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Values and ethics: Attributes influencing self-esteem and cognitive style of adolescents

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Abstract
Ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. Values on the other hand denotes the degree of importance of something or action, with the aim of determining what actions are best to do or what way is best to live, or to describe the significance of different actions. In psychology, the term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. In other words, how much you appreciate and like yourself. Self-esteem is often seen as a personality trait, which means that it tends to be stable and enduring. Cognitive styles refer to the preferred way individual processes information. Unlike individual differences in abilities which describe peak performance, styles describe a person's typical mode of thinking, remembering or problem solving. Furthermore, styles are usually considered to be bipolar dimensions whereas abilities are unipolar (ranging from zero to a maximum value). Having more of ability is usually considered beneficial while having a particular cognitive style simply denotes a tendency to behave in a certain manner. Cognitive style is a usually described as a personality dimension which influences attitudes, values, and social interaction. A number of cognitive styles have been identified and studied over the years. Field independence versus field dependence is probably the most well-known style. It refers to a tendency to approach the environment in an analytical, as opposed to global, fashion. At a perceptual level, field independent personalities are able to distinguish figures as discrete from their backgrounds compared to field dependent individuals who experience events in an undifferentiated way. In addition, field dependent individuals have a greater social orientation relative to field independent personalities. The present study is a reviewed study intending to find the relationship between the four attributes present in adolescents. The paper would emphasize on the relationship of ethics and values with adolescent's self-esteem and cognitive style.

Keywords: Ethics, values, self-esteem, cognitive style, field dependence, field independence

Introduction

The English word "ethics" is derived from the Greek word *ēthikós*, meaning "relating to one's character", which itself comes from the root word *êthos* meaning "character, moral nature". This word was transferred into Latin as *ethica* and then into French as *éthique*, from which it was transferred into English. Rushworth Kidder states that "standard definitions of *ethics* have typically included such phrases as 'the science of the ideal human character' or 'the science of moral duty'". Richard William Paul and Linda Elder define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures". The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy states that the word "ethics" is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual." Paul and Elder state that most people confuse ethics with behaving in accordance with social conventions, religious beliefs and the law and don't treat ethics as a stand-alone concept.

The word *ethics* in English refers to several things. It can refer to philosophical ethics or moral philosophy-a project that attempts to use reason to answer various kinds of ethical questions. As the English philosopher Bernard Williams writes, attempting to explain moral philosophy: "What makes an inquiry a philosophical one is reflective generality and a style of argument that claims to be rationally persuasive." Williams describes the content of this area of inquiry as addressing the very broad question, "how one should live". Ethics can also refer to a common human ability to think about ethical problems that is not particular to philosophy. As bioethicist Larry Churchill has written:

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"Ethics, understood as the capacity to think critically about moral values and direct our actions in terms of such values, is a generic human capacity." Ethics can also be used to describe a particular person's own idiosyncratic principles or habits.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. The field of ethics, along with aesthetics, concerns matters of value and thus comprises the branch of philosophy called axiology.

Ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual inquiry, moral philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory.

Three major areas of study within ethics recognized today are:
1. Meta – ethics, concerning the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions, and how their truth values (if any) can be determined
2. Normative ethics, concerning the practical means of determining a moral course of action
3. Applied ethics, concerning what a person is obligated (or permitted) to do in a specific situation or a particular domain of action.

Values on the other hand denotes the degree of importance of some thing or action, with the aim of determining what actions are best to do or what way is best to live (normative ethics), or to describe the significance of different actions. Value systems are proscriptive and prescriptive beliefs; they affect ethical behavior of a person or are the basis of their intentional activities. Often primary values are strong and secondary values are suitable for changes. What makes an action valuable may in turn depend on the ethical values of the objects it increases, decreases or alters. An object with "ethic value" may be termed an "ethic or philosophic good."

Values can be defined as broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of actions or outcomes. As such, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. "Equal rights for all", "Excellence deserves admiration", and "People should be treated with respect and dignity " are representatives of values. Values tend to influence attitudes and behavior and these types include ethical/moral values, doctrinal/ideological (religious, political) values, social values, and aesthetic values. It is debated whether some values that are not clearly physiologically determined, such as altruism, are intrinsic, and whether some, such as acquisitiveness, should be classified as vices or virtues.

Similarly, *ethical value* may be regarded as a subgroup of a broader field of philosophic value sometimes referred to as axiology. Ethical value denotes something's degree of importance, with the aim of determining what action or life is best to do, or at least attempt to describe the value of different actions. The study of ethical value is also included in value theory. In addition, values have been studied in various disciplines: anthropology, behavioral economics, business ethics, corporate governance, moral philosophy, political sciences, social psychology, sociology and theology.

Ethical value is sometimes used synonymously with goodness. However, goodness has many other meanings and may be regarded as more ambiguous.

Values clarification differs from cognitive moral education
▪ Value clarification consists of "helping people clarify what their lives are for and what is worth working for. It encourages students to define their own values and to understand others' values."
▪ Cognitive moral education builds on the belief that

students should learn to value things like democracy and justice as their moral reasoning develops.

Values relate to the norms of a culture, but they are more global and intellectual than norms. Norms provide rules for behavior in specific situations, while values identify what should be judged as good or evil. While norms are standards, patterns, rules and guides of expected behavior, values are abstract concepts of what is important and worthwhile.

"Over the last three decades, traditional-age college students have shown an increased interest in personal well-being and a decreased interest in the welfare of others." Values seemed to have changed, affecting the beliefs, and attitudes of the students.

Members take part in a culture even if each member's personal values do not entirely agree with some of the normative values sanctioned in that culture. This reflects an individual's ability to synthesize and extract aspects valuable to them from the multiple subcultures they belong to.

If a group member expresses a value that seriously conflicts with the group's norms, the group's authority may carry out various ways of encouraging conformity or stigmatizing the non-conforming behavior of that member.

Development and transmission of ethics and values
Values and ethics are generally received through cultural means, specially diffusion and transmission or socialization from parents to children. Parents in different cultures have different values and ethics. For example, parents in a hunter-gatherer society or surviving through subsistence agriculture value practical survival skills from a young age. Many such cultures begin teaching babies to use sharp tools, including knives, before their first birthdays. Italian parents value social and emotional abilities and having an even temperament. Spanish parents want their children to be sociable. Swedish parents value security and happiness. Dutch parents value independence, long attention spans, and predictable schedules. American parents are unusual for strongly valuing intellectual ability, especially in a narrow "book learning" sense. The people of Kenya value children who are not only smart, but who employ that intelligence in a responsible and helpful way. They value education and pride.

Developmental changes in ethics
A developmental perspective on ethics would explore the strengths and vulnerabilities of individuals at different stages of their lives, beginning with entry into school and continuing through retirement from professional activities. It would be especially interesting to place such a perspective explicitly in the context of psychological research on human development to examine how ethical challenges evolve in relation to our maturing selves. While a developmental perspective on ethics is related to theories of moral development, it is distinct. A theory of moral development examines different stages of moral reasoning, often viewed as forming a hierarchy from lower to higher levels of analysis. A developmental perspective on ethics, on the other hand, focuses on how different stages of life present or emphasize new or different ethical challenges. Such a perspective explores how these evolving challenges require new skills or different sensitivities to negotiate successfully.

Three developmental stages
Painting with broad brushstrokes, one can find distinguishably different phases of a life from the perspective of ethics. The

beginning of training in an individual's life is often marked by an energy and enthusiasm, an eagerness to use new skills and engage in new professional endeavors. This period may be characterized by an anxiety-driven ethics, a heightened concern of stepping out of bounds and a companion desire for certitude in knowing what specific behaviors are ethical and which are not. Ethical ambiguity tends to generate more anxiety at this stage of training, as is common across many disciplines. Often at this stage when things go wrong it is by virtue of an over-eagerness to do what is right and avoid what is wrong-which is entirely normative and can provide a healthy foundation for sensitivity to ethical concerns throughout a person's career. Failure to move out of this stage, on the other hand, may lay the foundation for a risk-avoidant posture that can restrict ability to engage others with whom individuals work in flexible and meaningful ways.

At mid-life, individuals may experience a feeling of hitting their stride, of coming to master the skills and techniques they have been honing for a decade or more. This period of one's life can bring enormous professional accomplishment and satisfaction. Nonetheless, this time may also offer special ethical challenges. The novelty of one's professional work has likely worn off and with it a beginner's enthusiasm has largely waned. What seemed new and fresh may now be experienced as routine. An individual may experience personal obligations, such as the demands of family, as wearing or even overwhelming. Such demands, financial and otherwise, can leave a feeling depleted and render the individual more vulnerable to ethical lapses.

Later still in life, challenges arise that are distinguishable from the beginning and middle stages of professional life. Three or more decades into a career, an individual has a wealth of wisdom and experience upon which to draw. Along with these years of experience, a special vulnerability may arise from a feeling that the rules governing the ethics of the profession apply to others and no longer to oneself, that one is now able to decide what is right and wrong in dealing with people without reference to codes of ethics and legal rules. This mindset can set the stage for serious ethical lapses.

A developmental perspective on ethics has significant implications for continuing education. From a development perspective, continuing education provides a unique opportunity for individuals to discuss and explore ethical challenges as they are experienced, rather than from a time far removed from when a psychologist actually encounters the challenges. This way of approaching ethics education offers the potential for a richness, vibrancy and relevance to our ethics programs.

Viewing our ethics from a developmental perspective is intended to complement rather than replace the broad range of substantive issues that ethics education addresses. As complementary to programs that address specific content areas, programs that offer a developmental perspective incorporate in an overt way the contexts of our personal and professional lives. By doing so, a developmental perspective more fully integrates our personal and professional selves, an integration that will ideally serve to enhance our competence and raise our standards of ethical practice.

Developmental changes and values
Adolescents increased in values was consistent and differentiated from the hierarchy of adults. There was an increase in power and a decrease in tradition values and an increase in self-direction values among Jewish adolescents but not among Arab participants. Overall, the perceived

importance of power, achievement, and self-direction values was more likely to increase than decrease, and the importance of conformity, tradition, security, and benevolence values was more likely to decrease than increase. Intraindividual changes in value importance followed the postulated pattern, as compatible values changed together, conflicting values changed in opposite directions.

Therefore it can be explained that values become better indicators of individual characteristics during adolescence. Adolescents increase their endorsement of self-focused values and decrease their valuation of other-focused values. They maintain the integrity of their value system despite value changes, confirming and validating value theory.

Gender difference in ethics
Previous research indicated that women often perform more ethically on the job than do men.

Investigations suggest that women are generally more ethical than men. Being a woman was related to increased ethical judgment, being a woman and older was associated with increased ethical intention, and being a woman and a supervisor was related to higher altruism.

It can be said that women should play a key role in the ethical role modeling. Organizations might also consider encouraging women to accept supervisory roles and become opinion leaders to foster organizational ethicality.

Women are more likely than men to have strongly internalized moral identities, leading to
Negotiations are a basic way in which resources, including economic opportunities, are divided. Women face discriminatory treatment in many common negotiation scenarios, such as greater backlash than men for negotiating their salaries. However, women have strengths that might help to equalize their outcomes over the longer-term in real world contexts. Past research has found that in business and negotiation, women hold higher ethical standards and are less prone than men to engage in unethical practices such as deception. In fact, gender disparities in interest in lucrative jobs emerge only when those jobs are portrayed as requiring unethical behavior. Despite consistent patterns that suggest there is a gender gap in ethics, little is known about *why* such gender differences occur. Here, the authors hypothesize that gender differences in how people define themselves underlie the disparities in ethical behavior. Moral identity is the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of moral traits—for instance, as being fair, honest, generous, and hard-working. Women might be expected to have stronger moral identities than men because gender roles often tie women to more communal and interdependent identities and morality can help to build relationships.

Gender difference and values
Studies conducted to investigate the relation between personal values and gender conformed that men are viewed as more likely to endorse agentic values, such as freedom and accomplishment, whereas women are viewed as more likely to endorse communal values, such as friendship and equality. Other studies assessed men and women's possession of stereotypic sets of masculine and feminine values, and examined their relation to gender-related personality traits, gender-related interests and role behaviors, and global self-perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Masculine values were found to be significantly related to socially desirable masculine traits, socially undesirable masculine traits,

masculine interests and a global self-concept of masculinity. Feminine values were shown to be significantly related to socially desirable feminine traits, feminine interests, feminine role behaviors, and a global self-concept of femininity. These results suggest that gender-linked personal values merit inclusion with traits, interests, role behaviors, and global self-concepts as part of an emerging multidimensional conception of gender characteristics.

Studies investigated that women and men, due to socialization, develop differently in terms of moral development It was also considered whether men and women differ in terms of a related construct, values of equity and equality. It is our expectation that gender influences overall orientation in terms of the two sets of values, and that differences in values lead decision makers to weigh decision issues and to make final decisions differently. Results suggest that there are some gender-related differences in value systems, weights of decision issues, and final decisions.

The results of recent investigations on work values suggest that the contradictory findings in regard to gender differences may be rooted in variations in the underlying structure of the work-values domain. In the present study a definitional framework for work values was proposed and tested. Essentially the same structure was obtained for women and men. However, women ranked affective outcomes as well as some of the instrumental and cognitive values higher than men did, whereas men ranked some other cognitive (influence, independence, responsibility) and instrumental (pay) items higher than women did. Personal growth and use of abilities were ranked higher by men in some samples and by women in others.

Developmental Changes in Cognitive Style (Field – Dependence Independence)

Studies have reported evidences in support of the clear age – related changes in field – dependence – independence over the life span. Cognitive style data obtained by administering different tests of field – dependence – independence *viz.*, the Embedded Figures Test, the Rod and Frame Test and the Body Adjustment Test covering the eight through twentyfour years of age period were graphically plotted. The resultant developmental curves showed a definite, continuous increase in field - independence between eight and fifteen years of age. Although in that period the rate of change became slower with increasing age. After age fifteen, the curves showed a levelling off and appeared like a plateau in the period of young adulthood. In elderly persons, there was a decrease in field - independence and a return to field - dependence. It was inferred that at some point between twentyfour years and old age, the process of increasing field - dependence began. It was further inferred that the point of changeover was in the late thirties, after which the rate of change towards field - dependence gained strength.

The developmental changes in field-dependence independence stem from an interplay between maturational changes in the body (particularly the nervous system) and the changing socialization experiences. During the growth years, a person's standing on the field - dependence – independence dimension typically displays relative stability. In other words, children tend to maintain the same position relative to their peers on the dimensions as they grow up. But as a group they manifest a progress towards increasing field independence. In young adulthood, field – dependence – independence displays absolute stability.

Developmental Changes in Self Esteem

Research findings indicate that it is difficult to accurately measure the self-esteem of children below seven years of age because they cannot comprehend the true meaning of self-esteem. Preschoolers almost always report being satisfied and happy without understanding the implications of these words. By age nine or ten, children develop more distinct sense of self-worth and competence in different areas. Therefore, they my report lower self – evaluation than they had reported earlier in a study in which self-esteem scores were found to be high at grade three and the scores declined significantly at grade five. However, some children older than ten years of age may not want to admit that they have undesirable characteristics or may be unaware that some of their characteristics are regarded as undesirable by others. Children's self-esteem scores are sometimes higher than those of the adolescents because either the children had inflated self-esteem (due to immaturity) or they deliberately reported more positive self-images than they really felt. Pre – adolescent children also do not realize the multidimensional nature of self-esteem. The self-esteem scores of individuals tend to decline as they reach adolescence because they engage in more realistic self – appraisals.

The decrease in self-esteem during adolescence can be due to the significant changes that take place during the changeover from childhood to adolescence. The entry into adolescence is marked by enormous biological, cognitive, socioemotional and academic changes. All these changes make adolescence a stage of great stress. The rapid changes of adolescence make adolescence prone to strong feelings of social inadequacy. However, once the changes settle down, adolescents gradually regain their self-esteem.

Adolescents typically have a more sophisticated view of what a sense of self encompasses than children do. While the self – descriptions of children focus on concrete characteristics like appearance, possessions, behaviours etc., those of adolescents are more abstract and revolve around psychological characteristics, interpersonal relationships, self-evaluations and conflicting feelings. Self-evaluations become more differentiated and better organized during adolescence. These age-related changes in self-esteem are associated with cognitive and socio - emotional developments.

Gender Difference in Cognitive Style (Field – Dependence – Independence)

Consistent gender differences have been found in field-dependence-independence dimension. Boys and men tend to be more field-independent than girls and women. This finding has been reported repeatedly across culture. The major reason for a finding such as this is gender distinction in socialization. It seems plausible that males are more field – independent because they are encouraged to develop autonomous functioning more often than females in most cultures.

A minority of studies have either denied the existence of significant gender difference in field-dependence-independence or have favored a superiority of females over males in field – independence. Since socialization influences field-dependence-independence, egalitarian socialization my wipe out gender difference in field-dependence-independence. Socialization promoting greater autonomy among girls may make them more field – independent than boys.

Psychologists reported that gender difference in field dependence-independence is usually not evident before the

age of eight years and among elderly persons. One reason for this could be that gender plays a prominent role in functioning only in the reproductive period not so much at the stages preceding and succeeding it.

Gender Difference in Self Esteem
An overwhelming number of investigations affirm the presence of gender difference in self-esteem. Most of these studies' present evidences in support of the male superiority in self-esteem. The prizing of masculinity by most cultures and the hardening of sexual differences by disparate socialization are mainly responsible for this. In fact, it was reported that girls tended to perceive themselves as less academically capable; craved for social desirability; and manifested more conforming social behavior than boys even when the two gender groups did not differ much in overall self-esteem. The locus of the lower self esteem of the girls, according to, is the school environment which provides an important context for self-esteem development. Children and adolescents experience varying degrees of success in both academic tasks and social interactions with peers within the school setting. Besides most pre – adolescent girls experience an intense conflict between success in these domains and conformity to gender role stereotypes within the school setting. This conflict occurs because in the early elementary grades, academic achievement for girls is congruent with the stereotyped female ideals of conformity, obedience and conscientiousness. But this gendered pattern undergoes a sea change during pre-adolescence when adoption of the traditional masculine behaviours such as ambitiousness, autonomy and determination ensure both academic and social success. The pre-adolescent and adolescent girls are therefore confused about whether to sacrifice their gender role stereotype to achieve success or to drop out of the race to success and to remain steadfast to their stereotyped feminine behavior. This conflict typically undermines their self-esteem. Most of the investigations in the area have shown that self-esteem decreases more sharply with the onset of adolescence among girls than among boys.

However, there are some studies which have reported no gender difference in self-esteem. At least among children, if not among adolescents. An important aspect of self-esteem is its stability. It has been observed that girls and boys do not differ in their self-esteem stability in either childhood or adolescence. Self-esteem is a characteristic one is not born with but it is acquired through life's experiences. Socialization largely influences self-esteem. So socialization experiences devoid of gender differentiation, at least the absence of pronounced gender discrimination, may be the reason for equalizing of the self-esteem levels of the two gender groups.

The present paper tries to explain the relationship of ethics and values on cognitive style and self-esteem of adolescents.

Influence of ethics and values on self-esteem and cognitive style of adolescents
Studies analyzed that self-esteem directly predicts ethical behaviours and values. A total of 410 students from two business schools in eastern India participated. A questionnaire was administered to collect information on socio-demographics and on self-esteem, power-distance, ethical behaviours and values. Results revealed that self-esteem was positively associated with ethical behaviours and values. Power-distance was a partial mediator in the relationships of self-esteem with ethical behaviours and values suggesting that

promoting self-esteem can partially reduce power-distance and can foster ethicality.

The purpose of another study was to connect personal values to self-esteem in 14 samples (N = 3612) of pre-professionals, high school students, and adults, from Finland, Russia, Switzerland, Italy, and Estonia. Self-enhancement values (power, achievement) and openness to change values (self-direction, stimulation) were positively, and self-transcendence values (universalism, benevolence) and conservation values (tradition) were negatively related to self-esteem.

Conclusion
Cognitive style is usually described as a personality dimension which influences attitudes, values and social interactions. It has been seen that field dependent individuals have a greater social orientation relative to field independent personalities. Self-esteem on the other hand is positively associated with ethical behaviours and values. Self-esteem has a positive relationship with ethical behaviours and values suggesting that promoting self-esteem can partially reduce power-distance and can foster ethicality.

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