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Orginal Article

Explaining Moral Reasoning Based on Personality Traits: Studying the Mediating Role of Mindfulness and Individual Values

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Abstract

Moral reasoning is a key element in various approaches to moral philosophy. This study aimed to develop an explanatory model of moral reasoning based on personality traits and cultural values. In this model, personality traits and cultural values were treated as exogenous variables. Mindfulness served as a first-level mediating variable, while personal values acted as a second-level mediating variable. Moral reasoning was designated as the endogenous variable. The participants consisted of 400 students selected through a multi-stage cluster random sampling method from various faculties at Shiraz University. Data were collected using the Big Five Personality Traits Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1999), the Mindfulness Questionnaire (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Personal Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 1994), and the Standard Moral Reasoning Questionnaire (Rest, 1973). Data analysis was conducted using path analysis and factor analysis. The findings indicated that among the Big Five personality traits, conscientiousness and openness to experience had significant positive relationships with moral reasoning. Agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience were positively associated with mindfulness. Furthermore, the personal value of self-transcendence was positively related to moral reasoning. Both self-transcendence and self-enhancement values, along with mindfulness, mediated the relationships between the personality traits of neuroticism, openness to

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experience, and conscientiousness with moral reasoning. It can be suggested that individuals who score high in openness to experience tend to be more mindful. However, in relation to self-transcendence, a negative association may arise due to the presence of unrealistic idealism as a component of self-transcendence. The findings are discussed in the context of existing theories and research.

Keywords: Personal values, Moral reasoning, Mindfulness, Personality traits

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Moral reasoning is a fundamental aspect of various approaches in moral philosophy. The present study aims to develop an explanatory model of moral reasoning based on personality traits. This research follows a correlational design, investigating the relationship between personality traits (as the predictor variable) and moral reasoning (as the criterion variable). Additionally, it explores the roles of mindfulness and individual values as mediating variables, utilizing the path analysis method. Method the current research employed a field study method, using a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The research population consisted of students from various academic levels at Shiraz University during the 2022-2023 academic years. A total of 400 students were selected using random cluster sampling. The data collection instruments included the Big Five Personality Factors Questionnaire (Goldberg), the Mindfulness Questionnaire (Brown & Ryan), the Personal Values Questionnaire (Schwartz), and the Moral Reasoning Standard Questionnaire (REST), all of which were used after confirming their reliability and validity. For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to describe demographic variables, while mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores were employed for the main variables. In the inferential part, a correlation matrix was created, and structural equation modeling was applied to test the research hypotheses. The bootstrapping method was utilized to examine the significance of indirect paths. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS software version 24, along with the PROCESS plugin version 4.2.

Results

The findings indicated that among the five major personality factors, the traits of openness to experience ($p < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.15$) and conscientiousness ($p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.21$) have a positive and significant relationship with moral

reasoning. Additionally, the traits of agreeableness ($p < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.12$), emotional stability ($p < 0.04$, $\beta = 0.12$), and openness to experience ($p < 0.002$, $\beta = 0.16$) showed a positive and significant relationship with mindfulness. Furthermore, the individual values of self-transcendence and self-enhancement, along with mindfulness, played a mediating role between the personality traits of emotional stability ($p < 0.04$, $\beta = 0.01$) and agreeableness ($p < 0.02$, $\beta = 0.05$) with moral reasoning.

Discussion

Moral reasoning helps individuals find the best solutions to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Those who are conscientious about their thoughts and actions are likely to apply moral reasoning to their behavior, making decisions that align with their moral values and beliefs. Moreover, openness to experience has the strongest correlation with moral reasoning. Individuals with a high degree of openness may exhibit stronger moral reasoning and consider a wider range of perspectives when making moral judgments. They tend to demonstrate trust, kindness, altruism, and other positive social behaviors, prioritizing fairness in their moral deliberations. In addition, people who are emotionally stable possess greater mindfulness, allowing them to be more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the present moment. It has also been observed that individuals with a strong sense of self-enhancement may prioritize their interests over those of others, which can negatively impact their moral reasoning. Like other studies, this research faced limitations, such as a predominance of female participants and the fact that most students were undergraduates. These factors should be considered by future researchers.

Keywords: individual values, mindfulness, moral reasoning, personality traits.

Contribution of the authors: In the present study, the second author, as a supervisor, was responsible for the overall supervision and strategy of the research process and for compiling and finalizing the corrections of the article. In developing the research plan, the first author has been in charge of the process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting the findings and writing the text of the article, and in general, the conclusion of the findings and expansion and interpretation in a joint manner and with the discussion and exchange of opinions of all colleagues and with the accompaniment of the third and fourth authors to The title of dissertation advisor was done

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