ability to make mature decisions on their own.

1.2.3. Family Influence

Family influences were favorable for the American samples. The socioeconomic status of the family influences the concern of conflict. Parents of low socio- economic status are more often concerned with respect, politeness, and obedience, whereas middle income families are more concerned with developing initiative and independence. Parents of low socio-economic status worry about keeping children out of trouble at school, whereas middle – class parents are more concerned about achievement and

grades (McKenry, Kotch, & Browne, 1991).

The level of parent-adolescent conflict is, in large part, determined by family atmosphere. An atmosphere of warmth and supportiveness, which promotes successful negotiation of disagreements between parents and adolescents, helps to keep conflict at low moderate levels. Under hostile, coercive conditions, however parents and adolescents will be unlikely to resolve disagreements and conflict will therefore escalate to dysfunctional levels (Rueter & Conger, 1995).

1.2.4. Peers

Peer interaction and morality has a strong relation with their moral development. Researches confirms Piaget's belief that interaction among peers who confront one another with differing viewpoints, promotes moral understanding. Teenagers in this age may directly confronts and criticizes the other's statements and emotionally intense expressions of disagreement occur, this kind of peer discussions may lead to much greater stage change than those in which adolescents state their opinion in an disorganized, uninvolved way (Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983; Haan, Aerts, & Cooper, 1985). Confirmation from the peer is also an aspect of moral development of an adolescent. One of the primary ways in which in which adolescents find peer acceptance is by developing and exhibiting personal qualities that others admire and by learning social skills that ensures acceptance (Miller, Bundy & Wise, 1991). They are accepted because they exhibit good reputations and good moral character that

people admire. (Gillmore, Hawkins, Day, & Catalano, 1992).

Evidence shows that personal qualities and social skills such as conversational ability, ability to empathize with others, and poise are the most important factors in social acceptance (Meyers & Nelson, 1986). A study of 204 adolescents revealed that personal factors such as social conduct, personality, and character traits were more important in social acceptance. This was true at all grades (Tedesco & Gaier, 1988). It is especially important to peer group acceptance that adolescents have to manifests characteristics similar to those of other members of the group.

Peer pressure is another aspect of peer relationship, adolescents confirm more to peer standards .around the eighth and ninth grades, conformity to peers- especially their anti-social standards –peaks (Brown & Larson, 2009).

At this pint of time adolescents are more likely to go along with peers hubcaps off a car, draw graffiti on a wall, or steal something, from a counter. A study found that U.S adolescents are more likely than these adolescents to put peer pressure on their peers to resist parental influence (Rothbaum & others, 2000).

1.2.5. Role of Media

The Role of media in life of peers also plays an important role media influences the adolescents which drag them to explore new advancements in the society. It drags them towards peer pressure and affects their behavior towards the family.

Moral and legal contingencies Malott, (2001) said that immoral behavior and illegal behavior do not really differ fundamentally, but both usually harm society. He also suggest that "society needs to arrange for individuals to observe their own behavior apply punishment and avoidant contingencies". If society cannot observe the behavior or its outcome directly, it has no choice but to use moral control because moral development leads to indirect and long delayed contingencies.

He also stated that moral control is hard to maintain and often fails because of the weakness of the contingencies. The reason that legal control is more effective is because society fears the legal outcomes.

1.2.6. *Social learning theorists Bandura and Walters (1963)* have demonstrated that morality is learned through modelling and imitation, that is the child has model in a parent or other significant adult and initially learns through external controls of reward and punishments which kinds of behavior to perpetuate or Eliminate. Presumably those behavior patterns which are reinforced and maintained are later internalized and become a basis for self-control. It implies that moral behavior is like any other behavior that is learned and retained through reinforcement contingencies. Social learning theory conveys that the style of parental discipline plays a central role in child's ability to internalize controls at an early age. Parents who explain and give verbal reasons for approval and disapproval of behavior

facilitate the child's understanding of what is expected and help the child to anticipate the consequences of his actions. Becker (1964) thinks that excessive parental control, hostility and physical punishments result in increased anti-social behavior and aggression on the part of the child.

This conveys that aggressive behavior from the parent does not lead to moral learning, but makes the child more aggressive. Apparently, it is also conveyed that children from warm, loving, non-punitive homes where constraints are verbalized more likely to refrain from delinquent behavior.

It has been demonstrated that during adolescence, peer group interactions are important because adolescents look to peers for support and validation.

It has been believed that social learning theory is a way to explain moral behavior rather than judgments. These three major approaches in modern psychological thoughts that purport to explain moral development are cognitive –developmental approach, psychoanalytical approach and the social learning theory.

Erikson (1970) also stated his view of moral development. He stated eight stages of an individual personalities. The stage which is concerned with adolescence is stage five which states that during adolescence the task is to archive ego identity and avoid role confusion.

He explained ego as knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of the society. He further purposed that there are number of things which can make this easier. First, there should be a mainstream adult culture

that is worthy of the adolescent's respect , one with good adult role model and open lines of communication. Erikson suggest psychosocial moratorium for adolescence in the society as there is too much "ego identity" where a person is so involved in a particular role in society that they are not left with tolerance. Erikson calls this a maladaptive tendency fanaticism. It means people will gather others around them and promote their beliefs and lifestyles without regard to others' right to disagree. If summarized, if this stage is negotiated successfully, we will have the virtue.

Erikson called it as fidelity, this means loyalty, the ability to live by societies standards despite their imperfections and incompleteness and inconsistencies, it means accepting the imperfections.

3. Approaches to Morality

3.1. Cognitive developmental approach

Piaget (1932) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) has proposed that moral development proceeds in predictable stages in the individual, and that is a part of general cognitive growth and development. They conveyed that the child's cognitive structure establishes the broad limits of moral posture, and these limits change and become more elaborated as the cognitive structure becomes more complex. Within the framework of general cognition, the specifics of moral development may be attenuated by environmental factors, but it is the individual's basic intellectual development that sets the pace for the value system. This approach conveys that intellectual development itself results from

the constant interaction of the individual and the environment.

In the view of Piaget Human beings are not passive learners; they actively construct their reality and build their mental structures is a kind of spiraling effect, one structure emerging out of the previous one. Thus it implies that not only simple maturation or environmental experience that affects the cognitive growth of the child, but the interplay of the two, with the individual simultaneously assimilating and accommodating to the environment.

3.2 . Behavior analytic approach

From a learning perspective, pro social behavior and moral actions and judgments are viewed as under the influence of beneficial or detrimental consequences experienced or predicted by the individual (Pelaez- Nogueras & Gewirtz, 1995). In a view, judgments and actions termed moral are taken to involve an increasingly sophisticated sense of how to further one's long term interest based on the predicted consequences of one's action. The moral development of a child is based on an extensive repertoire of acquired of acquired moral rules. Thus ,from behavior-analytic approach morality is conceived to be a system of rule-governed behavior, with the developmental question being how rules come to acquire discriminative control over the individuals moral behavior pattern.

3.3. Psychoanalytic approach

According to this approach the superego is Freud's construct for a "conscience" or a watchdog that helps the individual maintain personal morality.

This approach believes that with the development of the superego the child internalizes the parents' external control and acquires self- control. Thus the superego becomes the agent of society, "the moral arbiter of conduct", to inhibit the potentially immoral impulses of the id (Hall and Lindzey, 1957,

p.35), In this view, the moral controls that are internalized from the child's parents remain the same throughout the child's lifetime (Moccoby, 1968).

There is no provision in this theory development or change of moral values over time.

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