

21 - 8. Moral development

8. Moral development

© SPMM Course 8. Moral development Freudian theory: According to Freud, boys have unconscious wishes to compete with the father for mother's love. This leads to castration anxiety as fear of being punished for competing sets in. This anxiety drives the repression of such desire and leads to identification with one's father from whom the superego morality is incorporated; thus moral development is achieved via the development of the superego. In girls Oedipus complex is not seen; instead penis envy (Electra complex) is noted. Father is the love object here, and unconscious wish for having a baby from the father is present, but without a strong anxiety as seen in boys, the identification with mother and imbibing of superego occurs. Hence, Freud claimed that superego or morality is weaker in women than men. Piaget described qualitative differences in older vs. younger children in terms of morality that was based on the ability of older children to have social perspective (an extension of the Theory of Mind concept); he did not describe stage-by-stage development of morality. Cognitive development is essential but not sufficient for moral development. Moral development lags 2 years behind the cognitive development.

Piaget's Moral Development Theory
5 to 9 years Older than 10 years
Unilateral respect for the external law: seniors make rules; they are sacred and should not be broken, but get violated periodically for pleasure. External responsibility holds for crime; severity of outcome or loss decides the degree of punishment warranted. Moral realism: Strong penalty should be paid for any crime; can accept collective punishment to deliver justice (punishing the wrongdoer is more important than not hurting the innocent) Imminent justice: Wold is just – a misfortune will punish the deserved for a misdeed. Heteronomous morality: Subject to rules written by others. Mutual respect for the self-invented law: could be changed by consensus and for fairness.

Internal responsibility holds for crime; intent or motivation decides the degree of punishment warranted. Moral relativism: Punishment should match the crime; does not accept collective punishment.

No imminent justice.

Autonomous morality: Rules can be self-made.

© SPMM Course Kohlberg's theory of moral development: This is a stagewise process where reasons for making a judgment in a hypothetical experiment (Heinz Dilemma) are studied in children; reasons are more important than the actual judgment made. On this basis, Kohlberg identified 3 levels and 6 stages. □ Level 1 Pre-conventional morality (7-12 years to middle

childhood): In this stage, the children decide right or wrong according to the consequences. If an action leads to punishment it must be bad and if it leads to reward it must be good. i. Punishment and obedience orientation: Obedience to rules to avoid punishment ii. Reward orientation/ Instrumental relativism: What brings rewards is right. 'tit for tat' approach seen. □ Level 2 Conventional morality (approximately 13-16 years): Here the children believe that social rules and the expectation of the others determine what acceptable or unacceptable behaviour is. iii. Concordance orientation: What pleases others is right. What the majority thinks right is right. Also called Good boy/good girl orientation. Conforms to avoid disapproval and meet expectations of others. Being good is important and having good motives and showing concern iv. Social order or Authority orientation: Upholds laws and social rules to avoid the censure of the authorities and feelings of guilt about not doing one's duty. Maintaining social order is the goal. □ Level 3 Postconventional morality (approximately 16-20 years)- Here what is right is based on an individual's understanding of universal ethical principles. These are often abstract and ill-defined, but it might include the preservation of life at all costs and the importance of human dignity v. Social contract or legalistic orientation: Actions guided by principles commonly agreed by one's group on as essential to public welfare (relative values) and democracy is upheld while individual's life is given more respect than written codes of law. vi. Universal Ethical orientation: Actions guided by self-chosen ethical principles. Laws and social principles usually valid because they are based on these principles. Social rules can be broken if universal morality is not upheld. Level 3 cannot be considered a part of the normal or expected course of development and instead represents a philosophical ideal. Only 15% eventually achieve level 3. Formal operational thought is necessary but not sufficient to achieve level 3 morality. Kohlberg's stages are criticized to be

© SPMM Course androcentric (all male sample) and Eurocentric. Though they are well correlated with 'moral reasoning', they are not so well associated with actual behaviour. Eisenberg's stages: Both Kohlberg's and Piaget's theories were based on the prohibition of the wrong; Eisenberg's was based on prosocial reasoning where helping or altruistic behaviour was studied. Social learning theory argues that while actual reinforcement is not needed for 'learning' about morality, the performance of a moral deed can be reinforced (either directly or vicariously). Vicarious punishment is more effective than vicarious positive reinforcement in this regard.

Revision #1

Created 2026-01-04 20:02:25 UTC by Omar Ayman

Updated 2026-01-04 20:02:25 UTC by Omar Ayman