

The Relationship between Moral Intelligence and Cognitive Distortions among Employees

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ABSTRACT

Moral intelligence directs the life and helps people understand right and wrong. The study aims to investigate the relationship between moral intelligence and cognitive distortions among the employees of Mazandaran Welfare Organization. In a cross-sectional study, 283 individuals were selected by cluster sampling method. Information was collected through two questionnaires including Moral Competency Inventory (MCI) questionnaire and Cognitive Distortions Inventory (CDI). Analysis of the data involved linear regression and Pearson correlation tests. The results indicated moral intelligence was significantly correlated with cognitive distortions and 28.5% of changes in cognitive distortions can be explained by the moral intelligence. In this study, seems that moral competencies caused an individual does not interpret the fact based on unique information and personal categorizations and considers all situational aspects.

KEYWORDS: Moral intelligence; Cognitive distortions; Employee

INTRODUCTION

Moral intelligence is our mental capacity for determining how universal human principles should be introduced to our personal values, goals, and behavior. Moral intelligence directs the life and helps people understand right and wrong. Without moral intelligence we do things and experience events which have no meaning for us (Lennick, Kiel, Jordan, 2011). People who are truly moral do not accomplish right things only in the presence of power manifestations, rather develop principles of good behavior and empathy and stick to them in various situations (Berk, 2006). According to Bandura, moving away from moral standards leads to self-degradation. As he put it, "expecting to blame oneself for committing behavior that deviates from personal standards provides an inspiring source that long with other stimulating factors keep individuals' behavior within the standard frame. No punishment is as harmful as self-humiliation." Therefore strong morals do not guarantee ethical practice, because mechanisms like moral justification, tagging, distortion of consequences, etc. enable people to disobey moral principles, while they do not humiliate themselves (Olson & Hergenbahn, 2008). Lennick et al. (2011) also believe that mental orientations and excitements may inhibit conversion of moral principles to moral practice. Putting moral science into practice is difficult and teaching reasoning technique in moral situations and then upholding to it are as important as training them (Sternberg, 2011).

From the Cognitive scientists view, automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, and cognitive schemas are causes of the majority of behavioral disorders and interpersonal conflicts (Bahari et al., 2010). These thoughts seem spontaneous and authentic and are associated with problematic behaviors or excitement disturbance. Cognitive distortions cause vulnerability against life negative occurrences. In this case, it is more likely that a loss or obstacle in life is exaggeratedly interpreted as personal and negative (Leahy, 2003). Franceschi (2007) considers cognitive distortions to be a type of reasoning that leads to favor, without objective grounds.

Today, people more than ever are free to meet their needs and desires. Therefore, regulating social relationships based on ethical parameters has been given special importance and can be among the key factors of successful performance in an organization (Siadat, Kazemi, Mokhtaripour, 2009). Kohlberg et al., have put this hypothesis that if the ethical atmosphere of a social institution develops, its affiliated people will ethically grow further (Mussen, Conger, Kagan, Huston, 1990). According to Lenik et al. (2011), moral intelligence is a genuine and essential tool for those who seek for the highest creative potential in their business and management. Lack of attention to ethics in management can create great problems for organizations. Meanwhile, individuals judgment about the morality or immorality of actions, as well as positive view towards moral beliefs, away from cognitive distortions, significantly affect quantity on quality of their work, and so organizational success. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between moral intelligence and cognitive distortions among the employees of Mazandaran Welfare Organization.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In percent research, cross-sectional design study was used to study correlation between moral intelligence and cognitive distortions. The statistical community consisted of employees of Mazandaran Welfare Organization. Seven cities were selected randomly by cluster sampling method. Sample volume was determined with table of Krejcie & Morgan and Number of 283 samples participated in this study. The age range of the patients was 20-60 years. Data was gathered by the use of two criterion, self-reporting.

Moral Competency Inventory (MCI)

This questionnaire was designed by Lennick & kiel (2005) and it consists of 10 sub-scales. It consists of 40 questions in a five point Likert-like scale. Martin & Astin (2010) reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of questionnaire as follow: Acting consistently with principles, values, and beliefs=0.84, Telling the truth= 0.72 ,Standing up for what is right= 0.69, Keeping promises= 0.65, Taking responsibility for personal choice=0.73, Admitting mistake and failures=0.75, Embracing responsibility for serving others=0.74, Actively caring about others=0.81, Ability to let go of one's own mistakes=0.66, Ability to let go of other's mistakes=0.74.

Cognitive Distortions Inventory (CDI)

This questionnaire was produced by Abdollahzade & Salar (2009), and it consists of 20 questions in a five point Likert-like scale (from completely agree to completely disagree). Sub-scales of questionnaire consist of Dichotomous Thinking (DT), Overgeneralization (O), Should Statements (SS), Mental Filter (MF), Discounting the Positive (DP), Labeling (L), Personalization (P), Emotional Reasoning (ER), Magnification or Minimization (MM), Fortune Telling (FT). According to the test scoring plan, higher grading indicates lower cognitive distortion. Abdollahzade & Salar (2009) reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of questionnaire equal 0.80.

Gathered data were analyzed using SPSS 16 software and statistical tests of regression, independent t, and Pearson correlation.

RESULTS

The mean age of patients was 39.82 years with the range of 20-60 years. Collected information concerning of the employees demographics listed in Table (1).

Table1: Overview of demographic characteristics

Parameter		Number
Sex	Female	163
	Male	109
	Non character	11
Education	Junior high school	52
	High school and college	210
	Non character	21
Age	<35	57
	>35	145
	Non character	81

For data analysis, regression analysis was employed. The results Table (2) show that there is a correlation between moral intelligence and cognitive distortion at 99% confidence level. The value of correlation coefficient is 0.534 and the correlation has positive direction, implying that higher degree of moral intelligence is associated with lower level of cognitive distortion. The value of determination coefficient (R^2) is 0.285 which indicates that 28.5% of changes in dependent variable, i.e. cognitive distortion, can be explained by the independent variable, i.e. moral intelligence.

Table 2: ANOVA for the Regression Equation, moral intelligence on cognitive distortion

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of square	F	P- value	Sig	R
Regression	11139.070	1	11139.070	101.407	0.000	0.001	0.534
Residual	27900.680	254	109.845				
Total	39039.750	255					

Table 3: Results based on correlation and regression analysis for data

Regression parameter	Numerical Result	t	df	P- value	Sig
Intercept	22.868	4.637	254	0.000	0.01
Slope	0.666	10.070	254	0.000	0.01

The results of table (3) show that both coefficients remained in linear model. Therefore, the linear model is formularized as following:

$$\text{Cognitive distortion} = 22.868 + 0.666 (\text{Moral intelligence})$$

For determining the correlation degree between the factors, Pearson’s correlation test was used. The results Table (4) demonstrate a correlation between all moral intelligence factors and cognitive distortion, except “Telling the truth” and “Fortune Telling”.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix among moral intelligence and cognitive distortion

	DT	O	MF	DP	FT	MM	ER	SS	L	P
Acting consistently with principles, values, and beliefs	0.321**	0.339**	0.407**	0.356**	0.149*	0.350**	0.320**	0.230**	0.438**	0.342**
Telling the truth	0.274**	0.278**	0.373**	0.288**	0.095	0.217**	0.310**	0.224**	0.422**	0.318**
Standing up for what is right	0.229**	0.255**	0.367**	0.162**	0.127*	0.144*	0.149*	0.183**	0.285**	0.192**
Keeping promises	0.285**	0.376**	0.458**	0.354**	0.273**	0.240**	0.391**	0.247**	0.434**	0.365**
Taking responsibility for personal choice	0.178**	0.281**	0.364**	0.197**	0.148*	0.200**	0.227**	0.157*	0.356**	0.242**
Admitting mistake and failures	0.264**	0.315**	0.407**	0.266**	0.207**	0.181**	0.319**	0.234**	0.376**	0.302**
Embracing responsibility for serving others	0.228**	0.290**	0.370**	0.278**	0.196**	0.236**	0.235**	0.213**	0.338**	0.305**
Actively caring about others	0.231**	0.346**	0.376**	0.299**	0.220**	0.190**	0.280**	0.251**	0.353**	0.316**
Ability to let go of one’s own mistakes	0.242**	0.384**	0.468**	0.309**	0.259**	0.296**	0.294**	0.280**	0.464**	0.386**
Ability to let go of other’s mistakes	0.175**	0.272**	0.339**	0.141*	0.145*	0.121*	0.254**	0.140*	0.292**	0.261**

**p < 0.01

*p < 0.05

DISCUSSION

The results from regression analysis show that cognitive distortions are predictable by moral intelligence, which explains 28.5% of changes in cognitive distortions. The correlation between moral intelligence factors and cognitive distortions also indicate that all factor of moral intelligence except “Telling the truth” which has no significant correlation with “Fortune Telling” is associated with cognitive distortions. Bandura believe that strong moral principles alone do not guarantee ethical performance (Olson & Hergenbahn, 2008). The studies in neuropsychology also indicate that enjoyment-oriented decisions versus moral decisions are associated with greater amount of uncertainty and unpleasant feelings (Sommer, 2010). Therefore, regarding that the measured moral intelligence in the sample evaluates the beliefs and cherishing them and is correlated with cognitive distortions, it is in consistent with the mentioned studies.

The factor “ability to let go of other’s mistakes” has had the highest degree of correlation with “mental filter” and “Labeling” distortions, among all factors. In fact, as the person is more able to forgive his/her mistakes, he/she is less likely to commit mental filter and Labeling. People usually tend to fully uphold to the principles, so when people fail in their behaviors, they should treat themselves with compassion and forgiveness. Otherwise, the required energy for moving towards development of moral capacity will be lost. Similarly, compassion and forgiveness are needed for inspiring others (Lennick, Kiel, Jordan, 2011). It seems that this ability causes individual refuses to attribute negative general qualities to self or others and do not pay attention only to limited facts.

Several studies indicate that cognitive distortions predict interpersonal conflicts and are associated with social anxiety (Ebrahimi, Shaikh Zeinodini, Merasi, 2012). Strong moral reaction appears when an individual possesses high level of diagnostic information about moral character and does not employ person-oriented approach in judgment. Public anger is often activated by something unusual, such as the rights, and this refers to person-oriented approach in moral judgment. Strong moral reaction occurs when high diagnostic information on moral quality is provided (Tannenbaum, Uhlmann, Diermeier, 2011). On the other hand, little amount of information and distortion can have prejudicial and biased consequences which is socially important (Zhong, Strejcek, Sivanathan, 2010). It seems that moral competencies cause that an individual does not interpret the fact based on unique information and personal categorizations and considers all situational aspects.

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