

## **Eysenckian Dimensions of Personality and Morality: An Operationalisation of Possible Relationships**

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**Abstract:** The study pointed out the bias in the literature on the relationship between personality and morality in favour of the social dimension. It also acknowledges the possible influence of biological dimension of personality on morality. Employing Eysenck's theories of social attitudes and emotionality as the theoretical basis the study went further to operationalise twenty four possible relationships between Eysenckian dimensions of personality and Berkowitz's seven characteristics of a complex moral person.

**Key words:** Social dimension, personality, morality

### **INTRODUCTION**

That personality and morality are related seems obvious. This is evident by the similar patterns that moral development shares with personality development. Both Piaget<sup>[1]</sup> and Kohlberg<sup>[2]</sup> recognize the importance of intellectual maturity in the onset of moral maturity. Rest<sup>[3]</sup> also recognizes the importance of personality variables in the ability to interpret situations as requiring moral action. According to him individuals differ in their sensitivity to the needs and welfare of others and that the capacity to make inferences about situations as requiring moral action or not develops with age and individuals differ in this capacity. The so-called moral exemplars, that is those who exhibit higher level of moral commitment, have been noted to be characterized by certain personality traits like compassion, consistency, honesty, self-sacrifice and open-mindedness<sup>[4]</sup>.

Colby and Damon<sup>[5]</sup> have also demonstrated that the difference in moral sensitivity and commitment observed among moral exemplars when compared with the general population lies in the singular fact that moral exemplars have had their ideal selves incorporated into their daily lives. This suggests again that personality and morality are related.

The importance of consideration of personality in predicting behaviour of any type (including morality) has been captured by Eysenck when he suggested that the confound of results of many psychological studies lies in the failure of researchers to give consideration to individual differences in their research designs<sup>[6]</sup>.

It is the goal of this study to demonstrate theoretically how Eysenckian personality dimension can predict morality. In achieving this goal we shall attempt to

understand what morality and personality are, the bias in the literature towards social aspect of personality in demonstrating relationships between morality and personality, the possibility of biological basis of morality, how Eysenckian dimensions of personality could link morality and biology and their possible predictive power of moral agency.

**Meaning of morality:** Defining morality is a difficult task. Psychologists are by no means agreed on the meaning of the concept. Oxford dictionary defines it as standard principles of good behaviour. Reber<sup>[7]</sup> conceives of it as a doctrine or a set of principles for action, or a quality of an act deemed to be right and proper according to a particular moral code.

Rokeach<sup>[8]</sup> sees morality as a consideration of what is good; what is right or wrong. It includes components like moral values, laws, rules and moral behaviours. Soetan<sup>[9]</sup> sees morality as entailing the acquisition and comprehension of the respect and observance of rules and institutions of the society. Mundy-Castle and Bundy<sup>[10]</sup> conceive of morality as a social intelligence that entails reasoning about rightness and wrongness of an act or conduct in accordance with some principles or values.

Literature on moral psychology is replete with different conflicting criteria in the measurement of morality. Rest<sup>[3]</sup> has aggregated these criteria to six and has made comprehensive critique of each of them.

These criteria are:

- Behaviour in conformity with societal norms.
- Internalisation of societal norms
- Behaviour that helps another person

- Arousal of empathy
- Reasoning about justice
- Putting another's interest ahead one's own.

While each of the above has its weakness as a measure of morality Berkowitz and Grych<sup>[11]</sup> have argued that all the above criteria and many more need to be present in an individual in order to regard him as a complete moral person. Indeed Berkowitz and Grych<sup>[11]</sup> listed seven important characteristics of a moral person. These characteristics which can also be regarded as facets of morality are:

**Moral behaviour:** This will include covert and overt behaviours of the moral person which must respect the rights and wellbeing of self and others.

**Moral character:** This refers to the dispositions of the moral person which must be stable in their response to situation in moral ways. These dispositions are observable in character traits like honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others.

**Moral emotion:** This is the force behind all moral behaviours. It is this force that integrate and coordinate the knowledge and values of the moral person.

**Moral reasoning:** The moral person posses high sense of logic and justice and he often uses this to determine what is fair and just and to balance claims when faced with moral dilemmas.

**Moral identity:** the moral person also has a high sense of self as a central moral being.

**Moral values:** The moral person has lasting dispositions in believing in the moral rightness of a behaviour or state of being.

**Meta-moral characteristics:** The complete moral person also has certain attribute that are not necessarily moral in nature but that nevertheless serve moral functioning. Such attributes as observed by Colby and Damon<sup>[5]</sup> among moral exemplars include receptiveness to progressive social influence, positivity, humility, faith and spirituality. Berkowitz and Grych<sup>[11]</sup> consider metamoral characteristics as psychological foundations for moral agency. The traits they pinpointed are social orientation, self-control, compliance with external standards and self esteem.

**Meaning of personality:** The concept of personality has its origin in the Latin word *persona* and it refers to both the masks that were worn in the theatre and the wearers of

the masks. Borgatta and Lambert<sup>[12]</sup> claimed that the audience expected the wearer of a given mask to behave and exhibit attitudes in a consistent pattern.

Persona is synonymous to concepts like façade, exterior, guise, identity or image<sup>[6]</sup>. Personality, in this sense, means the public self. Personality, however, means more than the public self. It entails those internal stable factors that make people systematic and predictably different from one another<sup>[6]</sup>.

According to Efogbe<sup>[13]</sup>, Allport identified five definitions of personality. The first sees personality as entailing the totality of the individual's biological innate and acquired dispositions. The second emphasizes the organization of personal attributes of the individual while the third notes the hierarchical nature of personal attributes. The fourth conceives of personality as constituting the organism as a whole while the fifth stresses those qualities that distinguish the individual from the mass. After considering these five possible definitions offered by Allport, Efogbe<sup>[13]</sup> adopted a working definition that conceives of personality as the underlying relatively stable psychological structures and processes that organise an individual's experience and shape his/her actions and reactions to his or her environment.

Furnham and Heaven<sup>[6]</sup> have also observed that every definition of personality entails either of three themes. The first them suggests description of the nature of individual's responses and reactions to social and environmental situations, the second theme stresses the biological, inherited and organic component of personality while the third emphasizes the organizational and patterning feature of personality.

These broad themes are represented by Cattell's<sup>[14]</sup>, Allport's<sup>[15]</sup> and Maddi's<sup>[16]</sup>, for Cattell<sup>[14]</sup> personality is that which makes possible a prediction of what a person will do or not do in a given situation. For Allport<sup>[15]</sup> it is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of a psychophysical system that creates the person's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings. Maddi<sup>[16]</sup>, however sees personality as a stable set of tendencies and characteristic that determines those commonalities and differences in peoples' psychological behaviour (thought, feelings, actions) that have continuity in time and that may not be easily understood as the sole result of the social and biological pressures of the moment.

What all the definitions reviewed above add up to is that personality has both biological and social aspects. It is thus safe to conclude that personality is the biosocial tendencies and characteristics that influence individual's behaviour.

**Bias in the literature on the relationship between personality and morality:** The working definition of personality that we adopted suggests that personality has both social and biological dimensions. Many of the studies that have attempted an investigation of the relationship between personality and morality have, however, explored the social dimension at the expense of the biological<sup>[17, 10]</sup>. For example Emler *et al.*<sup>[17]</sup> have observed significant negative relationship between moral maturity and some socio-political dimensions of personality like traditional moralism, Machiavellian tactics, Machiavellian cynism. They also observed significant positive relationship between New left philosophy and moral maturity.

Mundy-Castle and Bundy<sup>[10]</sup> also observed significant positive relationship between traditional-modern personality dimension and person-centred morality—a moral response considered to be most superior in their (Mundy-Castle and Bundy's) three dimensional ethical system. No significant relationship was, however, observed between locus of control scores of respondents and their person-centred morality scores.

The overstress of social dimension of personality in the prediction of morality is probably attributable to the popular thinking among psychologists that moral development is solely determined by social and environmental factors that provide opportunities for role-taking and guided reflection<sup>[18,1]</sup>. Indeed, Kohlberg<sup>[18]</sup> has claimed that liberal democracy is a catalyst to the occurrence of role taking, guided reflection and cognitive disequilibrium, the triumvirate of moral development. Emler, Renwick and Malone<sup>[17]</sup> and Emler and Stace<sup>[19]</sup> have also suggested that the probable reason why most studies have focused on social dimension of personality is because many of the distinguishing features of the stages of moral development as propounded by Kohlberg are social. This position has further been corroborated by Emler and Stace<sup>[19]</sup> who reported that different types of moral reasoning characteristics of Kohlberg's stages of moral development are more of expressions of contrasting political identities with different ideological contents rather than developmental levels.

**The possibility of biological consideration:** In the recent time some authors have started to draw the attention of social scientists to the possible biological basis of morality<sup>[20]</sup>. Such social-biologists have not only argued that altruism (one of the criteria of morality) has survival function for human beings, they have also started to map out the epigenetic rules of morality and thus demonstrating that biology rather than social variables like religion is the source of moral consciousness. Indeed some have even argued that biology intersects religion and morality<sup>[21,22]</sup>.

One dimension of morality that may be rooted in biology is moral emotion. Much research efforts on morality has focused on the cognitive or rational dimension of morality<sup>[1,23-26]</sup>. Interest has gradually been shifting to emotional dimensions of morality since the 80s<sup>[25,26]</sup>.

Emotion, according to Rest<sup>[3]</sup>, is the motivational basis of moral action. According to Tangney<sup>[25]</sup> moral emotion is responsible for both the capacity to interpret accurately interpersonal event as entailing morality and the motivation to take reparative actions.

Zanjonc has demonstrated the primacy of moral emotion over moral cognition by contending that affective reaction often precedes complex cognitive operations and that the former is capable of being elicited independently of the latter<sup>[3]</sup>. This suggests that the understanding of social situations as moral situations dawns on the individual only after he or she has experienced moral emotion<sup>[3]</sup>. Samay<sup>[27]</sup> has also considered moral emotion as the energy that enable individuals to act for their moral reasons. In his words moral emotion is the general power supply of all behaviours.....integrating force of all knowledge and valuation (p.73). Indeed Hobffman has emphasized the role of empathy (one of the numerous moral emotions) in moral judgment.

Rozin, *et al.*<sup>[26]</sup> have posited the existence of two clusters of moral emotions. The first being made up of shame, embarrassment and guilt and the second being made up of contempt, anger and disgust. The first cluster of moral emotions has been described as being self-focused and self-conscious while the latter has been referred to as other-critical. This means that the first cluster of emotions are felt when we are critical of ourselves while the latter are felt when we are critical of others. All these emotions have been found to be distinct from one another, yet related<sup>[25,28]</sup>.

Tangney<sup>[25]</sup> has regarded some moral emotions as positive and some as negative; empathy, he regards as good moral affective capacity and shame and guilt as ugly feelings in negative situations. Indeed he has started to talk about these moral emotions in a manner as if they are personality dimensions. Thus, shame-proneness, guilt-proneness and empathy-proneness dimensions have been offered.

Similarly Rozin *et al.*<sup>[26]</sup> have begun to map out the relationship between moral emotions and ethical domains. Their attempt at mapping suggests that violation of community ethics, like failure of an individual to carry out his or her duties within a community, elicits contempt. Violation of ethics of autonomy (when individual's freedom or right are infringed upon) elicits anger while violation of ethics of divinity (e.g., blasphemy or desecration of holy shrine) elicits disgust.

What all this adds up to is that an individual's moral judgment can be predicted from his/her emotional reaction and that any personality theory or dimension that is capable of predicting individual differences in emotionality is also capable of predicting individual differences in morality. One personality theory that may be capable of doing this is Eysenck's personality dimensions. Francis has described this theory of personality as biological and physiological-based, emotion-linked, comprehensive, parsimonious and capable of predicting social attitudes like morality.

**Eysenck's personality dimensions and morality:**

Eysenck<sup>[29]</sup> has proposed a theory of personality that is based on four important dimensions of personality. These dimensions that were psychometrically derived seem sufficient to describe variation in human personality traits<sup>[30]</sup>. The four dimensions are Neuroticism-stability, Extraversion-Introversion, Psychoticism and Lie scale. All of them are relevant to our discussion of personality and morality.

**Neuroticism:** According to Saklofske and Eysenck this dimension measures emotional lability and overactivity. High scorer on this dimension tends to be anxious, worrying individual, moody and frequently depressed and suffers from various psychosomatic disorders.

**Extraversion:** This dimension describes the extent of an individual's social interaction. It is characterized by sociability and impulsivity. According to Saklofske and Eysenck a high scorer on this dimension is sociable and out-going, a risk-taker and inhibited whereas a low scorer is quiet, introspective, well-ordered and controlled.

**Psychoticism:** This is the personality dimension that Eysenck later offered and it is said to measure an aspect of personality not subsumed by the extraversion and neuroticism dimensions. Psychoticism describes the extent of an individual's tough-mindedness. Individuals high on this dimension are characterized by certain recklessness, they have disregard for common sense and convention and exhibit a degree of inappropriate emotional expression. Eysenck has suggested that high scores on Psychoticism dimension are indicators of individual predisposition to psychotic breakdown.

**Lie scale:** This dimension was not primarily conceived of by Eysenck to measure a personality dimension but to detect an individual's tendency to fake good. However, over the years Lie Scale has achieved the status of a

personality dimension. Lie Scale score has been given different interpretations. Two of these interpretations are that first, it is a measure of lack of insight<sup>[31,32]</sup> and second, it is a measure of conformity to social rules and pressures<sup>[33]</sup>.

Eysenck went further to offer a biological explanation of his dimensions of personality. He located the biological basis of extraversion to the Ascending Reticular Activation System (ARAS) that sends non-specific stimulation to the cortex. The biological substrate of extraversion, therefore is low psychological arousal. Biological basis of neuroticism is located in the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). It is consequent upon increased activation of the limbic system. Biological basis of psychoticism is located in testosterone or monoamine oxidase.

Both Eysenck's linkage of two of the dimensions to emotion and his theory of social attitudes suggest the possible relationship between Eysenck's personality dimensions and morality. Eysenck and Eysenck<sup>[34]</sup> posited that extraversion represents an increased susceptibility to positive affect while neuroticism predisposes to negative affect. Thus extraverts are not likely to be morally inhibited while individuals high in neuroticism are more likely to experience moral inhibition. Also his theory of social attitudes which employed social learning theory and socialization posited that people differ in their susceptibility to social conditioning along the personality dimensions. According to Eysenck, introverts are more amenable to social conditioning than extroverts and therefore more socialized and more tender-minded in attitudes. Eysenck<sup>[35]</sup> further posited that tough-minded attitudes are concerned with immediate satisfaction of aggressive and sexual impulses while tender-minded attitudes are concerned with ethical and religious ideas.

The implication of the above is that persons may differ in the moral emotion they are predisposed to experience, in their levels of moral maturity and in their cherished moral values according to their differences on Eysenck's personality dimensions.

**Operationalisation of the possible relationships:** In operationalising Eysenckian personality dimensions to predict morality it is possible to examine each of the personality dimensions vis-à-vis the six moral characteristics of a complete moral person as posited by Berkowitz and Erych<sup>[36]</sup>.

**Extroversion:** According to Eysenck's<sup>[35]</sup> theory of social attitudes, social conditionability varies along extraversion-introversion dimension, being lower at the extraversion end and higher at the introversion end.

Eysenck's<sup>[34]</sup> affect theory also suggest that susceptibility to positive and negative affect also varies along extraversion and neuroticism dimensions, extraversion being more to positive than negative affect. Taking these two attributes of extraversion dimension together it is possible to hypothesis the following about plausible relationships between extraversion and morality.

- H1 The higher an individual is in extraversion the lower will his/her behaviour respect the rights and well being of self and others.
- H2 The lower an individual is in extraversion the lower he/she will possess moral character traits like honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others.
- H3 The higher an individual is in extraversion dimension the less likely she/he will experience strong negative moral emotions like guilt, shame, disgust, embarrassment e.t.c.
- H4 The higher an individual is in extraversion the less sophisticated and the less mature will be her/his moral reasoning.
- H5 The higher an individual is in extraversion the less likely will she/he see himself/herself as a central moral being.
- H6 The higher an individual is in extraversion the lower he/she will possess strong moral values.

On the basis of the above it is plausible to suggest that high extraversion is antithetic to moral agency.

**Neuroticism:** Two characteristics of neuroticism that are important in predicting its relationships with morality are its characteristic emotional lability and its proness to negative affect. Perhaps the third is its low relationship with social conditionability. The following hypotheses can be formulated therefore:

- H7 The higher an individual is on neuroticism dimension the lower will his/her behaviour respects the rights and well being of self and others.
- H8 The higher an individual is on neuroticism the lower she/he will posses strong moral character traits like honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others.
- H9 The higher an individual is on neuroticism dimension the more likely she/she will experience strong negative moral emotions like guilt, shame disgust, embarrassment but the less likely she/he will experience strong positive moral emotion like empathy.

- H10 The higher an individual is on neuroticism the more likely she/he see himself as a central moral being.
- H11 The higher an individual is on neuroticism the higher she/he will possess strong moral values.
- H12 The higher an individual is on neuroticism the less sophisticated and the less mature will be his/her moral reasoning.

On the basis of the above it is possible to conjecture that high neuroticism is antithetic to moral agency.

**Psychoticism:** One characteristic of psychoticism that is predictive of morality is the tough-minded tenderminded attitudes. Psychoticism is said to vary along this social attitudinal dimensions high psychoticism being associated with tough-mindedness. Empirical evidence has also supported that psychoticism also vary along susceptibility to conditioning, high scorer being less susceptible than low scorer. It is possible to hypothesis based on the above that.

- H13 The higher an individual is in psychoticism the lower will his/her behaviour respects the rights and well being of others and the higher her/his behaviour respects the rights and well being of self.
- H14 The higher an individual is in psychoticism the lower he/she will possess moral traits like honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others.
- H15 The higher an individual is in psychoticism dimension the less likely she/he will experience strong negative emotions like guilt, shame and embarrassment e.t.c.
- H16 The higher an individual is in psychoticism the less sophisticated and less mature will be her/his moral reasoning.
- H17 The higher an individual is in psychoticism the less likely will she/he see him/herself as a central moral being.
- H18 The higher an individual is on psychoticism the lower he/she will possess strong moral values.

On the basis of the above it is plausible to suggest that high psychoticism is antithetic to moral values.

**Lie scale score:** Two important reasons will influence operationslisation of the relationship between Lie Scale Scores and morality dimensions. First is the Lie Scale's successful attainment of an autonomous personality dimension status and second is its interpretations as a measure of social rules and pressures<sup>[33,37]</sup>. In the recent time as being fundamental to

the tough-minded-tender-minded dimensions of Eysenckian social attitude theory and that high score on it may be characteristic of well-adjusted personality. On the basis of the above it is possible to hypothesize the following:

- H19 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie Scale the higher will his/her behaviour respects the rights and well-being of others and the lower his/her behaviour will respect the rights and well-being of self.
- H20 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie Scale the stronger will be his character traits like honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others.
- H21 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie Scale the more likely she/he will experience strong negative emotions like guilt, shame and embarrassment.
- H22 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie scale the less sophisticated and the more conventional will be his/her moral reasoning.
- H23 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie scale the more likely will she/he see himself/herself as a central moral being.
- H24 The higher is an individual's score on the Lie Scale the stronger will he/she holds to conventional moral values.

From the above it is plausible to suggest that high score on Lie scale Score may be positively related to moral agency.

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