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DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAN MORAL DEVELOPMENT SCALE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

MAHEEN MUZAMMIL[1] AND SAIMA MAJEED[2]

[1, 2]Forman Christian College University, Lahore, Pakistan

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: MAHEEN MUZAMMIL E-mail: maheenmuzammill@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES

To develop an Indigenous scale of Moral Development for young adults to identify the moral development components within the Pakistani cultural context

STUDY DESIGN

Mixed Method design, Qualitative and Quantitative (correlational cross-sectional)

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

Two Private and two Public Universities in Lahore, Pakistan. from January 2023 to March 2023.

METHOD

The study was carried out in two phases; in the first phase, a pool of 40 items was generated while conducting two separate focus groups with clinical psychologists and young adults and three semi-structured in-depth interviews with university professors. A 5-point Likert scale of 40 items was developed. The content validity was established through expert ratings. In the second phase, the scale was administered to 280 young adults, aged 18-25, (M=139(49.6%) F=141(50.4%) from two private and two public university students. Construct validity was established through Exploratory factor analysis.

RESULTS

Factors for the scale were obtained with the help of Principal Component Analysis with the Varimax rotation method and Kaisar normalization. Kaisar-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of Sample adequacy yielded a value of 0.753, indicating satisfactory sample adequacy, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$). The Scree plot suggested 4 factors: Moral disengagement, Moral maturity, parental/societal influence, and social media/peer influence.

CONCLUSION

The present study contributed to the development of an indigenous assessment tool for young adults in Pakistan. Presently no such tool is available to study moral development in young adults.

KEYWORDS

Morality, Moral Development, Parental influence, Moral Judgment, Moral maturity, Ethical Sensitivity, Moral disengagement.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding moral development within a specific cultural context is crucial for grasping the complexities of ethical decision-making. Existing theories and frameworks assess moral development in various populations, but a culturally sensitive tool is needed to capture the unique moral challenges and experiences of young adults in Pakistan. The development of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making is a complex process influenced by social, cultural, and legal customs. This research aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by developing a comprehensive scale specifically tailored to measure moral development in the cultural context of young adults in Pakistan.

The concept of moral development refers to the process by which individuals acquire the moral standards of their culture. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), moral development encompasses how children learn to understand and apply the moral standards and norms of their society [1]. This process is not uniform across cultures, as different societies have distinct moral codes and values that shape individual behavior.

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development has been one of the most influential frameworks in understanding how moral reasoning evolves. Kohlberg proposed that moral development is closely tied to a child's intellectual growth and involves the realization of fundamental ethical beliefs [2]. His theory outlines three major levels of moral reasoning, each consisting of two stages. These levels represent significant shifts in an individual's moral and social outlook, moving from a focus on avoiding punishment to adherence to social norms, and ultimately, to the development of abstract ethical principles.

At the pre-conventional level, morality is externally controlled, with individuals adhering to rules established by authoritative figures to avoid punishment or gain rewards. This level includes the punishment/obedience orientation, where behavior is driven by the consequences it incurs, and the instrumental purpose orientation, where individuals focus on obtaining rewards or meeting their own needs [3]. The conventional level involves a greater emphasis on conforming to social norms and expectations, with individuals seeking social acceptance and aiming to be perceived as "good" by others. The good boy/nice girl orientation at this level reflects a desire for social approval, while the law-and-order orientation emphasizes adherence to societal rules and laws as the basis for moral behavior.

The post-conventional or principled level of moral reasoning represents a more advanced stage, where individuals move beyond societal norms to develop a broader understanding of morality. At this level, moral judgments are guided by self-selected ethical principles and a sense of justice that transcends societal rules. The social contract orientation acknowledges that laws and regulations are flexible instruments that can be adapted to serve human objectives, while the universal ethical principal orientation represents the pinnacle of moral development, where individuals are guided by their conscience and ethical principles [4].

While Kohlberg's theory has been widely influential, it has also faced criticism for its focus on justice and rights, which some argue may not fully capture the moral reasoning processes of individuals in different cultural contexts. Carol Gilligan (1982) offered an alternative perspective, suggesting that the morality of care and compassion may be more relevant for understanding moral development in some cultures. This critique highlights the need for culturally sensitive tools that can accurately assess moral development in diverse populations [5].

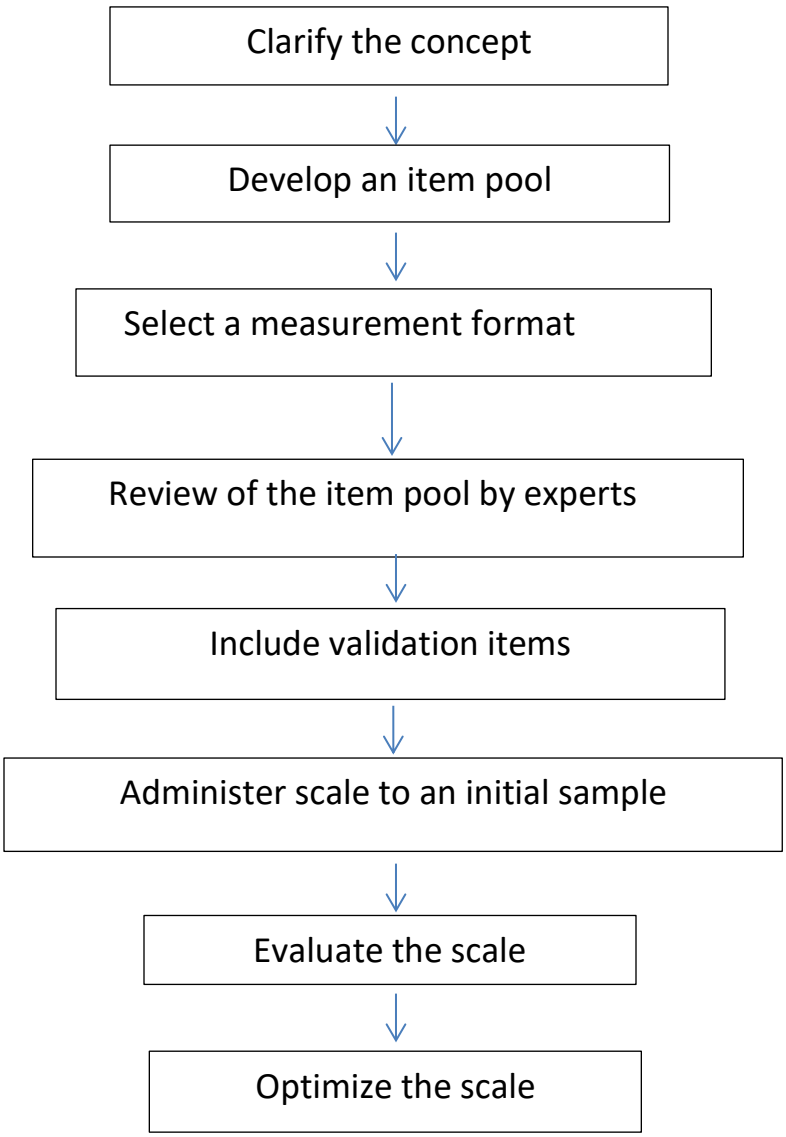
In the context of Pakistan, where social and cultural norms are deeply rooted in religious and communal values, existing frameworks may not fully capture the nuances of moral reasoning among young adults. The traditional focus on Western populations in moral development research has resulted in a limited understanding of how moral reasoning unfolds in non-Western societies. In Pakistan, moral development is likely influenced by a combination of factors, including religious teachings, family values, and communal expectations. The existing theories of moral development, while valuable, may not adequately address the unique challenges and experiences faced by young adults in this cultural context. This study aims to develop a culturally sensitive scale to measure moral development among young adults in Pakistan, addressing the unique social, cultural, and religious factors that influence their moral reasoning. The objective is to create a validated tool that accurately reflects the moral challenges and experiences of this population, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers, and contributing to a more global understanding of moral development across cultures.

METHOD

The Forman Moral Development Scale went through two phases to be used as a reliable and valid scale to evaluate moral reasoning in young adults. Verbal consent was obtained from all subjects/patients. Verbal consent was witnessed and formally recorded. The method of scale development comprised of both qualitative and quantitative methods to make it valid and reliable [6].

FIGURE 1

DeVellis' (2017) model for scale development followed in the study.



Phases of Study

The present study was comprised of two phases. The first phase consisted of item generation.

In the second phase of the study, both content and construct validity were established, and data were collected using a purposive sampling technique.

Phase 1

The first phase involved item pool generation, which was done through two focus groups and three semi-structured and in-depth interviews.

Sample

The first focus group was conducted with senior clinical psychologists and educationists with a minimum of 18 years of education and five or more years of clinical experience. The second focus group was conducted with undergraduate students in the age range of 18-25 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three university professors, each with at least 3 years of experience teaching undergraduates. The questions focused on moral development, reasoning, components, and dilemmas to gather detailed and comprehensive insights. With their consent, the participants' responses were recorded and transcribed to identify major themes.

Phase 2: Item Analysis

The objective of the second phase was to establish content and construct validity. The sample for the second phase consisted of senior clinical psychologists and educationists with a minimum of 18 years of education and five or more years of clinical experience, working with clinical populations. The experts analyzed items based on sentence structure, sentence construction, and content. The items were analyzed on a 5-point Likert scale, with 0 considered not relevant and 4 considered highly relevant. The experts rated the items and provided suggestions regarding the construct of the subject.

Content Validity

After generating the items, the statements were given to four senior clinical psychologists and educationists with a minimum of 18 years of education and five or above years of clinical experience, for evaluation. To establish the scale's content validity, sentence structure, construction, and content of items relevant to moral development were analyzed. The items were analyzed through a 5-point Likert scale where “0” denotes not relevant and “4” denotes highly relevant.

Construct Validity

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to establish construct validity. The sample size was dependent on 7 participants per item from two private and two government universities. The criteria included young adults aged 18 to 25, and university students who were currently enrolled in a program or had graduated. The sample size was 280 participants. The mean age for males was 21.6 (SD= 1.67) whereas females were 21.4 (SD=1.90)

Procedure

After getting approval from BOS, ERC, BASAR, and IRB the data was collected. The participants' consent was also obtained, and they were briefed about the objective of the study. The questionnaire included a brief overview, consent form, objectives of the research, and demographics sheet. They were assured of confidentiality and informed that their participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

Ethical Considerations

The study placed significant emphasis on ethical considerations, ensuring adherence to all ethical standards set forth by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

The study was first approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Board of Studies (BOS), and Ethical Review Board (ERB) of Forman Christian College University for ethical perspectives.

- Permission for data collection was obtained from public and private universities.
- Informed consent was given to participants, explaining the study's purpose.
- Participants were told that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw anytime.
- They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their right to know the results.
- Official contact information for the researcher was provided.
- Results were entered into SPSS, accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, ensuring data confidentiality.

RESULTS

The study included a total of 280 participants, with a nearly equal distribution of gender: 139 males (49.6%) and 141 females (50.4%). Regarding education level, the majority of participants, 242 (86.8%), were enrolled in bachelor's programs, while 37 (13.2%) were pursuing master's degrees. Table 1 also elaborates on the mean and Standard deviation.

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Table 1

Demographic description of young adults' age, gender, institute, family system, education major, and education year (N=280)

Variables	f	%	M	SD
Age			21.64	1.833
Gender				
Male	139	49.6		
Female	141	50.4		

Variables	f	%	M	SD
Institute				
Public	128	45.7		
Private	152	54.3		
Family System				
Joint	144	51.4		
Nuclear	136	48.6		
Educational Major				
Life sciences	53	18.9		
Arts and humanities	52	18.6		
Computer Sciences	42	15.0		
Social Sciences	81	28.9		
Business and Management	52	18.6		
Education				
Bachelors	242	86.8		
Masters	37	13.2		

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis was employed to investigate the internal structure of the Moral Development Scale using SPSS. Various statistical tests were utilized to aid in the construction of the scale. The 40-item scale underwent Principal Component Analysis, followed by Varimax rotation and Kaisar normalization.

The Kaisar-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of Sample adequacy yielded a value of 0.753, indicating satisfactory sample adequacy, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$). The Scree plot displayed an elbow shape, suggesting the presence of 4 factors.

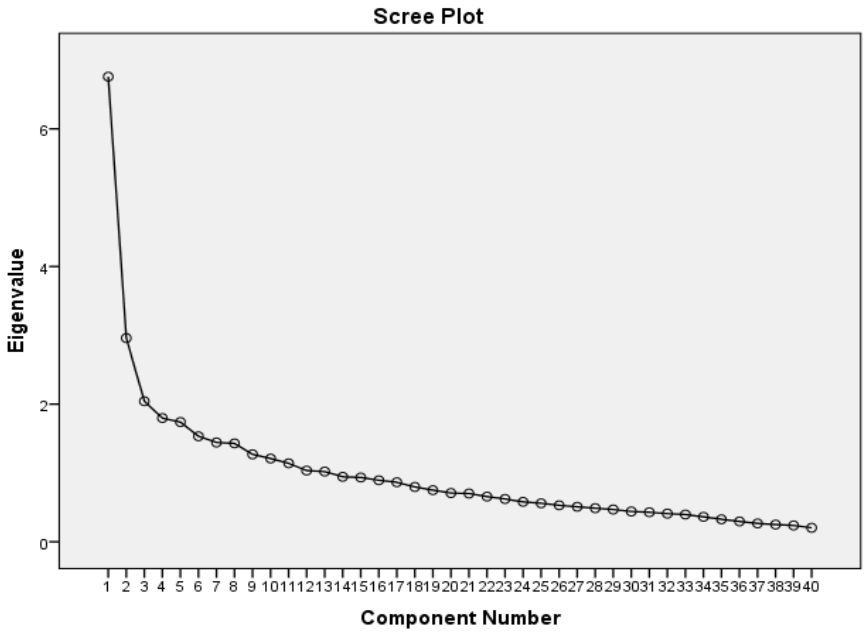
Scree Plot
Eigenvalue
0
2
4
6
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
Component Number

Table 2
Item loading for Exploratory Factor Analysis for Moral Development Scale (N=280)

Item	F1	F2	F3	F4
20	**.702**	-.140	.068	.154
24	**.695**	-.161	-.132	.223
22	**.670**	-.165	.022	.299
33	**.662**	-.266	-.016	.158
35	**.660**	-.068	-.054	.351
25	**.546**	-.249	-.058	.286
38	**-.522**	-.036	.272	.158
16	**.466**	-.097	-.250	.268
39	**.376**	-.002	-.112	.206
37	**.334**	.139	-.194	.162
21	**-.327**	.112	.263	.142
05	.009	**.712**	.081	-.166
08	-.201	**.707**	.037	.055
03	-.013	**.689**	-.055	-.078
11	-.122	**.568**	.187	-.104
12	.151	**.416**	.408	-.160
01	-.289	**.405**	.141	-.019
02	-.150	**.384**	.192	.050
30	-.172	**.378**	.238	-.018
29	.033	**.362**	.058	.176
13	-.050	**.284**	.210	-.076
29	-.266	.214	**.565**	-.037
10	.232	.059	**.526**	-.099
30	.153	.136	**.509**	-.325
32	-.218	-.054	**.506**	-.077
09	-.024	.252	**.450**	-.063
31	-.155	.027	**.434**	.108
28 -	-.304	.128	**.427**	.031
37	-.372	-.051	**.426**	.058
28	-.282	.071	**.405**	.083
36	-.213	.232	**.390**	.025
04	.014	.147	**.367**	.022
15	.025	-.095	-.111	**.622**
23	.311	.067	.032	**.572**
19	.232	-.012	-.112	**.564**
18	.099	.038	.164	**.546**
17	.105	.000	-.094	**.528**
07	.160	.101	-.128	**.411**
06	.001	-.052	.092	**.350**
40	.097	-.184	.040	**.339**

Factor 1: Moral Disengagement

The Eigenvalue for the first factor was 4.445 with a total variance of 11.112%. 11 items included in this factor that related to moral decisions that do not align with ethical values. Item examples are "backbiting about others, breaking rules etc."

Factor 2: Parental/Societal influence

The Eigenvalue for the second factor was 3.191 with total variance of 7.978%. 10 items included in this factor that related with the influence of parents, religion and social environment. Item examples are "parents influenced my moral values; culture taught me my ethics etc"

Factor 3: Moral Maturity

The Eigenvalue for the third factor was 3.063 with a total variance of 7.656%. 11 items included in this factor related to the level of maturity of an individual's moral judgment. Item examples are "I like helping others, I have to speak the truth regardless of any circumstance etc"

Factor 4: social media/peer influence

The Eigenvalue for the fourth factor was 2.859 with a total variance of 7.147%. 8 items were included in this factor that related to social media and peer group influence. Item examples are "social media encourages my wishes; friends made me morally weak etc."

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of FMDS (N=280)

Scales	k	*a*	Cut off	M(SD)	Range (min-max)
Moral Disengagement	11	.657	26	27.85(6.69)	39(14-53)
Parental/Societal Influence	10	.729	32	31.45(4.51)	25(15-40)
Moral Maturity	11	.633	43	42.44(5.70)	30(25-55)
Social Media/Peer Influence	8	.604	23	23.55(5.65)	32(8-40)
Total FMDS	40	.650	132	132.82(12.01)	95(96-191)

Note: k=no. of items, a + Cronbach Alpha, FMDS; Forman Moral Development Scale

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for the moral development scale with adequate internal reliability calculated through Cronbach Alpha.

Table 4:

Inter Correlations among Moral Development Scale and its Subscales (N=280)

Subscales	**M**	**SD**	1	2	3	4
Total FMDS	132.82	12.01	**.502****	**.446****	**.453****	**.603****
Moral Disengagement	27.85	6.69		**-.277****	**.318****	**.481****
Parental/Societal Influence	31.45	4.51			**.505****	**-.125****

Subscales	**M**	**SD**	1	2	3	4
Moral Maturity	42.44	5.70				**-.178****
Social media/Peer Influence	23.55	5.65				

Note: p < .01, FMDS; Forman Moral Development Scale

All the factors show a significant relationship with each other. The table shows a significant relationship of moral disengagement with the contents of the overall scale. However, parental influence negatively correlates with social media/peer influence, and moral maturity negatively correlates with social media/peer influence. All the other factors are positively correlated with each other.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was twofold: firstly, to develop an indigenous scale for Moral Disengagement specifically designed for Pakistani young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and secondly, to assess the psychometric properties of the scale to establish its reliability and validity as a measure of moral development in this age group.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and other relevant analyses, including examining Scree plots and utilizing a theoretical framework with four factors took place. As a result, a set of 40 items was generated to comprehensively capture the various dimensions of moral development in young adults. These items were carefully crafted to reflect the specific cultural context and values prevalent in Pakistan.

Moral Disengagement contains 11 statements. Moral disengagement refers to the psychological process through which individuals separate themselves from the moral consequences of their actions, enabling them to partake in unethical behaviors without experiencing guilt or self-condemnation. The concept of moral disengagement has recently received considerable attention, particularly in comprehending young adults' ethical decision-making processes. The study by Gini et al. (2014) explores the relationship between moral disengagement and aggression, specifically in adolescents and young adults. Their research focused on how cognitive mechanisms of moral disengagement, such as dehumanization and blaming the victim, can contribute to aggressive behaviors, including bullying[7].

Moreover, the second factor consisted of the influence of society and parents on young adults' moral development. Parental and societal influence plays crucial roles in shaping the behavior and development of young adults. Research has extensively examined the impact of these influences, shedding light on their effects on various aspects of young adults' lives, including their

values, beliefs, decision-making, and overall well-being. Research. in year 2000 found that children with authoritative parents (who are warm but firm) are more likely to develop empathy and moral reasoning[8].

Societal influence, including peer groups, also significantly impacts young adults' development. Peers play a central role in the socialization process during adolescence and young adulthood. Research has shown that peer influence can shape various aspects of young adults' lives, such as risk-taking behaviors and conformity to social norms. These values are internalized by young adults and shape their behavior and interactions in various social contexts. Parental and societal influences are instrumental in shaping young adults' development and behavior.

The third factor included 11 items based on the level of moral maturity in young adults. Moral maturity in young adults is a topic of great interest in psychological research, as it plays a crucial role in their overall development and decision-making processes. In conclusion, research on moral maturity in young adults highlights their progression towards higher stages of moral reasoning, the development of prosocial behavior and empathy, the prioritization of personal values aligned with moral principles, and the continued growth during the emerging adulthood phase[9].

The fourth and last factor includes 8 items with relevance to social media and peer influence. Social media and peer influence play significant roles in shaping the behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes of young adults. Social media platforms provide young adults with the opportunity to shape their identity through self-presentation, often influenced by social validation[10]. Adolescents and young adults are highly susceptible to peer influence, especially in social settings. Peer groups enforce behavioral norms, and individuals often conform to these norms to gain acceptance. Research has shown that peer pressure can increase risk-taking behaviors, including substance use and unhealthy social behaviors[10].

Implications and Recommendation

Developing an indigenous scale to measure moral disengagement offers a valuable tool for assessing moral development and facilitating cross-cultural comparisons. The findings show links between moral disengagement, moral maturity, and environmental and media influences. Further research should explore cultural variations and the impact of cultural identity, social norms, and educational practices on moral behavior. By considering these implications and implementing recommended actions, stakeholders can foster a healthier, more morally conscious society among young adults in Pakistan.

Limitations and Suggestions

- The sample size used in this study was relatively small, despite employing a 1:7 ratio of seven

subjects for each item on the scale. Future studies should aim to increase the data by adopting a larger sample size, perhaps using a 1:10 ratio.

- The use of measures in the present sample may have introduced bias to the results. To enhance the validity of the data, it is recommended to incorporate direct observation methods in future studies.
- The scale used in the study can be generalized to a wider population
- Cultural factors, such as collectivist values, may have influenced both the generation and interpretation of moral reasoning items, emphasizing group harmony over individual rights.

CONCLUSION

This study developed local assessment tools for evaluating moral development in young adults in Pakistan. It found strong links between moral disengagement, moral maturity, environmental and media influences, and negative psychological outcomes. Parental, societal, and peer factors play a crucial role. The research emphasizes the need for interventions to foster ethical decision-making, reduce moral disengagement, and promote empathy. The new scale also supports interdisciplinary research and cross-cultural comparisons, enhancing our understanding of moral development and ethical behavior in young adults globally.

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COMPETING OF INTERESTS AND FUNDING

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Due to study protocol and confidentiality, datasets created and/or analyzed during the current investigation are not publicly available.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"I/we declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this manuscript.

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AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION/UNDERTAKING FORM

Serial No.	Author Name	Author Affiliation	Contribution	Signature
1.	Maheen Muzammil	Forman Christian College University, Lahore	First Author. Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing	
2.	Dr. Saima Majeed	Forman Christian College University, Lahore	Supervision