

# Beyond Moral Foundations: In it What is in it

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Ahlak, ahlaki temeller, sıradan insanların ahlak algısı, özgürlük, hiyerarşi

## Keywords

Morality, moral foundations, lay perception of morality, liberty, hierarchy

## Abstract

What does morality entail? This question has been answered with a rather narrow outlook in psychological literature for years that is not harming and being fair. With the advance of research on recent decades, the understanding of morality has been quite expanded. Advances in different fields enabled a more comprehensive outlook to morality. Specifically, moral foundations theory (MFT) claimed the existence of other additional moral principles, such as loyalty, authority, and sanctity. The current research inquires lay understanding of morality with two qualitative studies. In the first study, we used MFT's specific moral foundation definitions to understand how they are perceived by participants. In the second study, we used a more unstructured way and tried to understand how they describe morality, moral person, and immoral person. Results confirmed the pluralistic outlook for the morality, along with some suggestions for the modifications and more concise operational definitions of moral foundations. Liberty, as a late addition was supported as a moral foundation along with broader aspects. The results extend MFT outlook with individual, societal and universal level moral principles and offers new research avenues such as moral emotions, virtues, and vices.

## Ahlaki Temellerin Ötesinde: Ne Varsa Onda Var Öz

Ahlak kavramının içeriği nedir? Bu soru yıllar boyu psikoloji literatüründe kısmen dar bir bakış açısı ile zarar vermemek ve adil olmak şeklinde yanıtlanmıştır. Geçtiğimiz 30 yılda yapılan araştırmalarla ahlak anlayışı oldukça genişlemiştir. Farklı alanlardaki ilerlemeler ahlaka daha kapsamlı bir bakış açısı getirilmesini sağlamıştır; özellikle ahlaki temeller kuramı (ATK), sadakat, otorite ve kutsallık gibi başka ahlaki ilkelerin de varlığını iddia etmiştir. Mevcut araştırma, iki niteliksel çalışmayla sıradan insanların ahlak anlayışını araştırmıştır. İlk çalışmada, ATK'nin ahlaki temel tanımlarını kullanarak katılımcılar tarafından nasıl algılandıklarını anlamayı amaçladık. İkinci çalışmada ise daha yapısal olmayan bir yol kullanarak ahlaki, ahlaklı insanı ve ahlaksız insanı nasıl tanımladıklarını anlamaya çalıştık. Bulgular çoğulcu ahlaki bakış açısını doğrulamıştır. Bununla beraber, ahlaki temellerde daha net işevuruk tanımların gereği ve çeşitli değişiklik önerileri dile getirilmiştir. Sonradan eklenen bir ahlaki kavram olan özgürlük, daha geniş yönleriyle birlikte ahlaki bir temel olarak da desteklenmiştir. Sonuçlar ATK'nin bakış açısını bireysel, toplumsal ve evrensel düzeydeki ahlaki ilkelerle genişletmekte ve ahlaki duygular, erdemler ve kötülükler gibi yeni araştırma alanları sunmaktadır.

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As a way to regulate social life and the world, morality has been associated with two concepts in the psychology literature: justice and care. Nevertheless, a wide array of subjects that are associated with morality to differing degrees have been frequently investigated especially within social psychology, such as altruism, prosocial behavior, aggressiveness, empathy, or prejudice (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). Over the years, with the developments and changes in different areas of science such as psychology, anthropology, or neuroscience; it has been suggested that a wider perspective is needed to understand morality fully. Factors like intuitions, emotions, or the function of morality in human life have become increasingly important for the field. Finally, the rise about morality resulted in having a place as a book chapter in the last edition Handbook of Social Psychology, for the first time (Chapter 22, Haidt, & Kesebir, 2010).

The flourishing of morality in 1990's and 2000's literature entailed mainly a top-down approach searching for the pillars of it in evolution, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience. Contrary to this approach, the current study focuses on the understanding of morality by lay people. What does morality mean for an ordinary person? Do they mean the same things as scholars do? We show by two qualitative studies that the top-down and bottom-up approaches to morality do not necessarily overlap; lay understanding of morality encompasses a wider understanding, some suggested pillars of morality do not readily appear in people's minds, different pillars are more integrated with each other as opposed to the claims by the literature, and there may be some new pillars not necessarily emphasized by the literature.

Throughout history, the tendency of human beings to shape the self, groups, or social life has been referred with various names, such as virtues, morality, or social conventions. The examination of this tendency can be traced back to ancient philosophers (e.g., Aristotle, 2009). While early examinations of morality have a broader outlook; within the psychological literature, for a long time, it has been understood rather by principles of justice.

The justice-based outlook toward morality stems from Kohlberg's (Power et al., 1989) work, in 1958. Based on the cognitive developmental theory of Piaget (1932 as cited in Kohlberg, 1973), Kohlberg claimed a developmental-moral trajectory common to all humans. He used different moral dilemmas with his participants; their moral reasoning in response to these moral dilemmas gave the way to stages of moral development. He determined three levels of moral development, each level having two stages. From the first to the last stage, a person's moral reasoning is liberated from the external standards and reaches universal abstract principles. In the early stages of moral development, avoiding punishment and getting rewards is the main motive for moral behavior. In the middle stages, the individual tries to be in line with expectations of the society and follows rules and authority. The need to maintain the approval of others turns to a genuine defense of rules. In the last stages, the individual may question the laws and the system, think of alternatives and fairer procedures than existing ones. Lastly, freely chosen moral principles related to conscience are adopted. These abstract principles are free from laws, and they are universal. Gilligan (1977, 1982) criticized Kohlberg due to overemphasis of justice and ignoring the role of care in moral judgments. Thus, she contributed to the understanding of morality by adding the principle of care and responsibility. She pointed out that there are elements of "care" in moral dilemmas of Kohlberg, such as being a victim of exploitation by society and hurt. She argued that nonviolence, care, and responsibility are equally important elements of morality. Later, the duality in moral principles has been accepted in Kohlberg's theory, too (Kohlberg et al., 1983 cited in Shweder & Haidt, 1993). Thus, the first two and by now, most widely known components of morality in psychological terms have been settled: fairness/ reciprocity (concerns about justice) and care (concerns about nurturance, welfare of people). Also, the widely supported belief is that moral judgment results after a long, conscious

deliberation, and reasoning. Although justice-care duality and reasoning-based outlook have been the domineering understanding of morality, alternative views about morality emerged in the beginning of 1990's, for instance Shweder and Haidt (1993) discussed alternative explanations regarding the origin of morality, such as intuition and other additional components of morality (such as maintaining group harmony).

Studies beginning from 1980's increasingly showed the role and importance of emotions, intuitions, and automatic processes. Human beings are not always rational as once thought and there are limits to conscious reasoning. For instance, people may not have an accurate and direct connection to the cause of their behavior (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977); the gut response is most likely to be affective and mental activity has an emotional component (Zajonc, 1980); our understanding of the world depends mostly on implicit cognition in an automatic manner (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Furthermore, the fact that brain damage in the emotional functioning related areas results in impairment in moral judgments (Damasio, 2006) and brain imaging techniques showed that moral judgments differ in emotional processing (Greene et al., 2001) indicated the neurological bases of the effect of emotion in moral judgments. These studies show that human mind has the tendency to evaluate, evaluation is a crucial and primary part of judgment (Zajonc, 1980; Haidt, 2001). Haidt (2001) argued for a gut response in an approval-disapproval nature regarding any stimulus.

The Social Intuitionist Model (SIM, Haidt, 2001) assumes that intuitions and emotions - not reasoning – play the critical role in moral judgments. Accordingly, as soon as we come across with a morality concerning situation, we have a gut feeling even if we may not be able to articulate it with our reasoning. SIM argues that researchers of rational moral reasoning do not emphasize emotional processes in moral judgments sufficiently (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008). Having a broader look, moral judgment takes place before moral reasoning and its articulation. Making an analogy with vision, Haidt and Joseph (2004) argue that just as we do not know the mechanism of vision, we know we see things; so too we may not know the reasons behind our judgment. But if it is asked, we will work on it to give an answer (whether it is correct or not, Nisbet & Wilson, 1977). In situations, where we cannot give a reason for our judgment and conclude with “it is just wrong”, moral dumbfounding occurs (Haidt, 2001).

The model sees moral intuitions at the heart of moral judgments. Accordingly, moral intuition is defined as “the sudden appearance in consciousness, or at the fringe of consciousness, of an evaluative feeling (like-dislike, good-bad) about the character or actions of a person, without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of search, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion” (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008). SIM does not exclude reasoning or rationalism; rather, according to the model, feelings and intuitions gain the upper hand over reasoning and reason (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008). According to the model, a moral judgment is intuitive in that it is effortless, automatic and does not require any conscious processing. It is a gut reaction to a moral stimulus. Only after an intuitive judgment is made, the person engages in moral reasoning. The person tries to support their judgment with relevant information. Therefore, this reasoning is post-hoc.

Another breakthrough was the inclusion of new principles in the field of morality. Anthropologically, three discourses of morality were offered (Shweder et al., 1997): ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. Each type of ethic has the function of regulating, protecting, and promoting different concepts. Ethics of autonomy regulates concepts such as harm, rights, and justice. The self is conceptualized in terms of individuality and distinctness. This type of ethics refers to the maximization of individuals' autonomy and protection of it. The principle is to protect the individual will, their rights and responsibilities. Shweder (1990) interpreted that Kohlberg and Gilligan's view of morality is just one type of moral discourse, i.e., ethics of autonomy. Ethics of community sees the world consisting of individuals as members of different groups and

institutions. So, the self is an actor in different settings only and it is conceptualized in terms of statuses and relationships. The regulative moral concepts are duty, hierarchy, and interdependency. The purpose of moral regulation is to protect the group; therefore, virtues such as obedience, loyalty, respect, or interdependence are associated with this type of ethics. Lastly, ethics of divinity relies on regulatory concepts related to sacred orders, natural order, tradition, sanctity, sin, and pollution. It refers to realization of one's spiritual nature. Divinity ethics is concerned with protecting the soul and the spiritual aspect of human or nature, from degradation.

Such a model paved the way to further enlargement of the morality research. The traditional moral emotions which are directed towards self (and therefore called self-conscious emotions) make the individual to accommodate oneself with the social world. These can be listed as shame, embarrassment, and guilt. Some studies argued for an additional group of emotions that are other-condemning and that are specific for each ethics discourses ("CAD triad hypothesis", Rozin et al., 1999). These are contempt, anger, and disgust, for violations of ethics of community, autonomy, and divinity, respectively. These emotions can be seen as signs of disapproval of others' actions. Other studies supported CAD triad hypothesis as well (Guerra & Giner-Sorolla, 2010). At the same time, emotions may be permeable between violations (Russell et al., 2013). The number of morality related emotions can be increased by the addition of other-suffering (e.g., compassion) and other-praising (e.g., gratitude, awe) emotions, or non-classified emotions such as serenity, or love (Haidt, 2003). From a different perspective, observers of moral or immoral acts experience certain emotions: behavior of villains elicit anger and disgust, behavior of heroes elicit inspiration and elevation, victims of immoral acts elicit sympathy and sadness, and lastly beneficiaries of moral acts elicit relief and happiness (Gray & Wegner, 2011).

Another influential anthropological model is relational models by Fiske (1991). According to this model, there are four main relational models people engage in. Communal sharing relations refers to the type of relations in which people are equivalent. Treatment to each other is the same, and the commonalities between members of the group are more important than differences. In authority ranking, the relationship is characterized by hierarchical relations. The relative standing of the people involved in the relation is asymmetrical. Equality matching relationships involve balanced, reciprocal, egalitarian exchanges. Last relationship model, market pricing involves proportionality and cost-benefit calculations. Based on this model, it is argued that morality is a type of relationship regulation (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Morality is the element to regulate and maintain the relations within four moral motivations: unity, hierarchy, equality, and proportionality.

These developments caused a renovation in the definition of morality: "Moral systems are interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make cooperative social life possible" (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010, p. 800). One that emphasizes the function of morality. The functions of morality were further operationalized as signaling (giving diagnostic information about the person), benefiting (benefiting others and creating welfare for others), binding (increasing group harmony, creating compliance with the group norms), and teaching (instructing norms through reinforcement and punishment mechanisms) (Carnes et al., 2022). Deriving from functionalistic definition, the self-specific function of morality was defined as self-restraint/moderation (protecting the self) and industriousness (advancing the self) (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013).

The functionalistic outlook to morality gave rise to an influential theory. Adopting a nativistic approach but also acknowledging the effect of learning (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Graham et al., 2013) on

morality, Haidt and his colleagues reviewed a number of works on morality, cultural and universal values. Mainly stemming from moral discourses (Shweder et al., 1997), Haidt and Joseph (2004) determined four moral foundations that are common to most of these works: suffering, hierarchy, reciprocity, and purity. Later hierarchy dimension has been further divided into two (as hierarchy and loyalty), constituting 5 moral foundations (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Below the explanation of each foundation is reported (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2012), with the previously used names for each foundation (foundations will be referred with the first part of their names hereafter).

Care/harm (previously called suffering / compassion, harm / care) concerns about suffering, nurturance, welfare of people and animals. Works on care generally involve altruism toward strangers, antisocial and prosocial behaviors. Virtues of kindness, compassion, nonviolence, and care are based on this foundation. It includes virtues of caring and compassion. Based on principles of justice, equity, and rights; fairness/cheating foundation (previously called reciprocity / fairness) involves making sure that people get what they deserve and do not get things they do not deserve. Reciprocity (including exchanges, reciprocal altruism), equality, proportionality, unfairness, cheating are important notions for this foundation. Loyalty/betrayal foundation (previously called ingroup / loyalty) refers to people's gregarious nature. People live in groups, they value these groups, and they sacrifice for their in-groups. Being loyal to the group is a virtue for this foundation. Loyalty related concerns are obligations of group membership, self-sacrifice, and being vigilant against betrayal. Authority/subversion foundation (previously called hierarchy / respect, respect for authority) stems from the fact that people live in groups and groups have a hierarchical structure in society. The hierarchical structure results in some virtues such as respect, obedience, and duty for the people in lower levels and magnanimity, fatherliness, wisdom, maintaining order and justice for the higher levels. Authority mainly refers to concerns about social order and the obligations of hierarchical relationships, such as obedience, respect, and the fulfillment of role-based duties. The last moral foundation, sanctity/degradation (previously called purity, purity / sanctity) is specific to human beings, and it refers to virtues regarding bodily and religious activities. It refers to concerns about physical and spiritual contagion, including virtues of chastity, wholesomeness, and control of desires. Although original triggers of emotion of disgust are smells, sights of pathogens, parasites, and the like; at present, they are out-group members or sexual deviants. Sanctity has an impurity avoidance function. This foundation is used by the religious right and spiritual left (environmental movements criticizing industrial capitalism, natural products: humanity's original nature, and protecting nature).

Sometimes, the five foundations have been grouped into two clusters of individualizing (care and fairness) and binding foundations (loyalty, authority, and sanctity) as well (e.g. Graham et al., 2009). Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) is flexible in that there may be other moral foundations such as efficiency / waste, ownership / theft, honesty / deception, or self-control (Challenges, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; for the last two also, Hofmann, Wisneski, Brandt, & Skitka, 2014) as long as they meet the five criteria for being a moral foundation: common concern in third-party normative judgments, automatic affective evaluation, culturally widespread, evidence of innate preparedness, and evolutionary adaptiveness (Graham et al., 2013). Among the new candidates, liberty / oppression is the most powerfully offered one (Challenges, 2009; Haidt, 2012; Iyer et al., 2012).

Liberty foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of living in groups with individuals who would, if given the chance, dominate, bully, and constrain others. Those who cannot respect group norms, who acted like bullies, were removed from the gene pool by being shunned, expelled, or killed. Feelings of being dominated or oppressed by a bully evokes the liberty foundation, therefore liberty supports

egalitarianism and antiauthoritarianism. Liberty foundation is specifically included in the theory mainly to understand the case of libertarians in the American political context (Iyer et al., 2012). Therefore, congruent with the political attitude of libertarians, it is thought that liberty consists of two components: economic - governmental and lifestyle liberty.

Mainly, MFT expanded and applied Shweder's moral discourses to social psychology. As a successor of SIM, MFT offers an evolutionary root for each foundation, original trigger, and modern triggers of them. It is believed that every foundation is underneath a virtue (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt, & Bjorklund, 2008); for instance, care foundation is conducive to kindness or fairness is conducive to justice. To measure moral foundations, methods such as content analysis (e.g., Haidt, & Graham, 2007; Graham et al., 2009), or questionnaires (e.g., Moral Foundations Questionnaire-MFQ, Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Moral Sacredness Questionnaire- MSQ, Graham, & Haidt, 2012) were used most frequently. MFQ has been translated in many languages (Questionnaires, 2013) and tested in different cultures (e.g., in Sweden; Nilsson, & Erlandsson, 2015, or in Turkey, both MFQ and MSQ by Yalçındağ et al., 2019). The theory does not rank foundations, nor does it give precedence to any foundation over the others. Also, the prevalence and acceptance of foundations are dependent on the culture in question.

MFT has been most effective in predicting the political attitudes in American political context. Findings indicate that political left (social democrats) values care and fairness, while political right (conservatives) values all five of them (e.g., Graham et al., 2009). The theory is also a vanguard in explaining the political position of libertarians whose major moral value is liberty (Iyer et al., 2012). It could also be a means to understand idealistic violence (Graham & Haidt, 2012) of extreme political groups.

Alternative explanations also prevail. For instance, Gray et al. (2012) asserted that all the immoral actions can be summarized in a dyadic relationship (one agent doing the harm, one patient suffering from the harm) in which the morality can be summarized by care/harm. The moral pluralism outlook maintained by the harm view, claiming that different types of harm create harm pluralism (Schein & Gray, 2015). Social domain theory maintains that there is a distinction between morality (rights, fairness, or welfare) and conventions (social rules that make cooperation possible and maintain harmony) (Turiel, 1983; 2017). From this point of view, binding foundations are rather conventions not moral principles. A specific criticism for one of the foundations, authority, asserts that the definition needs to be more precise and may not be a stable moral foundation (Frimer et al., 2014).

Fairness foundation was criticized for ignoring system-level inequalities or societal injustices (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013). Skurka et al. (2020) offered to include equity (equality of outcomes) and proportionality (effort and corresponding deservingness) among the moral foundations apart from fairness. Similarly, Meindl and colleagues (2019) asserted that equality based on people's needs and equity based on people's merits should be regarded to have a thorough measure for the fairness foundation. These suggestions eventually reflected on the new moral foundations questionnaire by dropping fairness items, adding proportionality and equality items (Atari et al., 2023); on the other hand, liberty foundation was dropped completely.

There are some modification suggestions for the questionnaire of MFT by other researchers, too. For instance, Harper and Rhodes (2021) claim that when liberty is also considered, all moral foundations can be boiled down to a 3-component model (traditionalism, compassion, and liberty). Zakharin and Bates (2021) reported that loyalty should be conceptualized as loyalty to clan (close others, such as family or community) and loyalty to one's country; authority should be conceptualized as the concern for the organization and

obedience; purity and sanctity should be thought as two distinct foundations. As for the sanctity-purity conundrum, Gray et al. (2023) reports that there are approximately 9 different meanings of it throughout the literature which would include maintaining natural order, respecting God, or self-control.

As stated above, there are also claims that there are some other possible foundations such as honesty or self-discipline (e.g., Hofmann et al., 2014). Not being a direct criticism of MFT, moral conviction program of research states that we need to take a bottom-up approach (rather than top-down) to understand morality because morality is a subjective experience (e.g., Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Moral motives model (MMM, Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013), as an alternative to MFT, connects morality to self-regulation and motivation at self, interpersonal and societal levels. Accordingly, moral motives are either approach or avoidance oriented which builds proscriptive and prescriptive morality (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; 2016). When focusing on what not to do, moral motives are self-restraint, not harming other(s) and maintaining social order, at the self, interpersonal and group level, respectively. When focusing on what to do for the good, it is industriousness, helping/ fairness, and social justice respectively for different levels.

In sum, morality has many aspects to be discussed and the flourishing of the area will continue to be so. In all this dynamism, when we look at morality by centering the theory of moral foundations, how can we reconcile the perception of ordinary people with the literature? How does the lay person perceive morality? Adopting the pluralistic and functionalistic outlook towards morality and with the intuitive primacy and the importance of people's understanding of good or bad in mind, we investigated the representation of morality.

We conducted two qualitative studies. The first study aimed to understand the conceptualization of the moral foundations as determined by the MFT. What is the representation of each moral foundation in people's minds? Are there any differences between scholarly defined moral foundations and lay people's understanding of them? To what extent are these moral foundations considered moral? Study 1 aimed to explore the answers to these questions. We expected that the perception of moral foundations is broader as compared to theoretical definitions. That is, participants' understanding of moral foundations would contain theoretical notions, their own morality definition, and non-moral units as well. Respondents' association of authority with morality would be weaker as compared to other moral foundations. The second study was more open-ended as it asked respondents' understanding of morality without referring to any theory. It looked for an answer related to the representation of morality, moral and immoral person in lay people's minds, together with an example of immoral act to materialize the concept more. It also explored the level of consistency between concepts of morality, moral person, and immoral person. Another aim of the study was to determine the similarities and differences of mental representations of morality with the literature, particularly with MFT. It was expected that notions of morality, moral person and immoral person would be parallel to each other. It is possible that the expressions of participants may not be in complete congruence with the literature. They may stress more abstract and general notions of honesty, propriety, or politeness more. It was expected that notions of MFT related to care, fairness, and religion will be indicated as morality elements. On the other hand, group-based elements of morality such as loyalty to one's nation, treason or subversion may not be indicated.

### Study 1

The first study aimed to a) explore the mental representation of moral foundations as defined by *moral foundations theory* (henceforth definition), and b) as defined by the participants *themselves* (henceforth concept) c) compare these two conceptualizations), d) to obtain preliminary and direct information about the extent to which these foundations are seen related to morality.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 47 participants, four of them did not answer demographic questions. As for 43 respondents (28 female, 15 male), age ranged between 22 and 61 ( $M = 35.93$ ,  $SD = 8.25$ ). Education level ranged between primary school and graduate degree, with 39 respondents being at least university graduates. They were residing in 10 different cities with Ankara being the most frequent one. They reported 29 different occupations. The political self-positioning on a 9-point scale (1= left, 5 = center, and 9 = right) yielded a positively skewed distribution, with  $M = 3.53$  ( $SD = 1.42$ ). Males were more right-leaning than females ( $r = .35$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $M_{\text{Female}} = 3.18$ ,  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.20$ ).

### *Measurement Devices and Process*

Ethical approval was obtained by the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University. For the definition measure, participants were given descriptions of each moral foundation, including liberty (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2007, Iyer et al., 2012)<sup>3</sup>. They were asked to write at most 5 words the definitions primed. The definitions can be found in Online Supplement. Secondly, for the concept measure, respondents were asked the specific words and adjectives they would use to define each concept (independent of the definition). They were free to use the words in paragraphs. Next, having read the definitions twice, participants rated the extent to which they relate each definition to the morality. Lastly, participants answered demographical questions. An online data collection web site was used.

## Results and Discussion

### *Qualitative Analysis*

The data were saved and analyzed in MAXQDA. Consistent with the instruction, the answers of the participants mostly consisted of words only. Participants rarely formed sentences or made explanations. The data were coded according to the smallest meaningful units, or thematic units, and then according to the categories. A thematic unit consists of the words that are articulated once or repeated more than once, that are synonyms or whose meanings are as close as possible, articulated with varying frequencies. In other words, thematic units are defined as narrow as possible. Each thematic unit was recorded in terms of number of respondents and frequency of articulation. As the answers were composed of words or short explanations, most of time the number of people and articulation times were the same. After all the thematic units were determined, the data were checked for any erroneous, conflicting, or redundant coding, changes were made where necessary. In the second step, the thematic units were gathered, and categories were formed. A category is a higher order unit of thematic units and consisted of thematic units a) whose meaning is semantically close, b) which express the same notion, c) which gained an extra meaning within the category context d) which has a close meaning –to the category information- in the relevant subject’s answers. In other words, categories are more abstract units. Also, for most of the cases, hierarchical (higher-level) categories were formed. Each

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout data collection, care has been translated as “ilgi, özen” but later on, “(sosyal) bakım, ilgi, özen” has been decided to be more suitable. Similarly, fairness has been translated as “adalet”, however “adalet” is more suitable for justice and “hakkaniyet” is more suitable for fairness.



category was given a name according to a) the mostly used thematic unit/s (thematic unit/s with highest frequencies) or b) the meaning of the category in general. The words the respondents used, thematic units and categories were carefully investigated in terms of their dictionary meanings. Some of the thematic units were used in two or three categories due to their multiple meanings and/or due to their coherence with the context of the category. Such cases were denoted with an asterisk in the related figures and tables in the online supplement. Lastly, there were some thematic units that did not form a category. Such units were depicted under the title of “ungrouped”.

For the interrater reliability, first coder (first author) familiarized another psychologist with the research and data. Then, they independently coded the answers to the first (definition) and second (concept) parts of the “Care” question. In other words, they independently generated codes for the sample data. Interrater agreement has been tested using “code use” (generating the same codes) and “code agreement” (coding the same segments of the data with the same code) features of MAXQDA for inter-coder reliability. For the answers to the definition of care, the results indicated that the coders used the same codes up to 93%. The different codes mostly stemmed from the fact that one coder used “I do not agree with the definition” code for a group of responses, while the other coder used some additional codes such as “do not agree”, “meaningless”, or “limited” for the same answers. The code agreement was 80%. For the answers related to the concept of care, the results indicated that the coders used the same codes up to 90%. The different codes mostly stemmed from the fact that 4 answers were represented with different codes by different coders. The codes on the other hand, mostly represent the same meaning indicating a redundant coding on the part of one of the coders. For instance, answers such as “to love”, “full of love” was coded with “love” by one coder, “to love” and “full of love” by a second coder. The code agreement was 70%. For both questions, disagreements were determined, discussed, and resolved. All the thematic units, their frequency tables and category maps are presented in the Online Supplement.

### ***On the Perception of Moral Foundations***

Congruence of the answers with the literature and some points the outside the regular description of foundations were summarized below. We also denoted sample responses in quotation marks and in Table 1.

The definition and conception of care were mostly in line with the understanding of the MFT. Different from the theory, feeling “pity” (mercy), and “tyranny” (an oppressive authority) were emphasized with the definition. The theoretical definition does not emphasize the root of cruelty, although the reaction to the brutality is the focus of care foundation. However, in the present study, respondents also emphasized one source of cruelty as tyranny. This would create an overlap with the liberty foundation as well. The conception of care stressed “positive relations” with the social environment, “paying attention and being aware”. Also, more general characteristics of care were noted, such as being neat. This indicates that the general perception of care includes moral as well as non-moral notions, therefore it is quite broad.

Both definition and conception of fairness were broader than the MFT definition. Both included “honesty” and “equality” as strong factors. Also, concepts related to law and judiciary were perceived within the fairness context. Additionally, the conception included fairness as an “ideal”, “kindness”, “empathy”, “freedom”, “sincerity”, “transparency”, “essence of humanity”, and “expressing oneself”. Such an outlook indicates the fundamental importance of the concept for the respondents. They placed it as a “basis of humanity”, both “to be a human” and “to live humanly”. The “care over others”, “genuineness” or “empathy” emerged as components of fairness. Theoretically, on the other hand, these notions are associated with care foundation, therefore it can be said that Harper and Rhodes’s (2021) argument that care and fairness constitute

one foundation (compassion) is reflected here, too. Lastly, fairness was one of the two foundations where the words “moral” and “morality” were thematic units. So, semantically fairness and morality seem to be close to each other which also would explain why for a long-time morality has been understood in terms of fairness (e.g., Power et al., 1989). As noted previously, we used “adalet” (justice) in Turkish; it is possible that if “hakkaniyet” (fairness) had been used, more answers related to reciprocity (the emphasis of MFT) would have been obtained.

Table 1  
*Excerpts from Respondents' Answers to Each Moral Foundation*

Foundation	Definition	Concept
Care	The value and compassion you feel for others (F, 26, Teacher). I think this is not the definition of care, but selfishness (No demographic info.).	Single out someone from others (F, 22, Doctor). Affection shown genuinely (F, 23, Teacher). The essence of being a human. Mindfulness and being attentive is the balance of life (No demographic information). Doing the job / fulfilling the duty properly (M, 30, Academic)
Fairness	Authority (somehow this was the first thing I could think) (F, 31, Doctor). The protection of individual from the state (F, 30, public employee). Not being able to bear to unfairness (F, 41, Dentist).	Not being sneakiness. Perceiving people equal (M, 29, Psychologist/police officer). In a social state, the system that defends individuals' rights and freedoms equally (M, 28, Engineer). One of the basic characteristics of humanity, a reaction developing with conscience (F, 23, Teacher). Law should occur to me, but it does not (F, 48, Finance).
Loyalty	The respect one has for oneself and for the group she/ he is in (F, 61, Teacher). Fanaticism! The definition you made above is the definition of identity by fanatics. No place for intermediate colors. No bearing for “defective”. Fascism (No demographic information).	Being able to give up own choices (M, 41, Academician). Giving the priority to the group (F, 22, Doctor). Having a reliable, problem free life (F, 25, Psychologist).
Authority	The fools' effort to guide you (M, 34, Sales Manager). Taking the responsibilities of the position and reciprocal respect and trust in every level (F, 61, Teacher). The authority should have the mastery of knowledge and justice... Otherwise it is not a concept to respect for (F, 48, Finance).	(Respect for authority is) A reaction to display as long as the authority respects for the individual freedoms (F, 23, Teacher). (Respect for authority) symbolizes the trust to individuals and institutions who are supposed to preserve public order, and if the trust is lost, revolt to this authority may be in question (F, 25, Public Relations)
Sanctity	Is not criticized, untouchable (F, 49, Retired). Tales of religion and slavery (F, 48, Finance).	Endeavor for being a kind person (F, 30, Public employee). Searching for the truth inside rather than outside (M, 41, Engineer/Artist). Being able to be liberated from time, being reset (M, 29, Psychologist, Police officer). The innocence one felt within the self (F, 22, Doctor). The importance of purity of the thought rather than the body (F, 42, Sales specialist).
Liberty	Eliminating inequality (M, 33, Author). Oppressed public (F, 22, Doctor). The inevitable result of thought (F, 25, Public Relations).	(Liberty is) is the capacity the self-actualize and live as one is, the state of existence of chances related to this. Same is true for societies (No demographic information). Being fearless in a state of trust (F, 42, Sales specialist). Not being indebted, not relying on the world (M, 29, Psychologist, police officer).

Note. In parentheses sex, age and occupation were indicated.

MFT refers to loyalty as a moral foundation, particularly within the context of being a traitor and betrayal as the abuse of loyalty. However, the respondents referred to a different kind of abuse in loyalty thematic units: oppressive regimes and obedience. Also, submissiveness, not being able to develop as an individual and a society, feeling of “fear” were emphasized. In terms of definition of loyalty, participants listed a number of contexts in which loyalty would matter: “family”, “marriage”, “identity”, “friendship”, “nation”. This would be in line with the Zakharin and Bates' (2021) assertion that loyalty is indeed of two kinds: clans and country. When it comes to the concept of loyalty, respondents stated an apparent distinction between two types of loyalty: restricting and optimum. While the restricting loyalty was seen as “slavery”, oppression and the like, an optimum loyalty included “negotiable obedience” where the individual does not lose his/her freewill. It was a pure genuine loyalty. Respondents also enlarged loyalty so as to include “loyalty to one's past or to one's faith”. They attributed some functions to loyalty such as providing protective environment that corresponds to a “secure environment” and “social support”. Additionally, “compromise” between parties for wishes and demands, having “understandings” were parts of loyalty.

MFT's emphasis in counting authority as a moral foundation is on the function of providing order, therefore vices related to authority are subversion of a legitimate authority and causing chaos in public. Acceptance of hierarchical relations or loyalty to authority figures are within the moral virtues related to authority foundation. On the other hand, in the present study, participants' emphasis was on the misuse of authority by the authority figures. If the authority in question is a person, respondents acknowledged the "loyalty to the leader". The additional attitudes towards authority that were not considered by MFT were "deindividuation" (blind obedience), "taking the authority's side" (pro-power), "subversiveness", and "questioning the authority". Respondents defined some conditions under which authority is respected for ("respect cannot be demanded; it should be deserved"). The misuse of authority such as "slavery" and "restriction of liberties" were emphasized throughout the answers. On the other hand, when the respondents explained their own view of authority, they admitted the functions of authority such as providing "peace", "fairness", or the feeling of "unity". They also described an optimum authority; one that does not use "weapons", "persuades with intellect and knowledge", and has "limits" and rules, "respects for individual liberties". The reciprocal relation between authority and follower relies on respect, honesty, loyalty, or empathy. Some respondents referred to "criticizing authority when necessary", "using an appropriate language". Some other participants found respect for authority totally "unnecessary" and "wrong". They stressed the misuse of authority such as "restricting liberties", "bullying", or "violence". Also, obedience, losing individuality, not questioning was associated with authority.

Basically, there were similarities between loyalty and authority especially when talking about restricting and optimum types of both. This may indicate how hierarchy is perceived. Participants were inclined to see authority-follower relations in loyalty, equal relations, and a questioning attitude in authority. Another point related to loyalty and authority was that *although definitions of moral foundations do not state and although not asked*, participants provided some answers related to restricting effects of both. We believe, this reactive attitude to loyalty and authority converges with the state of liberty as a candidate moral foundation. Respondents were sensitive about their liberty physically, mentally, and psychologically. Their acceptance of loyalty and authority as moral foundations subjected to the condition of existence of liberty. They also defined some new vices related to loyalty and authority, such as "utilization", "self-interest / self-seeking" (abusing loyalty), "deindividuation", and "taking the side of the powerful" (being pro-power). For both foundations, self-protective and self-advancement motives (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013) emphasized as well, although theoretically these are binding foundations.

Both the definition and conception of sanctity / purity reminded quite various and many things to participants. While the scholarly definition includes body, nature and religion within this foundation, participants included "children", "justice", "family", "homeland", "traditions", and "self" as well. MFT asserts that common sacred things have the function to facilitate common social life (Graham & Haidt, 2012). In other words, each moral foundation is a sacred foundation. In the present study, different bases of sanctity gave clues about what people think sacred. Another point about the perception of sanctity / purity was that it was the second foundations that was associated with words such as "moral", or "morality" explicitly. Lastly, the description of sanctity included factors related to mysticism, perfect complete being described by "mysticism", "transcendence", "perfection", and "psychological power". The variety of free associations with this concept overlaps with Gray et al.'s (2023) detection that purity has various meanings and therefore it is difficult to measure with such a concept offered by MFT. Indeed, as Gray and colleagues mentioned, qualitative analysis of both definition and conception converged on different bases of sanctity / purity: body, self, nature, religion, child, home/family, nature, homeland, body morality, or justice.

The liberty foundation refers to reaction to dominating, bullying, or constraining social agents, or authorities within the MFT context. The study on the other hand, proved a wider understanding as it was the case with the other foundations. There were traces of liberty at different levels: individual, societal, and non-human. Secondly, liberty and fairness were quite related to each other, as they both referred to “equality” and “rights”. Additionally, the excess of liberty was seen as “separateness” and “being away from society”. Lastly, participants acknowledged that liberty does require “rules”, “limits”, and “discipline”.

In general, the perception of each moral foundation was in line with the theory and MFT words extracted by Graham et al. (2009). Additionally, for all foundations the mental representation was broader than the scholarly definition; the understanding about these concepts contained both moral and non-moral elements. Similarly, fairness and care were closer as compared to scholarly definitions, they shared various common elements in people’s minds. The perception of loyalty and authority was quite close, largely overlapping each other. As one part of loyalty was closely associated with obedience to authority, another part was associated with care. The immorality about authority was tyranny contrary to the emphasis of subversion by the theory. Lastly, liberty was vital especially at societal and individual basis and needs to be investigated further.

### *Emotions, Feelings & Senses*

Having a comprehensive outlook and reviewing emotions, feelings, senses, and words used with “to feel” in Turkish, these categories were summarized and depicted together in Table 2.

Table 2  
*The n and Frequency of Thematic Units Related to Emotions, Feelings and Senses*

Turkish	English	Care D/C	Fairness D/C	Loyalty D/C	Authority D/C	Sanctity D/C	Liberty D/C
Merhamet, acıma	Feeling of pity	12,12/ -				- /1,1	
Sevgi, saf sevgi	Affection, Pure love	12,12/20,20*	1,1/ -	3,3/4,4		2,2/2,2*	- /1,1
Aşk	Love	1,1/ -		- /1,1		- /1,1	
Şefkat	Compassion	11,11/8,8					
Aile sevgisi	Family love					1,1/-	
Özsevgi	Self-love		1,1/ -				
Saygı duyma (kendine, başkalarına)	Respect (for others and oneself)	- /2,2	2,2/ -	- /1,1	3,3/3,3*	- /1,1	3,4/4,5
Özsaygı	Self-respect (self-esteem)		1,1/ -	1,1/ -			
Saygılı	Respectful		- /2,2				
Gruba saygı	Respect for the group			1,1/ -			
Güce saygı	Respect for the power				- /1,1		
Merak	Curiosity	- /1,1					
Mutlu(luk)	Happy(iness)	- /1,1	- /1,1			1,1/ -	1,1/1,1
Güvenilirlik	Trustworthiness		7,7/ - *				
Güven(li)	Reliable (ity)		- /1,1	3,3/7,7*	1,1/1,1		1,1/1,1
Emin	Confident			1,1/ -			
Onur / Şeref	Honor		1,1/ -	1,1 /1,1			
Umut (lu)	Hope (ful)		1,1/ -				- /1,1
Sükûnet	Serenity		- /1,1				
Huzur	Composure		- /1,1			- /1,1	- /2,2
Rahatlık	Relaxation						2,4/2,2*
Korkusuzluk	Fearlessness						- /3,3
Korku	Fear			1,1/ -	1,1/3,3	- /1,1	
Öfke	Anger				1,1/ -		
Hayranlık	Awe				- /1,1		
İğrenme	Disgust					1,1/ -	

D/C: Definition/ Conception. \* denotes the most frequent item, - denotes the absence of the thematic unit or category related to moral foundation.

Emotions related to care were compassion and affection like. Pity, affection, and pure love were the important feelings for care. On the other hand, compassion and curiosity were distinguishing care from other foundations. Fairness seemed to be associated with the widest range of feelings from affection to trust, from honor to composure. Self-love, hope, and serenity were specific to fairness, mostly. Trustworthiness was heavily emphasized among others. Loyalty was associated with reliability and affection. Respect for the group was the loyalty specific item. Here too, it was apparent that loyalty and care overlapped to some extent. Authority seemed to have the narrowest range of feelings. It was related to respect and fear, mostly. Respect for the power, awe and anger were specific to authority. Emotions associated with sanctity were mostly love and affection. Sanctity specific emotions were family love and disgust. Contrary to the literature, sanctity was only slightly associated with disgust (as one person mentioned it only once). The wide understanding of sanctity approximated it with affection, fear, and composure. Liberty was specifically associated with respect, composure, relaxation, and fearlessness. Relaxation and fearlessness were liberty-specific items. Thinking that liberty emerges where there is confrontation (with bullies, or tyranny), it is only natural to expect fearlessness, heroism, or courage to be related with liberty. Composure and hope were shared by fairness and liberty. Overall, most frequently cited items were love, pure love, affection, respect, happiness, reliability / trust, and fear (fearfulness, fearlessness). Love and respect were the most commonly articulated items, across moral foundations. While we can say that the moral emotions literature (e.g., Gray & Wegner, 2011; Haidt, 2003) and respondents' free association overlapped to a great extent, their answers did not include self-conscious emotions (e.g., guilt and shame). It is also evident that in respondents' mind, the emotions are not specific to certain moral foundations, but they are permeable (Russel et al., 2013).

### ***Common Notions / Recurring Units Across the Foundations***

Throughout the answers to twelve questions (answers related to definition and conception of six foundations), there have been recurring notions gaining the same, a slightly or totally different meaning within the specific framework. In other words, these themes have been repeated for different reasons or in different contexts. For instance, the notion of self or essence appeared under all foundations. In care, the individual who shows care has respect for oneself and others; care is the essence of humanity. In fairness, an unfair person is selfish. Fairness is to express oneself, to be at peace with oneself, protecting oneself. In loyalty, being loyal is related to our extended self. At the same time, it is giving up your own choices and compromising. Optimum loyalty provides a setting where individuals express themselves. In authority, a result of commitment to the authority is giving up yourself, being pacified. In sanctity, the self is one of the sacred bases. Searching for oneself, trying to be oneself is sacred. Sanctity is the feeling of innocence inside. Lastly, liberty involves self. Also, self/individual is a level of liberty. Liberty is to express oneself, self-actualization, self-confidence, staying authentic. Recurring notions may be an indication that there are common concerns for different foundations, as well as unique concerns. The common concerns appear as the basic mechanisms behind different moral concerns. As they gain different meanings in different contexts, most of them are fuzzy and broad in description. The most common units are depicted in Online Supplement.

### ***The Extent to Which Foundations Are Perceived Moral***

Participants were asked to rate the relevance of each moral foundation's definition to morality (see Table 3). Accordingly, the definition of fairness was most closely related to morality ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ) and respect for authority was least related to morality ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ). None of the moral foundations had a significant relationship with political view (there was a positive trend for sanctity, though). The interrelations between foundations indicated that care – liberty, care – fairness, and fairness – loyalty had relatively stronger relations with each other. Also, loyalty, authority, and sanctity were interrelated. This

pattern of correlations was in line with the individualizing-binding conceptualization of moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009). On the other hand, liberty was positively related to authority as well indicating that the perceptions of these two foundations as suitable for morality is consistent to some extent. Although theoretically liberty should be either negatively related or not related to authority (e.g., Yalçındağ et al., 2019), the descriptions we provided for liberty and authority might have found a common ground, such that both touch upon dysfunctional authorities.

Table 3

*Correlations among Moral Foundations*

Variables	Care	Fairness	Loyalty	Authority	Sanctity	Liberty	Pol. View
Care	5.04 (1.95)	.36*	-.02	.19	-.13	.58***	.00
Fairness		5.72 (1.74)	.38*	.21	.12	.27†	.06
Loyalty			4.49 (1.79)	.33*	.50***	.05	.14
Authority				2.98 (1.82)	.39**	.35*	.23
Sanctity					4.86 (2.03)	-.01	.26†
Liberty						4.44 (2.16)	-.11
Pol. View							3.54 (1.42)

Note. Means and standard deviations are shown on the diagonal. †  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the perception related to moral foundation as defined by MFT and by the participants. Also, the extent to which each moral foundation is perceived to be moral was asked. The results indicate that the perception of each foundation was much broader than the theoretical definition of that foundation. Moreover, the close examination of the qualitative analysis indicated that the mental representations of moral foundations overlapped with each other considerably. Permeability among foundations seems to be possible especially when we take common notions into account. Especially, care and loyalty, loyalty and authority, and liberty and fairness were close. Some common notions revealed the source of the similarity among foundations. Each notion gained a new meaning within each foundation; therefore, they are critical understanding the perception of morality in general. The quantitative analysis on the other hand showed that fairness was perceived as most moral and authority was perceived as the least moral, among moral foundations.

## Study 2

The second study aimed to a) explore the mental representation of morality via open-ended questions and b) compare the similarities and differences of the representations with the conceptualization in the literature.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 41 (20 females, 18 males, 3 not specified) participants with 24 different occupations. Their age ranged between 18 – 68, most of them were between 20 and 40 ( $M = 34.40$ ,  $SD =$

11.00). Participants were residents of 10 different cities of Turkey; most of them are from Ankara and İstanbul (68.40%). The education ranged between literate to graduate education, with 32 (84.10%) of the respondents being at least high school graduates.

### ***Measurement Device***

Participants answered four questions: a) what is morality in your opinion, what comes to your mind when you hear the word “morality”, b) what comes to your mind when you hear “moral person”, what are the adjectives that can describe a moral person, and c) how would you describe a person who is immoral and behaves wrongly? The fourth question asked them to d) give an example of an immoral act either they know, witnessed, or heard of. Demographic questions (sex, age, education, city, occupation) were asked at the end.

### ***Measurement Process***

Following the ethical approval by the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University, 29 participants were approached, informed about the study and the confidentiality. Question sheets were given in a closed envelope. Twelve participants answered the questions online via the online survey service of the university. Some participants preferred not to answer some of the questions; nevertheless, they were not excluded from the analysis. At the end, they were given brief information about the purpose of the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

The analysis plan was the same as Study 1. The answers of the participants mostly consisted of one to three words (adjectives) or short explanations. Each thematic unit was recorded in terms of number of respondents and frequency of articulation. For instance, the thematic unit “dürüst [honest] (15, 16)” of Moral Person (Question-2) consisted of words such as “dürüst” (honest) and “çevresine dürüst” (honest to their social environment), “dürüstçe konuşan” (someone who speaks honestly) and articulated by 15 participants, 16 times. To give an example of a category, “Dürüst” (Honest), a category of Moral Person, consists of the following thematic units: dürüst, doğru, düzgün, güvenilir, adil, namuslu, yalansız, saptırmadan, açıksözlüce, temiz (honest, right, righteous, trustworthy, fair, upright/decent, without lying, without twisting words, forthright, clean, respectively).

For the interrater reliability, similar to Study 1, first coder (first author) familiarized another psychologist with the research and data. Then, they independently coded the answers to the “Moral Person”. The results indicated that the coders used the same codes up to 93%. The code agreement was 60%. One respondent provided a definition of morality instead of moral person. The main disagreement stemmed from the fact that one coder did not include this response in the analysis, the other did. The rest of the disagreements were minor. All the thematic units, their frequency tables and category maps are presented in the Online Supplement.

### ***Understanding of Morality, Moral Person, Immoral Person, and Immoral Acts***

The outlook to morality, moral and immoral persons were consistent, overall. Table 4 summarizes the categories that were formed under four questions. Firstly, honesty was a strong and common theme in morality; for instance, “(Morality is) to keep the relations with oneself and others within the frame of honesty and sincerity” (F, 38, Janitor). “(Morality is) without criticizing others’ morality; living and acting, as one believes right” (F, 26, Doctor). It was also strong as a characteristic in moral person (honest) and immoral person

(dishonest). Adjectives such as “honest”, “right”, “trustworthy”, “without lying/without twisting words/forthright”, “not honest”, “liar”, “fraud” was frequently used to describe moral (and immoral) persons. Also, respondents gave some example behaviors about not being honest: “using a material that has been entrusted to you, for your own or others’ purposes, rather than preserving it” (41, M, Public Sector Employee). In sum, honesty emerged as a strong notion and as an additional candidate foundation on its own. Although the link between honesty and morality has long been evident (e.g., Hilbig et al., 2014), there are only some views (Iyer, 2010) and preliminary studies (Hofmann et al., 2014) that support honesty as an additional foundation.

Table 4  
*Common Themes Emerged Across Categories of Four Questions*

Theme	Categories Across Four Questions			
	Q1- Morality	Q2- Moral Person	Q3- Immoral Person	Q4- Immorality Example
Honesty	Honesty	Honest	Not being honest	Not being honest
Manners	To know manners	Graceful, urbane, well-mannered Wise	Does not behave with propriety	Fitting in the society, Immoral behaviors women face
Kindness	Goodness	Good, kind Accepting, not contemptuous Humane, caring	Evil, malevolent Inhumane, hurtful Self-interested (self-seeking)	-
Freedom and Respect	Respect (for oneself and others) Freedom	Respecting self and others	Unfair Gossiper	Immoral behaviors women face Violation of rights Harming One’s reputation
Sanctity	Sanctity	Honorable (upright)	Vileness Does not obey moral principles	-
Loyalty	Loyalty	Honest	Not being honest	Not being honest
Social Integration	-	Beloved, socially integrated	Separated, disconnected Ostracized, not integrated, separated	-
Conscience	-	Conscientious	Conscienceless, does not feel shame or guilt Antisocial	Contentment with immoral behaviors

Secondly, participants mentioned that morality is a set of rules; it is to know how to behave. As described by two interviewees “it is a societal supervisory mechanism developed in long years and supervises people’s lives” (M, 24, Student); “concept/concepts that show/s what is good and right and that changes –or will be able to change- person-to-person, society-to-society” (No demographic information). These notions were represented in thematic units such as “graceful”, “wise”, “beautiful (someone who thinks, speaks, acts beautifully)”, “considerate”, and as “not behaving with propriety”, “not knowing any manners or how to talk in society”, “ugly”, and “rude” in the answers to moral and immoral person, respectively. One participant stated that individuals who are not fit in the society they live in is an example of immoral behavior such that, “an individual criticizing a fascist state or a person defending monarchy in a democratic nation” (24, M, Student). Similarly, examples of immoral behaviors that women face (described below in more detail) can be regarded as under the “manners” category.



The third common notion was kindness (goodness). It is characterized by goodness, kindness, not being mean and described as “it is good, beautiful attributes (M, 29, Worker at Customs). It is internalizing/adopting the manner to treat others beautifully, in the society” (F, 24, Homemaker). A moral person was described as “kind, good”, “helpful”, “humane”, “understanding”, “empathetic”, “tolerant” whereas an immoral person was described as “evil”, “inhumane”, “self-interested” (self-seeking), “hurtful”, “displaying trouble causing behaviors”, “cruel” and “unloving”.

When asked about the im/moral person, participants mentioned the importance of “being socially integrated”, “beneficial for the society”, “warm”, and a “beloved” member of the society. They also associated “being ostracized”, “not welcomed”, “being unresponsive to the environment”, “maverick” and “vagabond” with immorality. This theme, which we named as social integration, did not emerge in the definition of morality, directly. Goodness and manners were close to having positive social relations however they were not direct correspondences. The fact that such categories did not come up in the morality question may be due to the more abstract nature of the question. It may be easier to picture a moral / immoral person than imagine what morality is. Nevertheless, this emphasis indicates that living harmoniously in groups is one of the keys of morality in participants’ opinion. This is in accordance with binding function of morality stressed especially by MFT (e.g., Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) or other functionalist accounts of morality (e.g., Carnes et al., 2022). On the other hand, it can be argued that all three notions (manners, goodness, social integration) are social conventions rather than morality (Turiel, 1983). The incongruity here can be reconciled by Skitka and colleagues’ (2021) approach to morality: it is possible that morality is a matter of degree, rather than kind.

Another common theme was freedom and respect (for others and oneself). This theme was closely related to rights as well, as participants explained freedom within a “rights” framework. Morality involved freedom such as “rights”, “justice”, “liberties”, “not judging others”; “morality is not to invade others’ rights, privacy, and life standards and to protect one’s benefits (M, 36, TV Programmer). (Morality is) justice, respect for freedom and rights people have on each other” (F, 26, Teacher). Responses revolving around “respecting others and oneself”, “having high self-esteem”, “being respectful” were considered under this theme: “I think of self-esteem (self-respect), I think one who is self-loving and has self-esteem is moral” (M, 33, Export Specialist). On the other hand, the representation of immoral person was described as “not being fair”, “denying rights of others”, “destroying relationships” and “gossiper”. “Slander”, “mobbing”, “nepotism”, “taking advantage of people who are in need”, “play people off against each other” were mentioned, too. When it comes to examples of immoral behavior, violation of others’ rights or getting unfair advantage stood out. One participant explained it “doing one’s job not with devotion but perfunctorily, thinking: “this is even too much”. For instance, when dusting, instead of dusting everything on the table, wiping carelessly part of the table. Even if the owner of the table is not aware of it, I don’t know, how such a person does not feel guilt. I cannot do that”. (F, 38, Janitor). “Demanding precedence because of solely having a significant other who has power. I see every single day” (F, 26, Doctor). “In work settings, in hierarchical relations, treating the novice badly. Making the novice do all the work. Making the novice do all your own work or duties” (F, 26, Doctor).

The examples of immoral behaviors revealed an unexpected bonus category as well: immoral behaviors that women face. Example themes were related to being female as an oppressed group of society, therefore we think that these examples can be regarded under “freedom and respect”. These behaviors were sexual harassment, rape, trying to count the crime of rape excusable, denying woman’s rights. Two examples were as follows: “Those harassing young (teenage) girls. For instance, I myself experienced something like this. I was eating ice cream and walking, I was 15. That man used very dirty words. I have never eaten ice cream outside anymore. I think men like him are immoral” (F, 56, Homemaker). “There are many examples

of immoral behaviors around us. But I would like to tell something I witnessed and feel sorry for. Recently, my neighbor's husband died. She is only 4 months pregnant. But that man who is supposed to be her husband's father wants all of his son's property as well as his wage. She is in such a miserable state; she is so miserable that what kind of a person who has conscience, who has morals wants his daughter-in-law to be in such a state?" (F, Worker, 41).

The least frequent common notions were sanctity and loyalty. Morality entailed "religion", "cleanliness", and "honor"/ "chastity": "Morality = religion (M, 39, Public Sector Employee). It (Morality) is purity in terms of body, such as belonging to one person" (F, 38, Janitor). Moral person was seen honorable, clean, and virtuous. On the contrary, an immoral person was "dishonorable", "indecent", "vile", and "having low self-control one one's desires". Lastly, the theme loyalty took place as "honesty", "loyalty", and "reliability" under the concept of morality. With a loyalty theme, a moral person was described as "honest" and "trustworthy", on the other hand an immoral person was described as "dishonest", "abusing others' trust". Some honesty and dishonesty categories were used for honesty theme, too; nevertheless, this kind of a connection emphasized loyalty, in terms of especially trustworthiness in relations.

Another weaker theme was conscience. Being "conscientious" / "conscienceless", reference to "shame" or "guilt", or being "antisocial" appeared as characteristics of an individual. Participants did not articulate conscience itself as an element of morality. Contentment with immoral behaviors such as "narrating an immoral behavior comfortably", "being reckless when behaving immorally towards women", and "trying to count the crime of rape excusable" were examples.

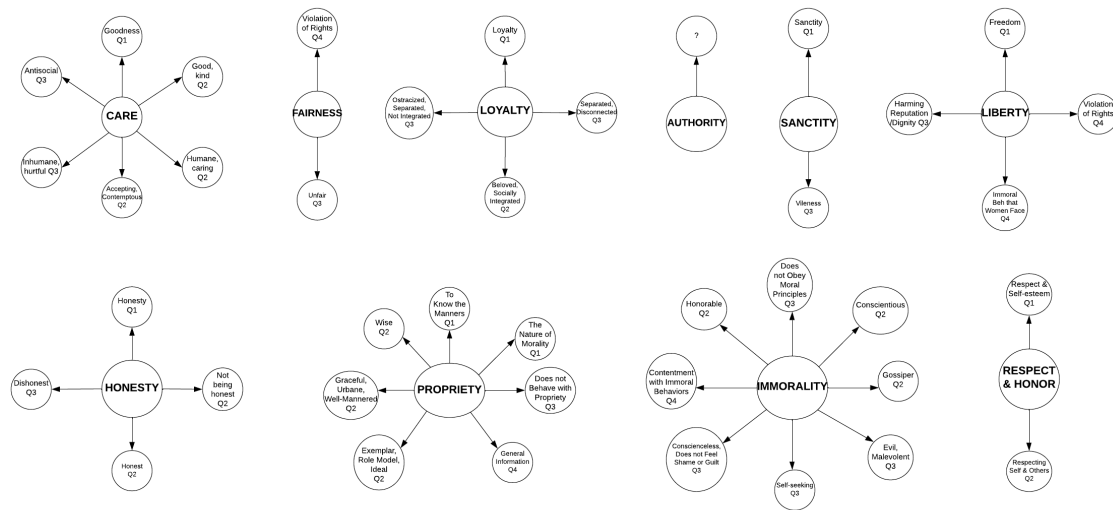
Lastly, participants had some arguments about the nature of morality as well. They explained that it is "innate", "relative", "variable", and a "societal concept" whereas "immorality is prevalent in everyday life". "Morality is nativistic, that is, it is given potentially to the individual. An individual knows what is right innately, no matter which society they belong which language they speak. Is there a common morality for humanity, or is it different in different civilizations? Even if there are differences, the basic things are common" (M, 48, Academician). "It changes person to person, depends on the person defining" (M, 59, Retired).

### ***Emotions, Feelings, & Senses***

Having a comprehensive outlook and reviewing emotions, feelings and senses and words used with "to feel" in Turkish, the most common elements were empathy, trust (confidence, trustworthiness, reliability), tolerance, pity, compassion, respect / disrespect (respecting / not respecting oneself, others, people), responsibility, honor, conscience, jealousy / envy, arrogance, shame, and contempt as feelings related to morality. Different from Study 1, emotions of jealousy/envy, arrogance, and shame readily came to respondents' minds. To our knowledge jealousy, envy or arrogance have not been emphasized in terms of their nature related to morality in the literature (e.g., Haidt, 2003), although contempt (Rozin et al., 1999) can be semantically close to arrogance.

### ***Possible Categorization in MFT***

As one of the aims of the study was to compare the similarities and differences of respondents' representation of morality and the literature, especially MFT. All the categories (the summary units of the responses) of four questions were considered in terms of possible notions of each moral foundation (see Figure 1). This tentative placement indicated two critical points: there may be additional foundations as well as there is permeability among foundations.



**Figure 1.** Possible Categorization of Participants' Answers According to MFT

The *care* foundation mostly consisted of caring or brutal acts that were consisted with the definition. As an extension of care, a tolerant and accepting attitude may be considered in this foundation as well. Considering loyalty's relation to building alliances and positive social relations, this last element might be considered under *loyalty*, too. *Fairness* foundation consisted of violation of rights and being unfair, only. While the scholarly definition emphasizes reciprocity, the respondents did not mention it, but they emphasized violation of rights or gaining unfair advantages. This may be interpreted as a form of reciprocity (or lack of reciprocity), as well. The *loyalty* foundation referred to being loyal in terms of being trustworthy and not cheating. Also, as the foundation symbolizes binding function of morality, being integrated (or not integrated) in the society can be thought as a reflection, too. Treason or betrayal did not come up in the answers however, living harmoniously in groups may be associated with loyalty. According to MFT, the trademark of *authority* foundation is respect. Authority foundation did not appear as a category in the responses in terms of hierarchical relations and respecting authority figures. On the other hand, respect itself has been one of the most frequent themes throughout the study. As *respect* did not include any specific authority figure and it included self-respect (self-esteem, self-worth) too, it was considered as an additional foundation. Due to their destructive function of social life, being antisocial (considered under care) or elements of immorality can be considered vices of authority, too. *Sanctity* foundation was represented by sanctity and religion itself. Also, vileness such as low self-control can be listed as a sanctity element because the bodily wishes, failure in resisting temptation, or greediness were considered vices of sanctity. *Liberty* foundation was represented by freedoms such as not interfering with others' liberties, respect for freedom or violation of rights. As mentioned before, immoralities toward women as an oppressed group, were considered in liberty foundation. Also, harming one's reputation can be related to limiting one's liberty. The MFT specifically mentions tyranny as a vice of liberty. In the study, notions such as hard work, mobbing, abusing one's position appeared; these notions can be considered close to tyranny and therefore can be considered within liberty. It should be noted that in participant's minds, justice, rights, and fairness were closely related with liberty.

There were a number of thematic units that could be considered independently of preexisting moral foundations. For instance, the thematic units related to *honesty* (and dishonesty) were among the most frequent units, indicating their importance for participants. One should note that, the participants did not mention any

specific circumstance considering honesty, therefore it was considered as a distinct group (or foundation). However, this also indicates that there may be specific forms of honesty for each foundation. Also, when we think within the framework of MFT, honesty could be important for both individualizing and binding functions of morality. It is important in terms of both being true to oneself and building reliable relations. Lastly, the MFT does not mention *propriety* (graceful behavior or being polite) as a form of morality. However, the data indicated a strong emphasis related to manners and propriety. According to social domain theory (Turiel, 1983) such principles need to be considered under the “conventions” domain, not moral domain. However, the strong emphasis of participants on such behaviors when asked about morality cannot be overlooked either. Such behaviors may be thought as extensions of existing foundations as well. For instance, some kindness related behaviors can be considered an extension of care foundation. One last interesting implication is that respondents explain lack of morality with evil, gossip, being self-interested (being self-seeking), lack of conscience/shame/guilt, not obeying moral principles, and not being honorable. These general expressions may apply to any foundation MFT suggests. Looking from a different point of view, an immoral person is a general term; all “immoralities” are associated with each other.

### Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the mental representation of morality, moral person, and immoral person. In general, morality is a positive, socially desirable phenomenon as well as complex and various in meaning. It is associated with honesty, societal rules and behaving in accordance with these rules, kindness, respect for others and self, freedom, and rights, primarily. Secondarily, it is associated with loyalty and sanctity. There is an overlap between current results and the classification of MFT to some extent, additionally data also suggest that foundations are closely related to each other and there may be additional foundations. The representations of morality, moral and immoral mostly overlap with each other. Morality is important in terms of honesty, manners, living harmoniously. In general, very frequently mentioned notions of honesty, kindness, conscience, and the like are low in precision and quite abstract in terms of their meaning. Lastly, especially immoral characteristics & notions (or moral characteristics & notions) are perceived as one entity or block; each unit is closely associated with the others as if one unit is attached to the other. Also, in the respondents’ cognitive map, morality may be a complex entity, with its pillars overlapping with each other. It is not easy to define and detect separate foundations of it.

### General Discussion

All over the world and throughout the history, people as individuals and social groups have some rules and accepted various right and wrongs, just to regulate world. Every social group happens to have some rules, rights, do’s and don’ts whose sanction differ in degree and kind. These set of rules and principles enable development of individual, social life and living together. Stemming from this understanding, they established rules and regulations; impose them on others; use them as advice, as in the below example of Bektashis’:

*Yalan söyleme! Haram yeme! Gıybet etme (Başkasının arkasından konuşma, dedikodu yapma)! Şehvetperest olma! Eline, beline, diline sahip ol! Kibir ve kin tutma! Kimseye hased etme (Kıskançlık etme)! Gördüğünü ört, görmediğini söyleme! Elinle koymadığın şeye yapışma! Elinin ermediği yere el uzatma! Sözüünün geçmediği yere söz söyleme! İbretle bak, hilm ile söyle (Dünyaya ders alarak bak, sözünü yumuşaklıkla söyle)! Küçüğe izzet, büyüğe hürmet eyle (Küçüklerle değer ver, büyüklerle saygı göster)! İkrarını saf eyle! Hakk’ı özünde mevcut bil! Erenlerin esrarına ağâh ol (Erenlerin sırrından haberdar ol!!)*

*Do not lie! Do not eat forbidden things (do not own things illegally)! Do not practice hate, pride, envy, anger, enmity, back-biting! Do not be a slave to lust! Conceal what you have seen! Do not tell what you have not seen! Do not take up the thing which your hand has not laid down! Do not stretch out thy hand to that which thy strength cannot accomplish! Do not (try) to speak where thy word will not carry! Behave with caution (learn your lessons from the world); speak with humility! Give honor to thy inferior (acknowledge their virtues); give respect to thy superior! Wherever thou lookest behold the Divine Reality; do not look upon anything as separate from or other than Reality; be sincere in thy confession; know that reality is present in thee; make known the mysteries to the eren's (saints)! Küçükyağcı (2013), English version adapted from Birge (1965)*

Recently, the field of social psychology has started to investigate these diverse rules as a form of morality. This investigation was a breakthrough, in terms of morality itself, too, since morality has been constrained to principles of fairness and care, for long years. With the recent contributions, a comprehensive outlook is prevailing. The changing outlook towards morality includes the taking intuitions into account, understanding morality in terms of its functions, acknowledging many principles of morality. A natural corollary is a down to earth view of morality with a greater explanatory power than previous accounts.

The current research aimed at testing one of the recent theories related to morality, MFT, in Turkey and integrate it with the representation of morality in lay people's minds. The first study examined the perception of moral foundations as defined by the theory and by participants' themselves. Each moral foundation comes out with a wide understanding, including moral and non-moral elements. The qualitative data suggest that there are a) previously not included elements within each foundation, b) commonalities among foundations, c) common concerns existent in more than one foundation. Also consistent with other findings, fairness foundation is perceived as most closely related to morality, while authority is perceived as least related. Information related to care foundation gives an idea about the trigger of it: tyranny. Accordingly, tyranny, bullying, or violence is seen as triggers of care. Fairness is stressed in terms of its fundamental characteristic for humanity. Loyalty is described in terms of new vices, such as slavery, oppression, utilization, or self-seeking behaviors. On the other hand, optimum loyalty is described in terms of free will, negotiation, secure environment, and social support. Similarly, there are new vices for authority as well: slavery, bullying, restriction of liberties, and violence. Subordinates' reaction types are defined as well: deindividuation, loyalty, being pro-power, questioning and the like. An optimum authority is described as possessing intellect, knowledge, being amicable, having respect for liberties, and does not abuse their power. Such emphases in loyalty and authority require the existence of liberty as a moral foundation very powerfully. Curiously enough, liberty is described by other notions as well, such as individualism, self-actualization, or creativeness, as well as notions related to societal and non-human levels. Traces of each moral foundation could be found on sanctity. Additionally, concepts such as development of self were included in sanctity as well. Some units are repeated in more than one foundation, in different contexts, such as justice, conscience, honesty, love/affection, respect, protect/preserve, acceptance/tolerance, trust, rights, or self.

The second study explored the representation of concepts of morality, moral person and immoral person in people's minds. Questions in this study have been designed as the first words that are associated with these concepts, congruent with the gut reactions approach. Accordingly, morality is a concept that is socially desirable and refers to a variety of subjects. Most frequently, it is associated with honesty, manners, respect for oneself, others, and the rights. Although some of the notions related to morality can be assigned to moral foundations, there are some notions such as honesty, respect, propriety that are not necessarily related to one foundation only. Also, the descriptions of immoral behavior or person refer to general abstract negative

notions. Morality within hierarchical relations have not been emphasized, therefore authority foundation is weakly represented. Another important corollary is that fairness and liberty perceptions are quite close to each other. The implications of the study are moral foundations are not quite distinct as they are theoretically (e.g. Haidt, 2007), the cognitive map of the people may be somewhat different than theoretical classification. People perceive notions related to propriety, rights, honesty, and freedoms as morality in an overlapping manner.

The results of the current two studies indicate that the outlook to the foundations needs to be from a few different angles. Existence of each moral foundation must be considered along with its violation, absence/neglect, extreme use/misuse because all these would have different consequences. MFT appears to cover only some of the angles; it would be suitable to have a holistic view. Also, future studies especially experimental studies should take this into account as well. The absence and violation of a moral foundation are not the same. To give an example, child neglect and treason are not the same kind of “immorality”, in three ways. Apart from touching upon different foundations, the transgression in child neglect and treason is not of the same kind. While there is an indifference in the former, there is an active involvement in the second. Approach to moral foundations can be revised in terms of violation, absence, and extremity of principles and in terms of *perpetrator* and the *result* of the act (a similar point of view, the distinction related to an agent of, and patient of an immoral act is argued by Gray, Young, & Waytz, 2012, as well). In this case, while immorality related to care is neglect (absence), immorality related to loyalty is treason (violation). Also, while in the first example, the victim of the immorality (child) may be salient, in the second example; the perpetrator (betrayor) is salient. Lastly, these immoralities refer to two different foundations: care and loyalty.

Three types of transgression can be exemplified in care foundation. Violation of care foundation would be cruelty, violence, and the result of this would be physical / emotional / cognitive harm. The absence of care foundation would be being a bystander when someone/ something is harmed/ in need; being indifferent or neglect. The result of absence of care would be not flourishing due to neglect. The extreme use (or misuse) of the care would turn to oneself as self-depletion whereas it would create dependence on the subject. By the end of this analysis, while acknowledging the “essence of morality is harm” outlook (Gray et al., 2012; Schein & Gray, 2015), we also point out to the different kinds of harm shaking different pillars of the morality. The general emphasis whether an immoral behavior results in harm may arise the idea whether care foundation is the ultimate foundation or has precedence over the others. However, every immorality may result in different kinds of harm. Especially immoralities resulting from violations (rather than absences or misuses) may be more salient in terms of their harmful results. Differentiating different kinds of transgressions is in line with the MMM theory of morality (Carnes & Janoff-Bulman, 2012; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013) in that violations and extreme use/ misuse would be proscriptive immorality; absence would be prescriptive immorality.

Another input that the current research indicated was different levels for loyalty, authority, and liberty foundations. For instance, it would be proper to evaluate loyalty in terms of the larger ingroup (such as nationality) and smaller ingroups (such as dyadic relations, family, one’s own social circles). Tackling loyalty at different levels was in line with Zakharin and Bates’s (2021) suggestion to measure loyalty better. As for the authority, as indicated by the results of qualitative studies, there are some vices and virtues related to *authority figures* and their *followers* that MFT does not strictly emphasize. We offer that the name of the related moral foundation could be changed as “hierarchical relations”, indicating a double-sided view, not only the authority itself. This foundation is related to hierarchical nature of relationships in the society and an individual compliance with this hierarchical nature. In this case, as the results showed, the compliance is expected at every level, both at superordinate and subordinate levels. The immorality of each level would be

different. The principle that was noted in Bektashi advice (give honor to thy inferior, acknowledge their virtues; give respect to thy superior) emphasizes the expected or socially acceptable behaviors every level displays. MFT is deficient in that it only emphasizes the subordinates' behavior and the related vice: subversion, as it is obvious in the name of the foundation ("respect for authority"). To be fair, previous accounts of authority foundation stress responsibilities of the authority figures as well (e.g., Haidt, & Joseph, 2004), however in time the vices of subordinates gained weight. In a hierarchical relationship, every level has responsibilities and duties, and has the possibility to violate, ignore or misuse the related principle. The addition of liberty could be an update related to vices of authority figures (tyranny, bullying); however, the current results indicate that liberty is wider than opposition to tyranny. Independent from hierarchical relations, it has a developmental route for an individual as well. It certainly deserves to be a distinct moral foundation and in fact must be expanded. As indicated, liberty has individual, societal, and nonhuman levels and their relations with other foundations could be a promising area for further study (e.g. purity of nature and the feeling of freedom it gives). Again, MMM theory (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013) using different levels (self, others, social groups) would be in line with this type of thinking; in fact, adding a fourth level (non-human, such as nature).

Another topic, which should be discussed and investigated, further is whether the virtues or foundations are basic as compared to the other. Haidt and Bjorklund (2008) indicate that basic intuitions characterized as moral foundation are a basis for virtues. For instance, honesty is a virtue based on fairness foundation, kindness is a virtue based on care. Some virtues may have more than one moral foundation as a basis, such as honor. The results of the current study however indicate that many notions are common to many foundations. For instance, honesty was a common concern for all foundations. These repeated notions may indicate the common concerns underlying each dimension. It is consistent with the theoretical view that moral foundations are sources of virtues, however the results indicate virtues as common notions. The relation between these common elements and moral foundations needs to be investigated further.

To sum up, the current study a) argues for the validity of MFT with a number of modifications and more concise operational definitions, b) supports the plurality of morality c) offers some tangible revisions for the understanding of each moral foundation, d) supports the existence of liberty as a moral foundation and offers different aspects of it, such as self-developmental, e) support the literature related to lay perception of morality and MFT, g) extends MFT with additional individual, societal, and universal level moral principles, h) creates some new research avenues such as emotions, virtues, vices, moral foundations and related moral principles.

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