Yemeni EFL Student Teachers' Moral Intelligence and its Relationship to their Academic Achievement

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Abstract: This corelational study aimed at investigating the relationship between the moral intelligence of a group of Yemeni EFL student teachers and their academic achievement. It also aimed at finding out any statistically significant differences between the moral intelligence of the student teachers who are categorized into high and low achievers. One hundred and twelve Yemeni EFL student teachers of a third level in the teacher preparation program at the Department of English in the College of Education at Sana'a University in Yemen participated in this study. Their ages ranged between 21 and 25 years. Data were collected using a literature-based questionnaire. The results of this study show that the mean of the ten categories of the moral intelligence is 4.02 (80.4%) indicating a high degree of moral intelligence. The results show that there is no statistically significant differencesat the 0.05 level between the moral intelligence and academic achievement in the Morphology and Syntax course. The results also indicate that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between high and low achievers on nine categories of the moral intelligence. Furthermore, the results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between female and male student teachers on nine categories of the moral intelligence, namely: Faith, Honesty, Integrity, Courage, Discipline, Responsibility, Service, Kindness and Courtesy. The study findings confirm the previous studies and present some suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Moral intelligence, Academic achievement, student teachers, Yemen

الذكاء الأخلاقي للطلاب اليمنيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وعلاقته بأدائهم الأكاديمي

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الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة الاستقصائية إلى دراسة العلاقة بين الذكاء الأخلاقي لمجموعة من الطلاب اليمنيين الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وأدائهم الأكاديمي. كما هدفت أيضًا إلى معرفة أي اختلافات ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكاء الأخلاقي للطلاب المعلمين الذين يصنفون إلى ذوي أداء عالي ومنخفض. شارك في هذه الدراسة مائة واثنا عشر طالبًا يمنيًا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من المستوى الثالث في برنامج إعداد المعلمين في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية بجامعة صنعاء - اليمن. تتراوح أعمارهم بين 21 و 25 سنة. تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة أن متوسط الفئات العشر من الذكاء الأخلاقي هو 4.02 (80.4%) مما يشير إلى درجة عالية من الذكاء الأخلاقي. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى 0.05 بين الذكاء الأخلاقي والأداء الأكاديمي في مقرر النحو والصرف الانجليزي. كما تشير النتائج أيضًا إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى 0.05 بين الطلاب ذوي الأداء العالي والمنخفض في تسع فئات من الذكاء الأخلاقي، وهي: الإيمان، والنزاهة، والجدارة بالثقة، والشجاعة، والانضباط، والمسؤولية، والخدمة، والعطف، والمجاملة. علاوة على ذلك، تشير النتائج أيضا إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى 0.05 بين

الطلاب المعلمين الذكور والإناث في تسع فئات من الذكاء الأخلاقي، وهي: الإيمان والصدق والنزاهة والشجاعة والانضباط والمسؤولية والخدمة والعطف والمجاملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الأخلاقي، التحصيل الدراسي، الطلاب المعلمون، اليمن.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Moral Intelligence has motivated researchers to investigate its role in the academic achievement of second and foreign language learners. The academic performance of second and foreign language learners is assumed to be related to their Moral Intelligence (Hoseinpoor and Ranjdoost , 2013; Seider et al., 2013; Ghaffari et al., 2015; Ibrahim and Al-Mehsin, 2016).

According to Borba (2001) moral intelligence is the capacity to understand right from wrong, to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them to behave in the right and honorable way. Lennick and Kiel (2005:7) define moral intelligence as "the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles should be applied to our personal values, goals, and actions". While Seider et al. (2013) state that moral intelligence consists of the qualities relevant to striving for ethical behavior in one's relationships with other individuals and communities.

Moral intelligence competencies have been studied and classified by different researchers in different ways based on different perspectives. Borba (2001) presents a model in which the moral intelligence competencies are classified into seven types, namely: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance, and fairness. On the other hand, Lennick and Kiel (2005) proposed a four-part competency taxonomy based on data collection using questionnaires by businessmen and leaders. Those four competencies are integrity, responsibility, forgiveness and compassion. Integrity's four competencies include 1) acting consistently with principles, values, and beliefs, 2) telling the truth, 3) standing up for what is right, and 4) keeping promises. The three competencies of responsibility include 1) taking personal responsibility, 2) admitting mistakes and failures, and 3) embracing responsibility for serving others. Forgiveness refers to 1) letting go of one's own mistakes and 2) letting go of others' mistakes. While compassion involves caring about others.

Moral Intelligence

Moral intelligence is a new concept that was first introduced by Borba (2001). It is less studied than the more established emotional and social intelligences, but has great potential to improve our understanding of behavior and learning . It gives our life purpose and without it, we would be able to do things, but they would lack meaning. (Beheshtifar et al., 2011). Furthermore, moral intelligence could include deciding on what is the right thing to do (Clarken, 2009). Moral intelligence is presented as the ability to apply universal moral principles to one's ethics, objectives and dealings (Lennick and Kiel, 2005).

According to Arfa et al. (2014:418) "moral intelligence means having a firm and strong moral beliefs and acting on them so that the person behaves appropriately and respectfully".

Many environmental factors influence the development of moral intelligence. Among such factors is family education style which influences the development of the moral intelligence of individuals. As it is the responsibility of the family to teach their children a set of ethical values and encourage them to follow such values in their lives. These ethical values usually contain a set of golden rules that show what is permissible and not permissible, what is lawful and taboo. These ethical values, that the individual has developed since childhood, become part of his moral commitment that guides him in life. (Moral Practices, 2019).

Previous Studies

Recently, there is an increased interest in the moral intelligence and its relationship to the academic achievement among learners. However, a review of the existing body of literature reveals that there is scarcity of the Arabic studies that dealt with the moral intelligence and its relationship to academic achievement among Arab learners.

In the Jordanian context, Mahasneh (2014) investigated the moral intelligence of 909 university students at the Hashemite University in Jordan whose ages ranged between 18 and 22 years old. He used a literature based questionnaire consisting of 38 items to collect his data. His results indicated that the Jordanian university students showed a medium level of moral intelligence. His results also showed that the female students had a significantly greater level of moral intelligence than the male students. He also found significant differences among the four academic levels of university students at the Hashemite University in Jordan in terms of their moral intelligence in the dimension of "responsibility", but he found no significant differences in the dimension of "integrity".

Al-Darabah et al. (2015) studied the moral intelligence of children aged (9-12) years old in Al-Karak governorate in Jordan. Their results indicated that the level of moral intelligence of their subjects was at a medium level. Their results also showed that there were no significant differences between the moral intelligence of the children according to gender, family size and parents' educational level.

Ibrahim and Al-Mehsin (2016) conducted a study to investigate the moral intelligence among students of Egyptian and Saudi universities. Their sample consisted of 218 female students from the College of Education at Sohag University in Egypt and 208 female students from the College of Education at Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. Their findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the degree of moral intelligence of students in the College of Education at Sohag University and students of the College of Education at Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University attributed to the school level.

Remawi and Naser (2017) studied the ethical practices of faculty members and the students' ethical behavioral practices at Al-Quds University in Palestine. They selected a stratified random sample consisting of 366 male and female students. Their results showed that the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students were moderate. They also found differences in the students' ethical behavioral practices due to gender.

In Iran, Hoseinpoor and Ranjdoost (2013) studied the relationship between moral intelligence and students' achievement. They selected a sample of 210 Tabriz Junior High school students. They used Lennick and Kiel's (2005) moral intelligence questionnaire. Their results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between moral intelligence (honesty, forgiveness and compassion) and students' achievement. They also reported that moral intelligence (forgiveness) was more among girls than boys.

Arfa et al. (2014) investigated the level of moral intelligence of faculty members and the administrative managers of Shahrekord Islamic Azad University in Iran. Their research sample consisted of 94 individuals. Their results indicated that the level of moral intelligence of faculty members and administrative managers of Shahrekord Islamic Azad University was high.

Furthermore, Ghaffari et al. (2015) carried out a research study on 333 medical students of Islamic Azad universities and State universities of Bonab and Maragheh in Iran. The aim of their research was to investigate the relationship between social and moral intelligence with students' academic performance. They collected their data using Lennick and Kiel's (2005) moral intelligence questionnaire. They found a positive and direct correlation between the subscales of moral intelligence and students' achievement.

In the American context, Sneider et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between achievement and moral character strengths among 488 early adolescents attending three urban middle schools in a large northeastern city in the United States of America. Their results revealed that students' perseverance, school connectedness and grade level were positive predictors of academic achievement while moral character strength such as integrity was a negative predictor of academic achievement. They concluded that the relationship between achievement, conduct, and moral character strengths such as integrity is more ambiguous.

In Thailand, Kitjaroonchai (2015) investigated the relationship between the students' academic achievement and their involvement in moral activities among 472 students studying at the Asia-Pacific International University in Thailand. The results of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between students academic achievement and their involvement in moral activities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study reported here were as follows:

1. To explore the Yemeni EFL student teachers' moral intelligence.

2. To understand the relationship between the student teachers' moral intelligence and their academic performance in a Morphology and Syntax course.

3. To explore the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both high achiever and low achiever student teachers.

4. To understand the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both male and female student teachers.

Research Questions

The following specific research questions were formulated to guide the inquiry:

1. Is there a relationship between the students' moral intelligence and their academic performance in a Morphology and Syntax course?

2. What are the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both high achiever and low achiever student teachers?

3. What are the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both male and female student teachers?

Study Limitations

The scope of the present study is limited in terms of the following aspects. It is based on the perceptions of the subjects as expressed in response to the 40 items of the questionnaire distributed on ten domains. The population of the present study is limited to the Fourth Level student teachers in the Department of English, College of Education at Sana'a University in Yemen during the academic year 2016/2017. The subjects were not chosen randomly, and therefore, caution should be taken in making generalizations from the results to other contexts.

Methodology

Participants

Using the total enumeration sampling technique, a hundred and twelve student teachers who were enrolled in a Morphology and Syntax course participated in this study. They studied at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University in Yemen during the academic year 2016 - 2017. They were enrolled in a four-year program (a total of 152 Credit hours) leading to a bachelor degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They had to secure a minimum of 50% in order to pass a course. Upon the completion of the requirements of the program, they would be granted a Bachelor of

Education Degree in the Teaching of English. They were homogenous and they had a lot of characteristics in common. They were all Yemeni learners who shared the same cultural background and they were native speakers of Arabic. They studied English as a foreign language. Ninety-one (81.25 %) of the student teachers were females and the other eleven (18.75 %) were males. The mean of their ages was 22.52 years old. The researcher used the students' final scores in the Morphology and Syntax course during the second semester of the academic year 2015/2016. They were used as an indicator of the student teachers' academic achievement and consequently they were ordered according to their averages from high to low achievers. Thus, the whole population was divided equally into three groups: high achievers, moderate achievers and low achievers based on their scores.

Research Tools

The data for the present study were collected by means of a closed ended questionnaire. The researcher adapted the survey questionnaire depending on the relative research studies and relevant literature with specific reference to Lennick and Kiel (2011). The emergent copy of the questionnaire was out of forty items distributed on the following ten domains.

Table (1) Distribution of Questionnaire Items on the Ten Dimensions of the Scale, the Number of Items and Samples

Dimensions	Number of items	Sample Item
Integrity	4	I can clearly state the principles, values, and beliefs that guide my actions.
Honesty	4	I tell the truth unless there is an overriding moral reason to withhold it.
Courage	4	I will generally confront someone if I see them doing something that is not right.
Trustworthy	4	When I agree to do something, I always follow through.
Responsibility	4	When I make a decision that turns out to be a mistake, I admit it.
Discipline	4	I own up to my own mistakes and failures.
Service	4	My colleagues would say that I go out of my may to help them.
Kindness	4	My first response when I meet new people is to be genuinely interested in them.
Courtesy	4	I appreciate the positive aspects of my past mistakes, realizing that they were valuable lessons on my way to success.
Faith	4	I do my best to do my duty to God and country.
Total	40	

Questionnaire Validity and Reliability

Joppe (2000:1) presents the following explanation of what validity is: " Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others". In order to check the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher translated the English version into Arabic. Then he translated the Arabic version back into English and made the necessary changes. After that, the final version was given to a jury of university professors to check the construct validity of the research tool.

Joppe (2000:1) defines reliability as: "...The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable". To verify the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher piloted it to a sample of 20 students of English at the Future University in Sana'a. The test reliability for the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability of the total test, containing 40 items was 0.82 which indicates high reliability.

Data Analysis

After the collection of the questionnaires, the responses of the participants were computer-coded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program. The quantitative data were first analyzed to yield descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages on the participants' characteristics such as age and gender. The Independent t-test as well as means and standard deviations were used for comparative purposes. The significance level in this survey was set at $P<0.05$. For data analysis, the researcher used the following criteria for classifying the categories of the moral intelligence into very high, high, moderate, low, and very low.

Table (2) Criteria for Classifying Moral Intelligence Categories

5 – 4.21	4.20 – 3.41	3.40 – 2.61	2.60 – 1.81	1.80 - 1
Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low

Results and Discussion

This section is meant to present and discuss the findings of the study in the light of the research questions.

Results Related to the First Research Question

This section sheds light on the relationship between the student teachers' moral intelligence and their academic achievement. That is to say, it answers the first research question of the study "Is there a

relationship between the students' moral intelligence and their academic performance in a Morphology and Syntax course?" Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed and the results are displayed in Table (3) below.

Table (3) Correlations between Moral Intelligence and Academic Achievement

		Moral Intelligence	Comment
Achievement	N	112	
	Pearson Correlation	0.118	No relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.214	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table (3) above indicates that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient value was 0.118 and the P. value was 0.214 which means that there is no relationship between the ten categories of moral intelligence and the academic achievement of the Yemeni student teachers. In other words, there was no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the moral intelligence and academic achievement in the Morphology and Syntax course. This is in line with the finding of Sneider et al. (2013) who observe that the relationship between achievement and moral character strengths such as integrity is more ambiguous. On the other hand, this result does not lend support to Hoseinpoor and Ranjdoost (2013) and Ghaffari et al. (2015) who found a positive and significant relationship between moral intelligence and students' achievement.

Results Related to the Second Research Question

The second research question of the study states what the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both high achiever and low achiever student teachers are. To answer this question the Independent Samples T-Test was calculated. Table (4) below displays such results.

Table (4) Mean, Standard deviation and Independent Samples t- Test of High and Low achievers

	High-Low	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Comment
Faith	High Achiever	38	4.48	0.44	-.443	0.659	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	4.52	0.48	-.442	0.660	
Honesty	High Achiever	38	4.28	0.43	2.551	0.013	Significant
	Low Achiever	37	4.01	0.49	2.546	0.013	
Integrity	High Achiever	38	4.19	0.61	.452	0.653	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	4.14	0.59	.452	0.653	
Trustworthy	High Achiever	38	4.14	0.62	.882	0.381	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	4.01	0.61	.882	0.381	

	High-Low	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Comment
Courage	High Achiever	38	4.05	0.56	1.357	0.179	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.85	0.68	1.354	0.180	
Discipline	High Achiever	38	3.99	0.51	1.145	0.256	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.84	0.61	1.143	0.257	
Responsibility	High Achiever	38	3.95	0.58	.011	0.991	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.95	0.53	.011	0.991	
Service	High Achiever	38	3.86	0.53	.572	0.569	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.79	0.55	.572	0.569	
Kindness	High Achiever	38	3.84	0.68	-.648	0.519	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.93	0.61	-.649	0.518	
Courtesy	High Achiever	38	3.64	0.53	.070	0.944	Not significant
	Low Achiever	37	3.63	0.67	.070	0.944	

The results presented in Table (4) above indicate that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between high and low achievers on nine categories of the moral intelligence, namely: Faith, Integrity, Trustworthy, Courage, Discipline, Responsibility, Service, Kindness and Courtesy. However, there was a statistically significant difference at the level of 0.05 between high and low achievers in favour of high achievers on the category of Honesty. That means the high achiever students show more aspects of honesty than the low achiever students.

Results Related to the Third Research Question

The third research question of the study asks what the similarities and differences between the moral intelligence of both male and female student teachers are. To answer the fourth question the Independent Samples T-Test was calculated. Table (5) below displays the results.

Table (5) Mean, Standard deviation and Independent Samples t- Test of Female and Male students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Comment
Faith	Male	21	4.47	0.42	-.528	0.599	Not significant
	Female	91	4.54	0.43	-.534	0.603	
Honesty	Male	21	3.97	0.48	-1.591	0.115	Not significant
	Female	91	4.20	0.45	-1.520	0.154	
Integrity	Male	21	4.06	0.52	-.717	0.475	Not significant
	Female	91	4.19	0.56	-.758	0.462	
Trustworthy	Male	21	3.77	0.42	-2.043	0.043	Significant
	Female	91	4.12	0.55	-2.547	0.023	
Courage	Male	21	3.84	0.61	-.881	0.380	Not significant
	Female	91	4.01	0.62	-.890	0.391	

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Comment
Discipline	Male	21	3.84	0.69	-.620	0.537	Not significant
	Female	91	3.94	0.51	-.487	0.635	
Responsibility	Male	21	3.79	0.48	-1.004	0.317	Not significant
	Female	91	3.96	0.53	-1.091	0.295	
Service	Male	21	3.86	0.52	.448	0.655	Not significant
	Female	91	3.78	0.51	.442	0.666	
Kindness	Male	21	3.88	0.57	-.052	0.959	Not significant
	Female	91	3.89	0.58	-.053	0.959	
Courtesy	Male	21	3.50	0.57	-1.005	0.317	Not significant
	Female	91	3.70	0.64	-1.107	0.289	

Table (5) above shows that the differences between the mean scores of the male participants and the mean scores of the female participants are not statistically significant at P< 0.05 on nine dimensions of the moral intelligence, namely: Faith, Honesty, Integrity, Courage, Discipline, Responsibility, Service, Kindness and Courtesy. This result lends support to the studies carried out by Shehata (2008) and Al-Darabah et al. (2015) who reported that there were no statistically differences between their male and female participants in the degree of moral intelligence. However, Table (5) above indicates that there was a statistically significant difference at P< 0.05 between male and female student teachers in favour of the female students on the category of Trustworthy. That is, trustworthy was more among females than males.

Findings

Based on the analysis of the respondents' responses to the statements of the questionnaires and based on the answers of the research questions, the findings of the current study can be summarized as follows:

1. The results of this study show that the mean of the ten categories of the moral intelligence is 4.02 (80.4%) indicating a high degree of moral intelligence.

2. The results of the current study indicate that there is no relationship between the ten categories of moral intelligence and the academic achievement of the Yemeni student teachers. That is there was no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the moral intelligence and academic achievement in the Morphology and Syntax course.

3. The results of this study indicate that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between high and low achievers on the categories of the moral intelligence in nine categories out of ten. The only difference was in the category of "Honesty" in favour of the high achiever students.

4. The results of this t study show that there is no statistically significant difference at the level of 0.05 between the students' moral intelligence and their gender in nine categories out of ten.

However, in the category of "Trustworthy" the significant difference came in favor of the female students.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

This study has investigated the moral intelligence of Yemeni student teachers and its relationship to their academic achievement. The results of the study indicated that there was no positive relationship between the Yemeni student teachers' moral intelligence and their academic achievement. The results also indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the male and female participants concerning their moral intelligence. The present study is limited to the Yemeni teacher preparation program at Sana'a (State) University which is preparing future EFL teachers for preparatory and secondary schools. The student teachers are not chosen randomly, and therefore, caution should be taken in making generalizations from the results to other contexts. Moreover, the results of this study suggest some future research directions. It would be a good idea to survey a larger sample of student teachers and to expand the scope of the study to other private universities in Yemen. Furthermore, future studies should include the practical factors affecting moral intelligence. Future research studies should examine the moral intelligence of the student teachers and their trainers.

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