

Kohlberg's moral development

Psychology



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KOHLBERGS MORAL DEVELOPMENT By + Introduction Moral development is not only concern with what is right and wrong morally. It involves a rational reasoning of individuals in a particular society. The society itself decides what is morally wrong and right, and every individual should follow it without questioning. According to the theory of moral development, individual reasoning is explained in six stages of reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981).

Precondition level deals with rewards and punishment. Conditional levels focus on a personal relationship with others in society. Post conventional levels deals with individuals rights.

The first stage of moral development focuses on reward and punishment. Children and some older individuals take rules and follow them to the letter. Children follow rules and regulation as stipulated by the society, to avoid punishment that will be imposed to them by parents and the local authority. At this stage, those who obey rules are praised while the lawbreakers are punished.

The second stage of moral development is the individualism and exchange, which holds the view that individuals only follow moral beliefs that are in line with their personal interests. In this case, the personal interests come first then morality. One can only act according to set standards if he is benefitting from the actions. There is a direct exchange between personal attainments and the following of rules and set standards (Kohlberg, 1981).

The third stage of moral development is interpersonal relationship. This stage focuses on conforming to the society expectation and playing its role. Every individual is supposed to be nice and act in a fair way to others in the society. This stage call for sacrifice of one's interest for the sake of others for peaceful coexistence among the society members.

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The fourth stage of moral development focuses on society as a whole. Individuals follow all the rules imposed on them. All the members of society follow rules not because they fear punishment but to maintain peace and avoid conflict with the authority. People do their duty in accordance with the stipulated rules imposed by those in authority.

The fifth stage of moral development is social agreement and rights to individuals. Members of a society consider what others believe rather than the law itself. Different people's opinions matter in decision-making and policy formulation of a society. The law aims at maintaining peace, harmony and regulating individual's behaviour.

The universal principle is the last stage, which is based on justice. The final stage focuses on the universal justice to individuals in society. Justice to all is paramount even if it is contrary to the stipulated society law. Justice is universal and promotes good coexistence and harmony in a society as a whole. Acting in a just way is above the law in society.

The Kohlberg theory has made us understand that law in society brings harmony. There are different individuals in society; there are those who value their interest first and others who put the society interest first. In judging a case, justice prevails even if it is against the law.

The theory of moral development is founded on moral reasoning, which plays an important role in the development of one's behaviour. Reasoning is far from individual's action since what one thinks and does is far from each other. Human beings may know what is right and wrong but choose actions for their or her interest.

Moral development theory is majorly relying on universal justice that is above the law. According to the theory, justice is all when making moral

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decisions that are not a universal truth. In moral reasoning, interpersonal feelings such as caring sympathy and love are an important role in reasoning.

The theory focuses on western philosophy, which focuses on individualism rather than collectivism. Kohlberg's theory focuses on individualist culture where one's interest is fulfilled rather than the society interest. Collectivist outlooks have more moral reasoning that serve the interest of all in the society, unlike individualist moral reasoning.

Carol Gilligan is an American feminist activist and a psychologist. Carol challenges the moral development theory. She came up with her theory that include female, women have different moral development as compared to men (Gilligan, 1993). The theory of moral development focuses only on men and not women. Gilligan made reforms in psychology debate; all psychologist included women in their reasoning to draw conclusion about human conduct.

Reference.

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