

RELIGIOSITY, EDUCATION AND MORAL JUDGMENT:

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE AND
MADRASAH STUDENTS OF PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of dogmatic religiosity and educational environment -with more or less role-taking and guided reflection opportunities- on the moral judgment competence of university, college and madrasah students. Data (N = 403) of students in bachelor and higher classes were collected from eight different institutes of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoonkha, and Islamabad regions. Three instruments, ORIGIN/u questionnaire, Dogmatic and Personal Religiosity Scale (DPR-scale) and Moral Judgment Test-Urdu (MJT-Urdu) were used for the purpose of data collection. The findings showed overall very low moral judgment competence in the whole sample (M = 11.8) and a high moral segmentation (M = -7.6). Dogmatic religious beliefs seemed to increase moral segmentation but had low impact on moral competence. Students of madaaris exhibited the lowest moral competence than college and university students. The advantaged educational environment was found to have insignificant but negative effect on moral judgment competence though it appeared to reduce moral segmentation. Females were found to have more moral segmentation than male students. The role of universities came out to be positive in reducing segmentation and stabilizing moral competence. Almost all groups showed more preference for postconventional moral arguments and less preference for conventional and preconventional arguments. The findings are discussed with especial emphasis on underlying dimensions of a society exhibiting such trends.

Keywords: Moral Judgment competence, Educational Environment, Role-taking and Guided reflection, Dogmatic Religiosity, Dual-Aspect Theory.

[Introduction]

The present study aimed to investigate the level of moral judgment competence in Pakistani population and its relationship with dogmatic religiosity and educational environment with opportunities of role-taking and guided reflection. This work was mainly based on the dual-aspect theory of Lind (2008) and utilized Urdu version of Moral Judgment Test (MJT) as the basic tool for measuring moral competence. Looking at the literature, we see that within cognitive developmental framework, Kohlberg introduced a stage theory of moral development that proposed sequential changes in complexity of thought with increasing age resulting in shifts from more ego-focused, self-interested resolution of moral issues (preconventional level) to more normative and rule preservative reasoning (Conventional level), and finally to the optimal development of democratic thinking and consideration of humanistic principles (Post Conventional level) (see Colby et al., 1983; Colby et al, 1987; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999, pp 1-2). Several studies (Armon and Dawson, 1997; Nisan and Kohlberg, 1982; Walker, 1982) supported the sequentiality claims of development as a stage progression. The literature also shows a heated debate between proponents of Kohlberg and Gilligan about the nature of morality (see Blum, 1988; Jorgensen, 2006). Gilligan claims that Kohlberg's conception of morality is too rationalistic and impartial that does not give space to empathy, care, loyalty, and responsibility among interpersonal relations. Morality does not exclusively originate from some universal principles that are unrelated to people and their relationships; for Gilligan people are not isolated beings cut off from all social relations and that is why morality is a complex integration of both impartial principles and phenomena of care and compassion among persons.

Distinct from these approaches, Lind (2000; 2006; 2008) provides a dual aspect model of morality based on cognitive developmental research that takes into account both attitudinal/affective and cognitive aspects as integral parts of morality. His dual aspect theory emphasizes two interrelated affective and cognitive dimensions that are not separate domains but are qualitatively distinct aspects of the same whole; he named this conceptualizing as a construct of moral judgment competence. Lind's work is rooted in Piagetian (see Lind, 2006) and Kohlbergian tradition and he gives credit to Kohlberg for the first time providing a clear conceptualization of moral judgment competence by defining it as "the capacity to make decision and judgments which are moral (i.e. based on internal moral principles) and to act in accordance with such judgments" (Kohlberg, 1964, as cited in, Lind, 2008). For Lind (1985) problem in conceptualization of moral thinking emerges from the confusion of separating content from structure. Most of the psychologists used methods to measure structural aspects independently of content aspect because they considered cognitive structures as pure formal structures lacking any content. For Lind there can be no pure reasoning independent of some content, and reasoning structures are always meaningfully associated with some affect/purpose/principle.

Lind (1978; 1982) introduced Moral Judgment Test (MJT) as an experimental questionnaire to simultaneously measure both of these aspects. He is of the view that objective methods that set external criterion on which some response consistency is judged and that consider any deviating response from that standard as a measurement error are not good operationalizations of the theory. Such methods usually do not emphasize intra-individual variation and judge inter-individual response consistency as an evidence of test's reliability. These methods cannot be applied especially to cognitive developmental framework that considers development of an individual as a unified phenomenon with increasing differentiation and integration of structure (cognition) and content (affect). An individual's response inconsistency cannot be solely attributed to measurement error but can be a true inconsistency in the individual him/herself and that is why it needs to be integrated in a measurement instrument. MJT is measure that takes into account this response inconsistency as a genuine aspect of the individual.

Religiosity and Moral Judgment

Moral judgment competence has been found to be associated with nature of religious beliefs and mostly shown negative correlation with dogmatic form of religiosity i.e. uncritical acceptance of religious authority (Lupu, 2009; Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011). Historically religion has always been considered as a unique moral system with a purpose to shape human behavior in consonance with the will of God by providing a standard of conduct and ways to avoid sin. For Voert, Felling and Peters (1994) abandoning religion and increasing secularization leads to more permissive morality that is more open to egoistic behaviors like tax cheating, selling goods without disclosing problems, and dishonesty in financial matters.

Contrary to such common sense views, the perspective of cognitive developmentalists about the role of institutional religions in the development of moral reasoning does not appear to be much favourable. Kohlberg thought his stage theory of moral development to be universally valid and claimed that religious teachings and religious beliefs had no effect on the development of moral cognitions (Richards and Davison, 1992). Richards (1988, cited in Richards and Davison, 1992) found religious biasness in Kohlbergian approach especially his preference for postconventional thought over conventional form of reasoning, while Rest interpreted these findings that conservatively religious people though, had a capacity to reason at postconventional level, deliberately preferred conventional reasoning -which he assumed as less developed as compared to postconventional reasoning- because they used religious criteria instead of personal criteria to judge some moral issues (for more elaboration see Richards and Davison, 1992). Narvaez et al. (1999) also found that people high on religious fundamentalism got higher scores for conventional moral reasoning.

Some of the studies using MJT showed that people with high dogmatic religiosity exhibited less moral judgment competence in comparison to people with more dogmatic religiosity (Lupu, 2009; Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011). Bataglia et al. (2002) found that people who showed no extreme opinion of being very religious or non-religious and had more flexibility of thought exhibited higher moral competence.

Moral segmentation, another phenomenon, has also been observed in conservative and religiously dominated societies (Bataglia et al., 2002; Lind, 2000a; Schillinger-Agati and Lind, 2003; Lupu, 2009; Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011) that occurs when there is a discrepancy in an individual's moral judgment competence scores between two dilemmas. Usually this discrepancy results when students get lower scores on euthanasia dilemma (that is relatively more sensitive and put more cognitive demand) than workers' dilemma. According to Lind (2000a) "religiously oriented subjects suppress their autonomous moral judgment on dilemma contents, on which the church takes a strong stance. The segmentation phenomenon seems to indicate that internalized rules (super-ego) rather than external social pressure constrain the use of autonomous moral judgment." The segmentation provides evidence that blind acceptance of religious

authorities even in some selected issues hampers people's ability to think autonomously.

This dogmatic form of religiousness is usually part of societies that are generally conservative in certain other dimensions as well. Studies have also been done to relate moral competence with different ideological orientations. Studies using MJT in both liberal and conservative cultures (Lind, 1986; Lupu, 2009; Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011; Schillinger-Agati, 2006; Liaquat, 2011) do not show differing patterns of preference of moral arguments and it is observed that postconventional arguments are preferred everywhere; it is only the competence where much variation has been observed. Gross (1999) could not find difference in moral competence in both liberal and conservative activists from United States and Israel when education and income were controlled while Lind (1986) observed higher moral judgment competence in West European students in comparison to East European students. Ishida (2011) found moral judgment competence to be negatively correlated with idealistic orientation especially the absolutists getting the lowest c-scores in comparison to subjectivist relativists.

Education and Moral Judgment Competence

Moral competence has also found to be effected by quality of learning environment. Studies by Schillinger-Agati, (2006), Lupu, (2009), and Saeidi-Parvaneh (2011) show that students with more opportunities of adopting certain responsible roles within their educational institutes (like being a research assistant, chair of group discussions, taking active part in curriculum development etc.) and who received more expert help and guidance from teachers, researchers or senior students developed higher levels of moral judgment competence and also showed significant gains of moral judgment scores during the course of their studies. In students belonging to less fertile learning environment, moral stagnation even moral regression was observed. Terenzini, Ro and Yin (2010) also suggested that conventional structural descriptors of educational institutes had less influence on students' experiences in comparison to internal organizational features that were more closely related to student experiences that had direct impact on learning outcomes. Rest and Thoma (1985) using Defining Issues Test found greater impact of higher education on moral judgment as college education appeared to be better predictor of moral judgment than school education.

Religiosity and Education in Pakistan

Pakistan is predominantly a Sunni Muslim country with Muslim population of 95% including about 75% Sunni and 20% Shia population (CIA, World Fact Book). After independence in 1947, government of Pakistan made religion an integral part of several educational policies to defend Pakistan's ideological basis.

From year 1969 to 2009 six education policies had been adopted by the government of Pakistan with one common theme among several others to educate people according to Islamic ideals, in order to produce in them, historical identity and cognizance about the real reasons of getting separation from United India. These values are taught by the inclusion of Islamic studies as a compulsory subject from grade 1 to grade 14 and as an elective subject for higher grades and also the inclusion of Pakistan studies with special reference to Islamic ideology and emphasis on two-nation theory (i.e. Muslims and Hindus were diametrically different nations in United India and partition was indispensable). The latest educational policy (GoP, 2009) has a whole chapter on Islamic education that describes policy orientation of the government about what need to be taught.

The school and college curricula are currently influenced by religious themes. Despite of the fact that Islamic studies is made part of the curriculum, in other subjects like Urdu, English and Social studies, Islamic references are given special place. There is emphasis on Hindu-Muslim separation with derogatory tone and distorted facts about historical relations with Hindus; statements related to importance of Jihad (Muslim holy war) are also common (for detailed discussion on nature of curricula, see Nayyar & Saleem, 2002; Ahmed, 2004).

Presently, education in Pakistan is a neglected sector with one of the lowest allocations of total percentage of GDP to education (2%) in comparison to other countries of the same region like Bangladesh (2.6%), Nepal (3.2%), India (3.3%), Iran (5.2%), and Maldives (8.3%) (UNESCO, 2009). On Educational Development Index (EDI), Pakistan stands at 119th position out of 127 countries (UNESCO, 2011). The system of education in Pakistan is very much polarized on the basis of quality, expenditure, language of instruction, and on other structural and organizational aspects.

Higher Education in Pakistan

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) played a key role in the growth of higher education in Pakistan. HEC was established in 2002, replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC) under the rule of the federal government. HEC is responsible for budgetary allocations to different higher education institutes, for policy formulations of such institutes, affiliation of different public and private sector universities, and making a link between higher education institutes and society. HEC is also responsible for the implementing a quality control to universities, by accrediting different universities, setting up a university ranking system and providing funds and facilities for the arrangement of different seminars and conferences. It also provides indigenous and foreign scholarships to students and the faculty for capacity building of higher education institutes in Pakistan. Colleges are also affiliated with HEC but HEC does not regulate colleges directly as it regulates universities. Colleges in Pakistan are not autonomous institutes and are affiliated with different Educational boards for higher secondary education and with different universities for Bachelor and Master level programs. Colleges usually function under provincial education departments and cannot make independent policy decisions about the scheme of studies and development of curricula rather they have to follow the pattern set by respective universities of their affiliation.

Despite the efforts and contributions of HEC in advancement of research (Qazi, Simon, Rawat and Hamid, 2010), the state of higher education in Pakistan is not satisfactory. According to the estimates of the Census of year 2001, only 4.38% of Pakistani population had Bachelor or equivalent education and only 1.58% of population had Master level education (GoP, Census, 2011).

The universities in Pakistan do not generally match international standards in matters of creativity and originality. Finances are limited and there has remained more emphasis on opening new departments and universities instead of improving resources of already available universities. Student unrest due to various reasons is another cause in disruption of normal academic activities in university campuses. Laboratories and classes lack facilities and equipment, and there is shortage of skilled and qualified faculty (Hamidullah, 2005, p. 32).

Madrasah Education in Pakistan

At the time of partition there were estimated 137 madaaris (singular Madrasah, i.e. religious seminary) in Pakistan and year 2004/05 informal estimates tell the number even higher than 45000 (Shah, 2006). An estimate provided by Ministry of Religious Affairs on the number of registered madaaris was about 10,000 for the year 2002 (Rahman, 2004). There are five sect based madaaris functioning in Pakistan at present with their separate boards of education; among those, Deobandi, Brelvi and Ahle-Hadees are Sunni sub-sects, and Jamat-e-Islami is a more political instead of sectarian based organization. Among these madaaris, 7000 registered madaaris belong to Deobandi sect. (Rahman, 2004).

In Pakistan, Madaaris mostly work as NGOs and get their finances through charity and zakat (Islamic concept of obligatory charity) provided by general people, through animal hide collections on the occasion of Eid, through support of land owners and traders, and through aid given by overseas Pakistanis. Though government provides some funds for improvement in madrasah education but its contribution is negligible in comparison to privately earned funds (Rahman, 2004; Shah, 2006).

The curriculum of Madaaris mainly consists of exegeses of Quran, Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and Sunnah (conduct of the Prophet), Arabic literature, grammar and composition, Islamic Jurisprudence, Logic, Beliefs, and geography of Arabic Muslim countries but with emphasis of one's own sect. Madaaris offer degrees from first grade to postgraduate levels. Government of Pakistan recognizes only the degree of Shahadat-ul-Alamiya as equivalent to university earned MA Arabic or MA Islamic Studies degree.

According to Rahman (2004) madaaris mostly cater for the needs of poor people, as most of them provide food and lodgings to their students, so lower social strata of society who cannot afford their children's economic needs send them to madaaris to lower their own burden. A study by Shah (2006) in the southern part of Punjab province showed that most of the madaaris had political affiliations. Usually madaaris were involved in street agitations in which madrasah students took the largest part. He also thought that poverty, religious fervor, and political power of madaaris compelled people to send their children or become their affiliates. Borchgrevink (2011) adopts a more favourable position and for him saying that madaaris are just meeting the needs of only poor people is an underestimation, as most of the Pakistani parents want their children to get religious education, and there are parents, who when do not find quality education in government schools, opt for madrasa education as better alternative. Even many students from abroad come to study in Pakistani madaaris because of their historical renown.

Method

This work tries to confirm a number of assumptions elaborated in Georg Lind's Dual-Aspect theory and his concept of role-taking and guided reflection opportunities, and also tries to find out relationship between dogmatic religious beliefs and level of moral judgment competence.

Sample

The sample of the study (N = 403) consisted of students of Bachelor and higher degree programs from 3 universities, 2 colleges, and 3 madaaris from the provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoonkha, and Federal Capital city of Islamabad, Pakistan. A non-random stratified cluster sampling method was used for the selection of the sample. The population was divided into 3 clusters of colleges, universities and madaaris. From each cluster students of Bachelor and higher programs were selected; from Madaaris that have a different administrative and degree awarding set up, only those students who were studying in programs equivalent to bachelor or higher were selected. As change in moral competence during studies was also intended to be assessed, so from each institute, students in their first year of study and students studying for more than one year were included in the sample. After the selection of appropriate clusters a convenience method was used for the purpose of data collection. Most of the students mainly belonged to disciplines of Psychology, Economics, International Relations, Mass Communications, English, and Sharia and Hadith. The final data set on which all main analyses were done consisted of 403 participants including 218 (54.6%) males, and 181 (45.4%) females. The mean age of respondents was 21.3 years. Among these respondents 205 students (51%) belonged to universities, 147 students (36.6%) belonged to colleges, and 50 students (12.4%) belonged to madaaris. Moreover, 132 (32.7%) were studying in Bachelor or equivalent grade, 264 (65.5%) were studying in Master or equivalent grade, while 7 students (1.7%) were doing M.Phil. A total of 146 students (37.5%) were studying for less than one year in their respective institutes while 243 students (62.5%) were in their institutes for more than a year.

Instruments

A study was done by the present author for the translation and validation of Moral Judgment Test into Urdu language (Liaquat, 2011). For the measurement of moral judgment competence and moral preferences this MJT-Urdu version was used. In order to measure the dogmatic religiosity of students, “Dogmatic and Personal Religiosity Scale (DPR-Scale)” by Lind and Kietzig (Revised-2011) was used (provided by Lind through personal communication). It is a 16-item 4 point Likert scale with response format “1 as Not at all to 4 as absolutely yes.” Item No. 1 to 11 measure the dogmatic religiosity and item No. 12 to 16 measure personal religiosity. The test mostly contained questions related to fundamental Muslim faith; these aspects are classified as dogmatic as people usually use religious criteria instead of some rational approach for such beliefs. The test was translated and adapted into Urdu language and only the dogmatic religiosity subscale of the DPR-scale was used for the present research, the personal religiosity subscale was dropped due to cultural irrelevance. Following the method used by Saeidi-Parvaneh (2011), participants were classified as more dogmatic if they got scores ranging from 3 to 4, while participants with scores less than 3 were classified as religiously less dogmatic.

For the measurement of opportunities of practical role-taking and guided reflection within the institutes, ORIGIN/u questionnaire developed by Lind (1996, reviewed 2001) was used (questionnaire was provided by Lind through personal communication). For the purpose of present research only RTS (syllabus related role-taking), GRS (syllabus related guided reflection), RTSS (semi syllabus related role taking) and GRSS (semi syllabus related guided reflection) subscales were used. The test was translated into Urdu and was assessed by a PhD associate professor of psychology. Only one statement was added asking about students’ opportunities of class presentations. Syllabus Related role taking opportunities (RTS) are measured on a 4 point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (often). The questions generally ask students to what extent they have role-taking opportunities like presenting research paper in class, participation in syllabus evaluation, chairing a discussion in class, opportunity to do research on a self-chosen topic, student internship, participation in social welfare programs etc. in their institutes. Syllabus related Guided Reflection (GS) subscale mostly covers opportunities like having guidance from supervisor, teachers, and class mates for different roles being performed, teachers’ method of teaching and nature of exam they conduct, and teachers’ contribution in developing critical thinking skills, problem solving, and self-reliance in students. Semi Syllabus related Role-taking opportunities (RTSS) subscale contains queries about the opportunities to become a student research assistant or a tutor for introductory or advanced courses while Semi Syllabus related Guided Reflection opportunities (GSS) subscale includes questions related to the availability of guidance from teachers, supervisors or class mates when performing those duties. The scores on ORIGIN/u range from 0-105. For the scoring of ORIGIN/u, the method adopted by Schillinger and Lind (2002) was used by setting a cut-off point at 25% of the total scale score which was 26.25. students with

scores lower than 26.25 were classified as belonging to less advantaged educational environment, while students getting scores above the cut-off point were classified as students belonging to more advantaged educational environment.

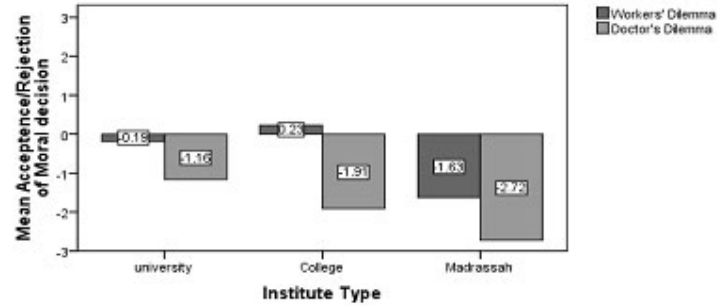
RESULTS

For certain analyses a cross-sectional study design was used. Two-way (2x2) factorial designs were used for the purpose of splitting groups into two categories of independent variables. As change in moral competence with passage of time was also needed to be observed within institutes, a replicated cross-sectional design was used; it is a design when participants at different phases of the program are studied at a single time so it contains in it the characteristics of both longitudinal and cross-sectional designs (Kumar, 2005). Mixed-method design was used where within group effect was needed to be studied for six moral orientations along with measuring between group effect for certain groups.

(i) Comparing with many international studies a very low moral judgment competence was found in the Pakistani sample ($M = 11.8$, $SD = 10.7$). High moral segmentation was observed ($M = -7.6$, $SD = 26.2$) and score on DPR scale showed extremely high dogmatic religiosity as well ($M = 3.6$, $SD = .33$).

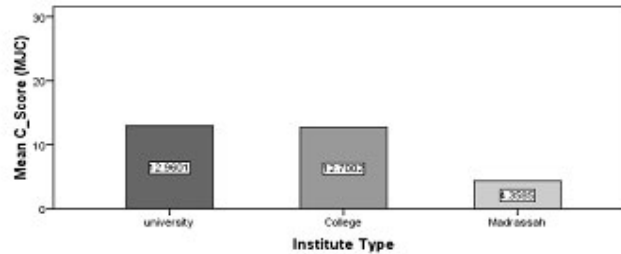
(ii) To understand a pattern of acceptance or rejection of decision choices in two dilemmas, Mixed Factorial Analysis of Variance was used. A significant main effect of dilemma type ($F = 50.6$, $p < .000$), main effect of Institute type ($F = 121.1$, $p < .000$), and a significant interaction effect of institute type and dilemma type ($F = 6.3$, $p < .002$) was found. Pairwise comparisons of between institute differences with Bonferroni correction show only madaaris to be significantly different from colleges and universities ($p < .05$) with rejection of both dilemma decisions more profound than other institutes. Overall the interaction effect shows that within each institute doctor's decision is more negatively rated than workers' decision (Fig 1).

Figure 1



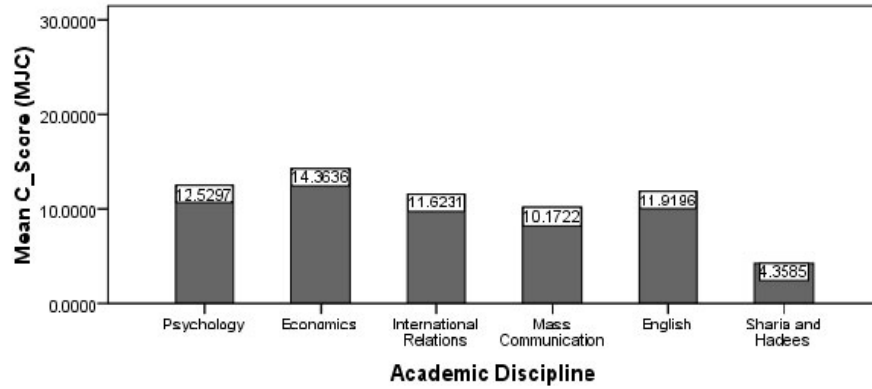
(iii) Madrasah students showed very low moral competence ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 6.7$) in comparison to students from colleges ($M = 12.7$, $SD = 11.2$) and universities ($M = 12.9$, $SD = 10$). One-way Analysis of variance shows a significant institutional difference ($F = 17.94$, $p < .05$) (Fig 2).

Figure 2



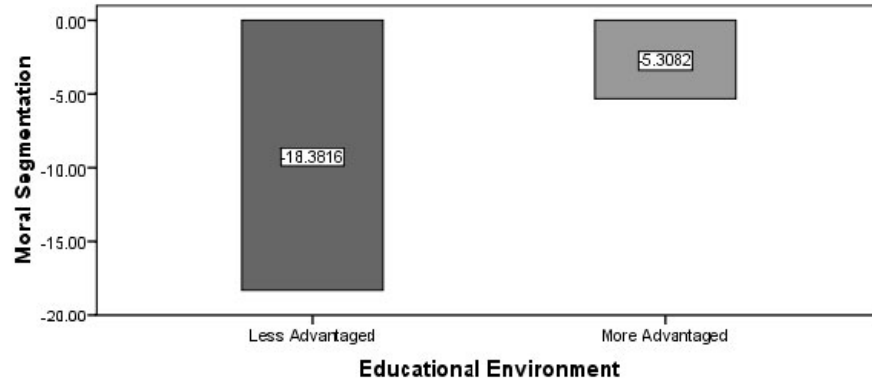
(iv) Significant differences were found ($F = 6.82, p < .000$) among students belonging to different academic disciplines. Post hoc analysis (Games-Howell test) showed that only Sharia and Hadith students significantly differ ($p < .05$) in moral judgment competence from all other group combinations. This finding appears to be confounding and might have an institutional effect as Sharia and Hadith students belonged to madaaris only that had already shown the lowest c-score in comparison to universities and colleges (Fig 3)

Figure 3



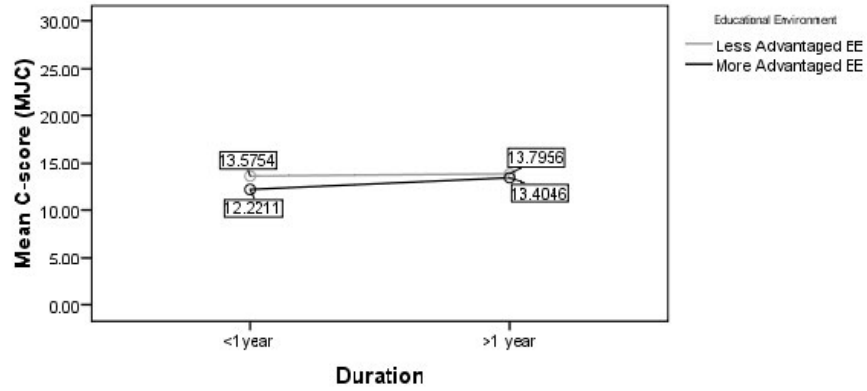
(v) The advantaged educational environment with more opportunities of role-taking and guided reflection was found to have insignificant ($p = .187$) negative effect on moral judgment competence (mean difference = 1.9) while it appeared to reduce moral segmentation, $t(369) = -3.6$, $p < .05$ (Fig 4).

Figure 4



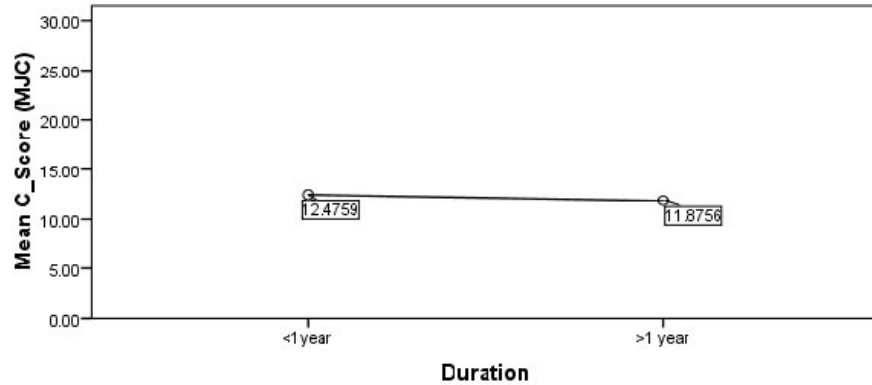
(vi) In university students with advantaged educational environment slight increase in moral competence was observed (AES = 1) while college students showed no such pattern (Fig 5, 6)

Figure 5



Moral Judgment Competence in university students with more and less advantaged educational environment

Figure 6



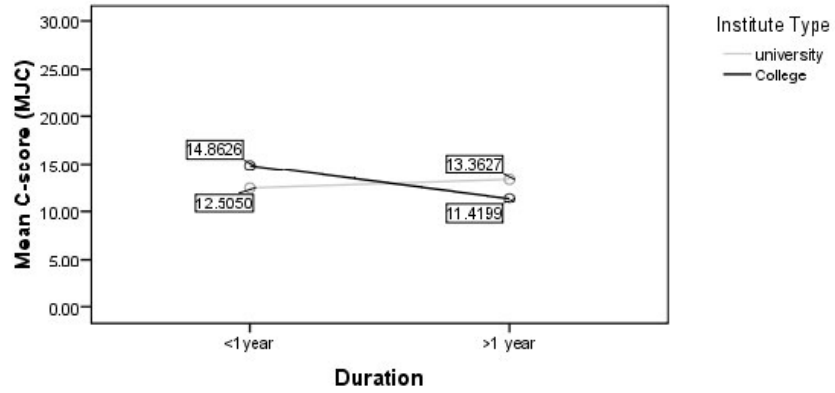
College students with more advantaged educational environment

(vii) Religiously more dogmatic students showed insignificant but relatively lower moral judgment competence ($M = 11.73$, $SD = 10.81$) in comparison to less dogmatic students ($M = 12.9$, $SD = 8.9$).

(viii) Less dogmatic students also exhibited lower moral segmentation ($M = -.57$, $SD = 17.3$) than more dogmatic students ($M = -7.9$, $SD = 27.2$).

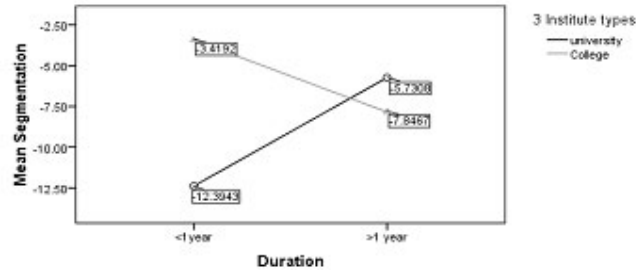
(ix) Role of universities appeared to be positive in stabilizing moral competence in comparison to colleges ($AES = 4.3$) (Fig 7).

Figure 7



(x) Universities also showed more reduction in moral segmentation than colleges (Figure 8).

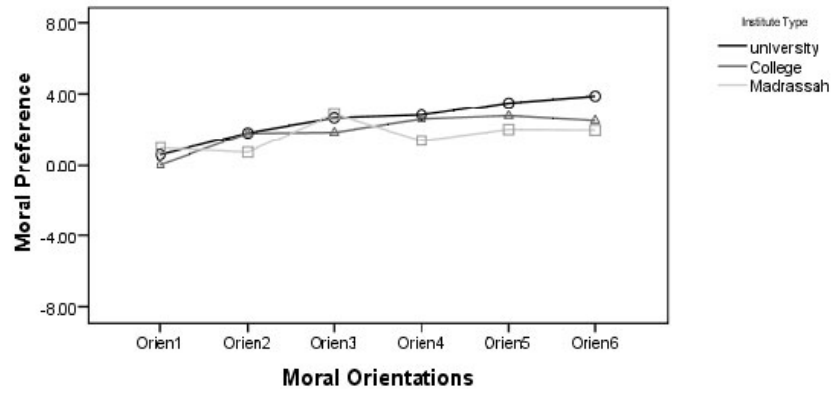
Figure 8



(xi) No significant difference in moral judgment competence was noticed between male ($M = 12.8$, $SD = 11.1$) and female students ($M = 12.7$, $SD = 10.4$), $t(339) = .05$, $p < .96$, while pure mean differences show that female students showed more moral segmentation ($M = -10.3$, $SD = 27.1$) than male students ($M = -4.9$, $SD = 27.9$), $t(325) = 1.8$, $p < .08$.

(xii) As for as moral orientations are concerned, same preference order – as predicted by theory- was found in all groups whether religiously less or more dogmatic or belonging to more enriched or less enriched educational environments. Results indicate that participants did rate the six orientations differently, a significant main effect for moral orientations was noted ($F = 19.17$, $p < .000$). There was no significant main effect of type of institute ($F = 1.22$, $p < .295$), indicating the ratings among university, college and madrasah students were overall the same. Significant interaction effect between moral orientations and type of institute was also observed ($F = 2.5$, $p < .008$). Only madrasah students proved to be an exception that showed the highest preference for stage 3 arguments (Fig 9).

Figure 9



DISCUSSION

The mean c-score of the whole sample is very low ($M = 11.8$) comparing with many studies conducted in other countries including the regional countries like China and Iran. In China (Yang and Wu, 2011), a mean c-score up to 31.4 have been reported while in Iran c-scores up to 20 have been seen (Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011). In Germany the c-scores of about 40 and in Brazil up to 25 were observed (Schillinger, 2006), while in Israel 25.7 and in USA, mean c-score of 23.8 have been found (Gross, 1996). The lower c-score of 13.94 had already been found in a Pakistani sample (Liaquat, 2011). This is a dangerous trend in a democratic country like Pakistan; higher moral judgment competence is the indication of good functioning democracy where people have the capacity to engage in peaceful arguments and make mutual decisions instead of trying to force their decisions on others. The overall lower competence is indicative of low rational discourse ability which is symptomatic of a culture that discourages debate and discussion among its members and might be more power oriented and authoritarian in nature. This lower competence also represents a scenario where different interest groups (whether political, religious, or other) consider their own interests as absolutely right and do not want to talk about issues in a balanced peaceful manner because of the basic lack of the ability to consider one another's points of view as equally valid as their own. This trend may lead to the development of an attitude that the use of force and other authoritarian means for reaching ends are the only legitimate options. This idea relates well with political instability of Pakistani society that has suffered frequent martial laws and experienced ineffective and powerless democratic governments.

The sample showed very high dogmatic religiosity ($M = 3.6$) and only 19 participants could be classified on the DPR-Scale as "religiously less dogmatic" out of 403 students. This ratio was very much expected on intuitive basis because of general religiousness of the society and its historical religious development. The DPR-Scale especially contains questions related to fundamental aspects of Muslim faith, like belief in God, angels, Quran, marriage in another religion etc. Students with less dogmatic religiosity showed slightly higher moral judgment competence in comparison to more dogmatic students. The overall depressed c-scores in the whole sample might be explained on the basis of that level of religiosity. Almost the whole sample looks to be homogeneous and extremely intense in their religious beliefs, which is a problem for doing analyses and getting some true variation on the variables associated with religiosity. Only personal religiosity that is more unsettled approach to religious truths has been found to enhance moral competence (Lupu, 2009). That aspect could not be assessed in the present study because of the homogenous nature of beliefs. This can well be linked with performance of madrasah students on MJT who performed poorly in comparison to college and university students; a highly religious setting in which they live most of the time may be contributive to their getting lower c-scores (Saeidi-Parvaneh, 2011). The less dogmatic group also showed almost no segmentation with mean value

of -0.6 than the high dogmatic group with mean segmentation of -7.9 agreeing with Lind (2003), Lupu (2009) and Saeidi-Parvaneh (2011).

Formal education in Pakistan has been found to have almost non-existent effect on moral competence. University education showed a slightly better impact on students in comparison to colleges though overall the situation looks to be alarming. A gain of only 1 c-score was observed in university students with more role taking and guided reflection opportunities (Absolute Effect Size = 1) over students with less role-taking and guided reflection opportunities, while college students showed a loss of 0.6 scores. This is very small effect which shows that universities are contributing very less in the development of moral competencies and colleges are performing even worse.

It is expected that higher learning institutes like colleges and universities contribute a lot better in fostering rational abilities and autonomous thinking skills in students. It seems that public sector universities and colleges in Pakistan are quite unable to develop that level of autonomy of thought which is expected from those institutes. Madrasah graduate students have been found to be extremely deficient in this competence. This finding further strengthens the claim made by studies done on the effect of religion on moral competence because in madrasah students' thinking and conduct religion has a special place in comparison to relatively more secular schools, colleges and universities. The particular conservative cultural dimension that is typical of highly religious societies might be another reason for low c-scores (Narvaez et al., 1999; Bataglia et al., 2002).

Within each institute doctor's decision is more negatively rated than workers' decision. Madrassa students have shown extreme rejection of doctor's act (mean = -2.72) while university students showed more flexibility of judgment (mean = -1.63). For Lind (2003) extreme stance on moral dilemmas show lack of autonomous thinking that is indicative of less moral judgment competence and more segmentation of c-scores. People with more autonomous thinking show a flexibility of thought in making a decision and do not opt for extreme judgments, while those who are controlled by some authority, external or internalized, go for an extreme view without bothering to think about the issue themselves. Schillinger-Agati and Lind (2003) found lower c-scores in students who had more extreme opinion about solution to euthanasia dilemma. In the present study madrasah students who showed the most extreme views regarding decisions made in dilemmas also had the lowest moral judgment competence which might confirm Lind's assumptions.

Generally, the positive role of universities is found in reducing moral segmentation in comparison to colleges. Universities in Pakistan with all the deficiencies (Rahman, 1998, 2004; Hamidullah, 2005) are much better places in comparison to other public sector educational institutes. Universities are much spacious places with separate faculties, academically trained staff, more research opportunities, and availability of basic facilities like internet and access to research journals. Universities generally provide more cultural exposure to students nationally and internationally through seminars, workshops and conferences; most of the universities provide co-

education which is another significant dimension added to the richness of experiences. Almost all of that is lacking in colleges in Pakistan. Public sector colleges are less developed, underfunded institutes with traditional methods of frontal teaching, no access to research journals, and limited cultural exposure. In the present study universities when compared with colleges showed signs of stability if not improvement of moral judgment competence while colleges showed regression in moral competence (absolute Effect Size = 3.2).

Though no gender differences in moral judgment competence were observed when only university and college students were compared, the female students showed high segmentation in comparison to males (that is -10.3 in comparison to -4.9). This finding needs more consideration because males and females showed equal level of intensity of religious beliefs. For females showing more incompetence in dealing with euthanasia dilemma could be due to several other factors in addition to role of religion. Euthanasia dilemma being a life and death issue generally appears to be quite perplexing even when religiosity factor is ignored. Carol Gilligan's description of ethics of care applies more to euthanasia issue than to a stealing act performed by workers in the other dilemma. Having a very impartial and balanced opinion on a matter dealing with life and death appears to put more cognitive load because of its extreme emotional significance. In comparison the stealing task appears to be less demanding where rational and impartial decision making is easier. Though emotional sensitivity was not measured in this research, following Gilligan's descriptions it might be an explanation for females showing more segmentation than men.

Conclusion

Apparently, the role of higher educational institutes in Pakistan (at least the regions from where data is collected) appears to be unproductive. The higher learning institutes in any society are the breeding places where such an intellectual elite is produced that is more equipped with knowledge and skills to effectively deal with problems of daily lives. People from higher learning institutes are mostly recruited to the posts of national importance where they have to involve in complex decision making activities. Any country with a democratic constitution cannot have a stable democracy without its citizens being trained in the democratic process. Democracy is a delicate system that put much responsibility on the citizens themselves. In authoritarian states much of the decision making is done by the ruling elite and people in general need not bother about state functioning, but in democratic countries people have to involve in decision making as the country is supposed to be run by the elected representatives. In a democratic country different interest groups have their own stakes and it is not possible that some particular group, on the basis that their own ideology is absolutely right, simply ignore others. People have to create a delicate balance by engaging in a continuous process of mutual discourse on issues of importance. In a democratic system these engagements are expected to be peaceful and flexible, in which every opinion should be given a respectful place. Moral judgment competence which is also a democratic competence is central to achieving these ends as it is the ability to assess others' opinions about important issues in a more balanced manner in which quality of the arguments are given more importance than egocentric interests. If a democratic society lacks this basic ability of discourse then it is prone to violence. The members of such societies care more for their own interests disregarding other groups due to their basic lack of ability to understand each other's points of view. The present study shows that people in general give highest importance to postconventional arguments. This is the brighter side of the picture as the moral values in Pakistani society appear to be same as most of the other democratic countries. It's a universal pattern of values observed in more than 40 countries where MJT research have been done. It is only the competence aspect on which the data show a stagnant trend. Too much emphasis on religion appears to be a contributing factor in lowering the moral competencies as well. The ideological basis of the country provided a way for different governments in Pakistan - whether democratic or military dictatorships- to make state defined religion as the integral part of school and college curriculum. The curricula are replete with religious references and even physical science subjects that are supposed to be impartial make no exception. This is a state of grave concern about the role and nature of religiosity in Pakistani society because in a constitutionally democratic country decision making is based on considering different points of view and that necessarily requires flexibility in approach which looks not achievable with a level of religiosity so high that any new idea which should be given proper place for consideration is rejected on the notion that it is threatening to ideological foundation of the society

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Footnote

1Based on the results of this study, the MJT-Urdu was certified as a valid equivalent to standard English language version (see [http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/mut/validation/MJT-Urdu-\(c\)-Liaquat-2012_validation.pdf](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/mut/validation/MJT-Urdu-(c)-Liaquat-2012_validation.pdf)).

www.alhassanain.org/english