
An Examination of How Socioemotional Development Impacts Identity and Moral Development

Erikson's Life Span Development theory breaks up the social development of an individual into eight stages of how and what we should develop when. In each stage we develop slightly different base on environmental factors. The absence of friends and peers will have a greater impact on people during their middle childhood to early adolescence, than it will on and middle aged person.

These environmental impacts can affect how we develop in our moral judgement and our perception of life in general. I will examine multiple articles on moral judgment and standards of judgments that have analyzed people with different impacts in their socioemotional development backgrounds and the affect these differences have on judgement. There are many environmental differences that can impact a person's development, such as socioeconomic status, religion, and cultural differences. Unfortunately, negative environmental impacts are the most pertinent to the topic of this paper. Maltreatment can happen to anyone at any age, but what are the long lasting effects of maltreatment on a still developing child?

In a study done by Smetana in 1999, he examined non-maltreated children versus maltreated children on their judgements towards transgressions. A total of 55 children, maltreated or non-maltreated, were interviewed on hypothetical events involving transgressions against other children which were depicted as either provoked or unprovoked. Maltreated Children were recruited from a center for low income maltreated children who were referred to this center by the Department of Social Services.

The 36 maltreated children were split up into two groups based on the form of maltreatment. These groups were determined based on a specific coding that separated the abused children from the neglected to create maltreatment sub-types that could possibly yield different results. The findings of this study are interesting, all children agreed when it came to making a moral judgement on provoked and unprovoked acts. All children understood that all transgressions are wrong and deserving of punishment. However, when it came to the emotional responses for example, non-maltreated children reported a higher degree of sadness for transgressors of unprovoked attacks and neglected children reported a higher level of fear in unprovoked unfair resource distribution.

These findings confirm Smetana's words "moral judgements develop from children's experiences of the instinct effect of actions on other, such as their harm, injury or their perceived

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)

violation of rights (Smetana 1999). ” The question of morality, when it comes to punishment, is wide spread. Many studies are done on children from different backgrounds, socioeconomic status, or maltreatment types to determine what can influence moral judgement in cases of transgressions, but can't that change? A scenario; A young girl growing up in a normal, middle class suburban home goes on to marry the boy next door who ends up beating her. As a child, her judgement of a transgression of similar sorts may have been different to her judgment now that she is the victim. Kohlbergs (1979) theory of moral development states “that moral reasoning changes over time in predictable stages moving from simple to the complex stage and that these are more adaptive than the simple stages. ” In total he describes 6 stages, split up into three groups, the Preconvention stage in which most children's moral development lies but also most criminal offenders, then the conventional stage where most of society's adolescence and adults moral judgment lies and lastly, the post conventional stage at which, individuals such as Mother Theresa and Ghandi use moral reasoning. In a study conducted by Buttell, Carney and Miller this theory was used to explore the level of moral reasoning in battered women use when making the decision of whether or not to return home to their abusive partner. It is a common view that battered women who return home are “morally immature,” but is this a misconception or can someone really regress in their level of moral reasoning?

A sample of 58 women checking in to a shelter for domestic violence victims was tested using the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to assess their moral reasoning. The test consisted of multiple-choice questions that would then give the researchers an average P-score (P = Principle morality) ranging from 0-95. The results showed the average P-score for the given sample of battered women was 32. 1. The average scores for college students and adult is a P-Score of 40, indicating that female victims of domestic violence are, in fact, reasoning at an average level of morally and are not morally immature. Through further evaluation it was also found that, when it comes to their own situation and the question of leaving their intimate victimizer, these women use moral reasoning on a post conventional level. This being said, women victimized by domestic violence use a superior form of moral judgment when making their decision because their thought process considers subjecting their own self-interest to protect the welfare of others, mainly their children. The decision on not leaving to protect their children from the abuser is a common one, but is it that all that really can be done?As a parent it is your job to protect your child and ensure his or her well-being at any cost.

So, a mother plagued by the abuse from her child's father makes the decision to stay so he does not turn his aggression and violence towards the child. With this, she is protecting her children from physical harm but what is often overlooked are the impacts of witnessing abuse of a loved one, on their psychological development. Acting with a heightened level of morality by sacrificing your own wellbeing to save someone else is honorable but in the case of domestic abuse, as explained above, I do not believe self-sacrifice is the solution to protecting your child. In a study conducted by Victoria Thornton, the affects of witnessing domestic abuse, on a

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

child's mental health was evaluated through drawings and play. Many previous studies concluded that children living in homes where domestic violence had occurred has a negative affect on the child's functioning. However, these results were found through questionnaires filled out by the mothers and not the children, assuming the mothers were in tune with how the child felt about the situation. Thornton found this to be less than ideal and chose to interview 8 children from five different families, each paired with their mother but question by themselves. This sample was recruited from a center working with domestic violence survivors and all mothers had reported being separated from their abuser for no less than six months.

The children were assessed through two forms of drawings, one being the Kinetic Family Drawing and the second being the Human Figure Drawing (Koppitz, 1968). The results revealed that all children "conveyed a sense of need to connect with someone who would listen" (Thornton, 94) and were able to depict specific events in their drawings that significantly impacted them. An example is, one of the participating children drew an image of her-self with the line acting as her arm had a break in it. In a later interview with the mother, Thornton found out that there had been an incident where the child's arm was hurt in a domestic dispute. One noteworthy finding was that most children are more aware of what is going on than the mothers think. So now that we have this information, are mothers who stay in these situations actually doing more damage than good? Although research does show that witnessing domestic abuse can have an impact on neurological development in a child, long lasting affects into adulthood are few. Most children are generally resilient. I have now examined Moral development seen from different angles, pertaining to people in different locks of life, and how direct and indirect negative stimuli impact us and people in general. Maltreated children have their development of moral judgment impeded on by their victimizers. Victims of domestic violence have a heightened sense of moral judgment in their own situations, which in turn causes them more damage.

Lastly, the children of these abused women have a heightened chance of abnormalities in their development. This seems like a vicious cycle, which in some cases it is. The development of moral reasoning is not just important for us as individuals to be able to make proper decision for our own lives but also for the general public. Whether you are a victim, victimizer or the witness of a transgression, the affect of moral judgments made by one person can have a domino affect on the people involved. The information above can seem morbid and disheartening but rest assured that these studies regard a small percentage of society. Moral development is influenced by many things that differ from person to person, cultural aspects of society and family life, just to name a few. If one is lacking positive influence in one aspect we generally search for another influence that will be more positive to even the playing field. With that being said and knowing that even in the worst situations most children are extremely resilient. Moral judgment, I believe, is what makes us different and the same all at once. There's a general morally definition of wrong and right but how we interpret it is what makes us who we are. Morality is what keeps society functioning.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

gradesfixer.com

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP