



Emotional Intelligence For Moral Character: Do Emotion-Related Competencies Lead To Better Moral Functioning?

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Abstract The present study examines three components of moral character: moral competencies, moral judgment and moral identity and seeks to understand how emotion-related competencies are linked these moral categories. The aim of the study is twofold, first to discover integrative linkages between different components of moral character and secondly, to understand the inclusive roles of emotion-related competencies (e.g., Trait Emotional Intelligence) in different categories of morality. A total of 318 individuals ($M_{age} = 21.75$ years; $SD_{age} = 2.24$, 65% female) filled the questionnaires measuring moral judgment, moral competencies, moral identity and Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI). Moral identity and competencies positively correlated with each other and with TEI; however, moral judgment does not appear in the same path: it related only with one aspect of TEI-emotional well-being. Also, TEI emerged as a mediator of relationship between moral identity and moral competence. By integrating three components of moral character (competence, judgment and identity) and linking them to the emotional competencies,

study nuances the dynamics and power of relationship between moral and emotional realms.

Keywords Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) · Moral identity · Moral competence · Moral character · Moral judgment

Introduction

Morality has always been one of the most intriguing subjects in social sciences as the concern about distinguishing right from wrong has been never fully resolved. The impact of the moral judgment is immersive on social actions as the moral failing of others has potential outcomes on social welfare. For several decades, moral psychology has begun to expand its boundaries by focusing different concepts of morality such as moral judgment, moral reasoning, moral identity, moral personality, moral emotion and moral action. These moral categories are the constituents of moral character and typically emphasize the embodiment of virtues such as social responsibility (Blasi, 2005; Hart, Atkins, & Donnelly, 2006; Ellemers, van der Toorn, Paunov, & van Leeuwen, 2019).

After the “affective revolution” in 1980s, the moral psychology began to rediscover the importance of emotion in studying of moral judgment and behavior (Frank, 1988; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley & Cohen, 2001). Nowadays, some current psychological accounts of moral judgment hold belief that affect plays an important role in moral reasoning (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005) and moral development (Piechowski, 1979).

Many theories and approaches have tried to analyze and explain the role of emotions in different realms of morality (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley & Cohen, 2001;

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Eisenberg, 2000; García & Ostrosky-Solís, 2006; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007a, b; Moll & de Oliveira-Souza, 2007; Varghese & Raj, 2014; Ellemers, van der Toorn, Paunov, & van Leeuwen, 2019). However, there is a lack of studies that comprehensively analyze effect of emotion-related competencies for constituents of moral character. Even though the literature asserted that emotional intelligence and moral character are related to each other, studies that are carried out to examine this relationship are very limited.

Present study addresses this issue by examined three different realms of morality character: moral competence, moral judgment and moral identity and seeks to understand the unique role of emotion-related competencies for each category.

Emotion-related competences reflect the concept of emotional intelligence which is not new in morality studies. Moral categories are closely related to emotional sensitivity, compassion and also moral beliefs. Emotional intelligence, as proposed by Mayer and Sullivan, consists of two distinct yet interchangeable processes, thinking and feeling (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton & Boyle, 2006). Emotions influence one's cognitive ability and, in turn, one's emotions require cognitive management. What one thinks is a product of what one feels at any given time, and what one feels is interpreted in one's mind (Kruger & Armenti, 2012). Empathy which as one of the key dimensions of emotional intelligence is thought to play a crucial role in moral behavior (Eisenberg, 2000; Hoffman, 2001). Empathy is not considered to be prosocial per se; however, with further cognitive processing, empathic response may develop into empathic concern, guilt or a combination of this two. Such prototypical moral emotions are thought to provide the motivational force to “do good” and avoid “doing bad” (Moll & de Oliveira-Souza, 2007), and function as an emotional moral barometer, providing immediate and salient feedback on behavior (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007a). Emotional empathy can thus be regarded as a necessary step in a chain that begins with affect recognition and emotional contagion and is followed by understanding another person's feelings; this understanding provides the basis for experiencing moral emotions, such as concern and guilt that in turn motivate moral behavior. Empathy is one of the components of TEI, and even though a number of studies evidence the role of empathy for moral behavior it is still not clear the mechanisms through which emotional intelligence is contributing into other aspects of morality.

Our research focuses on three constituents of moral character—moral competence, moral judgment and moral identity and explores unique associations between basic aspects of emotional intelligence with moral character.

Below, we discuss theoretical an empirical model of moral judgment, moral competence and moral identity and their link to basic emotional components in each category.

Moral Judgment, Moral Competence and Moral identity: Theory and Research

In this theoretical overview, we utilize inductive approach to link each type of moral character with larger moral concept. We examine three categories of moral character (moral judgment, moral competence and moral identity) and corresponding moral concepts (moral agency, moral cognition and moral functioning) (see Table 1). Also, based on empirical data and theoretical argumentations emotional components for each moral character are discussed.

Moral Judgment

Moral judgment is a function of moral cognition and broadly reflects the moral thinking, reasoning, rationalization and biases that affect moral decision making. It also could be defined as the set of capacities that allow people to properly engage with social and moral norms (Voiklis & Malle, 2017). For decades, the understanding of moral judgment in moral psychology has been dominated by rationalist paradigm. This traditional view emphasizes the role of reasoning and reflection in the process of moral reasoning and argues that moral judgment can be rationally assessed in terms of rightfulness (Kohlberg, & Kramer 1969; Piaget, 1932/1965; Turiel, 1983). This model acknowledges the existence of emotions in moral behavior but disdain the emotional aspect as direct cause of making moral decision. Opposite to rationalist's view, intuitionists stress the importance of moral intuitions and emotions, arguing that the moral decision is made due to perceptually existed “moral truth” which is not the product of rationalistic reasoning or reflection. Haidt (2001) argues that moral intuition is some kind of cognition, but it is not a reasoning, and the judgments of morality are the results of an automatic intuitive reaction (Haidt, 2007). In this case, the moral judgment cannot be defined as rationally right or wrong as it is a matter of beliefs and values. Basically, moral judgment rests on moral reasoning, while it implies inference of relevant decision rules from questions relating to the outcome in the form of moral judgments (Ellemers, van der Toorn, Paunov, & van Leeuwen, 2019). Moral reasoning itself is the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral and to act in accordance with such judgments (Kohlberg, 1964). This capacity is related to behaviors seen as morally relevant by some people and not others (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993). Moral reasoning

Table 1 Moral categories and associated moral characters

Moral categories	Definition	Moral character
Moral Agency	Deep moral commitments; morally relevant actions that have implications for justice and care; permanent obligation to morality that is deeply grounded as a foundational component of self-understanding (Lapsley, 2010)	Moral self-identity
Moral functioning	Specific mode of functioning of person as a whole; ability to integrate cognition, actions and ideas into a comprehensive unit (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009)	Moral competencies
Moral cognition	Moral thinking, reasoning, rationalizations and biases that affect moral decision making; set of capacities that allow people to properly engage with social and moral norms (Voiklis & Malle, 2017)	Moral judgment

involves two different but complimentary dimensions: emotional and cognitive. While emotional dimension is related to the values on which it is focused when judging moral issues, cognitive dimension is pertinent to focus on moral dimension of decision, confrontation with cognitive moral conflict and focusing on justice (Lind, 2008).

Empirical studies on moral judgment demonstrate that emotional competence is a key element that leads individuals toward non-utilitarian moral decision: individuals with low emotional responsiveness, such as those high in psychopathy, are expected to make more utilitarian judgment (Eslinger and Damasio, 1985; Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, & Cohen, 2004; Koenigs et al., 2007). That because psychopathy tends to reduce the empathy, leading to greater concern for the mathematically rational ends than the emotionally aversive dimension (Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, & Cohen, 2004, Greene et al., 2009; Crockett et al., 2010). Based on clinical experience, several authors have also reported that individuals with low emotional responsiveness (such as psychopaths) but with normal—or even higher—intelligence and a normal ability to judge, remain particularly immoral in behavioral settings (Cleckley, 1941; Hare, 1999; Glenn, Yang, Raine, & Colletti, 2010). Such discrepancy has been supported by other studies by demonstrating experimental evidence for a divergence between judgment and choice of action during moral evaluation (Kurzban, DeScioli, & Fein, 2012; Tassy, Oullier, Mancini, & Wicker, 2013). Indeed, moral choice of action and moral judgment could rely on partially distinct neural processes: recent study pointed out that neural disruption before moral dilemma evaluation alters the judgment (objective evaluation) without modifying the subsequent choice of action (Tassy, Oullier, Mancini, & Wicker, 2013).

Moral Competence

Moral functioning is specific mode of functioning of person as a whole. It as an ability to integrate cognition, actions

and ideas into a comprehensive unit (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009).

Moral functioning depends on person's moral competence—intricate network of human intellectual activities that require understanding, reasoning, problem-solving, decision making and heuristic conduct (see Table 1). Moral competence is an ability to methodically apply universal moral principles to one's ethics, objectives and dealings (Lennick and Kiel, 2005). Morality is a priori, meaning that individuals have an innate tendency to act with integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness and moral competence is defined as “the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles should be applied to our goals, values and actions” (Lennick and Kiel, 2005). Foundation of moral competence is universal principles, beliefs that guide individual's decisions and applied as rules in everyday life. These beliefs are mental representations associated with the knowing component of moral competence, serve as a basis of moral decisions and have a significant influence on the outcome of moral versus immoral decisions. Emotional intelligence has a very vital influence on moral competence: when an individual develops the ability to feel, interpret and express emotions correctly, adaptively, he/she puts up actions that are morally inclined. The control and regulation of emotional reactions determine the exposition of appropriate behaviors. Moral competency involves expression of these appropriate behaviors and the ability of a person to channel emotional skills, either positively or negatively, and adhere to the moral codes and standards (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007a, b). Empirical data demonstrate positive correlation between each of the TEI traits with moral competency; moreover, individuals high and low in TEI significantly differ on their levels of moral competency (Varghese & Raj, 2014).

Moral Identity

Moral agency means a permanent obligation to morality that is deeply grounded as a foundational component of

self-understanding (Lennick & Kiel, 2005). Moral agency basically reassembles moral identity and generally refers to the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). Aquino and Reed (2002), based on work by Blasi (1984) and Hart, Atkins, & Ford, (1998), developed concept of moral identity, that is, as a “self-conception organized around a set of moral traits” (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003). They argue that moral identity, as one in which moral traits are a deep and relatively stable part integrated in one's self-concept or self-schema (“moral identity internalization”), and in which these traits are manifested in action (“moral identity symbolization”) (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Moral identity does not replace the cognitive–developmental model or the idea of moral reasoning as a predictor of moral action. Rather, it complements this approach by identifying a social-psychological motivator of moral conduct. However, moral identity differs from moral reasoning in by refusing cognitive sophistication as a key theoretical element of moral identity. The motivational driver between moral identity and behavior is the likelihood that a person views certain moral trait as being essential to his or her self-concept. In short, we can think of “being a moral agent” in terms of having a moral identity, i.e., having one's self-concept centrally oriented toward a collection of moral traits that both define who one is and yield tendencies toward paradigmatically moral action (Weaver, 2006).

In sum, theoretical and empirical data evidence that morality is a multidimensional concept with multiple domains and the role of emotions is very influential on them. The current challenge for theory development and research in morality therefore is to consider its multifaceted nature and to connect them to each other—instead of studying them in isolation (Ellemers, van der Toorn, Pau-nov, & van Leeuwen, 2019). Compared with ample investigations on the features and patterns of moral reasoning as well as the linkage between moral reasoning and emotional intelligence, empirical research addressing relationships between moral categories and different aspects of emotional intelligence is inadequate. Moreover, majority of studies try to understand moral-emotion tandem while focusing on the concept of “moral emotions” such as guilty, shame, guilt and embarrassment (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007a, b); thus, the role of moral competencies remained unaddressed. Considering that every single moral category not only results in emotion but they are also guided by emotion-related competencies the urge to find how emotional competencies linked to moral categories is clear.

Present study is unifying three different components of moral character and looking for the impact that emotion-related competencies have on them.

Specifically, in the present study we aim to address the following questions: How different categories of moral character such as moral judgment, moral identity and moral competence are interrelated? How do specific emotional competencies come to be associated with specific moral components? Which morality character is best predicted by emotion-related competencies? Does Trait Emotional Intelligence contribute in forming moral identity and boosting moral competence?

Method

Participants

The study recruited a total of 318 individuals (65% female). Most of them (87%) were undergraduate students from Tbilisi State University. Participants ages ranged from 16 to 56 years, with a mean age of 21.75 (SD = 2.24). The participants were recruited through convenience sampling. The participants were volunteers and did not receive any reward or credit for taking part in the study.

Procedure

Participants completed a set of questionnaires, including measures of moral competence, Trait Emotional Intelligence, moral identity and moral reasoning dilemmas. The questionnaires were provided in small groups, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to completing a series of questionnaires, indicating that all data would be kept confidential.

Measures

Moral Reasoning: While moral reasoning is specific cognitive concept that involves conscious judgment and decisions on issues related to rightfulness it is usually assessed by objective dilemma-based moral problems (Foot, 1967; Greene et al., 2009; Moore, Clark, & Kane, 2008). Moral dilemmas typically entail two scenarios, in which some form of harm is going to occur, and the individual facing this dilemma has the choice to either let it happen or choose another option which is also harmful but results in overall greater good. Based on individual's responses, the dilemmas are solved either in consequential or categorical way. Consequential moral reasoning reflects the utilitarian philosophy entailing the impartial maximization of the greater good, whereas categorical reasoning demonstrates deontological paradigm. Deontology and consequentialism are frequently discussed morality theories, and they are usually thought as two opposing theories in normative ethics. Consequentialism focuses on the utility of an action,

while deontology emphasizes the obligation of an individual to adhere to universal moral rules, principle to determine moral behavior (Brady & Wheeler, 1996; Kant 1996).

To define the participant's orientation of moral reasoning, we intend to use moral dilemma scenarios. As the experimental setup does not allow studying real-life-or-death decisions moral judgments of hypothetical real-life, moral dilemmas provide valuable insight into human moral cognition. A moral dilemma/scenario is a short story about a situation involving a moral conflict. The participants read the given scenarios and rate the follow judgments on a 6-point scale (0 = definitely not, 6 = definitely). The dilemmas were formulated in first person to make the scenarios more relatable.

Example scenario (1): You witnessed a bank robbery. You recognized the robber and know that instead of leaving the money for himself, this man is willing to help the poor orphanage. The orphanage can buy food and warm clothes for their children with this money. If you decide to go to the police and announce the robber's identity, the money will be returned to the bank and children will stay without supplies.

Questions: Is it morally permissible not to announce the robber's identity to the police? Would you feel guilty if you decide not to go to the police? Would you feel guilty if you decide to go to the police?

The dilemmas (Foot, 1967; Thomson, 1976) are intended to determine categorical vs. consequential moral reasoning style. Namely, in presented case, choosing not to go to the police, contributes to consequential moral reasoning, whereas the choice of going to the police contributes to categorical moral reasoning.

Moral Competence: Lennick and Kiel's (2005) Moral Competency Index (MCI) was used to measure the morally competencies of individuals. MCI is a 40 item questionnaire measuring ten competencies (e.g., keeping promises, admitting mistakes and failures, taking responsibility for personal choices) on five-point Likert scale (1-never, 5-in all situations).

Moral identity: To assess the extent of moral centrality, we used Aquino and Reed (2002) Moral Identity Scale. The 12-item scale measures two factors of moral identity: internalization and symbolization. The former refers to having moral traits that are a deep and relatively stable part of one's self-concept, the latter assesses the degree to which these traits are manifested in action.

Emotional Intelligence: To assess the role of emotions in moral reasoning and behavior, we use Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) is a self-report inventory consisting of 153 items which are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly

agree). It measures 15 distinct facets, 4 factors and global TEI. Thirteen facets—assertiveness, emotion control, emotion expression, emotion management, emotion perception, empathy, happiness, impulse control, optimism, relationships, self-esteem, self-motivation, social awareness and stress management—are organized under four factors well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability (Petrides, 2001; Reed & Aquino 2003; Martskvishvili, Arutinov., & Mestvirishvili, 2013).

Results

Emotional Intelligence for Moral Judgment, Moral Identity and Moral Competence

Descriptive statistics for study variables and correlational matrix are presented in Table 2. Results indicated that age is negatively correlated with both types of moral identity as well as moral competency (moral internalization, $r = -.24$, $p < .001$; moral symbolization $r = .20$, $p < .001$; moral competency $r = -.22$, $p < .001$), but was not associated with moral reasoning or TEI. Unlikely, religiosity appeared to be in relationship with all the variables in question.

As illustrated, total score of TEI is positively related to different categories of morality. Specifically, TEI has weak, but significant connection with both factors of moral identity (moral internalization and moral symbolization, $r = .26$, $p < .001$; $r = .23$, $p < .001$, respectively) and moderate link with moral competency ($r = .48$, $p < .001$). Also, moral internalization and moral symbolization are strongly linked to moral competency ($r = .53$, $p < .001$; $r = .40$, $p < .001$), but none of them are related to moral judgment. Moral judgment also appears not to be connected to Trait EI, although it has weak negative connection with one of the factors of Trait EI, emotional well-being ($r = -.14$, $p < .001$).

In order to identify whether or not emotion-related competencies influenced different categories of morality, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted on each moral category (moral judgment, moral competence and moral identity) independently.

Table 3 shows results of hierarchical regression performed separately for moral reasoning, moral competence and moral identity. The results of step one indicated that the variance accounted for (R^2) with the first three predictors (age, gender and religiosity) equaled to .03 (adjusted $R^2 = .02$), which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(3, 314)} = 2.96$, $p < .05$). Next, when emotion-related competency scores were entered into the regression equation, change in variance accounted for (R^2) was equal to .05, which was not statistically significant $p > .05$. In model 2, overall two out of six predictors were statistically

Table 2 Correlation and descriptive statistics of study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age											
2. Religiosity	-.10										
3. Moral judgment	-.06	-.15**	(.60)								
4. Moral internalization	-.24**	.28**	.04	(.80)							
5. Moral symbolization	-.20**	.17**	-.02	.42**	(.83)						
6. Moral competency	-.22**	.21**	-.03	.53**	.40**	(.89)					
7. Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI Total)	-.07	.16**	-.08	.26**	.23**	.48**	(.85)				
8. Emotional well-being (TEI)	-.10	.24**	-.14**	.29**	.27**	.42**	.84**	(.81)			
9. Emotional self-control (TEI)	.02	.05	-.05	.07	.12*	.27**	.60**	.39**	(.52)		
10. Emotionality (TEI)	-.05	.12**	.01	.33**	.17**	.46**	.75**	.49**	.32**	(.61)	
11. Sociability (TEI)	.02	.01	.00	.03	-.01	.17**	.66**	.48**	.17**	.36**	(.62)
M	21.75	3.69	26.18	29.98	20.52	77.64	4.65	5.05	4.17	4.66	4.90
SD	2.24	1.70	5.79	5.08	7.04	8.57	.75	1.20	.95	.92	.97

n = 318 individuals

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Figures in parentheses are coefficients alpha; higher scores on moral judgment indicate more preference for consequential moral judgment style

Table 3 Hierarchical regressions of demographic variables and TEI on moral judgment, moral identity and moral competence

Variable	Consequential moral judgment			Moral internalization			Moral symbolization			Moral competence		
	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
<i>Step 1</i>												
Gender	.24	.63	.02	.13	.56	.01	.73	.79	.05	.88	.96	.05
Age	-.05	.04	-.07	-.13	.03	-.20***	-.16	.05	-.19***	-.21	.06	-.20***
Religiosity	-.52	.18	-.16**	.74	.16	.25***	.60	.23	.15*	.91	.28	.18***
R2	.03			.12			.06			.08		
ΔF	2.96*			13.75***			7.19***			9.45***		
<i>Step 2</i>												
Emotional well-being (TEI)	-.88	.34	-.19**	.83	.28	.20***	1.58	.41	.27***	1.52	.45	.21***
Emotional self-control (TEI)	-.01	.36	.00	-.40	.30	-.07	.15	.44	.02	.86	.47	.10
Emotionality (TEI)	.55	.39	.09	1.55	.33	.28**	.52	.48	.07	3.01	.52	.32***
Sociability (TEI)	.37	.36	.06	-.81	.30	-.16	-1.21	.44	-.17**	-.52	.48	-.06
R2	.05			.23			.13			.31		
ΔR2				.11			.07			.23		
ΔF	1.92			11.39***			6.34***			25.74***		

n = 318 individuals

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

significant, with emotional well-being recording a higher Beta value ($\beta = -.19, p < .05$) than the religiosity ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$).

When predicting moral internalization, the results of first step indicated that the variance accounted for (R2) with the first three predictors equaled .12, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(3, 314)} = 13.75, p < .00$). Entering emotion-related competencies into the next step,

predictive value of model 2 increased and variance accounted (R2) for whole model increased to .23, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(4, 310)} = 11.39, p < .00$). Only two factors of Trait EI, emotional well-being and emotionality ($\beta = .20, p < .00; \beta = .28, p < .001$ accordingly), predicted moral identity internalization significantly.

Regarding moral symbolization, the first step analyses indicated that the variance accounted for (R²) with the first three predictors equaled .06, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(3, 314)} = 7.18, p < .00$). Entering Trait EI into the next step, predictive value of model 2 increased and variance accounted (R²) for whole model increased to .13, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(4, 310)} = 6.34, p < .00$). Again, two factors of TEI, emotional well-being and sociability ($\beta = .27, p < .001, \beta = .17, p < .001$), predicted moral identity internalization significantly.

And lastly as for moral competence, the first step analyses indicated that the variance accounted for (R²) with the first three predictors equaled .08, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(3, 314)} = 9.45, p < .00$). Entering emotion-related competencies into the next step, predictive value of model 2 increased and variance accounted (R²) for whole model increased to .31, which was significantly different from zero ($F_{(4, 310)} = 25.74, p < .00$). Only two factors of TEI, specifically, emotional well-being and emotionality ($\beta = .21, p < .001, \beta = .32, p < .00$ accordingly), predicted moral identity internalization significantly.

The Mediation Analysis: TEI and Moral Categories

In order to test indirect associations between TEI and moral categories, we applied mediation model (Hayes, 2012) on moral identity, Trait EI and moral competence. The analysis revealed that TEI is a mediator of relationship between moral identity and moral competence. Excluding mediator, the regression of moral internalization and moral symbolization on moral competence were significant ($b = .60, p < .001; b = .38, p < .001$ respectively), but including Trait EI into the model as a mediator, relationship between both dimensions of moral identity and moral competence became stronger ($b = .74, p < .001; b = .49, p < .00$; see Figs. 1, 2). The result revealed that TEI partially mediates link between moral identity (both dimension) and moral competence (Figs. 1, 2).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine how moral competencies, moral reasoning and moral identity (internalization vs. symbolization) could be related to each other, and whether Trait Emotional Intelligence (1) predicts and (2) affects these relationships.

The relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and moral categories (judgment, identity and competency).

Firstly, we explored interrelation between three moral domains and Emotional Intelligence and as we predicted, study result evidence, that emotional competencies were positively correlated with moral identity and moral competence. Both dimensions of moral identity, internalization (which means that moral traits are central to one's self-concept), as well as symbolization (that refers to the degree to which these moral traits are reflected in public choices and/or actions in identifiable social settings) were positively related to global score of Trait Emotional Intelligence. Close observation reveals that basically two factors: emotionality and emotional well-being show positive correlations with moral identity dimension. Consequently, we argue that strong sense of moral identity is clearly linked with trait optimism, happiness, self-esteem and empathy which are the constituents of emotionality and emotional well-being facets. These finding support and extend previous empirical study validating that emotional intelligence promotes the link between moral identity and prosocial behavior (Côté, DeCelles, McCarthy, Van Kleef, & Hideg, 2011). Our findings demonstrating that reason why emotional intelligence promotes the relationship between moral identity and prosocial behavior might be a positive association between moral identity and those facets of Trait Emotional Intelligence that are very fundamental for prosocial behavior (empathy, trusts, self-esteem). In line with previous studies, our study demonstrates that moral competence positively linked with the global Trait Emotional Intelligence and all four of its facets (Varghese & Raj, 2014). Unexpectedly, no relationship was found between EI and Moral reasoning: results indicated that consequential moral judgment was not associated with the rest of the moral domains as well as with the emotional intelligence. This corresponds to the idea that judgment process is mostly dependent on cognitive functioning more

Fig. 1 Model testing hypothesis that TEI mediates the relationship between moral identity internalization and moral competence. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

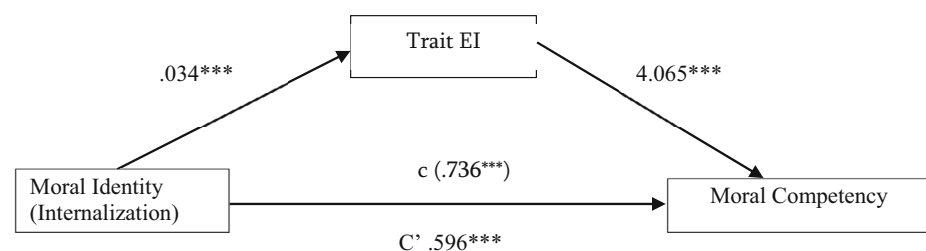
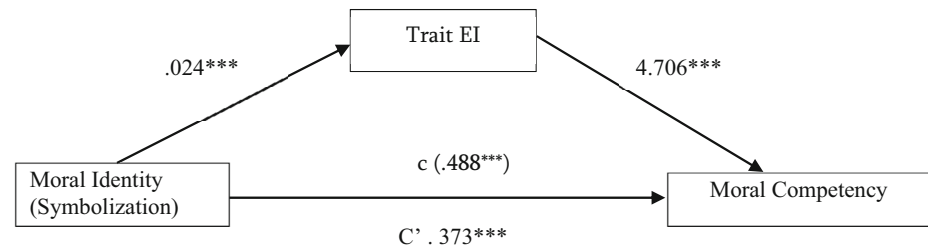


Fig. 2 Model testing hypothesis that TEI mediates the relationship between moral identity symbolization and moral competence. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$



than on emotional processes. For example, when people engage in deliberative thinking (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley & Cohen, 2001; Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, & Cohen, 2004) or have higher working memory capacity (Bartels, 2008; Feltz & Cokely, 2009; Moore, Clark, & Kane, 2008), they tend to make more utilitarian judgment.

We found that there is a strong positive connection between two dimensions of moral identity and moral competency. As authors suggest in moral identity model, a person characterized as having a high internalized moral identity is one for whom this network of morally relevant knowledge constructs is chronically accessible, both in terms of quantity and speed, within the working self-concept (Aquino et al., 2009). Considering the definition of moral competency, which broadly implies the knowledge of moral principles (Martin & Austin, 2010), this knowledge might be represented in moral schemas, upon which moral identity is built on.

The Religiosity and Moral Judgment

Next, we explored the role of specific emotional competencies for different moral categories. We also check whether the religiosity predicts the different level of moral identity, competence and judgment. The results confirmed that religiosity and morality are strongly connected with one another (Ahmed & Salas, 2008; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2011). Interestingly, higher levels of religiosity negatively predicted consequential moral judgment, which means that people who hold religious belief less accept immoral behavior no matter what the end (purpose) of this behavior is and pursue categorical moral reasoning style. Association between religiosity and morality has been debated extensively: two major standpoints on moral ethics, consequentialist stand in opposition to deontology, arguing that morally right if and only if that act maximizes the good. Indeed, empirical trend suggests that religious individuals rather insensitive to outcomes when forming moral judgments.) Christian fundamentalists deny that a “sacred value” (e.g., the inherent value of human life) should ever be discarded in the pursuit of a greater good, particularly a secular good (e.g., monetary gain) (Tetlock, 2003). Here,

we confirm this empirical trend by evidencing that having Christian values predict categorical moral judgment style.

Predictive Value of TEI for Different Categories of Morality

Study revealed that two factors of emotional intelligence, emotionality and emotional well-being, are the positive predictor of moral identity and moral competence. Generally, we have expected the empirical validation for inter-connection of moral and emotional realms based on the Moral identity and moral development theories. Although moral identity theory is mostly based on developing the cognitive schemas, it also acknowledges the importance of moral emotions in moral behavior (Blasi, 1999), and therefore, association of Moral identity and Trait EI was expected. Moreover, according to Piechowski (1979), moral development is closely related to emotional development, including one’s self-awareness, self-regulation, social consciousness and relationship management. Emotional intelligence is determinant factor that helpful to know one’s emotions, drives, goals, recognize the role of these on their decision, control one’s disruptive emotions, manage close relationship, consider other people’s feelings and motivate one’s to achieve their goals (Goleman, 1998). In other words, emotional intelligence plays role on one’s process of being individual.

In-depth inspection of the Trait EI factors reveal two important facets. Emotional well-being and emotionality are the basically responsible for predicting moral identity and competence. Here, we try to analyze each of them separately. Emotional well-being is a conjunction of trait optimism, trait happiness, self-esteem, coping ability and productivity (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2016). And what is more important here, it broadens the scopes of attention and cognition. We found that emotional well-being negatively predicts consequential moral judgment and positively predict moral competencies and both dimensions of moral identity: internalization and symbolization. The role of positive emotions in different aspect of human’s life is undeniable and have been documented in many studies (the role of positive emotion); however, moral traits, beliefs and competencies seem also chained with the ability to possess and maintain positive valance in emotional life.

That means happiness, comfort and security—properties that closely associated with well-being—positively contribute not only into individuals mental and physical health, but also it supports individual's moral values and religious beliefs as well. On a high level of emotional well-being, individuals are less prone to consequential moral reasoning and judging action and choices based on the clear moral rules such as individual's obligations and permissions responsibilities. Moral identity is highly charged with emotional content, meaning that verifying ones identify leads to positive emotions, while contradicting identity leads to negative ones (Stets & Carter, 2012). This might be one explanation why emotional well-being is so important when predicting moral identity.

Another factor that predicts moral categories is an emotionality. Namely, we found that moral competence and moral internalization are predicted by emotionality factor which is an ability to show empathy, identify and understand other's emotions. The result evidences that moral competence and internalized moral self are positively linked with the agency to be empathic to others. While empathy positively contributes into certain categories of morality, developing emotional competencies for morality is particularly necessary. That evidence that morality is not only a part of cognitive system where judgment, thinking and reasoning are the important determinants of moral categories.

Intermeeting Role of TEI

Lastly, we explored indirect associations between emotional competencies and moral categories. Study revealed the positive link between moral identity and moral competencies and next mediation analysis evidence the role of emotional Intelligence for moral identity and moral competence. We found that internalization and actualization of moral traits lead to boosting moral competence: set of universal human value that generated and give direction to individual moral behavior (Morales-Sánchez & Cabello-Medina, 2013). Strong moral identity is an important condition of developing moral competence, and emotional intelligence has a unique contribution here. It accelerates the link between moral identity and moral competence; thus, we can assume that emotional intelligence ability to identify, express and control self and other's emotions enable individuals to understand their own moral values and thus activate relevant moral behavior and TEI has a mediational role in this dynamic process.

Emotional intelligence might be seen not only as having independent value in shaping different domains of morality, but as a link connecting different domain of morality. For example, in our research we examined its role in relationship of moral identity and moral competency. As

we already mentioned, moral identity can be embodied in two manners, as an internalized as well as, symbolized one. From mediational analyses, it is clear that one of the ways moral identity is reflected in high moral competency is through TEI. In other words, what it means is: centrality of moral identity, both internalized and symbolized dimensions, is reflected on high levels of moral competence and one of the paths through which it is done, is TEI.

Concluding Remarks

The study examined complex and dynamic model of moral functioning by integrating three components of morality: moral competencies, moral judgment and moral identity and linked them to emotion-related competencies. The study result proves the role of emotional intelligence for moral domains, indicating unique contribution of TEI enhancing moral identity and moral competence. Moreover, moral identity was strongly linked to moral competence, indicating that people with high levels of moral identity are more competent in what universal moral principles are, and most importantly, one way this is achieved is through TEI. Interestingly study revealed that moral judgment is a separate category that did not have confluences with moral identity, moral competence nor with emotional competencies, and possibly it rests on the cognitive functioning alone.

Study contributes to the theoretical debates by proving that moral and emotional functioning is interrelated and also by demonstrating that moral judgment is a distinct category not linked to emotions. On more practical level, the study observations could be helpful for the moral educational professionals to design and implement successful training programs and modules to advancing humanistic values in society.

Study has a several limitations: first is a convenient student's sample that could be considered as homogenous group and affect the reliability of the study. Second is the problem of moral acting vs. thinking: even though we aimed to find the interrelation of emotional and moral competencies, study did not include the moral behavior in this model which might be an essential for future development of morality studies.

Further investigation of moral concepts can be done in the areas of health care, court system, organizational leadership and in different field academic setting: anthropology and sociology psychology. Nowadays, biggest challenges in modern world are strengthening democratic value, gender equality, social inclusion, civic engagement, conflict resolution and peace education and the role morality: moral competence, identity and reasoning are enormous.

Thus, research in morality field can result into significant interventions for professional into different field to facilitate moral competence and moral behavior.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest This study was funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia under Grant number YS-18-2025.

Research Involving Human Participants All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee (include name of committee + reference number) and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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