



Validation of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire in Turkey and its relation to cultural schemas of individualism and collectivism



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ABSTRACT

Although Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) is claimed to be universally applicable, the data brought to bear in its support come from a self-selected population with mostly English-speaking participants. To the best of our knowledge, the theory has not been hitherto tested in a predominantly Muslim country with non-western moral and religious sensibilities. In *Study 1*, we replicated previous findings using Turkish participants by showing through confirmatory factor analyses that the 5-factor structure of MFT provided a better fit than alternative models. In *Study 2*, the participants' cultural schemas of individualism and collectivism were experimentally manipulated to see the distinctness and separate manipulability of the five individual foundations. The individualism prime led to an increased concern with the harm dimension whereas the collectivism manipulation led to an increased concern with the loyalty dimension. Taken together, the findings suggest that the 5-factor model of morality is the best fitting model in Turkey as well and that it is useful in predicting the results of cultural prime manipulations.

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1. Introduction

Mental structures behind moral judgments have been intensively studied for the past 50 years (Darley & Shultz, 1990; Haidt, Koller & Dias, 1993; Kohlberg, 1969; Nichols, 2002; Nichols & Folds-Bennett, 2003; Piaget, 1965; Rozin, Lowery, Imada & Haidt, 1999; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997), mostly emphasizing harm and justice-based morality. The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), however, created a paradigm shift in moral judgment research by criticizing Kohlberg's justice-based morality guided by reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969), and offered a multi-foundational model of morality guided by intuitions (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt, 2001, 2007, 2012). According to MFT, previous conceptualizations of moral psychology have an implicit bias toward a western, liberal and individualistic understanding of morality which is in fact adopted by a small minority in the world (see Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). The theory envisions morality as being based on five separate intuitive foundations each of which is supposed to be an adaptation designed to solve different adaptive problems. The care/harm foundation is defined as the motivation to care for one's offspring and those in need and to protect them from coming to harm. The fairness/cheating foundation is the motivation to act in accordance with

justice norms within one's group and to detect those who freeride by benefitting from the group without paying any costs. The loyalty/betrayal foundation is the motivation to protect the interests of one's group against rival groups. The authority/subversion foundation is the motivation to respect those higher than oneself in the social hierarchy and thus to preserve the social order. Finally, the sanctity/degradation foundation is the motivation to be pure both physically and spiritually, to respect the sacred and to suppress carnal desires. While liberals mostly define morality in terms of only the care/harm and fairness/justice dimensions, conservatives see all five dimensions as more or less equally important (Haidt, 2007, 2012). Graham et al. (2009) call the care and fairness dimensions the "individualizing foundations" designed to protect the rights of the individual and the other three dimensions the "binding foundations" designed to protect group harmony by suppressing selfishness.

This multidimensional conception of morality is claimed to have an evolutionary basis and thus to be universal. To test the cross-cultural validity of the five-factor model, Graham et al. (2011) applied confirmatory factor analyses to data collected from various locations in the world based on the English version of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). They showed that the five-factor model provides a better fit than the individualizing/binding two-factor model and Shweder et al.'s (1997) three-factor model based on autonomy (harm and fairness), community (loyalty and authority) and divinity (sanctity). Independent studies in Korea (Kim, Kang & Yun, 2012), Italy (Bobbio, Nencini & Sarrica, 2011), Germany (Bowman, 2010), New Zealand

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(Davies, Sibley & Liu, 2014) and Sweden (Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015) again demonstrated a better fit for the five-factor model (but see Davis et al., 2015). However, in all these cross-cultural studies, especially those in non-English speaking cultures, the degree of fit is below traditional criteria. Furthermore, as far as we know, no study has tested the validity of the five factors in a predominantly Muslim country in their native language. This kind of test has an obvious bearing on the cross-cultural validity of the five-factor model.

One of the main goals of the present study is to test the five-factor model in the Turkish culture. Turkey is a non-western, predominantly Muslim country and thus sufficiently different from the US samples. In addition, Turkish political structure is complex where there are more than two major political parties and where the traditional left–right or liberal–conservative spectrum is difficult to apply. Basic political values in Turkey are thought to be unstable (see Öniş, 2007, 2009, for a detailed discussion). For example, the social democrat CHP (Republican People's Party) and the ultra-nationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) managed to form an alliance in the 2014 presidential elections. Therefore, Öniş (2007) claims that there is no European-style social democracy in Turkey and describes Turkish democracy as a lopsided one. Furthermore, political Islamists, who are traditionally classified as being right-wing, sometimes demonstrate left-wing sensitivities such as being pro welfare state and against capitalism and caring for the poor (Özbudun, 2006). It could therefore be illuminating to test the validity of the five-factor model in Turkish culture and to see how it relates to political ideology in Turkey.

Since Turkey is a country where collectivistic and individualistic values are enmeshed with each other (see Imamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 1999; Kagıtcıbası & Ataca, 2005; Kara, 2007), Turkish people can be expected to harbor both of these cultural thinking styles. It is also known that cultural thinking styles can influence one's basic values and moral judgments (Miller, Bersoff & Harwood, 1990; Shearman, 2008; Smith & Schwartz, 1997). Given that political attitudes are not stable in Turkey (see Öniş, 2007), it can be surmised that moral judgments are not stable either but can differ according to cultural thinking styles. Therefore, priming certain cultural patterns (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) and making them accessible in people's minds and seeing whether this influences the moral foundations people rely on might be important to understand the content of the moral foundations in Turkey (for a review of similar manipulations, see Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002). For example, demonstrating that the individualistic prime influences the individualizing, but not the binding, foundations whereas the collectivistic prime influences the binding, but not the individualizing, foundations would imply that these foundations are indeed separate. In other words, demonstrating the separate manipulability of the moral foundations could support the two- or the five-factor model of the Moral Foundations Theory.

The aim of the present set of studies is two-fold. First, a confirmatory factor analysis was done on the Turkish version of the MFQ to see whether the five-factor structure, as reported in the original study by Graham et al. (2011), provides a better fit than the three-factor structure proposed by Shweder et al. (1997) or the two-factor structure in terms of the individualizing and binding foundations (Study 1). Study 2 used a contextual prime (individualist culture vs. collectivist culture manipulation) to see whether people's basic moral orientations can shift between individualizing and binding foundations.

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

A total of 1436 participants took part in the study, the majority being undergraduate students (888 female, 513 male, 35 unreported; mean age = 22.88, *SD* = 9.63). All participants were native Turkish speakers. The majority identified themselves as Muslim ($n = 1058$). Of the

remaining participants, 89 were atheists, 203 believed in God but were not affiliated with a religion, 27 reported affiliation with a religion other than Islam and 59 did not respond.

2.1.2. Materials

The Moral Foundations Questionnaire, the psychometric properties of which were identified by Graham et al. (2011), was translated into Turkish through the method of translation-back translation. The questionnaire consists of 30 6-step Likert-type items and asks the participant to what degree he or she agrees with five moral dimensions. There are two sections in the questionnaire: judgments and relevance. In the first, the participants rate the importance of each of the criteria when they make moral judgments (e.g., "Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group"). In the second, the participants rate the degree to which they agree with each of the moral judgments (e.g., "I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing"). For each moral dimension, a composite score was formed by taking the average of six items (three items from the first section, three items from the second). In addition, a single 1 (left) to 7 (right) Likert-type self-placement question was asked to determine the political orientation of the participants. Higher scores represent more rightist political orientation.

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Data analytical strategy

To examine the factor structure of MFQ, we ran several confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using MPlus 6.12 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2011). All calculations were based upon the covariance matrix and the maximum likelihood method was used as input. We tested five theoretical models for the full 30-item MFQ as well as separate model tests for the judgment and relevance subscales (see Table 1). The five-factor model was estimated with one latent factor for each moral foundation, the respective scale items as manifest variables, and estimated relations between all latent factors. The hierarchical model estimated the relations between the latent factors for two related superordinate factors. Three-factor model estimated sanctity as a separate superordinate factor and estimated loyalty and authority as latent variables. Then, we compared those examined models by using Chi-Square difference test to find out the best-fitted model.

We assessed model fit using the Chi-Square Model Fit index, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Akaike Information Criteria (AIC), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). We also used χ^2/df as an additional model fit index because the Chi-Square test of absolute model fit is sensitive to sample size. A RMSEA value below .06 is considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Steiger, 2007), while SRMR values less than .08 are indicative of an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI is one of the most widely reported fit indices, with Hu and Bentler (1999) recognizing values equal to, or greater than, .95 on this index as a good fit. However, previous work on MFQ from countries speaking non-English language showed that model fit fell short of conventional fit criteria (Bobbio et al., 2011; Bowman, 2010; Davies et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2012; Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015). This inconsistency is considered to be due to the complex nature of moral judgments (see Davies et al., 2014; Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015 for similar discussions). To examine the predictive validity of the MFQ, we also correlated subscales of MFQ with one-item political ideology score. The two-factor model examined individualizing and binding foundations as separate factors. Finally, we examined a single-factor model in which all observed variables loaded to a single factor, to compare with the aforementioned models.

2.2.2. Structural validity

As presented in Table 1, fit indices yielded different patterns for different factor models. Model fit pattern of the judgment and relevance

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