THE REACTIONS OF BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO MORAL DILEMMAS RELATED TO CORRUPTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MORAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining moral reasoning related to corruption. Data were obtained from 350 purposively selected Bahir Dar University students (175 males and 175 females) using moral reasoning questionnaire. Using Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Gilligan's moral orientation model, the moral reasoning questionnaire was scored for moral stage and moral orientation. Results in multiple-regression analysis indicated that the old age group (22-26 yeas) had significantly higher stage of moral reasoning than the young age group (18-21 years) when responding to moral dilemmas about issues of corruption. But, there was no significant age group difference with respect to moral orientation. Furthermore, there was no gender difference in stage of moral reasoning and moral orientation. The importance of the results, particularly the educational implications, for understanding the role of psychological intervention programmes and commitments in combating corruption are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

The concept of "corruption" is synonymous with the misuse of authority in an exchange for promise, gift, or in favour of personal relationship. Corruption is harmful to the society. It has destructive effects on the economic, political, and administrative systems of a nation (Belete and Dereje 2000). In the unending struggle against corruption, citizens in democratic societies should play the key role, as vigilant and effective defenders of the common good based on the rule of law, the balance of power, freedom of information and speech and the widest possible participation by citizens in monitoring and managing public affairs (Lewis 1996). The anti-corruption report in Ethiopia (cited in Korajian 2003:44), however reported a bad story regarding the media as a tool to combat corruption in Ethiopia: "... in theory, journalists have a constitutional right of access to information, in reality such access is not enforced so journalists... suffer at the discretion of bureaucrats." On the issue of clarity, transparency and fairness of decision making in personnel management, corruption survey in Ethiopia also revealed a clear absence of such practices (The Federal Ethics and Anti- Corruption Commission 2004).

In a democratic society, acceptable behavior' and ethical conduct of citizens are governed by moral principles, rules of law, and procedures that guide what they should do in their interpersonal relationships with other people (Walker 1982; Walker and Pitts 1998). Corruption exists in spite of moral rules; it is because individuals', especially public officials' desire for gain prevents them from working properly. Like all economic agents, corrupters and the corrupted obey rational motives based on a desire for gain. Corruption increases if the expected benefits from it are higher than the risks involved (Rose 1978). The extent of corruption is linked to the factors that determine its profitability (Hurlock 1978). The corruption survey in Ethiopia makes some recommendations on the things

the government may do to curb corruption: sustainable political will and committed top leadership, honest and accountable judicial system, independence of judicial and bureaucratic institutions from political abuse, transparency when government agencies deal with businesses, and proper training and realistic salaries for civil servants (The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission 2004).

Furthermore, the survey revealed that relationship with supervisors, political, ethnic, and regional connections and providing gifts should not serve as causal factors for getting employment, greater remunerations and training opportunities. Thus morality, or the ability to make a decision which best meets individuals' aspirations as well as social standards or expectations in conflict situations, is an important ingredient in combating corruption. This situation can be supported by the following assumptions. The decision to give as well as take service according to the rules required by the conditions of the civil service, triggers the entire question of moral dilemmas that involve issues of rights and responsibilities in relationships as well as issues of care to self and others. Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning focuses on the first dimension which seems to be a more male-oriented point of view, whereas Gilligan has developed a different way of looking at morality focusing on care elicited by a sense of responsibility in relationships, one that seems to fit in more with a female viewpoint (Skoe and Gooden 1993 cited in Santrock 2001; Jadack et al. 1995). Male's characteristic approach to general moral laws seems to be "Do not interfere with the rights of others"; female's on the other hand, seems to be "Be concerned with the needs of others."

A moral duty to give as well as take service according to the rules required by the conditions of the service triggers issues of rights and responsibilities in relationships as well as issues of care to self and of others. Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory of moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1968 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995) and Gilligan's perspective on moral development (Gilligan 1982) together provide a rich conceptual

framework from which to study moral reasoning related to moral conflicts about corruption. Following is a brief review of these theoretical bases.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. Kohlberg believes that moral development is primarily based on moral reasoning and unfolds in a series of stages. He proposed that moral thinking progresses from childhood to adulthood in an orderly, hierarchical, stage like manner that is dependent on the level of cognitive development. Kohlberg postulated three levels in the development of justice- oriented moral reasoning and each of the levels includes two stages (Kohlberg 1969 cited in Santrock 2001: 422-423):

Level 1. Preconventional Reasoning. It is the lowest level in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this level, the individual shows no internalization of moral values- moral reasoning is controlled by external rewards and punishments.

Stage 1. Heteronomous Morality is the first stage in Kohlberg's theory. At this stage moral thinking is often tied to punishment. For example, children and adolescents obey rules because adults tell them to obey.

Stage 2 Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and Exchange. This is the second stage of Kohlberg's moral development. At this stage, not only do individuals pursue their own interests but also let others do the same. Thus, what is right involves an equal exchange. People are nice to others so that others will be nice to them in return.

Level 2. Conventional Reasoning. This is the second or intermediate level in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this level, internalization is intermediate. Individuals abide by certain standards (internal). But they are the standards of others (external), such as parents or the laws of society.

Stage 3.Mutual Interpersonal Expectations and Interpersonal Conformity is Kohlberg's third stage of moral development. At this stage individuals value trust, caring, and legality to others as a basis for moral judgment.

Stage 4.· Social Systems Morality. This is the fourth stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage, moral judgments are based on understanding the social order, law, justice, and duty. For example, individuals may say that, for a community to work effectively, it needs to be protected by laws that are adhered to by its members.

Level 3. Postconventional Reasoning. It is the highest level in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this level, morality is completely internalized and is not based on others' standards. The individual recognizes alternative moral courses, explores the options,. and then decides on a personal moral code.

Stage 5. Social Contract or Utility and Individual Rights. At this stage, individuals reason that values, rights, and principles undergo or transcend the law. A person evaluates the validity of actual laws and social systems in terms of the degree to which they observe and protect fundamental human rights and values.

Stage 6. A Universal Ethical Principle.. This is the sixth and highest stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage, the person has developed a moral standard based on universal human rights. When faced with a conflict between law and conscience, the person will follow conscience, even though the decision might involve personal risk.

Kohlberg's three levels of moral reasoning represent three possible perspectives an individual can take in relation to society's moral norms. A

person at a pre- conventional (self-centered) level deals with a moral issue from the viewpoint of the specific interests of the individuals involved. Rather than being interested in society's laws, a person is concerned with the consequences he or she would face in deciding upon a particular action. A person at the conventional (rule-oriented or traditional) level deals with a moral issue from the perception of a law-abiding citizen in society and is concerned with what society views as right or just. A person at the post-conventional level, or principled level deals with a moral issue from a perspective beyond the given laws of that person's own society (i.e., a type of reasoning which rests on an individual's conception of justice and fairness and which has a theoretical appeal at least in some people).

Kohlberg (1986) believed that these moral levels and stages occur in a sequence and are age related. The first level characterizes children's moral reasoning but can represent adolescent or adult reasoning as well. The second level develops during adolescence and remains as the dominant level of thinking of most adults. The third level is rare; it begins, if at all, during adolescence or early adulthood, and it represents the moral reasoning of only a few adults (Hersh et al. 1979).

Kohlberg and his associates assumed that a focus on justice is central in defining moral reasoning of persons across situations and cultures (Kohlberg et al. 1983). Their conclusion further showed that the order of progression through the stages is invariant. Yet, they also claimed that no moral growth occurs in the absence of social experiences that would cause a person to reevaluate his/her existing moral concepts. For instance, the abstract morality of universal ethical principle (stage 6) is the biblical story of Abraham and Issac reflecting this ideal. Papalia and Sally (1995: 425) explained the story in distinct moral language: "Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son's life when God demanded it as a proof of faith." Hence persons need to rethink their concepts of morality in the interest of national and global harmony (Kohlberg et al.1983).

Research indicated that both cognitive development and social experiences as exposure to parents and peers (Kruger and Tomasello 1986) and other participants in higher education (Mason and Gibbs 1993) do contribute to the growth of moral reasoning. Furthermore, factors that appear to be positively related with moral development include reward experience for proper conduct (Bryan and Walback 1970), fear of apprehension during misconduct (Hill and Kochendorfor 1969 cited in Darge 1993), and conduciveness of the environment to achieve one's goal without recourse to misconduct (Klausmaier 1975 cited in Darge 1993).

Kohlberg (1976 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995) emphasized that discussing issues at one stage above a person's present level of moral reasoning is most effective in raising moral judgments. Thus, if a person is reasoning at stage 3, hearing argument at stage 4 is more effective than hearing arguments at stage 2 or stage 5. Numerous evaluations of moral education programmes using Kohlberg's theory have indicated such programmes were successful in advancing moral thinking (Enright et al. 1983; Leming 1981), especially if the programme lasts more than a few weeks and if the intervention involves students in discussion· of controversial moral dilemmas (Rest 1983). Kohlberg (1986) recognized that teaching moral education programmes based on the belief that young people should learn to value things like democracy and justice is very essential.

Josephson (1992) invariably emphasized that direct instruction on ethics is necessary along with consistent modelling of ethical behaviour. Training in citizenship, including such topics as the duties of citizens in democracy, personal integrity, the notion of equality, and the concern for caring for self and others are qualities that help individuals to become healthy productive citizens (London 1987). Today there appears to be more concern that teachers and the schools play a more direct role in developing standards of teaching moral behaviour. Bennett (1986 cited in Dembo 1994) suggested that schools should develop discipline codes, explain to

children and their parents what the schools expect from them, and enforce the rules.

Gilligan's Perspective in Moral Development. The most extensive research on the relationship between responsibility for others and moral thinking was undertaken by Gilligan (1982). She believed that relationships and connections to others are critical aspects of female development. Gilligan noted that women often feel caught between caring for themselves and caring for others, and characterize their failures to care for others as failures to be "nice" women. Gilligan (1996) emphasized that Kohlberg greatly underplayed the care perspective in moral development. She believed that this might have happened because Kohlberg mostly researched with males rather than females, and because Kohlberg used male responses as a model for his theory.

In extensive interviews with girls from 6 to 18 years of age, Gilligan and her associates (Gilligan et al. 1990 cited in Dembo 1994) found that girls consistently interpret moral dilemmas in terms of human relationships and base these interpretations on listening and watching other people. According to Gilligan, females have the ability to sensitively pick up different rhythms in relationships and often are able to follow the pathways of feelings. According to this view, moral problems are embedded in a contextual frame that does not necessarily fit with abstract, deductive reasoning (Gilligan 1982).

Researchers (Garmon et al. 1995 cited in Santrock 2001) have found support for Gilligan's claim that females' and males' moral reasoning often centres on different concerns and issues. Gilligan argued that if females have a predominant care (response) orientation and males have a predominant justice (rights) orientation, then different scores for females and males might emerge using Kohlberg's justice - oriented scoring system. Gilligan (1982; 1996) had been disturbed by the fact that, in some early studies, women seemed to be morally inferior to men, especially reasoning at Kohlberg's stage 3 while men usually reason at stage 4.

Gilligan's response was to argue that differential gender typing causes boys and girls to adapt different moral orientations. The independence and assertiveness training that boys receive encourages them to view moral dilemmas as inevitable conflicts of interest between individuals that laws and other social conventions are designed to resolve. Gilligan called this moral orientation the morality of justice that may seem to represent stage 4 in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. By contrast girls are taught to be nurturant, emphatic, and concerned about others - to define their sense of "goodness" in terms of their personal relationships. Gilligan called this sense of caring or compassionate concern for human welfare - a morality of care that may seem to represent stage 3 in Kohlberg's scheme.

Papalia and Sally (1995:425) provided a dramatic illustration of Gilligan's person-centred morality stated in the Bible as follows; "... in the story of the woman who proved to King Solomon that she was a baby's mother when she agreed to give the infant to another woman rather than see it harmed." However, Gilligan's initial claim - that traditional Kohlbergian measures of moral development are biased against females - has been extensively disputed (Walker 1982). While females often articulate a care perspective and males a justice perspective, the gender difference is not absolute, and the two orientations are not mutually exclusive (Lyons 1990; Rothbart et al. 1986). Yet in spite of the weight of these advances, the controversy persists about people's gender bias in Kohlberg's theory.

Statement of the Problem

The present study used both Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory of moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1968 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995) and Gilligan's perspective on moral development (Gilligan 1982) to examine the nature of moral reasoning about social issues that involve corruption. Using Kohlberg's framework, moral stage with respect to thinking about conflicts about the act of corrupting was examined. It was anticipated that young adults in the early twenties would score a higher level of moral reasoning than adolescents in their late teens. Kohlberg's theory with its

developmental emphasis on rights and responsibilities, was used to examine moral stages and age differences with respect to dilemmas focusing on corruption. Using Gilligan's framework, moral orientation, or the extent to which individuals use rights or response orientation was examined. It was predicted that females would use a care orientation to a greater extent than males. To examine this issue further in the current study, gender differences and moral orientation with respect to dilemmas focusing on corruption were investigated. Specifically, the research questions entertained in this study are:

1. What is the moral stage and moral orientation of late adolescents and young adults when presented with hypothetical dilemmas related to corruption?

2. Is the moral stage and moral orientation of late adolescents and young adults consistent with theoretical predictions?

    A. Are there age and gender differences in stage of moral reasoning about corruption?

    B. Are there age and gender differences in moral orientation about corruption?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine moral reasoning related to moral conflicts about corruption. In this regard the results of the study have paramount significance to identify ways to combat corruption. This is particularly important in the Ethiopian context where psychological intervention programs are urgently needed to combat corruption. Briefly, the study thought to be significant because it could help to:

1. contribute basic scientific data on moral reasoning about corruption
    and that, in turn, might be applied to moral education programs
    expediting the ethical values of the community;

2. enhance understanding of the theoretical perspectives that define
    the moral domain as they pertain to moral conflicts about
    corruption;

3. identify ways in the development of current moral education
    programs to teach civil servants about rights and responsible
    behaviors to combat corruption;

4. suggest ways in integrating issues of corruption rules in the school
    curriculum; and

5. establish a research tradition between psychology and moral
    education.

METHODS

Subjects

A total of 350 Bahir Dar University students (175 males and 175 females)
were purposively chosen and served as study subjects. Their mean overall
age was 21 years. There were 175 students in the young age group (mean
age 20 years and age range = 18-21 years) and 175 were in the old age
group (mean age 22 years and age range = 22 - 26 years).

The subjects were purposively selected from the total university
population. The selection of the respondents was done - first by collecting

information on the number of students representing each type of student background characteristic classified by sex (male, female) and age group (young age group, old age group). A reasonably proportional number of students representing each type of student background characteristics was then taken for the study. Then, the respondents were selected purposively from a target population of levels (sex: male, female and age group: young age group, old age group) to represent each of the categories. The sampling plan was that equal number of students from each category be included in the study, and that was effected through out. Accordingly, 350 students (175 males and 175 females, 175 of them in the young age group and the rest in the old age group) were selected for the study.

In terms of developmental psychologists' delineation of the periods of human life span, the subjects' limited age levels (18 to 21 years and 22 to 26 years) involved in the approximate age divisions of late adolescents and young adults, respectively (Berger 1983). Kohlberg's (1968 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995) delineation of the stages of moral development also supported this anticipation.

The study was conducted in Bahir Dar University for two reasons; first, because the researcher's place of work is there and, hence, follow-up plans and participation in future interventions would be easily attained. Second, as the University is a civil servant training institution, and as this research deals with an investigation of issues on corruption, the data gathered from these prospective civil servants would be of practical importance to the institution.

Adolescents and young adults emerged as an ideal sample for the study because generally it appeared that these subjects are assumed to acquire basic skills such as decision making, problem-solving, communication, and self- assessment needed to combat corruption (Davis 1984). The tax system was the focus of this research because it is one of those systems where corruption flourishes (The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission 2004).

Instrument

To collect the necessary data from respondents a questionnaire was
employed. The data collected from the respondents were classified as
follows.

Background Information Questionnaire. This questionnaire required
respondents to provide data about their age and sex.

Moral Reasoning Questionnaire. Four dilemmas in moral conflicts
related to corruption were developed from the available literature. After a
try-out, two dilemmas were eliminated because many respondents found
them vague. A questionnaire which consisted of two dilemmatic situations
that are currently important to the subjects in the study was employed to
find out the kind of decisions individuals are likely to make in situations
related to moral conflicts about corruption and to identify the type of
moral reasoning they make in reaching the decision. Following is an
example of a moral dilemma used in this study:

> The tax collector threatens the taxpayer with a very high rate. That is,
> the payer was asked to pay more than he could. But the taxpayer could
> not afford to pay what the tax collector claimed. So, the tax payer and
> tax-collector made an agreement to reduce the rate whereby the tax -
> collector got personal gifts from the tax payer, thought that they had
> nothing to lose on that score. Was the tax collector right in doing that?
> Why do you think your response to the dilemma is a good one? Why
> did you reach at that conclusion?

The dilemmas used are hypothetical, yet were developed and written to be
meaningful and relevant to the subjects who participated in the pilot study.
It was preferable to use researcher developed moral dilemmas instead of

standardized moral vignettes mainly because these items do not directly focus on the existing situation in which the study is done. The reliability estimate of the moral reasoning questionnaire was 0.85.

Procedure

The students were told that the researcher would like to know their opinions to dilemmas that are related to the moral issues of corruption. Data were then gathered during a time convenient for the respondents. Students were told that all of their responses would be confidential.

In order to encourage respondents to take a stand and further define their positions, questioning strategies for each dilemma required respondents to explain what the protagonist should do and why. They were also asked to give different reasons for taking the same stand. Participants completed the questionnaire without a time limit for responding.

Coding of Responses and Estimating Reliability

The present study used both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's perspectives on moral reasoning to examine moral stage and moral orientation of respondents. Kohlberg's theory, with its developmental emphasis on rights and responsibility, was used to examine moral stage and age differences with respect to moral dilemmas focusing on issues of corruption. Gilligan's perspective, with its emphasis on care orientation, was used to examine gender and moral orientation. These two perspectives were utilized in the present study in the same way as used by Jadack et al. (1995) and Reda (2003).

Moral Stage: - To compute moral stage, scoring was conducted for each dilemma separately across respondents. The scoring procedure was made based on Kohlberg's general stage structure definitions and critical

indicators to each consideration (Kohlberg, 1976 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995).

Based on information about usage at all stages in Kohlberg's (Kohlberg 1976 cited in Papalia and Sally 1995) perspective of moral development weighted average score (WAS) and overall global stage score (GSS) were computed. The WAS was computed based on the sum of the products of the percent usage at each stage multiplied by the stage number. The GSS was computed based on all stages that a respondent uses 25 percent or more in response to dilemmas. GSS includes both pure and mixed stages (1, 1/2, 2, 2/3, 3, 3/4, 4, 4/5, 5, 5/6, 6).

Inter-rater reliability was determined between coders. The Pearson r for agreement between coders with respect to overall WASs was .74. With respect to GSSs, there was 78 percent exact agreement to stage.

Moral Orientation: - To measure moral orientation, Lyons' method (cited in Jadack et al. 1995) of coding dilemma data was adapted for the present study. Lyons' method involves a content analysis of responses to moral dilemmas. Content analysis for each moral dilemma results in three scores: (1) frequency of rights considerations, (2) frequency of response (care),considerations, and (3) predominant consideration (rights, response, mixed). The predominant consideration refers' to the mode of reasoning used very often. The same number of rights-and response-related responses refers to mixed orientation. To monitor the percentage of agreement between coders in determining the same data as a consideration interrater reliability was determined between coders. Interrater reliability at this step was .83.

In general, the moral reasoning questionnaire about corruption was selected because reliability indices of moral stage and moral orientation data were qualified as "good" according to the standard of 0.75 set by Show and Wright (1967).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research was to investigate moral reasoning related to issues of corruption. For this purpose, a 2x2 factorial design (ANOVA) with gender and age group as independent factors and Chi-square test with alpha pre-set at .05 were used to examine the data. Analysis of variance was used to test gender and age group differences in moral reasoning about issues of corruption. Chi-square test was used to examine the association of gender and age to the type of moral orientation used related to corruption.

RESULTS

Results are reported in two sections; first, results of moral stage data are reported. Next, the analysis of moral orientation data is presented.

Results of Moral Stage Data as the Functions of Age and Gender

In the current study, the two independent factors are age group and gender. The dependent factor is then the weighted average score (WAS) on the moral reasoning about issues of corruption.

To examine age group and gender differences in stage of moral reasoning, a 2(gender: male, female) x 2 (age group: young, old) analysis of variance, with the WAS score as the dependent factor was computed. Results of the two - way ANOVA shown in Table 1 revealed that the interaction effect was not significant, $F(1,346) = 0.146$, $P > .05$. Furthermore, the ANOVA revealed a non-significant main effect for gender, $F (1,346) = 1.366$, $P > .05$.

Table 1 - Summary Table for Two - Way ANOVA with Gender and Age Group as Independent Factors

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Score	Fcal
Rows (Gender)	0.683	1	0.683	1.366
Columns (Age)	2.475	1	2.475	4.950
Interaction (Gender x Age)	0.073	1	0.073	0.146
Within cell	170.000	346	0.500	-
Total	173.231	349	-	--

However, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for age group, F (1,346) = 4.950, P<. 05 with the older respondents reasoning at a higher stage than the young respondents. The ANOVA revealed that respondents' age levels affected their moral reasoning stages. Specifically, the analysis of the data pertaining to the type of moral reasoning used by respondents indicated that the young respondents used some stage 2/3 reasoning, but typically they reasoned at stage 3. The old respondents used some stage 3 thinking, but were moving toward using more stage 3/4 reasoning as well.

Results of Moral Orientation Data with Respect to Age and Gender

Moral orientation scores computed across all dilemmas are presented in Table 2. Respondents used moral reasoning reflecting response, rights, and mixed orientations. Overall, 45 respondents (12.85%) had a

predominant response orientation, 88 respondents (25.14%) had a right orientation, 217 respondents (62%) had a mixed orientation.

Table 2. Frequencies of Individuals' Moral Orientation with Respect to Age Group and Gender

Moral Orientation	Age Group		Total	Gender		Total
	Young	Old		Male	Female	
Response	24	21	45	22	23	45
Rights	43	45	88	45	43	88
Mixed	108	109	217	108	109	217
Total	175	175	350	175	175	350

To examine the association between respondents' age and types of moral orientation, the Chi-square value was computed using the 2x3 contingency table. The Chi-square analysis of the data shown in Table 2 revealed non-significant age group differences in moral orientation, $x^2(.05,350) = 32.5346$, $P > 0.05$. Overall, both the young and old respondents used response and rights orientations to a similar extent. They did not prefer one mode of moral thinking to another.

To examine the association between respondents' gender and the types of moral orientation respondents employed in response to dilemmas about the issues of corruption, the Chi-square value was computed using the 2x3 contingency table. The Chi-square analysis of the data shown in Table 2 revealed no significant gender differences with respect to the type of moral orientation males and females used to think about corruption, x^2 (.05,350)

= 32.5346, P > .05. Both males and females used response and rights orientation to a similar extent. Males and females did not prefer one orientation to another. They used a mix of orientations when responding to dilemmas about issues of corruption.

DISCUSSION

Moral Reasoning about Corruption

As anticipated, the analysis of variance revealed a main effect for age group, with the young age group reasoning at a lower moral stage level than the old age group on dilemmas about issues of corruption. The young age group in this study used some stage 2/3 reasoning emphasizing that serving one's own self-interest is reasonable and rational. The young age group made a decision not to corrupt because they assumed that other people would view them as selfish and immoral. Here, the young adults at stage 3 emphasized that the protagonist should not be corrupted because he must keep his reputation as an honest individual. One can do everything that he legally can otherwise people would view him as selfish or heartless. These respondents were worried about how people would view their act of corrupting. They need to consider the feelings of others into account.

The older age group in this study similarly used some stage 3 reasoning as well, emphasizing on human relations too much as reason for not reporting corruption but were moving toward using more stage 3/4 reasoning. For the old age group typical reasoning extended into topics of responsibility and obligation in relationships. The old age group made a decision not to corrupt because a society cannot function effectively if individuals take advantage by participating in unlawful acts like the case in the present study. The old age group believed that laws exist to maintain

order within society and to promote the good of the people. Thus one should not be corrupted, because it is illegal regardless of the motive behind it. A similar finding was reported by some other investigators (Hersh et al. 1979). However, the findings of the present study varied from Kohlberg's (Kohlberg 1986) findings in relation to the stages, which could have been reached by respondents.

Kohlberg's empirical studies showed that individuals in their late teens should approach stage 3/4 and persons in their early twenties should approach stage 4 in terms of their moral competence (Kohlberg 1986). The unsatisfactory level of moral reasoning used by the respondents to make decisions about corruption issues presented in the study may invite the following comments. Although the influence of messages from various interventions on combating corruption needs further research in contents such as the one in this study, a possible proposition for lower moral stage scores in the present study probably is related to the way people have been taught to think about moral conflicts related to unethical conduct. For example, Bahir Dar University draft code of conduct for students supported this anticipation (Bahir Dar University 2004). The 2004 draft code of conduct for students is an inadequate source of information about students' conduct. The document offers almost no insight into student conduct in Bahir Dar University, except suggesting the type of punishable offences. Research findings support this explanation suggesting that the amount of explanation about moral issues received by the individual (Papalia and Olds 1978 cited in Darge 1993) and exposure to appropriate models (Brophy and Willis 1981) appeared to be positively related with moral development. Darge (1993) invariably emphasized that academic morality among social science first year students in Addis Ababa University seemed to be at an unsatisfactory level. Darge's conclusion further indicated that the solution to the problem may lie both within and outside the university, with a heavy accent on the latter.

Moreover, differences in measurements of moral judgments might also be a reason for the apparent lack of uniformity in the observed moral

reasoning scores between Kohlberg's (Kohlberg 1986) normative data and reasoning on moral issues related to conflicts about corruption. A limitation of this study was that respondents were not given the standardized moral judgments inventory in addition to the moral reasoning questionnaire about corruption. Unfortunately, comparisons between reasoning on standardized Kohlberg's dilemmas and reasoning on moral conflicts related to corruption dilemmas were not possible with the data reported here. Comparisons of the present data with normative data computed by Kohlberg (1986) should be done with caution, and future research must include the battery of moral dilemmas about corruption as well as the standardized moral judgment inventory. Similar to findings of the present study, Krebs and his associates (Krebs et al. 1991) invariably highlighted that individuals . are not always consistent in their moral reasoning in response to non-Kohlbergian dilemmas. Part of this inconsistency may be due in part to hypothetical dilemmas other than Kohlberg's "real-life" dilemmas that the respondents themselves generated.

Differences in cultural background might also be a reason for the apparent lack of uniformity in the observed moral reasoning scores between Kohlberg's normative data and reasoning on conflicts related to corruption. Although Kohlberg presented research in different cultures supporting the universality of his stages, one should not conclude that his description of moral development holds true for all people in all cultures (Dembo 1994). Central to this proposition is the conviction that each culture promotes different paths of development, in part because each society functions best with adults who have a particular character structure. If we take the case of Ethiopian culture there are many proverbs that encourage citizens to exercise corruption. Among the proverbs that encourage corruption include the following:

¾›vƒI u?ƒ c = ²[õ   Yeabateh bet Sizeref

›w[I ´[õ   Abreh Zeref

As translated into English by Melakneh (1999) this means, "Every man for himself and the devil takes the hind most."

"Ñ<e ›ÃŸceU   Nigus Aiekesesem

cTÃ ›Ãॅ [eU   Semai Aietaresem

which signifies "The king can do no wrong." These proverbs may prepare individuals for a society where law and order are marginal in combating corruption-probably what that society needs at this level. Korajian' s (2003) research in Ethiopian context supported this anticipation suggesting that the highest reason for not reporting corruption was the fear of retaliation while the lowest was the belief that the person who perpetrated the corrupt act did no wrong. Seen from these angles the results of the present study (that varied from Kohlberg's findings in relation to the stages which could have been reached by respondents) are hardly surprising.

The findings of this study showed support for gender similarity rather than gender difference in moral reasoning about corruption. Contrary to Gilligan's (Gilligan 1982) claim that women's moral thinking is embedded in relatedness to others than to a greater extent than men's, this study found non-significant gender difference in moral reasoning using Kohlberg's (Kohlberg 1986) scoring system. These results are consistent with the results of some other researchers in other fields of inquiry who reported less pervasive evidence for gender difference than had previously been assumed (Reda 2003; Jadack et al. 1995; Walker 1982).

Moral Orientation

The findings of the current study also showed support for gender similarity in moral orientation. There was strong pervasive evidence in this study that the rights and care orientations are not sex-specific

moralities, as Gilligan (1982) had claimed. When presented with moral conflicts related to corruption, males and females indicated both a morality of caring and a concern with justice. Some other researchers had reported similar findings (Gibbs et al. 1984; Walker 1983).

Results in the current study also revealed no significant age group differences for one moral orientation over another; in fact they used a mix of orientations when responding to dilemmas related to moral conflict about corruption. Similar to findings by Brown and his associates, the present study emphasized that persons, regardless of gender, can and do think about moral problems related to social conflicts using both care and justice points of view. Therefore, researchers and theorists should not employ a particular moral orientation as a marker for a stage of moral development. A moral orientation should not be assumed a stable characteristic of a certain gender or individual (Brown et al. 1991 cited in Reda 2003). Moreover, results of this study are inconsistent with the assumption that a person uses one orientation to think about moral conflicts (Ford and Lowery 1986). A possible explanation for the results (that suggested no significant gender and age differences in moral orientation) probably centers around the proposition that person' s moral thinking moves from a state of equilibrium to disequilibria; variously advancing and regressing until finally it is able to take into account the relative merits of all aspects of moral orientations to moral decision making when responding to moral dilemmas to corruption. Cross-national studies supported this explanation (Turiel 1974; Reda 2003) suggesting that a particular moral orientation should not be considered as a stable characteristic of a certain gender or age group.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of the theoretical perspectives that define the domain of moral conflicts as they related to corruption. From this point of view, the general finding of the study leads to a basic conclusion that both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's perspectives on moral development provide a conceptual framework from which to study moral reasoning about corruption. The specific conclusions of the study are:-

1. There was a significant age difference in the stages of moral reasoning suggesting that the old age group had a significantly higher stage of moral reasoning than the young age group when responding to dilemmas related to moral conflicts about corruption. But, there was no significant age difference in moral orientation. Both young and old respondents used response and rights orientations to a similar extent.

2. There was no significant gender difference in the stages of moral reasoning and moral orientation, suggesting that men and women used reasoning reflecting both rights and response orientations to a similar extent.

The findings of the present study seemed to have the following practical policy implications in the development of moral education programmes to combat corruption in Ethiopia.

1. The presence of age differences in moral reasoning related to moral conflicts about corruption leads to worthwhile implications. The fact that young age group used some stage 2/3 reasoning but typically reasoned at stage 3 lends support to current moral education programmes. The old age group may be capable of thinking ethically recognizing that laws should be obeyed to maintain social order. Therefore current moral

education programmes could be augmented to speak not only to young persons about how to fight corruption for their personal freedom to do whatever they pleased, but could also include aspects of rights and responsibilities regarding the moral duty to give as well as take service according to the law of rules required by the conditions of the service and considerations of others' responsibilities and rights.

2. Corruption is linked with the misuse of authority in an exchange for promise, gift, or in favour of personal relationship. What moral orientations people use may have important practical implications in the development of moral education programmes to combat corruption. If individuals stress human relationships too much, they may miss the overall principles and may be unable to make difficult decisions; if they may stress abstract principles too much, they may blind themselves to the individuals who are affected by their decisions. The best moral thinking therefore should synthesize both approaches: individuals must come to see the importance of establishing principles to help guide them between the conflicting needs of their relationships to others and their obligations to themselves as well as to their own personal responsibility for their world.

For instance, current education programmes teach citizens about the responsibility to expose serious weaknesses in a manager's work approach, the right to say no to pay bribes, and the importance of reporting a boss. However, if a person approaches a moral conflict using a response orientation, the message that is to be learned could become clouded in issues related to maintenance of a relationship and looking "good" in the other's eyes. Therefore, it becomes clear that moral education programmes should teach ethical conducts within interpersonal relationships. That is, the discussion about issues

of corruption should include ideas about our accountability in maintaining the society, how corruption puts pressure on the majority of the population including our children and grand-children to wallows in poverty, and how corruption paralyzes our economic development, undermines the legitimacy of the democratic government, minimizes societal self-esteem and diminishes confidence in the rule of law and the institutions that support the government.

3. Ultimately, the existence of a truly democratic system, a responsible civil society, and respect for the rights and freedoms of everyone, are some of the infallible tools for nipping the evil of corruption in the bud. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian government simply should not wait until the country has achieved all these expectations. Therefore, to bring change in the relevant attitudes and values now the government must make a move. For example, realistic discussions of how the corrupt system works, facts about systematic reform of information, accountability, incentives and rules of conduct should be emphasized through films, radio dramas, billboards, and advertisements in broadcasts and print media. However, there are a host of difficulties in influencing value dispositions and behavioural propensities simply through these intervention programs alone. From this point of view, this approach should be integrated into school curriculum. For example, training in citizenship including such topics as the duties of citizens in a democratic system personal integrity as the basis for citizenship, the notion of equality, and the concern for caring for others should be emphasized in the regular school curriculum. Schools should set up ethics clubs administered by them.

4. Because the Bible or the Quaran as literature contains particular moral aspects of "do's" and "don'ts", moral

instruction may have a place in religious institutions. Thus, issues of individual and communal responsibility as well as issues of respect for self and others should be taught in religious education. Religious leaders should notify their followers of the earthly and heavenly costs of stealing, bribery, and dishonesty. All these ethical viewpoints, directly or indirectly, denounce corruption.

5. Finally corruption is not a social phenomenon that can be explained by a simple cause and effect model. It is a complicated issue, often the result of many contingent circumstances which produce varied and wide ranging effects. In this respect, investigations about child raring practices and about the educational as well as economic problems of adolescents and young adults will be useful. On the basis of such studies, a number of moral education programmes, centring on the family, the school, and the mass media can be entertained (Potentially useful intervention programmes have already been cited in the "introduction" section of this paper).

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