



Investigating the status of moral intelligence and its components in students of sanabad higher education institute

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Abstract

One's ability of using moral principles in life is called moral intelligence. Improving the level of students' moral intelligence, as the country's future makers, is of utmost importance. This study aimed at investigating the level of moral intelligence and its related domains in students of Sanabad, Golbahar, Higher Education Institute in 2018. This descriptive-analytical study was performed on 110 students of Sanabad Higher Education Institute. The standard questionnaire of Link and Kiel was used as the research tool. Scoring was based on a five-point Likert scale. Finally, the data were analyzed using SPSS software. 242 students (126 girls and 116 boys) of Sanabad Higher Education Institute having the mean age of 20.49 ± 2.97 years, participated in the study. The mean score of students' moral intelligence was 65.82 ± 10.62 . The mean score of integrity component was 16.50 ± 2.82 , responsibility component was 16.49 ± 2.77 , forgiveness component was 15.70 ± 2.48 , and empathy component was 16.33 ± 2.92 . There was no significant differences between the score of moral intelligence and students' gender ($p = 0.24$) as well as their age ($p = 0.57$); but, there was a significant difference between the mean score of students' moral intelligence and field of study ($p = 0.000$). Students of Sanabad Higher Education Institute were at a moderate level of moral intelligence, which can be upgraded to the good and very good level. Holding educational programs, encouraging students to self-motivation and modeling high-profile individuals in the field of ethics are suggested to enhance the level of moral intelligence.

Keywords: moral intelligence, students, integrity, forgiveness, empathy

Introduction

The morality of individuals has some features that has been formed due to inheritance or education based on which, human beings behaviors are valuated. Some others also consider morality as a set of principles for guiding and directing actions [1]. The ability of using moral principles is considered as moral intelligence. The term moral intelligence has been firstly proposed by Borba (2005) in the psychology. He defined moral intelligence as the capacities and abilities, correct comprehension of ethics, having powerful moral beliefs and following them [2]. Moral intelligence of students refers to the abilities that affect their personal and social behavior and identifies students' moral duties and responsibilities as an individual in the society. Narvaez believes that moral intelligence has been knotted to the emotions and intellect and moral behaviors depend on consistent emotions and reason. Moreover, Lennick and Kiel [4] considered the administration of educative programs to be effective in increasing moral intelligence; they also have defined emotional competence as the capacity of equation between purposes and actions as well as values and have defined moral intelligence as the ability of diagnosing true from false. According to the studies of Clarcken [5], moral intelligence is an integration of knowledge and imposed intention and it is a method of thinking, feeling and performing. Moreover, moral intelligence has four various dimensions that are essential for constant organizational and personal success. These four dimensions include integrity- which means creating coordination between beliefs and actions-, responsibility, empathy- which is paying attention to others-, and forgiveness- which is being aware of defects and mistakes of the self and others and forgiving them.

Furthermore, secondary dimensions of moral intelligence include cohesion, secrecy, following individual commitments, responsiveness and self-control, helping others, kindness and comprehending emotions and spiritual needs of the self and others [6]. Arabi and Izadi in a study investigated various organizations and conclude that organizations having moral intelligence are more successful than others [7]. Bahrami *et al.*, in their research, investigated the intelligence level of faculty members of medical science university and concluded that employees were in a very good status in terms of integrity, forgiveness and responsibility [8]. Khosrawi *et al.*, explored the status of medical center employees' moral intelligence and concluded that nurses had higher moral intelligence and the highest mean was related to the integrity dimension and the lowest mean was related to empathy [9]. Mashrouhi and Hosseini investigated school managers' moral intelligence and concluded that managers were in a moderate level in terms of moral intelligence components [10].

According to the findings of the studies, desired level of moral intelligence leads to the moral development of students, which could be improved using approaches such as encouraging students to moral dependent behaviors. Moral intelligence affects the thoughts and beliefs of students. Furthermore, students having higher moral intelligence, are more self-aware of their behaviors. Society expects educational system to improve scientific competencies as well as moral values and principles. Accordingly, students' moral intelligence, as one of the components affecting their performance, is one of the main concerns of behavioral researchers. Therefore, the current study investigated the moral intelligence level of Sanabad, Golbahar Higher

Education institute students in 2018.

Method

The current study was a descriptive-analytical research. Statistical population of the study included all Sanabad Higher Education Institute students during 2018-2014, who had been selected using quota sampling method. Sample volume included 242 individuals.

To collect the data, standard moral intelligence questionnaire proposed by Lennick and Kiel was utilized, which included 40 items in four main categories (integrity, responsibility, forgiveness and empathy). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire had been confirmed and reported in previous studies [11]. The scoring of this questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale (never to always). A score less than 60 was considered weak, 60-69 was moderate, 70-79 was good, 80-89 was very good and 90-100 was considered perfect. Finally, the obtained data were analyzed using SPSS software and descriptive statistics. Moreover, person correlation coefficient was utilized for investigating the relationship between demographic features and the mean of moral intelligence score. In addition, the relationship between gender and score of moral intelligence was explored using t-test. Significance level was considered to be $P < 0.05$.

Findings

242 students of Sanabad Higher Education Institute having the mean age of 20.49 ± 2.97 years old participated in the study; among which, 126 individuals were girl (52.1%) and 116 individuals were boy (47.9%) (Table 1).

The mean of overall score of students' moral intelligence was 65.82 ± 10.62 ; showing that Sanabad Higher education Institute students were in the moderate level in terms of moral intelligence. The mean score of integrity was 16.50 ± 2.82 , the mean of responsibility was 16.49 ± 2.77 , the mean of forgiveness was 15.70 ± 2.48 and the mean of empathy was 16.33 ± 2.92 . The highest obtained mean was related to responsibility and the lowest was related to forgiveness (Table 2).

The overall mean of intelligence as divided by educational field showed that management students having an overall moral intelligence score of 74 ± 4.50 , had the highest overall moral intelligence score and physical education students having the mean of 61.63 ± 11.23 , had the lowest moral intelligence score. Among four components of moral intelligence, integrity component had the highest score of 18.50 ± 1.12 among management students and psychology students had the lowest score of 14.36 ± 2.63 . Regarding responsibility component, management students had the highest score of 18.50 ± 1.12 and psychology students had the lowest score of 14.46 ± 2.36 . Regarding forgiveness component, art students had the highest score of 18.00 ± 1.0 and accounting students had the lowest score of 14.18 ± 2.51 . Regarding empathy component, art students had the highest score of 18.66 ± 1.52 and psychology students had the lowest score of 14.11 ± 2.27 (Table 3).

According to Table 4 and as the obtained significance level was more than 0.05, it could be stated that no significant differences could be observed between moral intelligence scores of boy and girl students ($p = 0.24$) and their age ($p = 0.57$).

Table 1: Distributing Sanabad Higher Education Institute students based on their gender

Gender	Statistical sample	Percentage
Girl	126	52.1%
Boy	116	47.9%
Total	242	100%

Table 2: The mean of moral intelligence score and its components among Sanabad Higher Education Institute students

Moral intelligence components	Mean of the score	Standard deviation
Integrity	16.50	2.82
Responsibility	16.49	2.77
Forgiveness	15.70	2.48
Empathy	16.33	2.92
Overall score of moral intelligence	65.82	10.62

Table 3: The mean of moral intelligence score and its components as divided by educational field of study

University majors	Integrity component	Responsibility component	Forgiveness component	Empathy component	Overall score
Psychology	14.36	14.46	14.20	14.11	64.39
Accounting	14.96	14.76	14.10	14.38	62.43
Physical education	17.44	17.44	16.46	17.44	61.63
Computer	17.78	17.78	15.84	17.78	63.97
Management	18.5	18.5	17.5	18.5	74
Art	18	18	18	18.66	72.66
Architecture	15.66	17.33	17.33	17.33	67.66

Table 4: The results of t-test regarding two independent groups for comparing the mean of moral intelligence in girl and boy students

Gender	Mean of moral intelligence	Standard deviation	Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Girl	65.74	1.36	-0.172	-0.126	240	0.24
Boy	65.91	1.36				

Discussion

Overall, the results of the study indicated that the mean of total moral intelligence score among students was 65.82, the mean of integrity component was 16.50, the mean of responsibility component was 16.49, the mean of forgiveness component was 15.70 and the mean of empathy component was 16.33. No significance differences could be

observed between moral intelligence score and gender as well as age of students; however, there was a significant difference between the mean of moral intelligence score and student educational field of study. This study was conducted among Allameh Tabatabaie University students of psychology and physical education faculties, political science and law faculties, management

and accounting as well as literature and communication faculties. The mean of moral intelligence of students was evaluated to be in a good level. Fulfilment of the obligation and promise had the highest ranks and confessing mistakes had the lowest rank ^[12]. Amini *et al.*, investigated the status of moral intelligence among mechanic, civil, mining and chemistry engineering students of Kashan University. To this end, 300 students completed the 40 item questionnaire of Lennick and Kiel. There was a significant difference between students' moral intelligence and gender as well as educational field of study. The mean of moral intelligence score of engineering faculty students was moderate and high. The highest mean was related to truthfulness component ^[13]. In the current study, the highest score was related to the integrity component and the lowest mean was related to the forgiveness component ^[6]. In addition, management students had the highest score of moral intelligence and psychology students had obtained the lowest mean. The significant difference of moral intelligence score of students in various university majors was indicative of the effect of educational curriculum, which showed the effect of environment and educational program in the amount of moral intelligence. Therefore, the role of educational programs on the moral intelligence should be emphasized more than before.

Moeinizadeh *et al.*, reported that the level of moral comprehension in accounting girl students was more than boys ^[14]. While, Wimalasiri reported that gender has no effects on moral intelligence ^[15].

In the current study, no significant differences was observed between moral intelligence score of girls and boy and among the age of students. Considering the fact that various factors affect the amount of moral intelligence, social, family, psychological and inherited factors are effective in moral intelligence. Thus, it is possible that these factors have caused differences regarding the relationship between demographic features and moral intelligence in different studies.

Arasteh *et al.*, investigated moral intelligence status of 369 students of Amir Kabir, Tarbiat Modarres, Tarbiat Moallem, Tehran, Shahid Beheshti and Sanati Sharif universities. The research instrument was Lennick and Kiel questionnaire. The results showed that moral features such as insisting on the right, fulfillment of the obligation, responsibility, performance consistency, truthfulness, confessing mistakes and failures, valuing others and forgiving others were in a moderate to high status. Moreover, a significant relationship was obtained between age, educational level and moral intelligence ^[16]. Another research had been conducted on 220 M.A. educational science students of Kharazmi University using moral intelligence questionnaire of Lennick and Kiel. Students' moral intelligence was reported to be in a moderate to high status and the relationship was increased as students' age and moral intelligence increased ^[17]. In the current study. The mean of moral intelligence of students was in a moderate level.

Conclusion

Sanabad Higher Education Institute students were in a moderate level in terms of moral intelligence, which could be improved to the good and very good level. Holding educational programs, encouraging students toward self-motivation and modeling high-profile individuals in the

field of ethics are suggested to enhance the level of moral intelligence.

Conflicts of Interests

No conflicts of interests existed in this study.

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