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Moral Development and Wisdom: The Mediating Role of Moral Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Introduction: The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the relationship between moral development and wisdom through the mediation of moral intelligence and emotional intelligence.
Material and Methods: The research method was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population included students of the University of Jyväskylä in the year 2024. A sample of 120 students was selected using a multi-stage cluster random method. The measurement tools included Webster's Self-Esteem Questionnaire (2007), Schering's Emotional Intelligence (1999), Lennick and Keel's Moral Intelligence (2005), and Graham's Moral Foundations (2007). The structural equation modeling method and Amos23 and SPSS22 software were used to analyze the data.
Results: The results showed that the conceptual model of the study had an appropriate fit. Examining the coefficients of the effects of the research variables on each other, it seemed that moral development had a direct standardized effect coefficient of 0.53 on intelligence. Also, the standardized effect coefficients of moral development on moral intelligence were 0.51, moral development on emotional intelligence were 0.11, moral intelligence on intelligence were 0.32, and emotional intelligence on intelligence were 0.21.
Conclusion: Based on the findings of this study, attention to effective moral variables and appropriate moral education on the one hand, and the promotion of emotional intelligence and attention to social and individual well-being resulting from the proper functioning of this intelligence in individuals on the other hand, are essential for the development of various areas of human wisdom.
Keywords: *Moral development, Wisdom, Moral intelligence, Emotional intelligence*

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the concept of wisdom and intelligence is as old as human history. However, in psychology, the study of wisdom has been accompanied by the emergence of modern psychology. Hall first associated wisdom with intellectual attitude, philosophical calm, fairness, and morality in adulthood [1]. Wisdom is a combination of psychological tendencies and characteristics that are considered an ideal point for individual and social well-being. Wisdom is developed through thought and experience and in the form of emotional, cognitive, and introspective indicators. The emotional indicator of wisdom implies the presence of positive emotions (including empathy and compassion) and the absence of negative emotions and behaviors towards others [2]. Wisdom is an important psychological trait and a personal ability in gifted and talented individuals. Wisdom is the ability to evaluate life based on deep concepts in a way that is meaningful to the

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individual and others [3]. Wisdom is the product of knowledge and experience, but goes beyond the accumulation of information; it involves the coordination of this information and its judicious use to enhance psychological well-being. In a social context, wisdom allows individuals to listen to others, evaluate what they say, and then provide wise advice [4]. From Ardlet's perspective, wisdom is a combination of personality traits with three broad dimensions: cognitive, reflective, and affective. The cognitive dimension reflects the desire to know the truth and to achieve a deeper understanding of life, including the acceptance of the paradoxes of human nature, the limitations of knowledge, and the unpredictability of life. The reflective dimension is defined as self-examination, self-awareness, and the ability to observe phenomena from different angles, and the affective dimension implies the presence of positive emotions, including empathy and compassion, and the absence of negative emotions and behaviors toward others. This multidimensional construct refers to the ability to use pragmatic reasoning to solve important life challenges [5]. Sternberg (2008) defines wisdom as the use of intelligence, creativity, and knowledge through values to achieve benevolent goals [6].

By reviewing the above definitions, we will come to a variable that can be considered to interfere with wisdom, which is the variable of morality. In general, morality is the plural of morality and means the inner strength of the individual that is perceived with the inner eye. Morality is a good or bad state or attribute of the soul, and it is a science that introduces good and bad soul traits and voluntary actions and behavior corresponding to them, and shows the way to acquire good traits and perform desirable actions and avoid selfish traits and bad actions. Also, moral development consists of stimulating, awakening and strengthening human traits and virtues and preventing the growth of undesirable traits that provide a source of deviation from human states. Similarly, moral development is a type of change that encompasses the intellectual, emotional and behavioral realms. The rational element of moral education is aimed at creating a moral understanding to recognize good from bad things [7, 8]. In addition, moral development focuses on the emergence and change of morality from birth to adulthood. Morality develops throughout life and is influenced by individual experience and behavior [9]. Moral education is also a factor in the development of scientific and practical moral talents and aims to cultivate a personality adorned with moral virtues. Moral education is not only essential for human happiness in the afterlife, but also organizes worldly life [10]. Teaching moral issues is important because it can promote moral development and facilitate the possibility of achieving appropriate solutions when moral problems arise [11].

Another variable discussed in the theories of wisdom is intelligence. Wisdom requires the correct use of intelligence. Wisdom is not found in people with low intelligence. In general, the relationship between wisdom and intelligence can be explained in such a way that an intelligent person drives fast on the road, he knows how to maximize his speed. How to use his vehicle in the best way, but it is possible to be on the wrong path. Wisdom determines the right path. Intelligence builds machines, and wisdom determines how to use them properly to achieve intelligent goals. What intelligent people need to use their personal abilities in the right direction is wisdom, which can show them the right way to live. Given the proposed place of intelligence in wisdom and intelligence, the two variables selected in this study, whose relationship with wisdom is examined, are important types of intelligence that have recently received more attention, namely emotional intelligence and moral intelligence.

Social psychologists have stated that emotional intelligence is an important factor that determines adaptive interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence is a coping mechanism that facilitates success and effective self-regulation for desired goals [12]. In addition, moral intelligence determines the moral trajectory of an individual in life and the world of work, prevents criminal and illegal acts, and promotes ethical decision-making [13]. A person who learns moral concepts such as the importance of self-control, patience, and forgiveness in interpersonal relationships and can control his or her anger has higher social adjustment. Also, people with high moral intelligence show more warmth and intimacy towards others, are kind to their friends, and are more sensitive to their needs [14]. Based on what was said, the question in the present study was: What is the relationship between moral development and wisdom with the mediation of moral intelligence and emotional intelligence?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research method was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population included students of the university Jyväskylä in 2024. A sample of 120 students was selected using a multi-stage cluster random method. The following questionnaires were used to collect the required data:

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire:

This scale was developed by Schering (1999) and has 33 questions that are scored based on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1). The questionnaire has 5 subscales including; Self-awareness, self-motivation, self-control, empathy and social skills. Schering (1999) used construct validity to determine validity and reported the relevant coefficient as 0.63 and the final coefficient of this questionnaire as 0.83 using Cronbach's alpha.

Moral Intelligence Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was developed by Lennick and Kiel (2005) and has 40 statements and its scoring is based on a 5-point Likert scale (always = 5 to never = 1). This questionnaire has 10 components as follows: 1) acting based on values and beliefs, 2) honesty, 3) integrity and insistence on the right, 4) keeping promises, 5) taking responsibility, 6) admitting mistakes and failures, 7) accepting responsibility for serving others, 8) being actively interested in others, 9) being able to forgive one's own mistakes, and 10) being able to forgive others' mistakes. Lennick and Kiel (2005) calculated the reliability of the aforementioned questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79

Wisdom Self-Esteem Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was developed by Webster (2007) to measure wisdom and consists of 40 items, each of which is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This scale has five factors that measure life crisis experience, emotion regulation, reflection, openness, and natural humor. Webster (2007) calculated Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale to be 0.90 and its test-retest reliability coefficient to be 0.84 after two weeks.

Moral Foundations Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was developed by Graham (2007) and consists of 32 items and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from not at all (1) to very much (5). This questionnaire measures five moral dimensions: harm dimension, caring dimension, fairness dimension, loyalty dimension, respect dimension, and sincerity dimension. Graham (2007) reported the reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81.

Structural equation modeling and Amos23 and SPSS22 software were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Examining the coefficients of the effects of the research variables on each other, it seemed that moral development had a direct standardized effect coefficient of 0.53 on intelligence. Also, the standardized effect coefficients of moral development on moral intelligence were 0.51, moral development on emotional intelligence were 0.11, moral intelligence on intelligence were 0.32, and emotional intelligence on intelligence were 0.21.

Based on this, the results obtained suggest that all the calculated effect coefficients for the relationships between the variables in the explanatory model are significant. Except for the relationship between moral development and emotional intelligence, which was not significant. Based on the results, the question arises as to how well the research model developed based on the theoretical framework and empirical background corresponds to reality? This is a question that every researcher who has developed his or her research within the framework of a structural equation model has faced and is eager to answer. The scientific criteria for validating the theoretical model using the collected data constitute the main discussion in the "Model Exposition Indicators" section, which is discussed below.

Table 1. Exposition Indicators of the General Model of Measuring Intelligence Based on Moral Development with Emotional Intelligence and Moral Intelligence.

Model fit indicates	Index rate	Fit status
RMSEA	0.075	Optimal
NFI	0.91	Optimal
NNFI	0.92	Optimal
CFI	0.92	Optimal
IFI	0.92	Optimal
RFI	0.91	Optimal
χ^2	3.26	Optimal

In Table 1, a good fit indicates that a model is accurately fitted to the observed data. In research, goodness-of-fit indices are usually used to assess the fit of a model, which is the most common and common index. If this index is lower than 0.1 and the significance level obtained is significant at the 0.05 level, the fit of the model is confirmed. Based on the results of Table 3, since the RMSEA index in this model is 0.75, it can be said that the model obtained for predicting wisdom based on moral development with the mediation of moral intelligence and emotional intelligence is a fit that is appropriate to reality. In addition, when the result of dividing the chi-square factor by the degree of freedom is less than 5, the model fit is confirmed, and considering that the result of this index in the previous study is 3.26, this fit index also indicates the appropriate fit of the model. Also, considering that the value obtained for other fit indices is higher than 0.9, it can be said that the previous results based on the appropriate fit of the model are confirmed. Now, after confirming the research model in general, the general hypotheses of the research are examined and analyzed separately.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficient matrix between research variables

Variables	Moral development	Moral intelligence	Emotional intelligence	Wise behavior
Moral development	1	0.51	0.07	0.71
Moral intelligence	0.51	1	0.13	0.35
Emotional intelligence	0.07	0.13	1	0.18
Wise behavior	0.71	0.35	0.18	1

Based on the correlation coefficients obtained in the correlation matrix in Table 2, the degree of relationship between all research variables is shown. Accordingly, the degree of correlation between wisdom with the variables of moral development, moral intelligence, and emotional intelligence is equal to 0.71, 0.35, and 0.18, respectively. Also, the correlation between emotional intelligence and moral intelligence was 0.13, the correlation between emotional intelligence and moral development was 0.07, and the correlation between moral intelligence and moral development was 0.51.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between moral development and wisdom through the mediation of moral intelligence and emotional intelligence in students. The results obtained are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Moral development and wisdom have a significant relationship. Sternberg (1998) considers reaching the final stages of Kohlberg's moral development as a prerequisite for wisdom. In these stages, the individual bases his moral judgments on universal moral principles [15]. According to Sternberg's theory of rational balance, rationality is the balance between intra-individual, interpersonal, and inter-personal interests in order to achieve a common good. Therefore, by reaching the final stages of moral development and the concept of justice in the aforementioned sense, the individual has in fact been able to put rationality into practice by achieving balance and achieving the common good. Also, in explaining this relationship, one of the characteristics of rational people can be used.

Hypothesis 2: Moral development is significantly related to emotional intelligence. Based on the findings of the study, this hypothesis is not confirmed. Considering that from the perspective of Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1995), the stages and manner of moral judgment form the process and basis of moral development, if emotional intelligence is not related to moral judgment, then the lack of relationship with moral development is also defensible.

Hypothesis 3: Moral development is significantly related to moral intelligence. This result is consistent with the results of some research in this field. According to Kohlberg, moral judgment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral behavior [16].

Hypothesis Four: Moral intelligence is significantly related to wisdom. One of the components of moral intelligence is empathy, which means recognizing the feelings and interests of others, which includes the stages of cultivating awareness and increasing sensitivity to the feelings of others. According to the life experience model [17], there are four sources as a type of positive syndrome that helps individuals to disperse and cope with life's challenges in a way that leads to the rapid growth of wisdom. Each of these resources also creates experiences that individuals seek, and having such experiences in turn further develops the resources [18]. Also, in another explanation, considering that it is one of the main components of moral intelligence [19], and from their perspective, moral intelligence gives purpose to people’s lives and gives meaning to their actions. Therefore, with the increase in moral intelligence, an individual's specialization in basic knowledge, including goal selection, understanding events, and making sense of life experiences, which, according to the Berlin model of wisdom, achieving this specialization itself means achieving wisdom [19], also increases, and the probability of wisdom also increases.

Hypothesis Five: Emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with intelligence. Intelligence and emotional intelligence have a significant relationship with each other. This

finding is consistent with the results of studies [20-22].

Hypothesis Six: There is a relationship between moral development and intelligence mediated by moral intelligence. With the explanations provided in relation to the argument of the effect of moral development on moral intelligence on the one hand and the effect of moral intelligence on wisdom on the other hand, which was referred to in Hypotheses 2 and 4, the mediating role of moral intelligence in the relationship between moral development and wisdom can be explained as follows. Moral development causes the capacity to understand right from wrong and correct behavior to increase, which itself means an increase in moral intelligence. By increasing moral intelligence and, consequently, its components, and increasing strategic and goal-oriented behaviors, individuals are helped to deal with and confront life's challenges, and it acts as a facilitator in facing specific life experiences, and changes in individuals' priorities and perspectives are manifested, which creates the greatest potential for developing wisdom in the individual. Also, increasing empathy, forgiveness, and compassion, and strengthening the emotional dimension of wisdom can play a role in increasing wisdom.

Hypothesis Seven: There is a relationship between moral development and wisdom mediated by emotional intelligence. In the present study, considering that the significant relationship between moral development and emotional intelligence (according to the second hypothesis) has not been confirmed. Also, based on the bootstrap test, the indirect path of moral development and wisdom with the mediating role of emotional intelligence is not significant and cannot account for part or all of the effect of the variable of bronze and does not have its own mediation effect. Therefore, considering that there is no significant relationship between moral development and emotional intelligence, no explanation can be provided regarding the effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between moral development and wisdom.

Based on what was found in this research, it is suggested that activities related to promoting rationality be pursued further in the fields of culture and education. Because the discussion of ethics and its sub-disciplines, including intelligence and moral development, will be effective when they are reflected in the context of culture and pave the way to achieving the common good and wisdom. In addition, indirectly involving rationality in the formal and informal education system by emphasizing how to properly and beneficially utilize psychological variables and intellectual capacities instead of teaching how to use and maximally utilize these capabilities for personal gain and rejecting social, cultural and other interests, is an issue that can be pursued in today's society, and this in itself increases human insight towards the proper use of capacities and achieving a rational and ethical society.

This research has the following limitations: Considering the important role of environment and culture in the development of intelligence, educational methods, cultural and social contexts were among the uncontrollable variables present in the research. Also, other mediating variables affecting the results can be cognitive and educational styles, individual characteristics, age, etc., and the lack of control over these variables was one of the limitations of this research. Finally, this study was conducted on students at a single university, so the results cannot be easily generalized to the entire population.

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, the issue of morality and wisdom is one of the most important issues facing human society today, the lack of which can be clearly seen in various stages of people's lives. Considering the various problems and obstacles

that exist in each of our lives to achieve our goals, the need for wisdom, meaning the correct use of internal and external resources, correct and beneficial and all-round choices, timely and holistic observation of conditions, and tolerance and reflection in ambiguous situations of life in order to adopt the best strategy and work to create balance in life to achieve a common good, is obvious. How many capable, intelligent, and specialized individuals fall apart when faced with the most basic issues of their lives and lose their health in all dimensions. Therefore, what is missing from humanity today is more than specialization or various abilities, it is the lack of wisdom. By understanding this category and applying its methods and training from the early ages of children's lives and raising wise individuals in families and educational environments, this gap can be filled for future generations.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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