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COGNITIVE SCHEMES FOR ASSESSMENT THE SOCIAL
SIGNIFICANCE OF MORAL TRANSGRESSION

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Abstract

The investigation was aimed on interaction between cognitive scheme defined by level of development of moral consciousness and evaluation of social significance of behaviour. The data consist of 314 adolescents aged from 13 to 17. 2 questionnaires were used: the MORS questionnaire (moral situation from real life) defining the readiness to take responsibility in situation of moral dilemma and the «Care-Justice» questionnaire to define the level of moral judgments development. Cluster analysis defined 4 groups differing by character of evaluation of social significance of actions in dilemma and acceptance of responsibility for norm violation: responsibility with egoistic attitude, high responsibility, low responsibility, polar position. It was revealed that in most cases the negative evaluation of hero's action in moral dilemma doesn't accompany by acceptance of his social responsibility. We arouse inconsistency between evaluations of action as "good" or "bad" and social significance of behavior. The results showed that cognitive scheme of assessing of social significance of behaviour of the person who violated moral norm is defined by level of moral reasoning and peculiarities of communication. High post-conventional level of development of moral consciousness provides high coherence of behavior assessing in situation of moral norm violation and acceptance of responsibility for that violation independently from interpersonal relations. Low pre-conventional level (stage of instrumental exchange) shows low coherence with significant influence of interpersonal distance on behavior esteem.

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Keywords: Cognitive scheme; moral reasoning; adolescence; moral transgression; responsibility.

1. Introduction

Cognitive approach developed by Piaget and Kohlberg focused on special role of intellect in child moral development and proposed stages of development of moral consciousness correlated with development of intellectual stages. Rest (1986, 1994) declared that moral development processes can't be described as strict sequence of stages and proposed to focus on moral sensitivity and moral identity that defines cognitive ways of moral decision in moral dilemma. Bandura (1996) defined types of moral freedom that help to prove moral disengagement and give positive social esteem of behavior where moral norms are violated. But whole vision of factors that influence on esteem of social significance of behavior is not depicted.

2. Problem Statement

We propose that level of moral reasoning and communication peculiarities will define cognitive schema of esteem of social significance of action reflecting adolescent's attitudes about moral regulation of relations in society. Higher level of moral reasoning relevant to stages of moral development according to periodization of L.Kohlberg will correlate with high coherence of behavior esteem and responsibility approval for moral norms violation. Communication peculiarities, including interpersonal distance in interaction (adult-peer, close adult-social adult) will define esteem of social significance of moral transgression behavior. We suppose that the subject's evaluation of level of responsibility of person who violate moral norm in situation of moral dilemma can be used as the model to investigate evaluation of moral significance of action. The assessing of social significance of action in case of moral transgression behaviour includes the evaluation of subject's rightness and acceptance of responsibility (Molchanov, 2017)

3. Research Questions

- 3.1.** What is the relationship between the level of development of moral reasoning and the assessment of the social value of behaviour that violates moral norms?
- 3.2.** How does the distance of interpersonal interaction affect the assessment of the social value of violation of moral norms?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate correlation between cognitive schemes defined by level of moral consciousness and esteem of moral significance of action that defines adolescent's attitude to the moral regulation of human relations in society

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects

The data consists of 314 adolescence, aged from 13 till 17 years, pupils in Moscow schools, Russia.

5.2. Procedure

2 questionnaires were used. The MORS questionnaire (moral situation from real life) defines the readiness to take responsibility in situation of moral dilemma. Subjects filled 8 situations where different moral norms were violated, 2 questions were asked: how you estimate the hero's behaviour that violates the norm; what is the level of responsibility of the hero. Additional factor of esteem of social significance of the moral norm violation were relations between dilemma hero and communicational partner in situation. The «Care-Justice» questionnaire is focused to define the level of moral judgments development according to two approaches and relevant periodization of moral development – L.Kohlberg (1984) and C. Gilligan (1977). 38 statements counted from 1 to 5 were proposed.

6. Findings

Cluster analysis defined 4 groups differs by character of evaluation of social significance of actions in dilemma and responsibility confession for norm violation. Data distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Cluster distribution

Clusters (number and name)	Number of subjects	Number of subjects as a percentage of the sample
1. Differentiated egoistic attitude	52	16,6
2. High responsibility	124	39,5
3 .Low responsibility	64	20,4
4 .Polar position	74	23,5
General number of subjects	314	100

First cluster included 52 subjects (16.6% of the data) that have differentiated responsibility with egoistic attitude. Adolescents from that group tend to decline hero's responsibility even in situation of moral violation. Responsibility is approved in situation with vivid moral violation in communication with peer. The unstable balance between personal interests and personal benefits on one hand and good relations with peers on the other leads to confess the hero's responsibility. But if the moral norm violation happens in communication with unfamiliar peer and gives the benefit for the hero subjects tend to decline the responsibility. Vivid moral norm violation with personal benefit as the result is not regarded as the base to confess hero's responsibility in that group.

Second biggest cluster (39, 5% of the data) is characterised by high readiness of adolescents to confess the hero's responsibility in most moral dilemmas excluding situation where conflict of justice norm (everyone will get proper esteem) and help norm (solve task for the friend) resolves to support peer. That group was named as "high responsible".

Third cluster (20, 4% of the data) is characterised by low readiness of adolescents to confess responsibility excluding situations of vivid norms violence in communication with close and far peers. That group was named as "low responsible".

Fourth cluster (23, 6% of the data) shows polar understanding of responsibility. Type of moral dilemma influences on responsibility confession as it was for subjects from the first clyster. But if adolescence from the first cluster focuses on egoistic interests, the teenagers from the fourth cluster pay

attention to the damage of peers. Polar evaluation of responsibility is in strict differentiation depending on communicational context – confess of responsibility in interaction with peers where there is vivid damage and low confess of responsibility in interaction with adults.

Our results revealed that in most cases the negative evaluation of hero's action in moral dilemma doesn't accompany by confess of his social responsibility. We arouse inconsistency between evaluation of action as “good” or “bad” and social significance of behavior. In Table 2 we can see the comparison of behavior evaluation and responsibility confession.

Table 02. Cluster differences in behaviour evaluation and responsibility confession

Cluster group	Negative evaluation of behaviour (%)	Responsibility confession
1. Differentiated egoistic attitude	52,6	31,6
2. High responsibility	70,2	65,1
3 .Low responsibility	55	31,9
4 .Polar position	60,7	46,7

According to the Table 2 the most negative assessing of hero's behaviour (negative evaluation) is typical for adolescents from group with high responsibility (70,2%) and groups with differentiated egoistic position and low responsibility were less strict (52,6% and 55% for these two groups). We can see that the highest coherence of negative behaviour esteem and responsibility confession is typical for group with high responsibility (0,92 of coherence). The maximum inconsistent is typical for groups with egoistic focus and low responsibility (0,60 and 0,58).

According to approach by J.Piaget and L.Kohlberg we proposed that there is a correlation between level of development of moral consciousness (moral judgments) and readiness to confess responsibility in moral dilemma that shows typical and familiar situations in adolescent's life (Molchanov & Markina, 2014). Comparative analysis of level of development of moral judgments by questionnaire “Care-Justice” showed significant statistically differences. Group with differentiated egoistic position prefer pre-conventional stage of instrument exchange. It has a good correlation with the low level of responsibility confession even in situation of moral norm violation. Stage of interpersonal conformity and mutual responsibility has good correlation with group of low responsibility confession. Post-conventional levels correlate with group of high responsibility.

Level of development of moral consciousness/moral reasoning is the important factor that defines evaluation of social significance of behaviour of the subject that violate moral norm. High post-conventional level of development of moral consciousness defines esteem of social significance of moral norm violation and confesses responsibility for it. Low pre-conventional level (stage of instrumental exchange) leads to mismatch between hero's action esteem and responsibility confession. At the same time, important factor that defines cognitive type of information analysis and moral dilemma decision is interpersonal distance in interaction between person who violate moral norm and his victim. We found out that close interpersonal distance positively correlates with responsibility: in interaction with friend, peer, brother and parents adolescents are ready to confess responsibility more often than with unfamiliar peer or

adult. With the specify of variety of moral reasoning we can suppose that interaction distance can arouse different cognitive scheme of social behavior esteem in situation of moral violation.

7. Conclusion

Cognitive scheme of esteem of social significance of behaviour of person that made moral transgression are defined by level of moral reasoning development of adolescents and communicational context, including distance of interpersonal interaction.

High post-conventional level of development of moral consciousness provides high coherence of behavior esteem in situation of moral norm violation and confession of responsibility for that violation independently from interpersonal relations. Low pre-conventional level (stage of instrumental exchange) – low coherence of behavior esteem and responsibility confession with significant influence of interpersonal distance on behavior evaluation

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