Moral Intelligence –Theory and Application in Education
Inteligencja moralna – teoria i zastosowanie w wychowaniu

Monika Dacka

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

monikadacka@kul.lublin.pl

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7029-7696

Abstract: Morality and intelligence influence various aspects of human life and action. They contribute to a certain stabilisation of a young person's functioning in a given society. The development and technological progress that is taking place is conducive to the development of young people, the satisfaction of certain needs, but it cannot guarantee the possibility of shaping basic values such as freedom, justice or responsibility. Currently, material and individualistic values are increasingly promoted. References to moral ideals based on truth, honesty and love, on the other hand, are less frequent. These are important when making future choices or decisions. A particularly important task today, in the face of various threats, addictions and value crises, is to shape the moral intelligence of young people. It involves having strong ethical and moral convictions and acting in accordance with them.

The purpose of this article is to introduce the concept of moral intelligence, to provide a definition and a conception of the research issue under consideration on a psychological level. It also shows some conditions of its formation during childhood and adolescence. The considerations undertaken in the article show the importance of moral intelligence in developing appropriate social attitudes, behaviour, acquiring moral principles, teaching responsibility, sensitivity to the suffering of others in adolescents.

Keywords: moral intelligence, honesty, forgiveness, responsibility, compassion, youth

Abstrakt: Moralność i inteligencja wpływają na różne aspekty ludzkiego życia i działania. Przyczyniają się do pewnej stabilizacji funkcjonowania młodego człowieka w danym społeczeństwie. Zachodzący rozwój i postęp technologiczny sprzyja rozwojowi młodzieży, zaspokajaniu określonych potrzeb, jednak nie jest w stanie zagwarantować możliwości kształtowania podstawowych wartości takich jak wolność, sprawiedliwość czy odpowiedzialność. Aktualnie coraz częściej promowane są wartości materialne i indywidualistyczne. Rzadziej natomiast dostrzegalne są odniesienia do ideałów moralnych opartych na prawdzie, uczciwości i miłości, mających znaczenie przy dokonywaniu przyszłych wyborów czy podejmowaniu decyzji. Szczególnie ważnym zadaniem w obliczu różnych zagrożeń, uzależnień, kryzysów wartości jest kształtowanie inteligencji moralnej młodzieży. Wiąże się ona z posiadaniem silnych przekonań etycznych, moralnych i zgodnym z nimi postępowaniem.

Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie pojęcia inteligencji moralnej, przedstawienie definicji i koncepcji analizowanego zagadnienia badawczego na płaszczyźnie psychologicznej. Ukazanie pewnych uwarunkowań jej kształtowania w okresie dzieciństwa i dorastania. Podjęte w artykule rozważania ukazują znaczenie inteligencji moralnej w rozwijaniu właściwych postaw społecznych, zachowań, nabywaniu zasad moralnych, uczeniu odpowiedzialności, wrażliwości na cierpienie innych ludzi u nastolatków.

Słowa kluczowe: inteligencja moralna, uczciwość, przebaczenie, odpowiedzialność, współczucie, młodzież

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of the 21st century is becoming a quest to discover the possibility of intelligence and morality working together to contribute to the creation of a relatively peaceful space for modern societies to function (Gardner 1999, 4). The scientific and technological developments noticed in recent years have contributed significantly to the quality of human life and functioning, but they are not able to satisfy the basic needs in terms of happiness, equality and freedom (Mahmutoğlu 2009, 227). Human beings in the modern world experience a wide variety of contradictions, pressures or lack of respect and adherence to universal social principles (Jeziorski 2015, 7). The protection of fundamental values and universal norms is possible through the concern for the observance of ethical norms and the development of moral standards.

Upbringing is important for the formation of right attitudes, and Christian upbringing in particular "includes important social elements: freedom, responsibility, concern for the common good, peace, appreciation of the progress of science and technology, striving to shape the world in a Christian way, dialogue with people with different beliefs, etc. In the spirit of Christian universalism, an attitude of openness to all that is true, good, wherever it comes from, is required in education" (Sieroń 2007, 100). Particularly in today's world, in which a relativistic culture is becoming dominant, the strong influence of technology is becoming so important that, according to Pope Benedict XVI, "taking responsibility for educating young people to know the truth, the fundamental values of life, the intellectual, theological and moral virtues means looking to the future with hope" (Benedykt XVI 2012, 21).

Moral formation plays an important role in the formation of a free human being who acts in accordance with norms, moral principles and values. According to moral theology, the formation of the ability "to recognise good and evil is connected with the gradual development of creative skills, thanks to which man, while initially performing certain acts under the dictates of parents and educators, learns to perform them independently and is capable of taking responsibility for the shape of his own life. By accepting rules that come from outside, man, through moral formation, experiences an invitation to show creative freedom, helping him to know and develop what is hidden in him from the beginning" (Derdziuk 2023, 106). Moral formation is also connected with the formation of conscience, which

ensures the inner freedom of man. The Second Vatican Council recognises that "conscience is man's most secret centre and sanctuary, where he is alone with God, whose voice resounds within him. Through conscience, in a strange way, that law which is fulfilled by loving God and neighbour becomes known. Through fidelity to conscience, Christians unite themselves with the rest of mankind in the search for truth and in solving in truth those moral problems which impose themselves both in the life of individuals and in social coexistence" (CPC 16).

The formation of conscience is an essential part of moral education and formation. Conscience is "the judgment of reason by which the human person discerns the moral quality of the concrete act he intends to perform, is about to perform or has performed" (CCC 2018, 1778). In theology, conscience is sometimes considered in cognitive concepts "conscience is a judgment of cognitive power" (Greniuk 1997, 89); in voluntaristic concepts, where it is identified with free will; in educational concepts, as the guardian of values of a moral nature (Greniuk 1997, 89). In contemporary moral theology, conscience is not identified only with the function of reason, will, the influence of sociological and efficient factors. All psychological factors are relevant (Greniuk 2005, 17).

This article focuses on presenting moral intelligence and its components in psychological terms.

Intelligence is sometimes perceived as the ability to function effectively in the world, to learn and develop knowledge, to cope with the challenges of everyday life (Beheshtifar et al. 2011, 6). Tegmark (2017, 85) considers intelligence as an ability to achieve complex goals. According to Gardner, intelligence is "the ability to solve problems or create products that are meaningful under specific cultural and environmental conditions" (Gardner 1993, 15). In Wechsler's (1944, 3) view, intelligence is associated with the ability to engage in purposeful activities, think rationally and cope effectively with the environment. Intelligent people, therefore, have a stock of knowledge, competencies that they acquire through experience that enable them to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life (Olusola and Ajayi 2015, 32).

Morality is associated with a certain 'human endowment' (Marek 2005, 32). In common parlance, it is sometimes considered as a set of principles, values, shaping human actions, attitudes and beliefs (Ellemers et al. 2019, 336). Szauer (2019) defines morality as "a set of views, judgements, norms and

personal patterns historically shaped and regulating in a given society the totality of relations between individuals, between individuals and groups and between social groups from the point of view of good and evil, right and wrong, righteousness and meanness." Morality, therefore, helps to externalise a person's way of thinking and valuing. In literature, morality is sometimes equated with a system of rules, rules of respect (Piaget 1967, 9), norms that regulate social relations (Smetana 1999, 312), an adaptive syndrome that enables one to cooperate with others (Greene 2013, 23). Gardner (1999, 77) saw morality as a certain property related to a person's will, character, personality and individuality. A person, through his or her good morality, can develop and shape his or her own identity and participate in building relationships with other people.

The use of various forms of intelligence is becoming an increasingly common way of ensuring order and optimal functioning in modern worlds and societies (Gündüz 2010, 159; Pana 2006, 258). Recently, moral intelligence, analysed in terms of human social, economic, communicative and civil rights life, has become a popular research topic in psychology. Nowadays, the role of this intelligence as providing humans with a specific framework for optimal development and socially acceptable activities is increasingly recognised. Moral intelligence is a combination of strength, knowledge and moral values. It is a predictor of socially expected behaviour (Eskandari et al. 2019, 5-6). It provides insight into how people feel, think and act (Khampa 2019, 657). It is also sometimes perceived as 'central intelligence' because it is in some way an anchor for other types of intelligence including emotional, cognitive and social intelligence. Moral intelligence is, therefore, rooted in moral principles and values (Yousefi and Heshmati 2015, 66).

The purpose of this article is to introduce the definition and concept of moral intelligence. An important element of this study is to show the importance of moral intelligence as a factor that can in some way protect young people from the dangers of the modern world.

1.   MORAL INTELLIGENCE – WAYS OF DEFINING IT AND ITS ROLE IN LITERATURE

Moral intelligence is sometimes considered to be one of many types of intelligence. In common parlance, it is perceived as a person's actions that are consistent with: standards of moral norms (Puspitasari et al. 2022, 344), frameworks of correct behaviour (Mohammadi et al. 2013, 57), knowledge, power,

desires, the ways in which people feel, think and act (Khampa 2019, 657). According to Hogan (1973), moral intelligence is associated with traits of socialisation, autonomy and empathy. It is also sometimes considered an ability to behave ethically (Hass 1998). According to Boss (1994, 401), moral intelligence is associated with respect for oneself and other people. Tanner and Christen (2014, 120) see it as the ability to process information of a moral nature and to cope with self-regulatory processes. Lennick and Kiel (2005, 7) define moral intelligence as "the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles should be applied to our personal values, goals, and actions."

Saleh (2018) sees moral intelligence as a certain ability to practice values, ethical attitudes in which analysing consequences precedes action. According to Borba (2001), moral intelligence means the ability to understand right and wrong. A person with properly formed moral intelligence, therefore, has strong moral and ethical convictions that enable him or her to behave in accordance with accepted ethical standards. Moral intelligence, as seen in the definitions presented, is sometimes considered to be a certain capacity of a person, shaped by the values conveyed, moral principles in the process of upbringing, socialisation and one's own work undertaken in later stages of life.

There are many different views in literature on intelligence and its determinants ranging from the view that intelligence is already established at birth, to claims that it can be developed, subject to change as a person develops (Deary 2000; Haimovitz and Dweck 2016). Moral intelligence is not innate; instead, it is an acquired intelligence, 'inscribed' not as a person's morality, conditioned by socio-cultural and individual factors (Chałas 2019, 57). Thus, moral intelligence enables human development in socially diverse systems (Petru and Roman 2023, 1).

Particularly important processes in the formation of moral intelligence are nurturing, modelling and teaching (Mohammadi et al. 2020, 2). Moral intelligence is undoubtedly a complex network of complex cognitive activities that involve understanding, decision-making and solving various problems (Clarken 2010, 7). Communication, social relations taking place in the family, school environment, enable the child to acquire certain values, norms and moral principles. For the proper development of children, adolescents, the shaping of appropriate attitudes, it is important that "respect for moral principles and the realisation of personal and moral values strengthens and enriches the individual humanity in the

human being, and constitutes a response to the essential needs and regularities of the development of individual and collective life in all its dominant forms" (Cichoń 1996, 15). Individual education and the context of the young person's life and functioning also become the primary sources for the formation of moral intelligence (Saleh 2018, 4-8).

Moral intelligence should be taught through planned activities (Altan 2017, 198) because it plays an important role in the development of children and adolescents. It represents a kind of adaptation for solving problems related to behaviour and everyday functioning. Moral intelligence enables young people to reflect on their own lives, to deepen their knowledge of themselves and the world. Developing this type of intelligence is not only about expanding moral knowledge, but also about universal principles, values and moral feelings. Moral intelligence is linked to other types of intelligence, such as emotional intelligence (the ability to cope with emotions, feelings, distinguish between emotions, use knowledge, manage thinking and behaviour (Salovey and Mayer 1990) and social intelligence (building relationships and getting along with others).

2. CONCEPTS OF MORAL INTELLIGENCE

Various components of moral intelligence are identified in literature (Eysenck 2004; Sigelman 1999). The most common concepts refer to moral principles, which are sometimes referred to as universal moral values ('golden rules') (Kinnier et al. 2000; Schwartz 2005, 30), principles of moral intelligence (Lennick and Kiel 2005), universal ethics (Melé and Sánchez-Runde 2013, 681), a professional model of ethical leadership (Sama and Shoaf 2008, 41) and common moral standards (Bird and Waters 1987, 1). Universal principles undoubtedly form the basis of moral intelligence. They are recognised as the foundation of human conduct regardless of the culture in which one lives and functions (Lennick and Kiel 2006). Universal principles are linked to the cognitive component of moral intelligence and are relevant to moral decision-making.

In their concept of moral intelligence, Lennick and Kiel (2005) distinguish four components of moral intelligence, which include integrity, responsibility, forgiveness and compassion. Integrity is related to adhering to principles, values, holding certain beliefs and keeping promises (Lennick and Kiel 2006, 16). The principle of integrity is related to righteous functioning, maintaining a certain consistency

between words and actions (Palanski and Yammarino 2007, 178). Integrity also means adhering to a moral code (Daly and Caputi 1987). According to Yukl and Van Fleet (1992), integrity is a person's behaviour that is consistent with his or her values, perceived as trustworthy and honest in the actions taken. Integrity is also associated with loyalty to accepted values, principles and truths (Peikoff 1991, 259). An honest person tells the truth, stands up for what is right and keeps promises. He refrains from distorting or manipulating reality.

Accountability is related to taking responsibility for oneself and every action a person takes. It refers to admitting mistakes and failures (Lennick and Kiel 2006, 16). The principle of responsibility is related to accepting actions and their results. Responsibility is associated with freedom and authentic living (Wong 2019, 275-276).

Forgiveness means tolerating faults, one's own and other people's mistakes (Lennick and Kiel 2005, 7; Lennick and Kiel 2011, 128). Palanski (2012) sees forgiveness as an intrapersonal act of the victim to let go of anger and resentment, while reconciliation is an interpersonal act through which the victim seeks to repair the relationship. Forgiveness involves relinquishing anger, resentment, initiating reconciliation avoiding revenge (Palanski 2012, 277).

Compassion involves caring about other people's choices, goals and respect. Sometimes it also means "taking the goals of others more seriously than they feel capable of" (Lennick and Kiel 2011, 126). Compassion is related to the dimension of morality relating to concern for the welfare of others. Gilbert (2009, 13) defines compassion as "a deep awareness of another's suffering combined with a desire to relieve it." Lazarus (1991, 289) equates compassion with being moved by the suffering of others and wanting to help them.

According to Borba (2008, 7-10), moral intelligence consists of seven virtues: empathy, conscience, respect, self-control, kindness, tolerance and honesty. Empathy involves the ability to understand and feel the distress experienced by other people. Empathy and compassion are not identical terms. Empathy is often equated with the intention to act for the benefit of others, a commitment to do so. Sympathy is associated with feeling pity at the sight of a person suffering. Empathy is sometimes associated with cognitive awareness of the inner states of others, i.e. perceiving the intentions, feelings and perceptions

of others (Hoffman 2006, 38). From a moral point of view, empathy contributes to a better understanding of other people's situations and the problems they experience (Thompson and Hoffman 1980).

Conscientiousness is related to the ability to apply certain principles in appropriate behaviour and to the ability to know the particular situation a person is in (Borba 2008, 7-10). The Catechism of the Catholic Church reveals the role of conscience as the place for discovering the law "which he does not impose on himself, but to which he must obey" (CCC 1776). Conscience thus makes it possible to discover and read the moral law.

Respect is related to the ability to appreciate others, to act in a harsh and appropriate manner towards them (Borba 2008, 7-10). It also includes respecting the dignity of others and constitutes a certain moral obligation (Wójcik 2010, 1). Showing respect to others allows one of the most important human needs to be satisfied.

Self-control involves the ability to control actions, the mind to resist negative incentives, internal and external, by being able to act appropriately (Borba 2008, 7-10). It is also associated with the ability to control one's behaviour, remaining independent of the environment in freedom from certain automated behaviours (Nęcka 2015, 488).

Kindness is associated with the ability to show concern for the wellbeing of others. It includes ethical qualities, concern for others, kindness, readiness to help (Borba 2008, 7-10). According to Eisenberg (1986, 63), benevolence is "voluntary, purposeful behaviour that benefits others and is not motivated by external factors such as rewards or punishments." A benevolent person genuinely shows interest in the well-being of others (Saleh 2018, 9).

Tolerance involves respect for the rights and dignity of the other person (Borba 2008, 7-10). It represents a certain attitude based on acceptance of and agreement with other people's differences of opinion, belief, thought (Glombik 2013, 114). It is associated with forbearance (Okoń 1998, 405). Tolerance is also associated with concern for the welfare of others, opposition to evil (Glombik 2013, 122).

Honesty, the last of the virtues, is related to the ability to be open, to act appropriately. It also refers to acting and functioning justly (Saleh 2018, 10).

According to Borba (2003, 14), three virtues are central to the development of moral intelligence; these include conscience, self-control and empathy. They are considered the moral core. Weaker development of these virtues in a child will make the youngest more susceptible to negative environmental influences and increase the propensity for socially unacceptable behaviour.

3. DETERMINANTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

The first stage in the development of moral intelligence is education. It is considered to be an endeavour of a moral nature, the primary aim of which becomes the development of the ability to distinguish between good and evil, the shaping of moral sensitivity and the development of the ability to act appropriately (Łobocki 2005, 269). The process of developing moral intelligence begins with the child's cognition of the good, then it is developed by feeling it, seeking it and taking action on its behalf (Dacka 2022, 21). The youngest children undoubtedly learn from an early age by observing both moral and immoral behaviour. One-year-old children are already capable of taking action to try to comfort, to show help to others (e.g. pointing out needed items, bringing them) (Liszkowski et al. 2006, 181-182). During the first period of life, parents are the child's visible behavioural role models. They participate in the formation of his character. The family environment becomes the first place for the child to develop moral intelligence (Oladipo 2009, 150). According to Hoffman (1983), the processes of internalisation of parental rules taking place from early childhood onwards are important in the formation of the child's morality. In their communication with their parents, children also assimilate certain rules that are relevant to their life and functioning in society.

Research by Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow and King (1983, 247-248) has shown that the capacity for empathy, altruism are already present in the early developmental stages. Young children are capable of perceiving problematic situations, e.g. parents arguing in the environment, and taking action based on altruism, caring or empathy. A natural way to promote pro-social behaviour among children may be the verbal praise they receive. A study by Warneken, Thomasello (2008, 1786-1787) found that children were more likely to show prosocial behaviour when they received verbal praise. For the formation of morality, the moral intelligence of children, the parental attitude of their parents is of great importance.

Research by Augustine and Stifter (2015, 298-299) indicates that warm and positive parenting can contribute to a child's successful functioning in terms of following certain rules and developing a conscience. An open, supportive parental attitude promotes the development of children's moral behaviour.

Karmakar's (2015, 438) research has shown that adherence-focused parenting styles contribute to children's greater awareness of adherence and norm-compliant behaviour. An overly restrictive parenting style is not conducive to adolescent moral functioning. Alhadabi and colleagues (2019, 133), in their research, showed that upbringing by the father influences moral intelligence, whereas upbringing by the mother does not matter for such intelligence. Certain moral principles e.g. honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, compassion are taught to the youngest by verbalisation and modelling. Children mostly acquire certain skills, ways of social functioning through what they see, what they experience (Beheshtifar et al. 2011, 298-299). The development of morality, like the formation of moral intelligence, involves continuous learning to function with and take action with others.

Parents, carers, in later stages of development, and also educators and teachers are involved in the process of upbringing (Lennick and Kiel 2006, 13). According to Yusuf (2008), morality from childhood to adolescence is dominantly influenced by environmental factors especially family and school. Children also learn certain patterns through the nurturing process that takes place in the pre-school and school environment. During the pre-school period, children begin to see the importance of fairness and equality (Rizzo et al. 2016). Also, participation in play, especially in thematic play encourages children to acquire certain socially expected norms and values. It becomes a fundamental task of socialisation to develop in the youngest children a proper value system, teaching norms and social rules. Teachers can shape moral intelligence by stimulating discussion of literature showing positive values and heroic actions, references to attitudes formed in the home environment (Oladipo 2009,153). One of the goals of school education becomes the development in pupils of the principles of honesty, justice and responsibility for their actions. Pupils need the support, the involvement of people significant to them, helping them to develop clear and desirable values.

The process of effectively developing moral intelligence should be based on three strategies: dialogue, critical thinking and discussion (Hashim 2013). The aim of the educational process is first and

foremost to take care of the comprehensive and harmonious development of the personality of children and adolescents. The formation of moral intelligence takes place not only through the child's memorisation of certain rules, social principles, but through learning to cooperate, act with others, listen to them and observe them (Coles 1999, 19). Particularly emphasised is the role of transmitting and developing sensitivity to moral values, teaching to act in accordance with social rules and shaping moral character traits e.g. honesty, responsibility, truthfulness (Regulska 2013, 145).

Undoubtedly, the environments in which children and adolescents function and develop shape their moral awareness, sensitise them to perceive the complexity of moral problems and transmit moral principles and values. Particularly during adolescence, the process of shaping certain attitudes, value systems and assessing one's own behaviour in terms of right and wrong takes place. The changes taking place contribute to the formation of moral judgements. The adolescent period is characterised by key changes in identity, moral awareness and emotional bonding (Ricon and Katz 2024, 10).

4. RESEARCH ON MORAL INTELLIGENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Previous studies show the importance of moral intelligence and its components in shaping appropriate attitudes among young people. A study conducted by You and colleagues (2015, 599) on seventh, eighth and ninth grade students found that low levels of empathy and low levels of attachment to mother, peers and school were associated with higher levels of bullying among other students. Higher levels of empathy, attachment to mother, peers and school were conducive to lower levels of bullying.

Research by Hosseinpour and colleagues (2022, 4) on a group of 315 adolescent boys found a negative association between moral intelligence and addictive potential. Moral beliefs contribute to adolescents displaying higher levels of self-criticism and being less compliant with impulses. Adolescents displaying high moral values are able to control their behaviour and thoughts. They do not succumb to the tendency to turn to drugs or other addictive substances.

Wulandari and colleagues conducted a study (2019, 148-149) on adolescents aged 13-14, showed that self-esteem has an impact on moral intelligence. Positive self-esteem empowers and empowers flexible young people to be responsible for their choices and decisions. Young people with high self-esteem

choose a problem-focused strategy when faced with difficulties. Higher self-esteem reduces the tendency to take socially unacceptable actions.

The development of moral intelligence and its component parts is important for the formation of moral awareness. In addition, it enables the evaluation of behaviour as good or bad, and fosters the development of an understanding of behaviour in relation to the social context.

CONCLUSION

Moral intelligence is sometimes treated as a distinct construct, an acquired ability that can be developed and evolve with human development (Bahrami et al. 2012). Moral intelligence has great potential to contribute to improving the functioning of contemporary adolescents experiencing a decline in moral values, an escalation of immoral behaviour. Currently, the need to develop moral values and shape moral intelligence from the earliest stages of children's development and to develop it in adolescents is becoming more pressing.

Shaping the moral compass during childhood can contribute to the development of moral principles, pro-social behaviour and good habits helpful for functioning in society during adolescence and adulthood. Moral intelligence is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, a strong attitude associated with thinking, acting in accordance with challenged moral principles and values. Developing moral intelligence can contribute to strengthening self-control, social responsibility and reducing the feeling of social pressure in young people.

Moral intelligence is undoubtedly an important behavioural control skill that prevents the move towards hostility, destruction, violation of social rights especially so much needed during adolescence. Particularly in the 21st century, in the face of a progressive moral crisis, strong self-centredness, shaping moral intelligence in adolescents may become a valuable ability to make and take the right choices, decisions on the basis of consciously accepted moral principles and norms.

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