

Quality of Moral Judgement in the Nigerian Police Force: Assessing the Mediating Influences of Level of Education and Gender

Tobias Obiora Ozor, Chiedozie Okechukwu Okafor

Department of Psychology, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria
Email: calldozie@yahoo.co.uk

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Abstract

The study investigated gender and level of education as factors in quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police Force. A total of 167 participants comprising eighty-one (81) males and eighty-six (86) females of the Nigerian Police were drawn from Central Police Station (C.P.S), Uwani, and State CID Head Quarters, all in Enugu State. A 28 items ethical moral self inventory was administered to them to measure their quality of moral judgment. A cross-sectional survey design was used, while a 2-way ANOVA Statistics was applied to analyze the data. The findings revealed no significant influence of the two independent variables (gender and level of education). Gender: $F(1,163) = .02$ at $p < .05$; level of education: $F(1,163) = .35$ at $p < .05$, and gender interaction level of education: $F(1,163) = .07$ at $p < .05$ on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police. The finding was discussed in terms of its relevance to further education, and on-the-job training and counseling.

Keywords

Gender, Education, Ethics, Moral Judgment

1. Introduction

Morality, from the Latin “moralitas” meaning manner, character, proper behaviour, is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are good (or right) and those that are bad (or wrong) (Super-son, 2009). A moral code is a system of morality, and a moral is any practice or teaching within a moral code (John Stone, 2008). The adjective moral, is synonymous with “good” or “right”. Immorality is the active opposition to morality while amorality is defined as unawareness of, or disbelief in any of moral standards or principles

(Amoral, 2010).

1.1. Morality and Ethics

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is that branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality. The word “ethics” is commonly used interchangeably with morality, and sometimes used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual (Deigh, 1995). Likewise, certain types of ethical theories, especially deontological ethics, sometimes distinguish between “ethics” and “morals”. Although the morality of people and their ethics’ amount to the same thing, there is a usage that restricts morality to systems based on notions such as duty, obligation, and principles of conduct, reserving ethics for the more Aristotelian approach to practical reasoning based on the notion of virtue, and generally avoiding the separation of moral considerations from other practical considerations (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 2008). Descriptive ethics is the branch of philosophy which explained morality to mean personal or cultural values, codes of conduct or social mores. This further added that it did not connote objective claims of right or wrong, but only refers to that which is considered right or wrong. Furthermore, in its normative sense, morality refers to whatever if any, is actually right or wrong, which may be independent of the values or mores held by any particular peoples or cultures.

In addition, philosophical theories on the nature and origins of morality theories of meta-ethics) are broadly divided into two classes: moral realism and moral anti-realism. Moral realism is the class of theories which hold that there are true moral statements that report objective moral facts; while moral anti-realism on the other hand, holds that moral statements either fail or do not even attempt to report objective moral facts. Instead, they hold that moral claims are deprived either from an unsupported belief that there are objective moral facts (error theory, a form of moral nihilism), the speakers’ sentiments (emotivism, a form of moral relativism); or any one of the norms prevalent in society (ethical subjectivism, another form of moral relativism (Chapouthier, 2004).

Furthermore, Nigerian Police based on the nature of their job, face a lot of challenges whenever they want to perform their duty as force people. For example, in case of criminal investigation, it seemed that police were denied the freedom of information or access into the arena of investigation by the general public which would help them to unravel the facts surrounding the crime committed, and this is based on people’s perception of their quality of moral reasoning, cognitive capacity, and even creative ability. This is because the Nigerian Police are accused of the fact that when money speaks, the truth remains silent, and as a result, lack good quality moral judgement. These challenges affect the Nigerian Police in functioning normal and attaining a psychological well-being. Thus, the researcher intended to verify whether such factors like gender and level of education are likely to influence the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police.

1.2. Theories of Moral Development (e.g. Kohlberg, 1973)

Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development constitute an adaptation of a psychological theory originally conceived of by the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget. The theory holds that moral reasoning, the basis for ethical behavior, has six identifiable developmental stages; each more adequate at responding to moral dilemma than its predecessor (Kohlberg, 1973). Kohlberg followed the development of moral judgement far beyond the ages studied earlier by Piaget (Piaget, 1932) who also claimed that logic and morality develop through constructive stages. Expanding on Piaget’s work, Kohlberg determined that the process of moral development was principally concerned with justice, and that it continued throughout the individual’s life-time, a notion that spawned dialogue on the philosophical implications of such research (Kohlberg & Colleagues, 1983).

Kohlberg relied on stories such as dilemma, and was interested in how individuals would justify their actions if placed in similar moral dilemmas. For examples, Level 1: pre-conventional, which embodies the obedience and punishment orientations of how can I avoid punishment? And self-interest orientations of, what is in it for me? Level 2: Conventional, which houses the interpersonal accord and conformity (social norms) orientation—the good boy/good girl attitude, and authority and social order maintaining orientation—for law and social-order. Level 3: Post-conventional, which gives orientation on social contract, and universal ethical principles that handle principled conscience. Pre-conventional level of moral reasoning points out that adults at this level of reasoning, judge the morality of an action by its direct consequences (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). In stage one which is obedience and punishment driven, individuals focus on the direct consequences of their actions on themselves. For example, an action is perceived as morally wrong because the perpetrator is punished. Colby & Kohlberg,

(1987) Stage two (self-interest driven) espouses the “what is in it for me” in which right behaviour is defined by whatever is in the individual’s best interest, and shows a limited interest in the needs of others (Kohlberg, 1973).

The conventional level of moral reasoning is typical of adults. Those who reason in a conventional way, judge the morality of actions by comparing them to society’s views and expectations (Kohlberg, 1973). In stage three (interpersonal accord and conformity driven) the self enters society by filling social roles. Individuals are subjected to approval or disapproval from others. Stage four (authority and social order obedience driven) is important to obey laws, dictums and social conventions because of their importance in maintaining a functioning society.

The post-conventional level, also known as the principle level, is marked by a growing realization that individuals are separated entities from society, and that the individual’s own perspective may take precedence over society’s view, individuals may disobey rules inconsistent with their own principles. Post-conventional moralists live by their own ethical principles-principles that typically include such human rights as life, liberty, justice, and also view rule as useful but changeable mechanisms. In stage five (social contract driven), the world is viewed as holding different opinions, rights and values (Kohlberg, 1973). In stage six (universal ethical principles driven), moral reasoning is based on abstract reasoning using universal ethical principles. This involves an individual imagining what they would do in another’s shoes, if they believed what that other person imagines to be true (Clark, 1981).

However Kohlberg’s theory is criticized for emphasizing justice to the exclusion of other values, and so may not adequately address the arguments of those who value other moral aspects of action. Furthermore, the explicit making of moral right and wrong judgements coincides with activation in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex while intuitive reactions to situations containing implicit moral issues activate the temporoparietal junction area (Harenski, 2010). The brain areas that are consistently involved when humans reason about moral issues have been investigated by a large-scale meta-analysis of the brain activity changes reported in the moral neuroscience literature (Bzdok, 2011). This supports that notion that moral reasoning is related to both seeing things from other person’s points of view and to grasping others’ feelings.

If morality is the answer to the question “how ought we to live” at the individual level, police can be seen as addressing the same question at the social level. It is therefore unsurprising that evidence has been found of a relationship between morality and police attitude. Haidt and Graham (2006) studied the differences between male and female police on quality of moral judgement, and found that female police were not rated higher in quality of moral judgement than their male counterparts and *vice-versa*. In other words, it was found that neither male Police nor female Police value fairness more than the other. Morgan (2007) in his study on the difference between male and female police on efficient judgement at Ikoton-Egbe, Lagos, Nigeria reported that female police showed higher mean score on efficient moral judgement than their male counterparts. In other words, a significant gender differences was found in the study with the females rated more than the males in moral judgement. Werner (2009) in his study that compared literate and illiterate communities on the quality of moral judgement reported that neither people in the literate community nor those in the illiterate community were rated higher than the other in quality of moral judgement.

Therefore, the aims of this study are 1) to determine whether there will be a significant influence of gender in the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police, 2) to determine whether there will be a significant influence of level of education in the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police.

Operationally, gender refers to the biological dimensions of being male or female; Level of education refers to primary/secondary schools (o’level) and college of education, polytechnics and university certificates (A’level); Moral judgement refers to a factual judgement upon the action of an individual that can be evaluated as good or bad “right or wrong as measured by the Ethical Moral Self Inventory (EMSI) (Morgan, 2007).

Two hypotheses were tested in this study:

- 1) Gender will not significantly influence the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police.
- 2) Level of education will not significantly influence the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of one hundred and sixty-seven (167) participants comprising eighty-one (81) male and eighty-six (86)

female police officers were randomly drawn from the Central Police Station (CPS) Uwani and State CID Headquarters, Enugu, and used for this study. They were within the age range of 25 and 42. Their educational qualifications were O'level and A'level certificates. Out of eighty-one (81) males, 23 had O'level certificates and 58 had A'level certificates, and out of eighty-six (86) females 51 had O'level certificates and 35 had A'level certificates.

2.2. Instrument

A 28-item inventory, Ethical Moral Self Inventory (EMSI) designed to measure the quality of moral judgement was used. The inventory is the moral ethical self scale which is one of the five scales of the Tennessee self concept scale (TSCS) (Fitts, 1985). This instrument has been validated for use in Nigerian context by (Morgan, 2007). The test-retest reliability coefficients were .92 and .74.

2.3. Procedure

A total of 180 copies of the instrument were administered across the target population within a period of two weeks. The administration of the copies took the form of group testing with the help of the research assistants. Out of the 180 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 167 copies were correctly filled and used for the study, while 13 copies were wrongly filled and discarded. Only those police officers who were present at the duty post and willing to fill the questionnaire were served with it.

2.4. Design/Statistics

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, while a 2×2 (two-way) ANOVA was applied in analyzing the data collected.

2.5. Results

From **Table 1**, female police with A'level education obtained a higher total mean of 91.11, when compared with male police with A'level education who obtained a total mean of 90.90. Male police with o'level education obtained a total mean of 90.39, while female police o'level education obtained a total mean of 89.75. A higher mean indicates higher quality of moral judgement. A 2-way ANOVA was employed to test the significance of these differences.

From **Table 2**, F-Calculated value of .02 is less than F-critical value of 3.89 at $p < .05$ level of significance, indicating a non significant outcome. Hence, hypothesis 1 which stated that gender will not significantly influence the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian police was accepted. This showed that no remarkable influence of gender on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police was found.

Table 1. Means of gender and level of education on quality of moral judgement.

		O'level	A'level
Gender	Male	$\bar{x} = 90.39$ $n = 23$	$\bar{x} = 90.90$ $n = 58$
	Female	$\bar{x} = 89.75$ $n = 51$	$\bar{x} = 91.11$ $n = 35$

Note: O'Level: Primary/Secondary School Certificates. A'level: College of education, polytechnic and university certificates.

Table 2. ANOVA Summary of gender and level of education on quality of moral judgement.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	$p <$
Gender	1.47	1	1.47	.02	.05
Level of education	31.96	1	31.96	.35	.05
Gender vs. level of education	6.61	1	6.61	.07	.05
Within cells	14972.09	163	91.85		

Also from **Table 2**, F-calculated value .35 is less than F-critical value of 3.89 at $p < .05$ level of significance, indicating also, a non significant result. Hence, hypothesis II which stated that level of education will not significantly influence quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police was accepted. This means that no remarkable influence of level of education on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police was found. Finally, F-calculated value .07 is less than F-critical value 3.89 at $p <$ level of significance indicating a non significant interaction effect of gender and level of education as factors in the quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian police.

3. Discussion

This study investigated the influence of gender and level of education on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police. The results revealed that the first and second hypotheses (null) were accepted following the non significant influence of both gender and level of education on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police discovered. The results agreed with the finding of [Haidt and Graham \(2006\)](#), but disagreed with [Morgan \(2007\)](#) study. The disagreement here could be accounted for by the differences in cultural orientation, age, and other personality characterizes. This study also agreed with [Werner \(2009\)](#) study which reported non significant influence of level of education on quality of moral judgement among people in literate and illiterate communities. The outcome of the hypotheses tested in relation to gender shows that both male/female police share the similar views in relation to what is good or right, and what is bad or wrong. This is an indication that police, be it male or female expresses that same degree in the quality of moral judgement which may have accounted for the non variation in this study.

The second hypotheses tested, also indicated a non significant influence of level of education on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian Police, and were accepted. This means that a non remarkable influence of level of education on quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian police was found, which shows that there were no strong variations in quality of moral judgement based on level of education among the Nigerian police. The result also shows that gender and level of education showed non significant interaction effect, which shows that the variables did not jointly determine the degree in quality of moral judgement among the Nigerian police. However, observation of the means shows that highly educated participants obtained a total higher mean (see **Table 1**) when compared with the less educated participants. Thus, the relevance of further education and on-the-job training cannot be overemphasized.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The results of this study showed that the Nigerian police men and women, more educated or less educated, did not differ significantly on quality of moral judgments. In addition, a non significant interaction of gender and level of education was observed on quality of oral judgement among the Nigerian Police. The results imply that there could be other factors such as salary structure, promotion and good security facilities that can significantly influence the quality of moral judgment in the Nigerian Police Force. In addition, Nigerian police should be encouraged, through education, to sustain high quality of moral judgement while discharging their duty. Other agencies, both government and private are not left out. The burden therefore lies on teachers and educationist at all levels to ensure that moral values are not left behind in the education processes for this will go a long way to restoring the good image of work-force in and outside the country.

Implications of the Finding

The result of this study has serious implication for Nigerian political health. Considering that the participants for this study represented a cross section of the Nigerian civil society, it is pertinent to note that what was found in this study tells more about the Nigerian political system. For instance the study found no significant influence of gender and level of education on quality of more judgment, indicating a system where everyone reasons almost alike. It is therefore, not surprising to say that the on-going political alienation and malpractices in the country permeated the minds of all Nigerians in relatively the same form. So, when one says that political meaninglessness, powerlessness and normlessness dwell in Nigeria, it is not likely that a greater majority will be exonerated.

To this end, this study encourages all Nigerians to begin to develop unique sense of judgment; a sense of judgment that concentrates on objective truth and which must not follow the popular opinion. Nigerians, espe-

cially the youths are also encouraged to seek out opportunities to train their mind on constructive, non-partisan, reasoning that can improve the lives of others.

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