

Moral Reasoning among Croatian Adolescents with Different Levels of Education

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Abstract : Moral development takes place in six phases which can be divided in a pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional level. Moral reasoning, as a key concept of moral development theories, involves a process of discernment/inference in doubtful situations. In research to date, education has proved to be a significant predictor of moral reasoning. The aim of this study was to investigate differences in moral reasoning and Kohlberg's phases of moral development between Croatian adolescents with different levels of education. In Study 1 comparisons between the group of secondary school students aged 17-18 (N=192) and the group of university students aged 21-25 (N=383) were made. Study 2 included comparison between university students group (N=69) and non-students group (N=43) aged from 21 to 24 (these two groups did not differ in age). In both studies, the Croatian Test of Moral Reasoning by Proroković was applied. As a measure of moral reasoning, the Index of Moral Reasoning (IMR) was calculated. This measure has some advantages compared to other measures of moral reasoning, and includes individual assessments of deviations from the 'optimal profile'. Results of the Study 1 did not show differences in the IMR between secondary school students and university students. Both groups gave higher assessments to the arguments that correspond to higher phases of moral development. However, group differences were found for pre-conventional and conventional phases. As expected, secondary school students gave significantly higher assessments to the arguments that correspond to lower phases of moral development. Results of the Study 2 showed that university students, in relation to non-students, have higher IMR. Respecting to phases of moral development, both groups of participants gave higher assessments to the arguments that correspond to the post-conventional phase. Consistent with expectations and previous findings, results of both studies did not confirm gender differences in moral reasoning.

Keywords : education, index of moral reasoning, Kohlberg's theory of moral development, moral reasoning

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