



Moral Emotions & Ethical Decision-Making: A Socio-Cultural Approach

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Outline

- Research questions
- Literature background
 - Emotions
 - Moral emotions & ethical decisions/behaviors
 - A “socio-cultural” approach
- The influence of situational factors on moral emotions in the U.S., China, & India
- Future research & management implications

Research Questions

- Which moral emotions influence ethical decision-making in different cultures? (specifically, U.S., China, & India)
- How do situational factors influence these moral emotions?

Emotions

- Subjective, involuntary, rapid responses to events important us
(Frijda, 1988; Keltner & Haidt, 1999)
 - Dependent upon the situation and an individual's perception of the situation
 - Situation can impact one's own life or the lives of others
 - Emotions facilitate reasoning as we process information

Emotions

- Biological, cognitive, social, physiological, neurological, psychological, cultural perspectives
- Emotions facilitate reasoning
- Thinking and feeling
- Experience and anticipate

Moral Emotions

- Emotions that motivate moral behaviors/decisions and consider our moral principles (Eisenberg, 2000)
- “Emotions that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society of a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent” (Haidt, 2003: 853)
 - Other-condemning (Haidt, 2003)
 - Contempt – Anger – Disgust
 - Self-conscious (Eisenberg, 2000)
 - Guilt, Shame, Embarrassment
 - Empathy (Davis, 1983; Tangney, 1991)
 - Cognitive and Affective Dimensions

A Socio-Cultural Approach

- Emotions are embedded in cultural norms – we learn to experience and express emotions through socialization processes (Keltner & Haidt, 2003)
 - Not all societies/cultures experience the same emotions
 - Or, if same emotions, not experienced at the same level of intensity for the same types of situations
 - May have different names for same emotions or no names for them at all
 - Conceptualization may be more/less inclusive of characteristics specific to other emotions

Example

(Menon, 2000; Shweder, 1993; Tangney, 1991)

■ U.S.

- Shame = negative – feel badly, avoid others
- Happiness = positive – celebrate, rejoice

■ India

- Shame = positive – associated with civility, modesty
- Happiness = negative – childlike, immature

A Socio-Cultural Approach

- Indigenous Emotions & Ethics in India – *rasa* (Menon, 2000)
 - Uncivilizing emotions (e.g., rage – men) by men vs. refining emotions (e.g., modesty – women)
 - “Refined” women who are modest, detached, and humble are perceived to be morally superior in their middle and old age – self-refinement is the ultimate goal

A Socio-Cultural Approach

- Self-Construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)
 - Independent
 - Individuals are separate from one another; individualistic, autonomous
 - U.S.
 - Interdependent
 - Individuals are connected to one another; collective, relational
 - China & India

Situational Factors

- General Proposition: Moral emotions mediate relationships between situational factors and EDM components
 - 1) Type of emotions elicited will vary
 - U.S./Independent Selves: Empathy & Guilt
 - “put ourselves in someone else’s shoes”
 - China & India/Interdependent Selves: Shame
 - Concerned with how others view us

Situational Factors

- General Proposition: Moral emotions mediate relationships between situational factors and EDM components
 - 2) Intensity of emotions experienced will vary across cultures
 - e.g., shame – more intense feelings experienced in Indian culture than Chinese culture

Situational Factors

- General Proposition: Moral emotions mediate relationships between situational factors and EDM components
 - 3) Situation-specific factors (e.g., moral intensity, type of harm) will have stronger effects on moral emotions in cultures where individuals have more influence in decision-making
 - U.S. > India > China

Future Research

- Political and economic context
- The role of moral courage on the relationship between moral emotions and the EDM process

Management Implications

- Are managers able to shame individuals into making ethical decisions? Is *that* ethical?
- Understanding various cultural norms, which include the experience and expression of emotions
- Emotional intelligence – recognizing, understanding, assimilate, and manage emotions of selves and others – more complex