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Young people's Interpretation of Ethically Loaded Situations: Dependence on Subject Context and Individual-typological Characteristics

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Abstract

Introduction. A research approach to identifying individual determinants of moral reasoning is proposed as an intellectual process that ensures the application of moral injunctions in the changing substantive contexts of ethically loaded situations. **Methods.** The study was conducted on a sample of students of K.E. Tsiolkovski KSU, studying in the first and second courses of socio-humanitarian training directions (n = 90 people). The specificity of variability of productivity of interpretation of moral contradictions on the material of constructed ethically loaded situations in the conditions of change of their subject context was to be revealed. The procedures of one-factor analysis of variance and its variant (ANOVA with repeated measurements) were applied to establish the strength of the influence of the variable "subject context" on the completeness, essential relevance, and problematization of the interpretation of ethically loaded situations under the influence of subject-level variables. **Results.** It was found that the completeness, relevance, and problematization of interpretation of ethically loaded situations in different subject contexts do not remain unchanged, and the boundaries of such variability are associated with the variability of indicators of formation of cognitive and personal characteristics of students. With the inclusion of moral content in the legal context, the completeness of its components is increased, and this trend is determined by the effect of variables such as the level of intellectual development and the formation of ethical categories. When interpreting an ethically loaded situation in a worldly context, the relevance of substantiating a moral contradiction is limited by the formation of collective and personal reflection. In the legal context, the level of problematization increases with the degree of

formation of ethical categories, and in the worldly context, the problematization of moral contradictions increases in those subjects who demonstrate the dominance of moral guidelines in their social behavior. **Discussion.** Identification of the limits of variability in the productivity of interpreting moral contradictions in contextually heterogeneous ethical situations in individuals who differ in their cognitive and personal characteristics allows us to establish how moral norms function in individual consciousness and how they are actualized in the form of a moral prohibition.

Keywords

moral reasoning, ethically loaded situation, subject context, interpretive productivity, individual characteristics, moral injunction, subject of moral choice

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Introduction

Essential for understanding moral thinking is the idea of how the process of recognizing moral contradictions, structuring, and interpreting them is carried out. The study of the determinants of this process allows us not only to obtain the necessary information about the representation of moral prohibitions in individual consciousness, but also to reconstruct the ways of orientation in ethically loaded situations (hereinafter - ELS), which are used by its solvers (moral agents). In such situations, individuals appeal to their potentially opposite personal and professional values, for example, with regard to what constitutes quality of life or human dignity, performing a multidimensional interpretation of the grounds for socially responsible behavior (Arutyunova and Aleksandrov, 2019; Gorbunova, 2010; Machekkhina, 2018; Bartels et al., 2016; Tassy et al., 2013).

Ethically loaded situations are situations in which people's interests, needs, desires contradict the interests, needs, desires of others, and it is required to apply a moral

prohibition in resolving the contradiction or to propose or articulate available conventional norms of settlement that would be recognized by the conflicting parties. The moral injunction actualized by the subject involves a certain way of interpreting normative situations, explaining the reasons for one's own and others' behavior, and evaluating their correctness (Nichols, Mallon, 2006; Skitka et al., 2021). Evaluating a proper action from one's own position and from the position of another person is a contextual determinant that affects the imperativeness of applying moral obligations.

The assumption that there are specific features of moral decision making in different substantive contexts of ethical situations is based on the recognition of differences in systems of social relations. In these systems, "...incentives addressed to individuals or groups are not universal but always correspond to a particular type of regulation of social relations" (Fiske, 1992). From this perspective, the rule of law (in the legal system) and moral judgment (in the system of everyday interactions), although they fulfill the same function, still carry different information for making a moral decision.

Moral prohibitions in the context of social interactions are realized not directly, but indirectly, in correlation with norms and rules encoded in the logic of regulation of subject-legal or any other context (Luhmann, 2007). Such subject "codes" reflect the contextual specificity of ELS. In this capacity, they serve as identifying markers in the process of correlation of their moral content.

The specifics of making moral judgments and interpreting moral contradictions when solving different types of tasks are widely discussed in works and at the moment constitute a whole corpus of research (Yenikolopov, Medvedeva, Vorontsova, 2019; Carpendale & Krebs, 1995; Greene et al., 2008; Sobral & Fraguela, 2018). The need to take into account the context in which moral reasoning is produced has been demonstrated in different substantive tasks: disseminating advances in genetic engineering, exposing criminal behavior, behaving honestly in sports, and ensuring the appropriate quality of medical services (Craft, 2013). However, in current research, the substantive context of moral injunctions is not considered as a contextual variable that has an advancing or, on the contrary, leveling influence on the problematization of moral contradictions and their interpretation.

The fundamental point in considering the interpretation of ELS is that it includes both the evaluation component itself ("right" or "wrong" "necessary" or "not necessary") and the justification, which is the proof of the acceptability of such an evaluation. Interpretation requires analyzing the selected content in the entirety of the connections and relations represented in it, including its correlation with other content, similar or different. Accordingly, interpretation can be difficult due to the multitude of possible directions of analyzing and structuring the included normative contents.

It is still relevant to discuss the basis of interpretation of moral decision in terms of completeness of coverage of all its structural elements - both subjective (motivation, values) and objective (result, circumstances, consequences). Representatives of consequentialist ethics, e.g., eudaemonism, Machiavellianism, and utilitarianism, attach

the main importance to the results of actions and their consequences, while values and motives are relegated to the periphery of moral reasoning. In contrast, representatives of the theory of "autonomous morality" determine the place of results depending on values and motives. The functional role of each of the ELS components in its productive interpretation in specific subject contexts has not yet been adequately considered.

Depending on which components of ELS are fixed by individuals as a semantic center, the dominant view of moral contradiction and its comprehension is established. Fixing this contradiction acts as problematization. Following the tradition coming from Michel Foucault, problematization is necessary when "...a certain complex of attitudes or behavior enters the field of thought on condition that a certain number of factors related to these attitudes or behavior becomes uncertain, loses its "recognizability" and ordinariness, creates a number of "difficulties" around itself, i.e. becomes problematic" (Foucault, 2006, p. 66).

The ELS is an intellectual task in which the interpretation of its content precedes a decision. But, as Dewey observes, this decision is not self-evident. "There are conflicting desires, there are alternative and unquestionable kinds of good. All that is required here is to choose the proper mode of action, the proper good. So the subject of inquiry is clarified: one must review in detail how the situation is constructed; analyze its various factors; clarify what is incomprehensible; distrust what is most conspicuous and distracting; consider the consequences of the most varied modes of action that come to mind; consider the solution reached as hypothetical or tentative until the foreseen or assumed consequences, because of which it was taken, coincide with the consequences actual. Such an inquiry is rational understanding" (Dewey, 2003, p. 106).

As was shown earlier, the process of interpreting such situations should involve cognitive characteristics of individuals, associated, firstly, with the actualization of ethical categories, ways of logical reasoning as means of recognizing the moral content of a social task, its structuring as a situation of moral choice, and, secondly, with ways of detecting and problematizing the contradiction between proper moral and extramoral judgments about the components of an integral situation (Gorbacheva et al., 2018; Malyugin, 2007).

The identification of moral content can be carried out not only by means of abstract thinking and reflexive reasoning, but also determined by the predisposition to moral evaluations and corresponding actions. In the interpretation of ELS, a moral agent can be guided both by situational affective evaluation guided by moral feeling and by stable personal characteristics, moral orientation and conscious attitude to moral norms (Lebedeva, 2023).

When choosing research procedures and diagnostic techniques adequate to the problem under discussion, it is important to take into account that moral agents demonstrate variable ways of interpreting ELS (Molchanov et al., 2019; Beißert, Hasselhorn, 2016; Reynolds, 2006). Despite the fact that the requirements of morality

can acquire a "convex" character and be rigidly imposed on participants in the form of a moral rule, in accordance with "their vision" of the situation, moral agents prefer to be guided in reasoning not only by moral norms proper but also by other norms irrelevant to the moral sphere. In this case, it is legitimate to assume that the cognitive and personal characteristics of individuals play a mediator role in making moral decisions in the changing subject contexts of ELS.

Methods

A one-factor design of the empirical study with randomized presentation of tasks was chosen. The independent variable in the study was the context of situations that actualize moral contradictions (law, life practices) and the dependent variable was the productivity of interpreting the components of the moral choice.

Sample

The study involved junior students of K.E. Tsiolkovski Kaluga State University aged 18-19 years (a total of 90 people).

Methodology

The constructed research tasks included ELSs that arise in the area of legal and everyday life practices. The main series of tasks consisted of four descriptive texts. The nature of moral contradiction in the tasks did not differ, while only their subject context, legal and everyday life - was changed. This requirement was ensured by a preliminary evaluation by an expert. The project participants (four people) acted as experts, and the high degree (at least 95%) of coincidence of structural homogeneity assessments was an indicator of the compliance of the research tasks with the specified requirements.

In order to balance the power of possible influence on the productivity of interpretation of the factors of "familiarity" or "typicality" of the content of the situations analyzed by the students, all of them were generated on the basis of the material presented in the media environment, which equally corresponded to the sociocultural awareness of the students.

The first group of situations, "Divorce" and "Separation", reflected moral conflict in the sphere of everyday practices: 1) preserving family unity in the context of changing cultural norms and preserving tradition, and 2) maintaining child-parent relationships, contrary to cultural stereotypes and values of individual well-being. The second group of situations "Exposure" and "Obliteration" were realized in the legal sphere: 1) reflecting the contradictions between the interests of preserving family ties and responsibility before the law and 2) reflecting the contradictions between the interests of preserving family and corporate ties (both ties with a narrow radius of trust) and the legal norms of society.

To analyze the productivity of situation interpretation, we used a procedure specially developed and tested by Machekhina procedure of content analysis of protocols, the units of which were statements (words and phrases in the texts of protocols) relating to the main components of the situation. The main indicators in assessing the productivity of interpreting the situation of moral choice are: completeness, which is characterized by the coverage of all components of the situation: participants, their motives and values, conditions of moral decision; and essential relevance, which includes the moral dimensions of the situation, where the leading role is given to the problematic reflection by an individual of the conflict of interests, opinions, and expectations of participants in a situation that requires moral evaluation, recognition of freedom, and responsibility of the individual as a subject of moral behavior. An indicator of the problematization of moral contradiction served as statements on the expansion of the analysis of the situation in the direction of predicting its consequences in terms of violation of moral prohibition (Machekhina, 2015; Machekhina, 2018).

Example of ELS and interpretation

Here is an example of a legal situation with a description of indicators of productivity of its interpretation.

Situation Description "Disclosure": "The father of a young female lawyer, a Hungarian immigrant, is accused of war crimes committed during World War II. The prosecutor suspects that he is most likely "Bear," a former death squad commander of the fascist and racist Crossed Arrows of Hungary party." During the siege of Budapest, Miska and his unit tortured and murdered dozens of Hungarian Jews, Roma, and many others. For a young woman, these accusations are absurd. The affectionate single father who raised her and now cares for her son, in her opinion, could not have committed such crimes. She decides to act as the father's public defender and initially succeeds in proving that he is not involved in the crimes of which he is accused, but as she investigates, she comes across photographs that confirm the prosecutor's suspicions. She decides to inform her father and write a letter to the prosecutor, to which she attaches documents proving his guilt.

The interpretation of the presented moral choice situation was considered complete if all components were mentioned in the subject's protocol:

- participants (a father suspected of committing nationalist crimes, loving his daughter and grandson; his daughter, a lawyer investigating his involvement in these crimes, loving her father and son);
- motives (an elderly man (suspected of Nazi crimes) wants to live with his daughter and raise his grandson; his daughter wants to find out whether or not her father is guilty of the crimes of which he is accused);
- values (the father of the female lawyer - maintaining his status as a caring

father and grandfather; his daughters - love for her father and justice;

- conditions (a former Nazi was on trial, accused of committing war crimes (shooting civilians - old men, women, children). At the trial, sufficient evidence of his guilt was not presented, and he was released. However, as a result of her own investigation, his daughter finds irrefutable evidence that convinces her of his guilt).

The interpretation of the presented situation of moral choice was considered relevant if the subject's protocol revealed the moral contradiction underlying the considered ELS: a female lawyer finds herself in a situation of conflict between civil humanistic values (justice) and utilitarian morality, making a choice between acting justly and handing over to the court the evidence of her father's guilt in war crimes that she found, or concealing the truth and leaving everything as it is; for her father, love for his daughter and grandson and preserving his father's rights; for her father - love for his daughter and grandson and preserving his father's rights.

Psychodiagnostic techniques

The empirical research plan was supplemented with the use of psychodiagnostic techniques. A package of methods was selected to identify cognitive and personality characteristics. The level of intellectual development, including awareness and formation of thinking actions, was determined using the "Adult Intellectual Development Test" (Akimova, Gorbacheva et al., 2012). The measure of mastering ethical categories that allow one to orient in the sphere of moral codes of social interaction was checked by means of the methods of forming ethical categories "Definition of "categories" and "Proverbs" (Zhidkova, 2013). To verify the assumption about the mediating role of reflexivity of thinking and types of reflection in the identification, problematization, and interpretation of moral contradiction, the "Methodology of diagnostics of reflexivity of thinking" (Anisimov, 1994) was used. To establish the degree of expression of moral orientation, the research methodology "Types of Orientation in Social Interaction" (Machekhina, 2015) was used.

Hypothesis of the study

The main hypothesis of the study was that the productivity of ELS interpretation will vary depending on its subject context, and the boundaries of this variability will be conjugated with the variability of indicators of the formation of cognitive and personal characteristics.

Results

Table 1 shows how the interpretation of ELS changed in terms of completeness, relevance, problematization, and overall productivity (defined as a summary measure of completeness and relevance).

Comparisons of the results of the interpretations of situations and its components presented in different subject contexts (using the nonparametric Wilcoxon T-criterion for comparing related samples) showed that their structuring was more fully realized in the legal context ($T = 246.0$; $p = 0.000$). This was also confirmed with respect to a more extended analysis of the actions ($T = 338.5$; $p = 0.04$), their motives ($T = 89.0$; $p = 0.000$) and values ($T = 85.0$; $p = 0.000$). The differences between the relevance scores for the interpretation of the components of situations in worldly and legal contexts were even more pronounced (except for the conditions), all of which were significant at the level of at least $p = 0.01$.

Table 1
Indicators of completeness, relevance and overall productivity of ELS interpretations depending on changes in their subject contexts

Indicators of interpretation of situations	Worldly context	Legal context	Statistical validity of the influence of subject matter context (n = 90)	
	average value	average value	T-criterion	Significance level
Completeness				
Participants	1.44	1.62	338.5	0.04
Motives	0.91	1.25	89.00	0.000
Values	1.09	1.38	85.5	0.000
Terms and conditions	0.73	0.80	108.5	no differences
Problematization	0.44	0.45	159.5	no differences
Completeness (total score)	4.61	5.5	246.0	0.000

Indicators of interpretation of situations	Worldly context	Legal context	Statistical validity of the influence of subject matter context (n = 90)	
	average value	average value	T-criterion	Significance level
Relevance				
Participants	0.49	0.83	183.5	0.000
Motives	0.47	0.66	95.0	0.013
Values	0.56	0.73	196.0	0.031
Terms and conditions	0.27	0.30	113.0	no differences
Problematization	0.28	0.26	144.5	no differences
Relevance (total score)	2.07	2.78	233.5	0.000
Productivity				
	6.68	8.28	317.0	0.000

Using a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA for related samples), the trend of variability in interpretation productivity was confirmed under changing subject contexts (Table 2).

The completeness of the components of the description of ELS realized on legal material is significantly higher compared to the indicators demonstrated in situations with worldly ($F = 12.74$; $p = 0.000$). The legal context of a moral choice situation also contributes to its relevant substantive interpretation, in contrast to its inclusion in a worldly one ($F = 14.77$; $p = 0.000$). At the same time, students work out the moral characteristics and motives in the participants of situations are worked out by students more deeply on the material of worldly practices ($F = 8.07$; $p = 0.007$). Under the conditions of including the situation in the legal context, the level of its problematization also increases ($F = 15.45$; $p = 0.0000$), significantly distinguishes the influence of this gradation of the variable from other variants of its change (everyday practices).

Table 2

Changes in completeness, relevance, and problematization of ELS in different subject contexts using single-factor analysis of variance

Interpretation productivity indicators	Type of situation (subject context)	F-statistic	Significance level (Sig)
Completeness of the validity of the moral contradiction	Legal	$F = 12.74$	$p = 0.000$
	Worldly	$F = 10.04$	$p = 0.002$
Relevance	Legal	$F = 14.77$	$p = 0.000$
	Worldly	$F = 13.90$	$p = 0.000$
Problematization	Legal	$F = 15.45$	$p = 0.000$
	Worldly	$F = 8.07$	$p = 0.007$

The analysis of the correlation between the expression of cognitive characteristics and indicators of the productivity of interpreting situations (which was conducted using the Spearman rank correlation method) indicated the ambiguous nature of the intellectual

mediation of the processes of structuring and interpreting moral contradictions. It was found that the relevant reconstruction of worldly ELS is based on student cognitive characteristics, among which awareness of cultural and sociopolitical phenomena ($r_s = 0.53$; $p = 0.000$), thinking reflexivity ($r_s = 0.28$; $p = 0.02$), and formation of ethical categories ($r_s = 0.32$; $p = 0.004$) play a significant role. The completeness of structuring and interpreting a life situation was also supported by reflexivity of thinking ($r_s = 0.27$; $p = 0.02$) and such type of reflection as collective reflection ($r_s = 0.31$; $p = 0.003$). The composition of cognitive and personality characteristics that mediate the productive interpretation of ELS given in a legal context appeared to be similar: Both completeness and relevance of interpretation were positively correlated with the general indicator of the level of intellectual development ($r_s = 0.58$; $p = 0.000$), the formation of different types of reflection, personal ($r_s = 0.34$; $p = 0.002$), collective ($r_s = 0.31$; $p = 0.003$) and general reflexivity of thinking ($r_s = 0.36$; $p = 0.001$), and what especially distinguished the tasks with a legal context, a sufficiently high level of mastering ethical categories ($r_s = 0.41$; $p = 0.000$).

The data obtained required further correction and specification. This was determined by the fact that the study was built as an intragroup design and, according to it, the action of the independent variable could be paired with the action of the subject-level variable. Therefore, another variant of one-factor analysis of variance was applied for related samples (ANOVA with repeated measures).

Let us present the most indicative and significant results (according to Fisher's minimum value criterion) results of testing the main hypothesis. Thus, it was revealed that when ELS is included in the context of decision-making in the legal sphere, the completeness of its components is increased. But this variability is determined by the effect of such subject variables such as the level of intellectual development ($p = 0.008$) and the formation of ethical categories ($p = 0.03$). Transfer of the analyzed situation into a worldly context determines a more complete consideration of it, provided that the students have a general level of reflection ($p = 0.05$), as well as a level of intellectual development ($p = 0.007$).

Any change in the subject context of a moral choice situation affects the indicators of reconstruction completeness, and the increase in these indicators is associated with an increase in collective reflection ($p = 0.004$), which is expressed in the ability to recognize the actions, thinking, and deeds of others in joint activities (according to O.S. Anisimov). When considering the situation of moral choice in the everyday context, the increase in relevance is limited by the effect of the subjective level variable: the formation of collective ($p = 0.01$) and personal ($p = 0.01$) reflection.

With the transfer of the analysis of the situation of moral choice into the legal sphere, the essential relevance of its reconstruction will increase; this regularity is manifested in more reflexive subjects ($p = 0.002$). In this connection, the influence of the formation of ethical categories and the moral orientation of the personality on problematizing the content of moral choice in the conditions of changing the subject context of social interaction

was concretized. With the introduction of the legal context, the level of problematization increases with the increase in the degree of formation of ethical categories ($p = 0.03$). In the conditions of daily life, the sensitivity to the identification of moral contradictions increases (at the level of tendency) in those subjects who demonstrate the dominance of moral guidelines in their social behavior ($p = 0.08$).

Regardless of the context in which the ELS was set, those subjects characterized by high indicators of collective reflection ($p = 0.04$) demonstrated substantial relevance of their interpretation. As we have revealed earlier, the special influence of this variable is determined by the ability to overcome the "pressure" of the subject context in highlighting the components of the situation of moral choice that are significant for the analysis of social interaction tasks (Gorbacheva et al., 2018).

Determination of the specifics of the impact of the studied factors on the variability of the indicators of completeness, relevance, and problematization in the ELS of moral choice in groups differing in cognitive and personality characteristics, as well as the identified cases of interrelation between the levels of expression of these characteristics and the indicators of interpretation allowed us to assume that in groups differing in the overall productivity of interpretation of moral content, there will be different, characteristic of these groups, holistic patterns of cognitive and / or personality. The identification of such patterns could be regarded as evidence of the existence of stable predispositions in the form of certain individual characteristics and their combinations in the processes of moral thinking.

To solve this task, we applied the frequency-configural analysis developed by G.A. Linert (Linert, 2000), which makes it possible to identify such configurations of subjects' traits that distinguish one type of subject (competent in moral aspects of social interaction tasks) from another (lacking moral competence). We tried to find out whether the level of the overall productivity of ELS interpretation (the total indicator of completeness and relevance for all six tasks) correlates with cognitive and personal characteristics as the level of intellectual development, moral orientation, the level of reflexivity of personality, and the peculiarities of manifestation of reflexion types in thinking. In other words, it was necessary to establish whether a certain configuration of cognitive and personal characteristics distinguishes the subjects demonstrating a high level of productivity in interpreting situations of moral choice from the subjects with a low level of productivity by this indicator, or whether the distinguished groups have no differences (null hypothesis).

The analysis carried out on a sample of 40 subjects belonging to contrasting groups in terms of interpretation the level of productivity (the total score of completeness and relevance) showed that the assumed presented was not confirmed. This concerns the level of productivity of interpreting the situation of moral choice in the tasks of social interaction in the sphere of daily life practices and law.

A holistic pattern of these characteristics (all low indicators conjugated with each other) was revealed in a single group (low productivity of interpretation) in three subjects. However, it would be hasty to refer them to a special type representing a certain unity

and to speak about the configuration of traits corresponding to it. Rather, they are distinguished by moral detachment, which is especially noticeable in the nature of their problematization of moral contradictions - answers to some questions in the protocols were absent or one-word answers, and where there was an opportunity not to answer (for example, when answering the question: "If you had the opportunity to ask a question to the hero..."), they did not offer any options or they were of an extra-moral nature ("How old is he?", "Does he live alone?", etc.).

Such patterns were not found in the group of subjects with high interpretation productivity. The absence of holistic patterns of cognitive and personal characteristics in the compared groups pointed to the "flexible uncertainty" of mediating ELS interpretation under the conditions of changing its subject context. The same subjects, interpreting the moral aspects of a situation and identifying its components in different subject contexts, actualized different cognitive and personal characteristics, and the variants of their combinations were reconstructed each time the subject context varied.

Discussion

The proposed research approach focuses on the indicators of productivity of ELS interpretation and meets the objectives of the study of the essence and regularities of moral thinking as an intellectual process that ensures the application of universal values in the management of one's behavior, as well as the distinction between "right" and "wrong" in a variety of interaction contexts.

As the perceived risks of not making moral choices for the characters in the interpreted legal situation increased, similar interpretations were no longer predictive of application of the moral prohibition to the everyday situation. In the legal context, the nonapplication of a moral prohibition more clearly posed a threat to public safety or undermined social harmony. The students' support for the positive functioning of society was justified with less inconsistency than recognizing or diminishing the moral dignity of an individual. This determined the greater completeness of reproduction of all components of the legal situation.

Increased contradiction in the choice between harming an individual/group of individuals and socially significant positive consequences leads to a decrease in the relevance of applying moral prohibitions, but an increase in alternative moral justifications. The results predict that when an action is implemented in the direction of asserting some larger and more valuable possibility (greater good for society, organization), the alternative of deciding in favor of the good of the individual will be seen as (relatively) "wrong." At the same time, in the everyday context, students carried out the problematization of the decisions made by the characters mainly in the direction of recognizing the necessity of moral prohibition. Here, the pattern confirmed in experimental studies of moral behavior was manifested: the more familiar the subject is with details from the lives of the actors, the more likely he or

she is to attribute to them "moral responsibility and... even when under the pressure of insurmountable circumstances" (Edmonds, 2016, p. 124).

The completeness of identification of the components presented in situations of moral choice, and the relevance of their interpretation, emphasizing the attitude to the Other as an equal participant in the interaction, and evaluation of decisions made on the basis of the ratio of "the greatest good and the least evil", are based on similar configurations of cognitive characteristics. The role of ethical categories was particularly manifested: the indicators of their formation in students determined the stability of a complete and meaningfully relevant analysis of moral conflict in varying contexts of situations. The function of an ethical categories is considered here not so much in terms of generalization of knowledge but as a means of recognizing a situation, selecting features relevant to its subject qualification, and developing meaning (Jordaan, 1996).

It should be noted that the level of general intellectual development did not act as a critical resource in varying individual outcomes of completeness and relevance of interpretations of moral conflict, but contributed to its problematization in all situations, regardless of their context. This can be explained by what we know about the evidence that making rationally "weighted" judgments does not in itself yet determine imperative application of the norms to which they appeal (Nichols et al., 2016). The role of intellectual processes is not so much to make the more 'moral' judgment as to strike a balance and compromise between competing moral obligations and to find a common condition for relating them and ways of satisfying each (Brandt, 1992, pp. 40-41).

Interpretation, which ensures the identification of the structure and components of ELS, places high demands on subjects in terms of the formation of reflexive mechanisms that ensure the restructuring of thought analysis in the direction of harmonizing the differing social contexts of normative regulation (Landy & Kupfer, 2023). The development of reflexivity of thinking and its forms in the form of personal and communicative reflection is associated with a comprehensive consideration of the components of the situation, with understanding the conditions and consequences of the resolution of moral contradictions regardless of their subject contexts, including everyday practices. The role of collective reflection in following a moral prohibition becomes especially evident when the social context of interaction between participants in a situation of moral choice and moral decision making in the legal field of joint action changes. And in this regard, it is important to take into account that "moral judgments represent not a product, but a tool with the help of which a person defends and argues his position" (Zaikin, 2017, p. 36). In reconciling their own judgments of the proper with the judgments of imagined others, the study participants received a kind of independent support for the principles that gave additional substantiating power to the moral injunction.

The stable "coupling" between the levels of expression of certain cognitive and personal characteristics and, as a consequence, the consistency of moral interpretation could expectably be evidence of the determinability of students' use of moral prohibition, which is manifested regardless of the subject contexts in which it is realized. But such a position contradicts the essential characteristic of the autonomy of the moral agent. That is why it would be legitimate to conclude that successful orientation in contextually variable ELS and their productive interpretation require flexible and adaptive functioning of cognitive and personal characteristics, actualization of their various combinations and forms of conjugate action.

Conclusion

The study substantiated the position that the processes of identification, structuring, and interpretation of moral contradictions serve as active manifestations of thinking in the sphere of morality. An important step in the process under consideration is the assumption that moral prohibitions as grounds for productive interpretation do not appear in their immanent essence but are embodied in the subject logic of normative requirements. From this point of view, the completeness and relevance of the interpretation of the moral contradiction in the tasks modeling an ethically loaded situation is carried out through the "reformatting" of its components in relation to the specifics of normative regulation and its application in specific spheres of social interaction. The law and the everyday context of life (everyday practices) were considered as such.

The hypothesis about the mediating role of cognitive and personal characteristics in the application of moral prohibition was confirmed. Individual (cognitive and personal) characteristics of the subjects were involved in the process of interpreting ELS to a different extent: 1) with the selectivity of selection and productivity of thought processing of moral content (the formation of ethical categories, the level of intellectual development) and 2) with the ways of detecting and problematizing the contradiction between moral and extra-moral judgments about the components of an integral situation under the conditions of changes in its subject context (the level of development of thinking reflexion and its types - intellectual and collective personal reflexion; the degree of expression of moral orientation of the personality).

Theoretical and practical significance of the conducted research consists of the fact that due to the conceptualizations and methodological developments carried out in it, opportunities are opened for studying general psychological regularities of thinking, implemented in the moral sphere, taking into account psychologically substantial operationalization of indicators of interpretation of moral contradictions in situations with a high risk of social responsibility.

Limitations of the study

The study was carried out on a sample of junior students who are not characterized by the depth of immersion in the subject-professional context of ethically loaded situations. The inclusion of undergraduate students as participants in the study could be a factor that enhances the impact of the situations subject context of the analyzed on the productivity of their interpretation.

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors do not have any conflict of interest.