Three Factors Affecting the Moral Development of Adolescents

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Abstract. This paper mainly discusses three social factors that affect the moral development of teenagers and hopes to provide a more comprehensive vision. The first is the influence of family factors. The moral development level of children from families with higher levels of family education tends to be higher, while the level of moral development of children with poor family relations tends to be opposite to the level of family moral development. Moreover, when the peer relationship of adolescents is not good, it is easy to lead to the low level of moral development of adolescents. At same time, when the moral development level of adolescents' peers is low, their own moral development level will also be low. Finally, this paper argues that community factors, as a secondary factor, often play an auxiliary role in the moral development of teenagers. This paper mainly focuses on the influence of social environment on the moral development of adolescents. Future studies can focus on the cross-influence of social media, games, and the three factors discussed in this paper on the moral development of adolescents, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social factors affecting the moral development of adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents; Family; Peer; Moral development.

1. Introduction

Moral ability is the result of moral education. The purpose of moral education is to enable human beings to better discover, accept, and internalize the common values of the society, which is helpful for people to better socialize and promote the development of society [1]. Thus, moral is very important for human society. and teenagers are in an especially important period in developmental psychology. During this period, people's self-cognition is gradually shaped completely, and their three views are taking shape. Since they are the future of society, and their moral development determined the moral level of the future society. The moral development of teenagers and their moral education are very important.

However, despite the great progress in the theoretical study of developmental psychology, moral development has rarely been studied as a whole, and thus there is no comprehensive study of the factors that influence moral development. Previous studies tend to focus on the independent effects of games, social media, news media, and independent factors such as family and school, but this fails to meet our need to fully understand the social factors that influence the moral development of adolescents.

Therefore, this paper hopes to discuss what social factors can affect the level of moral development of teenagers, to find out better ways to help the moral development of teenagers. This paper discussed their influence on the moral development of teenagers from three aspects: family, peers, and community. When discussing the influence of family, this paper chooses the education level of family and family relationship as the entry point, while when discussing the influence caused by peers, it chooses the peer relationship and peer observation effect as the entry point. Finally, this paper argues that community factors, as a secondary factor, often play an auxiliary role in the moral development of teenagers.

2. The Moral Development of Teenagers

2.1. Morality

Morality is a social concept, its means is to maintain social stability, promote social development and help people better cooperate with each other. Morality concerns the way we treat each other, how

do we cultivate a sense of care and fairness, and how do we experience and process our and others' emotional experiences in the context of moral and social conflict [2].

2.2. Adolescents

Adolescents are an especially important period in developmental psychology. During this period, people's self-cognition is gradually shaped completely, and their three views are taking shape. In this period, they gradually begin to walk out of the family and into the society [3]. This period will be one of the most critical periods for moral shaping, because based on different social backgrounds and growing environments, they will have more diversified identity development, including the moral self [4].

The morality of young people is diverse and is affected by both internal and external influences. Due to the strong plasticity of young people, their moral cognition will change very frequently, showing a spiral trend. Although the process of change and the ultimate level of moral development of adolescents may be similar, the process of moral development of adolescents and what morality means to them may be different due to unique social customs, cultures, and religions. The interplay between various social customs, cultures, norms, and religions creates radically different definitions of morality and sense of moral atmosphere, and thus adolescents may have multiple moral cultures [5]. In turn, these perceptions may influence their behavior. Therefore, the meaning of moral development in this paper is the development of moral concepts widely recognized and accepted by the society under various social and cultural backgrounds.

Gfellner believed that moral development was gentle [6]. Morality does not develop suddenly, but slowly and gradually, and the research found that self-level and moral development were correlated at any given point in time, but that self-functioning in early adolescence did not predict subsequent moral development. This shows that although self-awareness can affect the moral development of adolescents, it is not the only influencing factor. Some external factors, such as social factors, also have an impact on the moral development of adolescents.

Therefore, to discuss the moral development of teenagers can start from the social level. For adolescents, the three biggest social factors that affect their moral development are family factors, peer factors and community factors. Therefore, the following part of this paper will describe in detail the influence of these three parts on the moral development of teenagers.

3. Three Key Factors Influencing the Development of Adolescent Morality

3.1.Family

Family plays an irreplaceable role for teenagers, and their values will shape first by their families. That is why a functioning family is essential. Jerković and Lić [7] done research in 2020 to determine whether there was a statistically significant correlation between family functioning and students' moral development and overall school performance. The study includes 220 high school students. Their research found that students from best-functioning families (with all the in-group determinants of positive educational effects) have the highest average scores on tests of moral development, while students from moderately functioning families have the lowest average scores. They therefore argue that family functioning is one of the key factors in shaping the morality of young people's personality and academic performance.

3.1.1 Family education level

Among all the family factors, family education level is an important part. Ujang [8] found that the more educated families were, the more likely they were to set a clear goal for their children's upbringing and to work consistently for it. In the research, using observations, interviews, and notes methods, Ujang looked at three families with different educational backgrounds. The result shows that under the influence of proper methods and good and harmonious family atmosphere, teenagers in families with higher education level can often receive good moral education. Their success is

supported by clear goals and objectives, consistent and continuous provision of materials, use of appropriate methods and methods, and good and harmonious families. However, in those families with low education level, children often have poor moral education results due to the lack of good goals, textbooks, methods, and other reasons in the family, as well as the problems in the family atmosphere.

There are two reasons for this, first, higher family education means broader knowledge, which means they attach more importance to children's education, and because they have a better foundation, they can more clearly cultivate children's goals. A clear goal will obviously help the moral development of teenagers. Second, high degree family often means higher household income, while higher household income contributes to sustainability in children spend more on education resources, which can make children have better education environment, and those from the same family conditions are companions, participating children do better teachers' education, can let the child's moral development more socialization.

3.1.2 Relationship in family

Similarly, the relationship within the family also has a particularly important impact on the moral development of adolescents. The relationship of family is often reflected in the ability of communication and cohesion between family members. Perceived family cohesion and communication moderated the moral and ideological relationship between fathers and adolescents. The extent to which parents socialized the moral values of adolescents would vary depending on the moral values of both parents, The strength of family ties and the moral standards practiced in the family [8]. In this case, effective family communication and stronger family cohesion can help parents better transmit their moral values to their children.

The research backs this up. White and Matawie [9] studied 218 groups of adolescents and their parents and showed that perceived family cohesion and communication moderated the moral relationship between fathers and adolescents; Several aspects of parental morality significantly predicted adolescent morality. It doesn't mean that adolescents whose families have better family relationships, adaptability and communication skills will have higher moral standards. If adolescents from families with better family relationships, adaptability, and communication skills but low moral standards, adolescents are more likely to have lower moral standards. Therefore, children's moral development will depend on their parents' moral concepts and degree of socialization.

3.2.Peers

Peer is an extremely important link in the socialization process of adolescents, because in the adolescent stage, children begin to leave the family and go to the society, and the first thing they face is to have a good relationship with peers. Communication with peers is the child's first step out of the family and socialization.

However, peers can exert both good and bad moral influences on adolescents, so it is particularly important for adolescents to choose peers reasonably. There are two important factors that determine the moral influence of peers on adolescents. They are the relationship between peers -- that is, whether there is peer conflict or peer problems, and the moral level of peers.

3.2.1. Peer relations

A good group of companions will undoubtedly make a teenager's moral development smoother. However, when teenagers facing peer problems, their moral development will often fall into an unfavorable situation. Since moral judgment increases with age, older adolescents are expected to be at a higher stage of moral judgment development than younger adolescents. So younger adolescents are more susceptible to peer problems. In Zulfiqar's research in 2020 [10], the development of moral judgment in adolescents declines as peer contradictions increase, especially in late adolescence. Adolescents with moderate and severe peer problems have lower levels of moral judgment development than adolescents with no and mild peer problems.

Moral disengagement is a series of cognitive processes used to depart from moral standards to achieve exoneration of culpability and permit unethical behavior. In the study by Wang et al. [11], they investigated the longitudinal relationship between moral disengagement and bullying behavior in a group of adolescents from fifth through ninth grade over three semesters and found that moral disengagement predicted bullying behavior six months later. In addition, older students and boys use moral disconnection more than older students and girls and younger students and boys who engage in greater bullying behavior. It was not clear moral disconnect will have what kind of effect on the moral development of adolescents, but even if the moral disconnects no long-term impact on the moral development of adolescents, it indicates the bullying behavior will obviously have a major impact on the bully moral development, bullying is one of the most serious partner problems, lead to low moral standards. Therefore, it is very important to check and prevent moral disconnection.

3.2.2 Peer's observation

Peers can very easily influence moral behavior. Research has shown that peer observation leads adolescents to have their own preferences like those of their peers [12]. In the study by Yu et al., they took 100 British residents and asked them in the first experiment to judge the goals of their prosocial and antisocial peers, and they showed that most participants were able to accurately judge the goals of their peers. The second experiment, in which participants were asked to make moral decisions before and after observing their peers, showed that peer observation led participants to have preferences like those of their peers. This means that adolescents who observe prosocial behavior in their peers will behave more prosocial, that is, with higher moral standards, and adolescents who observe antisocial behavior in their peers will behave more antisocial, that is, with lower moral standards.

This requires that when selecting peers for adolescents, more is not always better. It is true that more peers can help children achieve better socialization, but more peers may also lead to some peers with low moral development level. Under the effect of peer observation, the moral development level of adolescents may be reduced.

3.3 Community

Community means the place where teenagers live, so it often has an impact on teenagers' morals without their knowing it. But on the surface, the influence of the community is exerted by peers in the community. Ramakrishna and his colleagues' study [13] showed that the moral intensity of college students using pirated software shows. The moral strength of any student was significantly related to the level of moral strength of other students, but not to the perceived level of moral strength of other immediate community groups, faculty, and university employees.

Similarly, community-school partnerships are believed to play a key role in the moral development of adolescents. The study argues that community partners encourage moral development by supporting students academically, emotionally, and socially. When community partners provide learning opportunities and resources not available in schools, students improve their skills and exposed to different community values. Through partnership activities, civic responsibility is promoted, and students' social capital is strengthened as they create their own connections with the communities in which they live [14]. This connection to the community is a form of socialization. Socialization means moral development.

There is also a cooperative relationship between the family and the community, where the community provides help to those families who need it, and those families who can help provide help to the community. It is all social behavior. In this interaction between the family and the community, the socialization of the youth will improve. Community provides a good bridge between family and school, which can often provide a very good auxiliary and supportive role for the moral development of teenagers. In addition to supporting families, schools, and peers, communities can also provide community-based service learning (CBSL). In Ruso's study [15], CBSl can bring about positive changes in students' moral development, future awareness and empathy.

In conclusion, community often plays an auxiliary factor in the moral development of adolescents. It plays a role of bridge among family, school, and peers, so that the influence of these three factors can be integrated. Therefore, community factors should be studied in addition to other factors when discussing the moral development of adolescents.

4. Summary

To sum up, this paper explores three factors that influence the moral development of adolescents and finds that peers and family can have a critical impact on the moral development of adolescents, for example, both peer relationship and family relationship affect the moral development of adolescents, but the influence caused by family relationship is not necessarily directional, which depends on the moral level and moral concept of the family. While the influence of community is often a secondary factor. This paper is helpful for the parents or teachers who are devoted to the moral education of teenagers to better help the moral development of teenagers. Previous studies have less systematically explored the factors affecting the moral development of adolescents. This paper mainly focuses on the influence of social environment on the moral development of adolescents. In the future, should focus on the cross-influence of social media, games and other factors and the three factors studied in this paper on the moral development of adolescents, to have a more comprehensive understanding of the social factors affecting the moral development of adolescents.

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