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INITIAL MORAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS POST-HOLOCAUST- ERA MORAL DILEMMAS

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Abstract

This paper describes the process of the development of initial moral attitudes among Israeli high-school students when faced with post-Holocaust moral dilemmas in their Holocaust learning program at school. 102 Israeli male and female high school students aged from 16-17 participated voluntarily in the research. They are members of the third generation after the Holocaust which means that they had relatives who were Holocaust victims and/or survivors. The research was conducted in January 2015, when the students were in the middle of Grade 11 soon after they began the Holocaust Learning Program. The research tool was a Moral Attitudes Questionnaire describing seven dilemmas faced by the Jews after the Holocaust. Students were asked to respond by choosing possible solutions to the dilemmas. Post-Holocaust era dilemmas are expressions of the continuous Jewish struggle to cope with the memory, the consequences and the effects of the Holocaust. In these dilemmas, moral tension between moral solutions varies according to the nature of the dilemma. The results revealed that the "acceptance" moral solutions to the dilemmas were awarded more agreement than the "judgmental" solutions. It is concluded that participants usually agreed with what is now the more accepted view in Israeli discourse concerning Jewish behavior after the Holocaust: it cannot be judged retrospectively.

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1. Introduction

The Holocaust was the murder of six million Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany during World War II 1939-1945 (Greif et al., 1983).

The Holocaust was not just an attack on millions of Jews as individuals rather it was also an attack on the very existence of the Jewish people...The knowledge that the danger of complete extermination hovered over them then definitely influenced every Jew everywhere during the Holocaust and still does today (Goldhagen, 1998, p. 17).

The Holocaust ended with the surrender of Nazi Germany on 9th May 1945, but it continues to influence and occupy the Jewish people and the State of Israel in various dimensions: educational, social, cultural and others for generation to come (Weitz, 1997). It has significantly influenced Israeli education programs, although its appearance and content in education has altered over the years (Machman, 1998).

Among the generations of Holocaust survivors, the children of the survivors, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, there is an inter-generational transmission of trauma and memory. This trauma has most central significance for each generation and it influences a variety of areas and levels (Fuchs, 2009, p. 12).

Although the Holocaust ended many years ago, in the mind of Holocaust survivors, the Holocaust continued to influence them and their families each and every day. Strong feelings burned in the survivors, especially shame and pangs of conscience due to various events that they underwent and actions that they performed, and also a desire for revenge (Gampel, 2005). An example was the story of a 16-year-old youth, a survivor of "Dachau" concentration camp in Germany.

He appealed to a Jewish rabbi, Meir Birenbaum, one of the officers of the British army who liberated the camp and told him about a "terrible crime" that he had committed: The German soldiers forced him to tighten a rope around his father's neck. He refused but his father ordered him to do it knowing that if he did not, the Germans would kill him too. So, he did this out of "respect for his father". Immediately afterwards the Germans hung his father in front of him. Although the youth knew that his life was saved because of his decision to honor his father's command, he was haunted by heavy guilt feelings (Farabstein, 2002, p. 533).

Moral dilemmas are a very important part of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust story but have somehow been neglected by public interest, study and education in Israel. Post-Holocaust era dilemmas - from the end of World War II in May 1945 until today, are expressions of the continuous Jewish struggle to cope with the memory, the consequences and the effects of the Holocaust. In these dilemmas, moral tension between moral solutions varies according to the nature of the dilemma (Efrat & Baban, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

No research has ever been conducted before on the attitudes of Israeli high school students towards Jewish moral dilemmas after the Holocaust.

3. Research Question

What will be the level of agreement or disagreement with different moral behaviours of the Jews after the Holocaust among Israeli high school students who participated in a Holocaust Learning Program?

4. Purpose of the Study

To identify the level of agreement or disagreement with the different moral behaviors of Jews after the Holocaust among Israeli high school students, who participated in a Holocaust Learning Program.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

103 Israeli high school students aged from 16-17.

5.2. Procedure

The research was conducted in January 2015, when the students were in the middle of Grade 11, soon after they began the Holocaust Learning Program.

5.3. Research tool

The research tool was a Moral Attitudes Questionnaire, which described seven dilemmas faced by the Jews after the Holocaust. Students were asked to respond by choosing possible solutions to the dilemmas.

5.4. Data analysis

Data analysis related to the students' responses for each of the moral dilemmas. Analysis was performed with the tool of descriptive statistics, presenting the distribution of the responses in percentages, the central tendency index – mean, and the standard deviant tendency index – SD. Each dilemma was analysed independently in order to examine the specific choice of solution, which indicated the participant's moral attitudes towards each dilemma. It should be noted that the students could chose to mark their agreement or disagreement with either or both of the two solutions given for each dilemma. Therefore, the total number of responses may exceed 102, which is the total number of participants.]

6. Findings

The seven post-Holocaust dilemmas presented here were sorted into three categories according to similar characteristics. Each category has its own specific characteristics and its own moral tension between the two contradicting moral solutions.

In all tables: Responses were graded on a scale from 1-5. Mean<3 = disagreement; Mean>3 = agreement; Mean>4 = strong agreement.

Category 1 – "Dilemmas relating to the perception of Jewish behavior towards the Nazis", included: 1. the 'Like Lambs to the Slaughter dilemma', 2. the 'Kapo dilemma', 3. the 'Kastner dilemma', 4. the 'Resistance dilemma'. The main common characteristic of this category is the attempt to understand and evaluate the way that Jews behaved towards the Nazis from different angles. Moral deliberation for this category wavers between "judgmental" versus "acceptance" attitudes.

Dilemma 1. "They went like lambs to the slaughter dilemma"

The essence of the dilemma is how to relate to what was seen by Israeli society in the first years after the Holocaust as the Jews' "passive" reaction to their extermination.

Solution A – The judgmental moral solution is: "We should blame them for their 'passive' reaction".

Solution B – The acceptance moral solution is: We should not blame them".

Table 1. Responses to "They went like lambs to the slaughter" dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	58.82%	23.53%	9.80%	7.84%		100	51	1.67	.95
	B		1.20%	9.64%	50.60%	38.55%	100	83	4.27	.68

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=4; for Solution B: N=0, for 'Other Solution': N=17

As shown in Table 1 the distribution of the responses reveals that Solution A - the judgmental solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 59% - disagreement, 10% - uncertainty and 8% - agreement. Solution B - the acceptance solution was awarded: 1% - disagreement, 10% - uncertainty and 90% - agreement. This means that participants agreed more with the acceptance solution.

Dilemma 2. The "Kapo" (foreman) dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is whether to take action for criminal prosecution against Jews who served under the Nazis in the concentration and death camps as those who directed special prisoners' working units ("Commandos") or prisoner's residences ("Blocks"). Those people were often blamed by survivors for wicked unnecessarily abusive acts against the prisoners.

Solution A – The judgmental moral solution is: "We should judge them".

Solution B – The acceptance moral solution is: "We should not judge them".

Table 2. Responses to “The Kapo” dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	8.43%	2.41%	21.69%	46.99%	20.48%	100	83	3.69	1.09
	B	20.00%	21.82%	34.55%	14.55%	9.09%	100	55	2.71	1.21

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=3; for Solution B: N=1, for 'Other Solution': N=14

As shown in Table 2 the distribution of the responses reveals that Solution A - the judgmental solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 11% - disagreement, 22% - uncertainty and 67% - agreement. Solution B - the acceptance solution was awarded 42% - disagreement, 35% - uncertainty and 24% - agreement. This means that participants agreed more with the judgmental solution.

Dilemma 3. The Kastner dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is whether to accuse Dr. Israel Kastner who was the head of the 'Jewish Rescue Committee' in Budapest that he betrayed his people. This was because in order to save Jews he made financial deals with Nazi officers.

Solution A – The acceptance moral solution is: “We cannot accuse him of betrayal because he made deals with the Nazis in order to save Jews”.

Solution B –The judgmental moral solution is: "We should accuse him of betrayal because he made deals with the Nazis, who murdered our people”.

Table 3. Response to "The Kastner Dilemma"

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A		1.14%	11.36%	47.73%	39.77%	100	88	4.26	.70
	B	33.33%	33.33%	11.90%	9.52%	11.90%	100	42	2.33	1.36

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=6; for Solution B: N=1, for 'Other Solution': N = 8

As shown in Table 3 the distribution of the responses reveals that Solution A - the acceptance solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 1% - disagreement, 11% - uncertainty and 88% - agreement. Solution B - the judgmental solution was awarded 67% - disagreement, 12% - uncertainty and 21% - agreement. This means that participants agreed more with the acceptance solution.

Dilemma 4. The Resistance dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is whether to emphasize Jewish armed resistance ("active resistance") against the Nazis on one hand or to emphasize unarmed resistance ("passive" resistance") on the other.

Solution A – The acceptance moral solution is: “Passive resistance should be emphasized” because this is how most Jews were saved.

Solution B - The judgmental moral solution is: “Active resistance should be emphasized to educate new generations to actively resist oppression.

Table 4. Responses to “The resistance” dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	1.89%	3.77%	33.96%	47.17%	13.21%	100	53	3.66	.83
	B	4.44%	15.56%	37.78%	33.33%	8.89%	100	45	3.27	.99

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=5; for Solution B: N=4, for 'Other Solution': N=28

As shown in Table 4 the distribution of answers reveals that Solution A- the acceptance solution was awarded 6% of disagreement, 34% of uncertainty and 60% of agreement. Solution B - the judgmental solution was awarded 20% of disagreement, 38% of uncertainty and 42% of agreement. The meaning is that participants agreed more with the acceptance solution. Moreover, the multiplicity of “Other solutions” given for this dilemma (28) which all failed to advocate a lack of emphasis for either of the attitudes, actually increased the agreement with the acceptance moral solution.

Summary for dilemmas category 1: "The Perception of Jewish behavior towards the Nazis". In three out of four dilemmas, the acceptance moral solutions were awarded more agreement than the judgmental solutions.

Category 2 – "Consideration of revenge and compromise", included: 5. the 'Revenge dilemma', 6. the 'Restitution Payments dilemma'. The main common characteristic of this category was Jewish thinking and decisions concerning how to treat former Nazis crimes in the post-Holocaust era. Moral deliberation for this category exists between "affective-intuitive” versus “rational-utilitarian” attitudes.

Dilemma 5. The Revenge dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is whether it is morally right to kill Nazis who were involved in the murder of Jews in Europe during the Holocaust.

Solution A - The affective- intuitive moral solution is: “We should exact revenge against those who murdered our people and families”.

Solution B - The rational-utilitarian moral solution is: “We should not exact revenge by killing people, because we are not murderers”.

Table 5. Responses to “The revenge” dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	6.06%	19.70%	24.24%	28.79%	21.21%	100	66	3.39	1.20

B 7.69% 4.62% 24.62% 43.08% 20.00% 100 65 **3.63** 1.10

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=5; for Solution B: N=3, for 'Other Solution': N = 8

As shown in Table 5 the distribution of the responses reveals that Solution A - the affective-intuitive solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 26% - disagreement, 24% - uncertainty and 50% - agreement. Solution B - the rational-utilitarian solution was awarded 12% - disagreement, 25% - uncertainty and 63% - agreement. This means that participants agreed more with the rational-utilitarian solution.

Dilemma 6. The Restitution payments dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is whether it is morally justified for Holocaust survivors as individuals, and Israel as a state, to receive payments from Germany as restitution for Nazi crimes during Holocaust.

Solution A - The rational-utilitarian moral solution is: "We should accept the restitution payments because we need them to rehabilitate our lives".

Solution B - The affective- intuitive moral solution is: "We should not accept the restitution payments because it constitutes a kind of forgiveness for those who murdered our people".

Table 6. Responses to "The restitution payments" dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	1.08%	2.15%	4.30%	51.61%	40.86%	100	93	4.29	.75
	B	19.05%	30.95%	21.43%	16.67%	11.90%	100	42	2.71	1.29

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=1; for Solution B: N=1, for 'Other Solution': N=18

As shown in Table 6 the distribution of the responses revealed that Solution A - the rational-utilitarian solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 3% - disagreement, 4% - uncertainty and 93% - agreement. Solution B - the affective-intuitive solution was awarded 50% - disagreement, 21% - uncertainty and 29% - agreement. This means that participants agreed more with the rational-utilitarian solution.

Summary for dilemmas category 2: "Consideration of revenge and compromise". It seems that for all dilemmas in this category, the rational-utilitarian moral solutions were awarded more agreement than the rational-utilitarian solutions.

Category 3 - "The perception of the Holocaust as a historical event", included only one dilemma - 'the Comparison of the Holocaust dilemma'. The essence of the dilemma is whether or not to compare the Jewish Holocaust with other genocides in history. Moral deliberation for this dilemma exists between

“universal” versus “Jewish-particular” moral solutions. A "universal" moral solution would be found when the Holocaust is perceived by the Jews as a universal event similar to other genocides with universal implications while “Jewish-particular” moral solution means that the Holocaust is understood as a "Jewish only" event which is not really similar or connected to the genocides of other nations or people history. Therefore, the conclusion is that it cannot be compared to any other events

Dilemma 7. The Comparison of the Holocaust dilemma

The essence of the dilemma is the deliberation between two options: 1. to learn about the Jewish Holocaust from a particular point of view which emphasizes the Jewish tragedy without mentioning other similar genocides during World War II or in other historical periods. 2. To learn about the Jewish Holocaust from a universal point of view; an approach which emphasizes the similarity and connection between genocides of other ethnic and national groups and the Jewish Holocaust.

Solution A - The universal moral solution is: “The Holocaust can and should be compared to other genocides”.

Solution B - The Jewish particular moral solution is: “The Holocaust cannot be compared to other genocides, because it was unique”.

Table 7. Responses to “The comparison of the Holocaust” dilemma

Time	Solution	Strong disagree 1	Disagree 2	Uncertain 3	Agree 4	Strong agree 5	%	N	Mean	SD
1	A	16.67%	4.55%	31.82%	37.88%	9.09%	100	66	3.18	1.20
	B	2.82%	7.04%	21.13%	32.39%	36.62%	100	71	3.93	1.06

'No opinion' for Solution A: N=4; for Solution B: N=2, for 'Other Solution': N = 22

As shown in Table 7 the distribution of the responses reveals that Solution A - the universal solution was awarded responses in the following proportions: 21% - disagreement, 32% - uncertainty and 47% - agreement. Solution B - the particular Jewish solution was awarded 10% - disagreement, 21% - uncertainty and 69% - agreement. *This means that participants agreed more with the particular Jewish solution.*

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Category 1: "The Perception of Jewish behavior towards the Nazis". This category includes the 'Like Lambs to the Slaughter dilemma', the 'Kapo' dilemma', the 'Kastner dilemma' and the 'Resistance dilemma'. In three out of the four dilemmas the "acceptance" moral solutions were awarded more agreement than the "judgmental" solutions. It was only for the 'Kapo' dilemma' that the participants agreed more with the judgmental solution. The results indicate that participants usually supported the solution that represented understanding and acceptance for the "passive" behavior of the Jews during the

Holocaust. Moreover, there was a lack of willingness to reproach them for not rising up in armed rebellion against the Nazis.

These results testify that the participants distanced themselves from attitudes that were strongly represented and to some extents are still held in Israeli society towards the “cowardly” behavior of the Jews during the Holocaust (Farber, 2007; Weitzberg, 1996). The acceptance moral attitude adopted by the participants resembles what is nowadays the prevalent view in Israeli society. This view sees the Holocaust as a national disaster in which the reality was so difficult, cruel and different to an exceptional and unique extent, that the behavior of the Jews cannot be judged (Moras, 1972; Neuberger, 1994). In general, the participants adopted the attitude that it is impossible to retroactively judge those who experienced this reality in person. This attitude demonstrates moral thinking that complies with the highest level on Kohlberg’s (1969) scale of moral development – “hierarchy of principles orientation”. At this stage of development, the individual weighs evaluative-moral considerations that are in substance both complex and universal. So, what may be the reason that in the 'Kapo dilemma' the picture is reversed? A possible explanation is the power that the term or the expression "Kapo" carries in Jewish-Israeli memory. “Kapo” was the "title" given to a Jewish foreman in the extermination camps, and it became a synonym for a cruel Jew, who collaborated with the Nazis, and intentionally hurt Jewish prisoners in the camps (Levine, 2015). Our explanation is supported by the findings of Guglielmo and Malle (2010). They indicated that when a person intentionally and skillfully injures or kills another person, then people are far less likely to view their action as morally justified, even when the circumstances are complex. In the reality of the Holocaust the students’ responses to the 'Kapo dilemma' corresponded exactly with this explanation. The conclusion is that the participant usually agreed with what is now the more accepted view in Israeli discourse concerning Jewish behavior during the Holocaust: it cannot be judged retrospectively.

Category 2: "Consideration of revenge and compromise". This category includes the 'Revenge dilemma' and the 'Restitution Payments dilemma'. In both dilemmas the rational-utilitarian moral solutions were awarded more agreement than the rational-utilitarian solutions. This picture was prominent in the 'Restitution payments dilemma' but was present also in the 'Revenge dilemma'. It seems that the difference between the results in category 5 derives from the acceptance of the perception that 'Restitution payments' are definitely useful and needed and for that reason, acceptance of these payments is justified. On the other hand, killing Nazis war criminals, who murdered Jews seems to be less justified or moral because of the illegal and violent nature of this kind of act. These assumptions are in line with other research findings indicating that social norms usually oppose harmful actions against other people and that emotional aversion to harming others may have evolved as part of humans’ decision-making (Haidt, 2007). Our results also correlate with recent studies that support the natural assumption that when an individual is exposed to the experience of harming other people, it triggers strong emotional reactions that are expressed both at cognitive and physiological levels, especially if the harmful action involves physical force such as killing and intention as in murder (Cushman et al., 2006; Greene, 2007). The first conclusion is that our participants actually followed social moral norms, which reject the possibility of taking the law in to one’s own hands and carrying out personal justice. The second conclusion is that even now 70 years after the end of the Holocaust the issue of revenge against Nazis war criminals still burns in

the soul of Israeli youth, although they are already the third or fourth generation after the Holocaust victims or survivors.

Category 3: "The perception of the Holocaust as a historical event". This category included only one dilemma - 'the Comparison of the Holocaust dilemma'. The results indicated that participants agreed more with the 'particular Jewish' solution. These results are not surprising because there is a very strong perception of the Holocaust as a "solely Jewish" historical event, which cannot be compared to other genocides in Israeli society and education (Oron, 2006). Still, many of the participants choose to support the universal attitude which grasps the Holocaust as a common human historical event with worldwide implications (Gurani, 2015).

The conclusion is that at the beginning of their Holocaust Learning Program, the participants had serious deliberations regarding the "traditional" accepted perception of the Holocaust as a historical event. Perhaps, in some way they felt intuitively that this perception was too narrow. Maybe they had formerly held moral attitudes or values that favored more liberal views that could be defined as a 'universal moral attitude'.

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