

IEWS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF
CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present the views of parents and teachers on the moral development of children and adolescents in different theoretical and methodological perspectives. The first study aimed at investigating relationships between the strategies of conflict resolution of preadolescents and their perception of their parents' and teachers' views on these. The second study discusses the perceptions of mothers about the moral feelings of their children diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. And the last study investigates moral educational conceptions of parents and teachers regarding obedience, respect, justice and autonomy.

Keywords: moral development, moral feelings, conflict, moral conceptions.

This article presents the views of parents and teachers on the moral development of children and adolescents in different theoretical and methodological perspectives. The first study aimed at investigating relationships between the strategies of conflict resolution of preadolescents and their perception of their parents' and teachers' views on these, as well as differences in the two sources of influence. The second study discusses the perceptions of mothers about the moral feelings of their children diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD, as well as their perceptions concerning school ineffectiveness, teacher's lack of sensitivity and

knowledge to deal adequately successfully with these difficulties. And the last study investigates moral educational conceptions of parents and teachers regarding obedience, respect, justice and autonomy of their children and students respectively. Mapping to opinions, perceptions and conceptions of parents and teachers on the moral development of children and adolescents in school, family and clinical context, enables the expansion of knowledge about intervention strategies favoring the construction of moral knowledge process in these contexts. Furthermore, these studies raise the possibility of developing new research questions to consider affective, cultural and relational aspects of the development of morality of the child.

Preadolescents' interpersonal Conflict Resolution and Parents' and Teachers opinions

Arim, Marshall and Kapka (2010) propose as the best way to evaluate the impact of educational practices upon the conduct of young people is to ask them about their perception of them, which have not been much investigated. In the present study, the participants' perception of these practices was assessed by asking them what their educators would think about their strategies to solve two, among ten conflicts, and their motives for that opinion. Interpersonal conflict is defined here as situations of social interaction that involve some disagreement or misunderstanding between the parties. The two most frequent ways to deal with conflicts is either the absence of reaction, such as submission to the other party, or confrontation (Deluty, 1979). Peaceful confrontation usually is made through negotiation or other form of appeasement, while the violent is characterized by coercion, physical or verbal, to intimidate the other party. The conflict can also be solved by mixed strategies, which combine two forms of dealing with it. Youth' strategies to solve conflicts are influenced by gender, cognitive development and experience. Gender is an important variable because boys are less restrained than girls to use coercive strategies (Kikas, Peets, Troop & Hind, 2009). Cognitive development is also very important because it is demanded to cope with the complexity involved in this situation, that usually comprises a large number of dimensions to be evaluated before reacting. Some examples of these dimensions are the identity of the protagonist, his motive, possible solutions and risks involved (Vasconcellos, Picon, Prochnow & Chitto Gauer, 2006). Experience is also important, not only because it contributes to cognitive development, but also because the exposure to various types of situations and models favors the construction of schemes, which facilitate decision making. Regarding the influence of the family, Baumrind, Larzelere and Owens (2010) found a relationship between democratic practices and peaceful conflict resolution, carried out through negotiation, that is

explained by the role model of these practices to children, as well as motivation to face situations constructively. It is also important to remember what Turiel (2008) pointed out at the eighties about children's compliance to family values, that is not unrestricted, because it depends on the area to which is related. Greater legitimacy of parental authority is met in the moral and security domains. Less adherence to parental opinions is found in the personal and conventional domains. Regarding teacher's authority, the same limits are found as Smetana and Bitz, (1996) revealed that, like parents, their opinion tended too to be more legitimated in the moral domain than in the personal one. Also, conventional rules, such as observing schedules, are only considered legitimate if related to maintaining order in the classroom (Yariv, 2009). One research that compared family and school (Silveira & Wagner, 2009) found some continuity between parental and school educational practices of inductive kind. Nevertheless, they also found that almost no communication occurred between them to deal with child's conduct, and that parents mixed coercive and inductive educational practices, which teachers didn't. Another difference between family and school is their perception of the youth, which can influence their intervention on issues like social interaction. An illustrative study was carried out about the perception of relationship difficulties experienced by young people, such as victimization caused by shyness and social anxiety (Tu & Erath, 2013). This type of problem, not as evident as aggression, does not receive due attention and help from teachers. Also, parents and teachers differ in the importance attributed to conduct problems as Winterbottom, Smith, Hind and Haggard (2008) found that the first considered them more serious than the latter. Although parents are more stable in their evaluations than teachers, they also showed greater variability as a group, while teachers were more similar to each other. We considered relevant to investigate if preadolescents perceive these practices and differences between educators, and how they perceive them, which was the aim of the current study.

Method

Participants: Participated in the study 369 students who attended the sixth and seventh grades of three elementary schools, two located in the city of São Paulo and one in Lavras, Minas Gerais. One of São Paulo's schools is public and the other two are private. Among the 156 participants of São Paulo's public school 46% are female, 54% male, 47% enrolled in sixth grade and 53% in seventh. Eighty two students participated in the São Paulo private school, 48% of whom were female, 52% male, 54% attending the sixth year and 46% the seventh. At the Lavras' private school 131 students participated, 40% female, 60% male, 49%

in sixth grade and (51%)in seventh. The average age of public school students was 12 years, in the private school at São Paulo was 10.9 years and 11, 9 years at the Lavras' private school. The instrument used was the Portuguese version of the open questionnaire developed and provided by Robert Deluty (Deluty, 1979) already used in other investigations (Leme, 2004; Leme & Carvalho, 2012). The questionnaire describes 10 hypothetical conflict situations in which the participant is described as one of the protagonists, facing provocations, frustrations or disagreements perpetrated by one or more persons, varied in the degree of proximity, as colleagues, friends or parents. The description of the situation is followed by the question: "What would you do?" Two questions on the opinion of parents and teachers about participant's strategy were added in two of these conflicts. The selection of these situations was based on information provided by ten pre teenagers who pointed them as the most likely to arouse reaction from educators. These questions were aimed to obtain information concerning possible relationships between conflict resolution strategies informed by the participants and their perception of teachers' and parents' opinions. Other information requested was family constitution, leisure companies, relationship with school. The questionnaire was administered in the classroom, at schedules made available by teachers, who were asked to leave the room to guarantee students' privacy. The research objectives were explained to the students, as well as their right to voluntary and anonymous participation. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Instituto de Psicologia USP.

Results and discussion

Differences on family constitution of the students were found related to the type of school, as most (75%) of private schools students lived exclusively with their nuclear, while only 41% of public school students lived in similar conditions. In addition, a third of them lived with the extended family, with or without their parents, increasing the variability of sources of authority. Another difference in students' life conditions, which may have impact on conflict resolution, refers to their leisure companies. Nearly half of public school students (43%) had less opportunity than private school students to establish bonds of friendship with classmates, as their leisure on weekends was spent only with the family, unlike the majority of private school students who spent time with classmates. As to the strategies employed to solve conflicts, it was found that the sample' preferred strategy to solve the proposed conflicts was submission, that concentrated almost half of all responses (40%). It was also the prevalent strategy in one of the conflicts selected to investigate participants' perception of

parents' and teachers' opinion, which according to the majority of them was approval. The second strategy most frequently found was aggression (18%), followed by two strategies equivalent in incidence, one was the mixed strategy of submission and aggression (16%) and the other assertiveness (16%). The incidence of these strategies was similar into the three schools and genders. Aggressive responses prevailed in two situations of conflict, especially in São Paulo's schools. One of these situations, depicted the devolution of a book damaged by a friend (São Paulo public school: 46%, São Paulo private school: 36%, Lavras private school: 35%). The other situation described the participant being pushed out of the cafeteria line by a class mate (São Paulo public school: 43%; São Paulo private school: 36%; Lavras private school: 33%). This situation was the other one selected to investigate participants' perception of parents' and teachers' opinion, which according to them was disapproval (78%), and approval when they used a mix of submission with aggression, the second one in frequency. It is worth to note that parent's opinion was significantly more recognized than teachers, especially in the case of submission. In the case of aggression, one third of participants informed that parents wouldn't manifest an opinion. The alleged motive for the approval of strategy employed was coinciding with their recommendations and the opposite when the strategy was disapproved, confirming previous findings about authority legitimation on security and moral domains (Turiel, 2008). Finally, São Paulo participants, mainly private school students, demonstrated more knowledge about their parents' opinion than teachers', probably because as Winterbottom et al. (2008) found, they attribute more relevance to these problems.

Moral feeling: mother's perception of children with dyslexia and ADHD

Among the school complaints highlight the Specific Learning Disorder with impaired reading and Attention Deficit Disorder and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The first is characterized by impaired words readability, in speed or fluency of reading and understanding and it can be named, alternatively, as dyslexia. The second is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity (APA, 2013). Research has been developed with children with this condition. Bishop and Snowling (2004) reported serious impacts on educational and psychosocial outcomes in reading difficulty with children. Students with poor school performance have shown more often emotional and behavioral difficulties than children without these problems (Aviles, Anderson & Davila, 2006). Mental health problems among people with ADHD and Learning Disorder have been reported, including depression, anxiety, anguish and self-destruction (Wilson, Armstrong, Furrie &

Walcot, 2009; McGillivray & Baker, 2009; Mugnaisi, Lassi, La Malfa & Albertini, 2009; Klassen, Tze & Hannok, 2011). Perron (cited by La Taille, 20002) showed that students who fail in learning can feel inferior and they can also feel unsuccessful in activities unrelated to the classroom. The opposite is also true. Students with good academic performance believe that they will have similar results in other activities. For La Taille (2002) the frustration of not having been successful may lead to negative self-evaluation. Contempt and humiliation lead to feelings of inferiority (Adler, 1935), because the child is aware of the results of their actions in their social environment. Humiliating experience are scoff, laughing, criticism, comparisons with others. The humiliation impairs social interactions. In this sense, the feeling of failure is related to the moral sentiments. In this study we chose to verify the existence of sense of shame, humiliation and failure experienced by children with neurodevelopmental disorder. According to La Taille (2002), the feeling of shame and inferiority are related because they lead to the feeling of humiliation. But both are different. When experiencing shame the person shares the imposed negative image by others. In humiliation, the negative image is not supported. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating mother's perception of complaint about moral feelings of humiliation, shame and failure experienced by their children diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD at the school context. In this study we chose to investigate these feelings in mother's perception of these children because they usually accompany the school life of their children and they know the impact of these disorders in the development.

Method

Participants of the study were 64 mothers of children with school problems who were referred to interdisciplinary assessment at two centers specialized in diagnosis. Range age was 26-57 years. Regarding education level, we found that 17% completed higher education, 39% high school, 14% middle school and 25% elementary school. Concerning work, 71% worked in some professional activity. We used a semi-structured interview guide consisting of questions about children performance as student, the teacher's expectations regarding the success and failure in school and behavior, the value attributed to knowledge, the feelings of malaise and the children's concern about their problems and their impact on the children's emotional life. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the State University of Campinas - Brazil, under protocol number 266/2011. Mothers signed the consent term allowing the use of the interview for use in research. Children diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD have gone through interdisciplinary assessment

(neuropsychological, speech, educational and medical – neurological and/or psychiatric) of the hospital service of pediatric neurology at the Faculty of Unicamp Medical Sciences and in a philanthropic center in the state of São Paulo for service to school demand. In both, the same assessment procedures were adopted. The researcher was part of the interdisciplinary team and the clinical interview was conducted individually as one of the protocols part of the evaluation process. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and organized into comparative tables. The content analysis was conducted following the guidelines of Bardin (1979). The raw results (unit) were aggregated in the categories of analysis by two independent judges. We adopt the criteria of 100% agreement. The judges justified their choices. After, the data were organized in a spreadsheet. In order to analyze the trend of each group, we analyzed the relative frequency (%) of the categories: feelings of shame, humiliation and inferiority.

Results and discussion

Among the evaluated children, 28 (21 boys e 7 girls) were diagnosed with dyslexia and 36 (30 boys e 6 girls) with ADHD hyperactive or combined, with ages ranging from 8 to 14 years ($M=10,45$; $SD=2,45$) who attended the 3rd to 9th grade of elementary school of public and private schools. In the group with dyslexia (GD) 16 participants attended public school and 12 participants attended private school. In the group with ADHD (GADHD), 29 participants attended public school and seven private schools. The results showed differences between the groups in mother's perception about the moral sentiments of her children. In the dyslexia group, the mothers reported that their children experienced negative moral feelings as: exclusion, humiliation, shame and failure. Some examples are illustrative: "She says that she is stupid, then I say 'you are not'. She says that she is stupid and says there is a girl in her class who does not need help. She feels this way... I think she feels useless. Sometimes she speaks to me: 'Mom, I don't understand why things are not so good to me and things are good to my friends! Am I stupid, mom?'" (GD, female, age: 9 years). Other mother: "She is afraid to change schools and be treated as slow." (GD, female, age: 11 years). In the ADHD group, mothers also judged the situations experienced by her children as negative. Mothers believe her children do not feel the same way as other children and the absence of proper perception of the environment favors behavioral difficulties. The following are some examples: "We always knew he (son) was different. His school works is far lagging behind the others friends. He was always very restless, but he is not ashamed. He does not care." (ADHD, male age: 11 years); "He says he has mental illness. He sees himself as sick, helpless." (ADHD, male age: 14 years). I do not know if she has regret or remorse, because she does all over again."

(GADHD, female, age: 10 years). The mothers of both groups reported perceiving ineffectiveness of the school, lack of sensitivity and knowledge of many teachers in dealing adequately with their children's difficulties. The mothers expressed too the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. This panorama is one of the causes of those moral negative feelings. "The teacher talked to me she called L. to go to the blackboard, but she was not going and teacher spoke: 'Come, it is an order.' My daughter did not obeyed. The teacher took her out of the classroom." The mother concludes: "My daughter is a 'tree' in classroom". She goes to school, but is absent in the eyes of the teacher." (GD, female, age: 13 years). The results are in line with studies that showed emotional difficulties in children with learning difficulties (Bishop & Snowling 2004; Aviles, Anderson & Davila, 2006). McNulty (2003) examined life stories of adults who have been diagnosed with dyslexia in childhood, with emphasis on emotional experiences. The results indicated that, since childhood, children could be aware of the symptoms associated with a learning disability. Moreover, they may feel different earlier than is generally considered, which would affect their personality and emotional life, contributing to more pronounced difficulties with self-awareness and self-esteem. The failure experienced by children in the school context favors negative moral feelings. This study concludes that the school when unprepared and without structure to deal with children's problems, instead of protecting them from social vulnerability, favors even more this condition. The difference between the groups analyzed in this paper shows the need to investigate in more depth the different perceptions between the complaints.

Parents' and teacher's moral educational conceptions

For Piaget (1932), moral development isn't innate learned but depends on the educational process. In his opinion, possibilities for children moral evolution is absolutely tied to the educational opportunities he or she has. Piaget (1932) states that heteronomy or the first phase of children moral development is called the morals of obedience, and concerns the first forms of duty consciousness in the children that recognize in their teachers and in their parents the source and model of rules. Obedience is the first construct that we investigated in parents' and educators' educational conceptions. The second construct this research investigated was respect. It is the first moral feeling. The sense of obligation originated from respect is the origin of morality. According to Turiel (2005, p. 22), in order to understand the approach to morality proposed by Piaget it is important to take into account his understanding that emotional approach is connected to moral reasoning and its development. The feeling of justice has a very special meaning for Piaget's theory of moral judgment (1932/1994).

According to him, justice is a relationships' immanent condition and also its law of balance. It is morality's most rational feeling. Therefore, autonomy presents itself as our fourth and last construct: being understood as a "power that is attained from within, and that is only exerted amidst cooperation" (Piaget, 1932/1994). So, the constructs we presented are non-congruent, and are investigated through a single instrument. Obedience, respect, justice and autonomy are understood within this paper as constructs that need to be properly enacted between adults and children through cooperative relations. The aim of this paper is to present a mapping of the conceptions of teachers and parents about four constructs of moral education.

Method

Two empirical studies are presented. The sample of the first one consisted of 860 parents, fathers (20,6%) and mothers (79,4%) of teenagers between the ages of twelve and twenty years old. There are participants from each one of the five Brazilian territory regions (42,8% south-eastern, 20,2% northeastern, 16,5% middle west, 11% north, and 9,3% south) and the research with the parents was done on school grounds (54,8% public and 45,% private schools). The Moral Educative Conceptions Scale is constructed with items that represent four constructs: 4 items for obedience, 5 items for respect, 8 items for justice, and 8 items for autonomy. The participants attributed ratings from 1 to 7 (respectively the options with which they disagree totally and those with which they agree totally). The participants of the second study consisted of 30 educators. We choose 11 items of the Scale of Moral Educational Conceptions, whose results showed polarized in the first study, and the wording of these items was adapted for the teacher student relationship. In this research, the participants were invited to answer about their agreement or disagreement about each item and after that they should write one justification for their opinions.

Results and discussion

1st STUDY: judgment versus moral action

The main result found out in the answers given by parents concerning their educative conceptions in regards to the constructs was the difficulty presented in differentiating action and moral judgment. The answers presented a "sound educator" judgment, all the while revealing insecurities expressed in the answers given to concrete actions. Some examples that illustrate these results are: 72,5% of educator participants agreed with the need to always take into account the explanations given by children, denoting a fair moral judgment based in relationships of mutual respect and cooperation. They also said that (58,8%) a parent should

help children to deal with the consequences of their actions, thus making an option for sanction by reciprocity. However, 72,3% agreed with punishing by taking off something their children really like whenever they did something wrong. The quantity of educator-parents that agree (60%) with physical punishment if they did something really wrong is startling. Also, 62,3% of participants agree that “is up to the parents to make decisions for their children”. Educators admitted (99%) that it is fundamental that parents talk to their children, but 67,5% of the very same parents admitted they are unable or cannot listen to their own children.

The results presented above had the goal of illustrating the main result found out by our research, that concerns the difficulty of achieving coherence between moral judgment and moral action. According to Turiel (2005, p. 30), the issue of the relationship between moral action and judgment is yet to be resolved, much in the same manner as the issue of reasoning and emotion in the processes of social interactions.

According to the author, there is a tendency in both academical and public discourse to focus in just one aspect of morality. Therefore, in his opinion, the metaphor better suited for morality than “X made us do that” might be “morality is in the foxholes”, which in the author’s opinion means that: “moral development occurs through continuing children reciprocal relations, every day of their lives, with both adults and other children” (Turiel, 2005, p. 30). It concerns complex systems, whose interactions and equilibrium might promote the construction of moral autonomy.

2nd STUDY: Teacher’s Educative Conceptions Scale

Once again, the dichotomy between moral action and judgment made itself known. A teacher remarked: “I do not know if I must answer how all teachers act, or if I should answer with the correct way a teacher should act”. Another one observed: “The teacher should always be willing to interact with and hear their students, expressing their own opinions and hearing those of others, but we know this will not be an easy journey”. A final account: “The teacher must understand that, far beyond punishing their students, what should be done is the maintenance of a respectful relationship”.

Teachers frequently employed “politically correct mottoes” to justify their answers, such as: “If you want a trust relationship, you must trust the student first”, “I believe the teacher’s attitude must be one of respect and justice, and in order for that to occur, it is necessary to ponder, hear and make yourself heard”, “It is important for the teacher to be aware of his importance as a subject that teaches their students more than programs”. Complaints and lamentations that are frequent amidst Brazilian teachers also appeared: “After twenty years of

experience in education, I realize that society has changed, parents nowadays are more permissive, and because of that, classrooms are full of students that won't accept basic rules and social limits"; "Actually what teachers have at hand to deal with their students' errors are warnings, suspensions and other strategies that do nothing to improve students' behavior". Lastly, teachers make accusations against their own peers, thus showing they aren't answering the questions thinking about themselves: "The teacher should show interest in their students' activities, but it doesn't happen in teaching practice"; "the teacher must justify his orientations always if possible"; "Teacher's attitudes towards their students should be coherent, but actually aren't".

It was expected that education professionals would offer more evolved answers than other professions participants, because we assumed that, having formal educational formation, these parents would be better qualified to educate their children. The main result found out in the answers given by parents and educators concerning their educative conceptions in regards to the constructs was the difficulty presented in differentiating action and moral judgment. The answers presented a "sound educator" judgment, all the while revealing insecurities expressed in the answers given to concrete actions.

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