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(Review Article)

Academic Ethics: Moral Luck of University Students in Iran

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Abstract

Background: Over the past several years, a lot of talks have been produced and published in Iran about the controversial and disputed position of academic ethics. Some evidence shows normative weaknesses or even anomalies in the universities. This means worrying signs of an anomic situation, at least in the range of academics and students. In this discussion, I will concentrate on those parts of the claims and speeches that declare about the shaking position in the academic ethics of students, such as the prevalence of academic credentials, a rare passion for learning, trifling courses, plagiarism and academic fraud, black market dealing thesis (Enghelab avenue phenomenon), the so-called "copy and paste" behaviors in the preparation of articles, negligence in academic norms and academic assignments, fake numbers and forging articles, lack of sense of responsibility, self-centered individualism, and low motivation for group work, the lack of serious acceptance from learning communities and so on.
Conclusion: We are less concerned about what the "conditions of possibility" are for the ethics of student in this country. Some important conceptual and critical researches have been taken into account in ethical research topics on world collaboration for human morality. The question of the current study is as follows: how much is the cooperation of the current Iranian society, higher education system, and management of university and class with our students for the ethics of their studying and their proper socialization. In this study, moral luck theory is used, which is a part of the major issues of modern science and moral philosophy. Nelkin, Nagel and Williams have discussed it. At the end, reflection on "student as victim" is also viewed from the perspective of ethics.

Keywords: University students, Academic ethics, Scientific socialization, Moral luck

Introduction

Theoretical Background

For many years, discussions have been held in Iran about the academic ethics of students in academic environments. Some of the researchers have already studied in the context of ethical disputes in the academic environment of Iranian students (1-6). Current paper studied the subject in terms of moral luck of university students.

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Williams (7) criticized while formulating and Nagel (8) tried to develop this issue more. Some researchers discussed about Williams (9-11).

Moral luck theory explains that people and social groups' luck for being ethics may be different. Different historical, social, cultural and educational factors and also some personality traits may increase or decrease the moral luck. For instant a person who has been helped by social institutions to complete the process of socialization and internalization of values and norms successfully, has a high moral luck. Also, personality traits are involved in the luck of the people for example, an outgoing person has a greater moral chance than an emotional or angry person.

Moral luck can make ethical judgment controversial. Aristotle (12) has argued in his book the Nicomachean Ethics about eudaimonia (happiness) as a maximizing virtuous activity. If man makes all benevolence for eudaimonia, he will seek the eudaimonia for itself. Eudaimonia is also a blessing that is not only in the hands of public but also requires proper education and so on. Therefore, for the morality of humans, the world needs to cooperate with them. In other words, education, health, governance, security and management, and other conditions need to be provided.

If we look at the academic ethics of students in the current Iranian society from this perspective, we need to think more about their moral luck. How much the world (and here Iranian society and Iran's higher education system and the current position of university in this country) can contribute positively and effectively to students for their ethics? Assuming that our students in terms of ethics and norms are currently in a position that is sadly spoken, but if conditions and situations were different, their morality was still the same? The moral luck theory responds: No, they had another status. A situation that may be the subject of praise and admiration, and everyone was proud.

In the theory, different set of luck has been discussed as follows: Resultant Luck, Constitutive Luck, Circumstantial Luck, and Causal Luck, which overlap with each other (9).

The moral luck theorists want to explain, with a set of different luck, that a person who experiences a humiliating ethical behavior may have been distressed. For instance, in the resultant luck there is an example that two people intend to commit evil deed, but an accident causes a person commits it and another one does not do the evil deed. Constitutive luck discusses inherited, physical, and genetic characteristics which leads a person to indecent behavior. Circumstantial luck indicates the factors and environmental circumstances that make to do good or bad deed. Causal luck refers to the set of causes and historical factors that affect the behavior of the individual (whether good or bad).

The purpose of this study is to investigate academic ethics of university students from the viewpoint of moral luck. Meta-analysis method is used by using the findings of the author and other researchers on the subject of academic ethics of university students. In this way, the author attempts to open a new horizon through a systematic review and analysis and re-analysis of evidence and findings from previous researches. Some researchers have discussed about meta-analysis method (10, 11). In the current paper the author, while contemplating the data and findings on the academic ethics of Iranian students, seeks to do a new search for Iranian studies on academic ethics using the new concept of moral luck in the texts and materials of ethics research.

If within the framework of this luck, we consider the ethics of students in Iranian society, we seem to get a set of variables that could affect the moral luck of students. Some of these variables have already been discussed in the study of some articles (13-15) continued the Iranian studies, ultimately to the concept of "Student's ego depletion". The study found that the administrative bureaucracy of the university and its other management, cultural, and organizational factors in Iran make decline the student's ethical energy significantly. Also in the Institute for Research and Development in Higher Education a study was done by some researchers (16) on the analysis of student's academic burnout in Iran's public higher education system. In the qualitative phase of the study, the following factors were found as the sources of student's academic burnout:

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- Uncertainty about the university's job efficiency;
- Low practical values of academic education;
- Frequency of observed and experienced weaknesses and failures in students regarding the quality of academic education;
- Lack of sufficient attractiveness in some curriculum in university education
- The prevalence of superficial and massive paper writing in universities and among faculty members and graduate students;
- Restrictive regulations in student and university affairs at university;
- Observation of serious weaknesses in appropriateness of university management;
- Observation of certain behaviors and relations indicating the lack of development in the organizational culture of the university and the atmosphere of the academic groups and the relationships between the faculty and faculty members of the university;
- Observation of instances of injustice and inequality in the distribution of opportunities and delegation of authorities at the university;
- Observation of instances of injustice and specialism in classroom grades and examinations or reviewing and judging theses and dissertations;
- Weakness in the main scientific, artistic, cultural, and social activities of students;

In the survey that named "student's burnout" which was conducted at national level among university students, a sample of 2635 students were studied in 2016-2017 (16). Undergraduate and graduate students of different majors at universities with a long or moderate history or even newly formed one were studied in the survey. In this study, academic burnout construct included three components of academic fatigue, academic unwillingness and academic inefficiency.

Findings of this study indicate that 50 to 60 percent of students studied suffer from moderate academic burnout. The academic burnout on a scale of zero to seven is obtained 3.5. Major factors for students' burnout are as follows: current problems in the quality and efficiency of academic education and faculty members; university support systems; occupational efficiency based on education; university infrastructure problems; seeing the prevalence of scientific anomalies besides the current problems of students' personal features.

Significantly, boys suffer from academic burnout more than girls, single students more than married ones, unemployed students more than employed ones, non-member of student associations more than members, non-dormitory students more than dormitory ones, Students with a history of disease more than others, young students more than older ones, students with lower grade more than others, and undergraduate students more than graduate ones. Regression analysis in the study show that observed and felt weaknesses of students from faculty members and education has the greatest impact on student's academic burnout.

Studies like the aforementioned one show to what extent the various factors can reduce our university students' moral luck in the society.

Conclusion

Though moral luck theory proposes to open horizons of moral realism to ethical issues, but explanation of the theory requires more theoretical considerations. First, in interpreting this theory, we must take care of the reduction of the "human factor to the victim". We also see this in folk understanding, and with referring to some structural and social causes, a picture of "the person as a victim" is made that has no moral responsibility. The "student as a victim" perspective in our discussion means that the student has no moral responsibility and is a victim of social conditions and systems. In other words, ethical luck is considered with the "control principle" and our moral judgment should have been wary when a student does not fully control his actions due to the presence of random factors outside of him. So it

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is crucial to be cautious in terms of moral judgment, Nagel et al. (8) claim that people cannot be morally assessed for what is not their fault, or for what is due to factors beyond their control. Meanwhile, the human factor is not totally uncontrollable. Although various factors limit the control of study but the researcher did not eliminate them. This has been discussed by Kant with the possibility of good will in humans and contemporary philosophers, such as Zagzebski (17, 18) argued by the possibility of enthusiasm to virtues.

Kant claims that a person can hold on to virtues and endeavor of goodness to have a moral attempt and reasoning. In the Kantian perspective, the intention of that will is sufficient for a human subject to deserve moral praises. It means, once the remaining arrangements which are under their control (such as enthusiasm and motivation) are provided for the good will and virtues, however, it does not have the perfect practical effect, it deserves moral praise. In other words, in this world, under any circumstances, there is the possibility of moral experience and a kind of mystic journey and moral immorality for the human subject. In our discussion the approach of "student as a victim" ignores the individual and human efforts which are the origin of moral will and enthusiasm. This approach also undermines the will and desire. As in folk comprehension, when referring to structural elements and external documents, that human beings have no responsibility for their behavior.

Another important point here is that it should be given more careful attention to seeing the human person in a more social network. In case of the remaining will and enthusiasm, individual's ethical consciousness attaches to larger capacities on a larger scale. In the aforementioned principle we have noticed that, in spite of the limited control of the internal control, internal desire can be sought and endeavored but this point of moral hope will not remain just as weak and personal, since some facilities has been deposited into the "social life." The moral considerations of individual have led to the institutionalization of morality in human society and various social opportunities in the historical and social scale.

In the discussion of students, the potential of considerations for ethics of university students are as follows: Student institutions, discursive pressures in society by critics and civil institutions, the existence of scholars adheres to professional ethics and academic norms, possibility to improve managerial processes, masters' personality, university leadership style, higher education policies and regulations…. In other words, there is still possibility of cooperation in the world for prosperity of students. All the following features provide the world with the opportunity to collaborate on the ethics of education: each cooperative teaching method; every humanitarian, supportive and participatory leadership style; each influential master with character; each student association that is formed and activates students. Thus, while the moral is fragile but it does not mean the end of moral reasoning, moral will, ethical enthusiasm, and student's moral endeavor. Therefore, ethics of university students is the subject for moral judgment (praise or blame).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues (Including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, redundancy, etc.) have been completely observed by the authors.

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