

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Case Study: Heinz Steals the Drug

*In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that?
(Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19)*

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development



Respond to the following questions. You must explain the reasoning behind your “yes” or “no” answer.

In the center of my universe is Liberty. I believe that every person is born free. They are born to have a free life, to exercise their faculties freely and to own property freely. In such a universe only voluntary action takes place. There is no legislator that regulates one’s life, liberty and property, for his task is to secure what pre-exists: life, liberty and property. In this world every human interaction can be traced back to property rights.

All my answers and reasonings follow from this belief...

1. Should the husband have broken into the man’s store to steal the drug for his wife? Why or why not?

Absolutely not. By breaking into a man’s store and stealing the drug he violates the druggist’s property, which is unacceptable. In my universe no reason can overwrite voluntary action. If one’s voluntary action violates another person’s voluntary action, the former action is unacceptable.

2. Did Heinz have a right to steal the drug?

Absolutely not. Even though I pity him, violating anybody’s property rights is unacceptable. Stealing the drug is a violation of property rights. There is no voluntary action here on behalf of the druggist. Heinz has no right to steal anything from anyone whatsoever.

3. Was Heinz violating the druggist's rights?

Absolutely yes. It is up to the druggist to decide what he sells for how much. That is the basis of voluntary action.

Imagine a world where stealing someone's property is accepted. How long could that society function?!

4. What sentence should the judge give him once he was caught?

Well, firstly, it is up to the druggist to decide if he presses charges against the perpetrator. It is his property that was violated, thus this decision must lie with him.

Secondly, if the druggist decides to press charges, and Heinz is caught, the principle that the judge should turn to is restoration - since the case is a property right violation. The druggist states how much damage has been done to his property, and the perpetrator - Heinz - must restore the damage.

Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist, born in Bronxville, New York is famous for his research in moral education, reasoning, and developing stages of moral development.

LEVEL I: PRE - CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

Stage 1: Obedience _____

Stage 2: Self-interest_____

LEVEL II: CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

Stage 3: Conformity_____

Stage 4: Law-and-order_____

LEVEL III: POST - CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

Stage 5: Human rights_____

Stage 6: Universal human ethics_____

Below is a list of possible arguments that belong to the six stages. Decide which stage each scenario belongs to and explain why. Then think of a word or two that would best describe the values/actions presented by the particular argument and stage of moral development as proposed by Kohlberg.

Heinz should steal the medicine because his wife expects it; he wants to be a good husband. Or: Heinz should not steal the drug because stealing is bad and he is not a criminal; he tried to do everything he could without breaking the law, you cannot blame him.

Stage: 3

Explanation: This is the good-boy behaviour, where Heinz lives up to social expectations.

Descriptive Word: Conformity/Interpersonal relationships

Heinz should steal the medicine, because saving a human life is a more fundamental value than the property rights of another person. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine, because others may need the medicine just as badly, and their lives are equally significant.

Stage: 6

Explanation: This is abstract reasoning, where the principle of justice may as well be against the law.

Descriptive Word: Universal human ethics/Universal principles

Heinz should not steal the medicine because the law prohibits stealing, making it illegal. Or: Heinz should steal the drug for his wife but also take the prescribed punishment for the crime as well as paying the druggist what he is owed. Criminals cannot just run around without regard for the law; actions have consequences.

Stage: 4

Explanation: Considers society as a whole when making judgements. Focus is on law and order by following the rules, and respecting authority.

Descriptive Word: Law-and-order/Maintaining social order

Heinz should steal the medicine because he will be much happier if he saves his wife, even if he will have to serve a prison sentence. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because prison is an awful place, and he would probably languish over a jail cell more than his wife's death.

Stage: 2

Explanation: Actions are judged according to how they serve individual needs.

Descriptive Word: Self-interest/Individualism and exchange

Heinz should not steal the medicine because he will consequently be put in prison which will mean he is a bad person. Or: Heinz should steal the medicine because it is only worth \$200 and not how much the druggist wanted for it; Heinz had even offered to pay for it and was not stealing anything else.

Stage: 1

Explanation: Sees rules as fixed and absolute. Obeying the rules is important to avoid punishment. Morality is motivated solely by punishment.

Descriptive Word: Obedience/Obedience and punishment

Heinz should steal the medicine because everyone has a right to choose life, regardless of the law. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because the scientist has a right to fair compensation. Even if his wife is sick, it does not make his actions right.

Stage: 5

Explanation: Differing values. Laws are important, but members of the society should agree upon these standards. Laws sometimes work against the interest of particular individuals. Maintenance of individual rights.

Descriptive Word: Human rights/Social contract and individual rights

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development Visual Flow Chart **Assignment Rubric**

Create a visual diagram/flow chart using text and images to present and explain the key components of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. Your diagram must include the three distinct levels as well as the six stages of development. Use pictures, words, arrows, quotes, or any other symbols that help to convey Kohlberg's theory. Your diagram should be done on an 8.5 x 11 piece of blank paper.

****Please hand in this criteria sheet with your assignment.*

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	NOTES/ COMMENTS
Knowledge/ Understanding of topic		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student addresses each component of Kohlberg's theory clearly and displays a solid understanding of the topic. 	0 2 4 6 8 10	
Communication/Presentation <i>Clarity and visual presentation</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicates facts and ideas with a high degree of clarity ▪ The flow chart is well organized and easy to follow 	0 1 2 3 4 5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The format incorporates the use of visual aids, text, and especially symbols to enhance meaning ▪ Assignment is neat, and is colourful 	0 1 2 3 4 5	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effort is visible in the creative presentation of assignment 		
TOTAL MARK:	/15	

DUE: Friday, November 20th

KOHLBERG'S LEVELS OF MORAL REASONING

LEVEL OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT	STAGE OF REASONING	APPROX. AGES
Preconventional "do's and don'ts"	<p><i>Stage 1:</i> Right is obedience to power and avoidance of punishment.</p> <p><i>Stage 2:</i> Right is taking responsibility and leaving others to be responsible for themselves.</p>	< 11
Conventional	<p><i>Stage 3:</i> Right is being considerate: "uphold the values of other adolescents and adults' rules of society"</p> <p><i>Stage 4:</i> Right is being good, with the values and norms of family and society at large.</p>	adolescence and adulthood
Postconventional	<p><i>Stage 5:</i> Right is finding inner "universal rights" balance between self-rights and societal rules — a social contract.</p> <p><i>Stage 6:</i> Right is based on a higher order of applying principles to all human-kind; being non-judgmental and respecting all human life.</p>	after 20

Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist, born in Bronxville, New York is famous for his research in moral education, reasoning, and developing stages of moral development. His theory, which is the basis for ethical behaviour, states that there are six identifiable developmental constructive (knowledge and meaning constructed from experience) stages and with each stage an individual becomes progressively better at responding to moral dilemmas than the last.

Kohlberg was interested in how people would justify their actions if they were put in a moral dilemma. He created stories for people of various ages and cultural backgrounds and had them respond to specific questions. He then grouped the responses into six distinct stages which were grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional.

As a person grows and experiences life they move forward in stages. Kohlberg believed that no one could move in reverse, nor could anyone “jump” forward stages. Each stage provides a new perspective and is more complex than the previous. He thought only about 25% of persons actually grows to stage six, the majority remain in stage four.

Level I: Preconventional Morality

Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment orientation. Actions are evaluated in terms of possible punishment, not goodness or badness; obedience to power is emphasized.

How can I avoid punishment?

Stage 2: Pleasure-seeking orientation. Proper action is determined by one's own needs; concerns for the needs of others is largely a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," not of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

What's in it for me?

Level II: Conventional Morality

Stage 3: Good boy/good girl orientation. Good behavior is that which pleases others in the immediate group or which brings approval; the emphasis is on being "nice."

Conforming to social norms

Stage 4: Authority orientation. In this stage the emphasis is on upholding law, order, and authority, doing one's duty, and following social rules.

Law and Order morality

Level III: Post conventional Morality

Stage 5: Social-contract orientation. Support of laws and rules is based on rational analysis and mutual agreement; rules are recognized as open to question but are upheld for the good of the community and in the name of democratic values.

Ex. Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Stage 6: Morality of individual principals. Behavior is directed by self-chosen ethical principals that tend to be general, comprehensive, or universal; high value is placed on justice, dignity, and equality of all persons.

Universal ethical principles

Below is a list of possible arguments that belong to the six stages. Decide which stage each scenario belongs to and explain why. Then think of a word or two that would best describe the values/actions presented by the particular argument and stage of moral development as proposed by Kohlberg.

Stage one (*obedience*): Heinz should not steal the medicine because he will consequently be put in prison which will mean he is a bad person. Or: Heinz should steal the medicine because it is only worth \$200 and not how much the druggist wanted for it; Heinz had even offered to pay for it and was not stealing anything else.

Stage two (*self-interest*): Heinz should steal the medicine because he will be much happier if he saves his wife, even if he will have to serve a prison sentence. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because prison is an awful place, and he would probably languish over a jail cell more than his wife's death.

Stage three (*conformity*): Heinz should steal the medicine because his wife expects it; he wants to be a good husband. Or: Heinz should not steal the drug because stealing is bad and he is not a criminal; he tried to do everything he could without breaking the law, you cannot blame him.

Stage four (*law-and-order*): Heinz should not steal the medicine because the law prohibits stealing, making it illegal. Or: Heinz should steal the drug for his wife but also take the prescribed punishment for the crime as well as paying the druggist what he is owed. Criminals cannot just run around without regard for the law; actions have consequences.

Stage five (*human rights*): Heinz should steal the medicine because everyone has a right to choose life, regardless of the law. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because the scientist has a right to fair compensation. Even if his wife is sick, it does not make his actions right.

Stage six (*universal human ethics*): Heinz should steal the medicine, because saving a human life is a more fundamental value than the property rights of another person. Or: Heinz should not

steal the medicine, because others may need the medicine just as badly, and their lives are equally significant.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

