

CED 6413: Human Development and Growth
Laboratory 1: Kohlberg's Moral Reasoning Task

Assignment Overview

Kohlberg measured his participants' moral development by analyzing their responses to a series of hypothetical dilemmas. In this exercise, you will do something similar. In the first phase, you will interview three participants using a moral dilemma similar to those that Kohlberg used. You will submit a verbatim (word-for-word) transcript of your interview. Then, in Phase 2, you will be given four interview transcripts that you will classify according to Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning.

Phase One

Participants. You will need the help of **three** participants to do this exercise. You may ask friends, family members, or others to help you, but all of your participants should be over the age of 18 years. Try to use both men and women.

Materials. The interview schedule is printed below. An audio recorder (most Smartphones have this) would also be helpful, but are not required. If you audio record participants' responses, document that you have permission by recording yourself asking if you can record as well as the participant's agreement.

Procedure. Provide a copy of the interview for your participants. When interviewing each of your participants, you should find a quiet place to ask your questions, some place where you will not be interrupted. Begin by introducing yourself and the class activity. Assure your participant that their responses will be anonymous – and follow through by not recording the participants' names anywhere. Strictly follow the interview schedule by asking the questions in the order they appear on the interview schedule and write down everything said by your participants. Do NOT discuss participants' responses with them. Also make note of anything they do that might be relevant (e.g., long pauses, facial expressions, etc.). Sometimes what participants **do not** say is just as important as what they do say.

Written Transcript. Submit a written transcript of your interview. This means you should type the interviews verbatim (word-for-word), including both your words and their words, as well as any nonverbal behaviors that you recorded (e.g., long pauses). Note that very few people speak using correct English, so your interview transcript will likely be filled with incomplete sentences and incorrect grammar. This is ok. You will be evaluated on the thoroughness of the interview transcript, not on the English.

Phase Two

Analyse the interview transcripts that are given based on Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Take each interview separately. Based on the interview responses overall, first classify the participant into one of Kohlberg's stages. Second, justify your classification by explaining how the participant's responses fit into this category. (You may use direct quotes from the interview here.) Third, note any uncertainty in your categorization, and discuss why the response might fit into more than one level. If you believe that Kohlberg's levels do not do an adequate job of capturing the reasoning that you observed, then describe why.

After you do this for each of the participants, then write an overall critique of Kohlberg's theory. Do you think the theory accurately explains moral development? Why or why not? Be specific in your critique.

Marking Scheme

- Thoroughness of interview transcripts (4 points)
- Accurate categorization of each participant into correct level of moral reasoning (6 points)
- Analysis reflected an understanding of Kohlberg's theory (2 points)
- Critique of Kohlberg's theory (3 points)

Moral Reasoning Interview Schedule

Part A. Personal Information

1. Participant Number (note: you make this up)
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Occupation

Part B. Moral Reasoning Scenario

Note: Read this together with the participant. Re-read the scenario as often as needed to ensure the participant understands it very well.

Two young men, brothers, got into serious trouble. They were secretly fleeing town in a hurry and needed money. Peter, the older one, broke into a store and stole about 400 thousand naira. Paul, the younger one, went to an old man who was known to help people in town. He told the man that he was very sick and needed 400 thousand naira to pay for an operation. Paul asked the old man to lend him the money and promised him that he would pay him back when he recovered. Of course, Paul was not really sick and he had no intention of paying the man back. Although the old man did not know Paul very well, he lent him the money. So Peter and Paul both left town, each with 400 thousand naira.

Part C. Moral Reasoning Questions

- 1a. Which is worse, stealing like Paul or stealing like Peter?
- 1b. Why is that worse?

2. What do you think is the worst thing about cheating the old man?
- 2a. Why is that the worst thing?

3. In general, why should a promise be kept?

- 4a. Was the old man being irresponsible by lending Paul the money?
- 4b. Why or why not?

- 5a. Is it important to keep a promise to someone you do not know well or will never see again?
- 5b. Why or why not?

6. Why should someone not steal from a store?

7. What is the value or importance of property rights?

- 8a. Should people do everything that they can to obey the law?
- 8b. Why or why not?

9. Do you have any other thoughts about Paul or Peter?