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Cognitive Load, Decision-Making, and Moral Development: A Dual-Process Analysis of Kurdish Discourse via Kohlberg's Theory

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ء العبء المعرفي، واتخاذ القرار، والتطور الأخلاقي: تحليل ثنائي العمليات للخطاب الكردي في ضوء نظرية كولبرغ

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قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة كرميان، كلار، إقليم كردستان، العراق

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Abstract

This study investigates moral reasoning in Kurdish society using the framework of Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development supported by Dual-Process Theory and Cognitive Load Theory. Data were collected from 432 people from the Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Raparine, and Garmian regions using a quantitative methodology. To see how various cognitive processes, influence ethical judgment, participants were given a challenging moral conundrum designed to provoke both intuitive and deliberate modes of reasoning. The findings show a strong collective orientation toward institutional authority and social stability, with Stage 4 (Law and Order) reasoning clearly predominating. Both descriptive and inferential techniques, including frequencies, means, standard deviations, t-tests, ANOVA, agreement ratios, and factor analysis, were used in the statistical analysis, which was carried out using SPSS. With implications for upcoming educational and public activities, the findings collectively provide a complex description of moral reasoning patterns within Kurdish society and highlight the cognitive and educational circumstances that impact ethical decision-making.

Keywords: Kohlberg's Theory, Moral Reasoning, Dual-Process Theory, Cognitive Load, Kurdish Discourse.

الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الاستدلال الأخلاقي في المجتمع الكردي في ضوء مراحل التطور الأخلاقي لدى لورنس كولبرغ، مع توظيف نظرية العمليات الثنائية ونظرية العبء المعرفي لتفسير الكيفية التي تؤثر بها العمليات المعرفية في إصدار الأحكام الأخلاقية واتخاذ القرارات. جُمعت البيانات من **432مشاركًا** من مناطق السليمانية وحلبجة ورابرين وكرميان، باستخدام منهجية كمية. وللكشف عن أنماط التفكير الأخلاقي، عُرضت على المشاركين معضلة أخلاقية معقدة صُممت لاستثارة نمطي التفكير الحدسي والتأملي، بما يسمح بفحص التفاعل بين المعالجة السريعة والتلقائية والمعالجة البطيئة والمتعمدة.أظهرت النتائج وجود توجه جمعي واضح نحو سلطة المؤسسات والحفاظ على الاستقرار الاجتماعي، مع هيمنة الاستدلال المرتبط **بالمرحلة الرابعة، مرحلة القانون والنظام**، ضمن مراحل كولبرغ للتطور الأخلاقي. وأُجري التحليل الإحصائي باستخدام برنامج **SPSS**، بالاعتماد على مجموعة من الأساليب الوصفية والاستدلالية، شملت التكرارات، والمتوسطات الحسابية، والانحرافات المعيارية، واختبارات «ت»، وتحليل التباين(ANOVA) ، ونسب الاتفاق، والتحليل العاملي.

وتقدم النتائج تصورًا

1. Introduction

1.1 Language, Morality, and Cognition

One of the fundamental contexts that human civilizations use to control conduct and maintain social order is morality. Language users may assess actions, defend decisions, and assign blame in socially particular circumstances with the aid of moral judgment, which arises through cognitive appraisal and communication engagement rather than functioning as a set of inflexible abstract rules (Haidt, 2007; Greene, 2014). In this process, language plays a central role, as it is considered as the fundamental way through which moral reasoning is articulated, negotiated, and shared. According to Rashid et al. (2023), moral judgments are therefore not restricted to internal cognitive processes but are enacted discursively and influenced by institutional expectations, cultural norms, and social values.

In the context of Kurdish society, moral discourse is strictly intertwined with shared historical experiences, communal identity, and respect for institutional authority. Kurdish language, as a linguistic system, functions not merely as a tool of communication but as a carrier of moral concepts that effect perceptions of duty, justice, and social responsibility. Examining morality through the lenis of discourse therefore enables a deeper understanding of how ethical values are cognitively processed and socially legitimized within this cultural context (Becker et al., 2025).

1.2 Cognitive Load and Moral Regression

Cognitive Load Theory further clarifies fluctuations in moral reasoning by showing the boundaries of working memory through complex tasks (Sweller, 1988; Sweller et al., 2011). Cognitive load is higly and essentialy contained in Moral dilemmas, as they require language users to integrate emotional responses, social norms, and legal principles simultaneously (Paxton et al., 2012). When the processing ability is exceedingly loaded, individuals tend to dipend on cognitively economical strategies, for instance rule-following or deference to authority (Kahneman, 2011; Trémolière & Bonnefon, 2014). Within a Kohlbergian context, this shift is usually used as a reversion toward Stage 4 of reasoning, where validity is grounded in law and social order (Kohlberg, 1984). From Linguistic perspective, simplified argumentation, reduced hedging, and increased reliance on absolute moral claims and institutional references are usually allinged with such reversion (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Additionally, cognitive load contributes to the prevalence of law-oriented reasoning in Kurdish moral discourse. Legal and traditional contexts offer constant and efficient moral schemas in conversations manifested by social pressure or institutional authority (Schwartz, 1997; Haidt, 2012). Moral reversion under cognitive load should therefore be taken as an adaptive cognitive-discursive retort rather than a deficiency.

1.3 Dual-Process Theory and Moral Judgment

Recent studies in the field of cognitive psychology have been questioning about the idea that moral reasoning is primarily logical. In Dual-Process Theory, cognition is intermediated by two interdependent systems: System 1, which is quick, intuitive, and emotionally motivated, and System 2, which is slower, more introspective, and analytical (Kahneman, 2011; Evans & Stanovich, 2013). Careful reasoning is used to support the initial moral judgments that are commonly made intuitively (Haidt, 2001; Greene, 2013). This viewpoint has significant implications for moral discourse analysis. Moral language frequently functions as a justificatory resource rather than as evidence of deep deliberation, if judgments originate intuitively. Language users draw on culturally available moral frameworks such as law, religion, or tradition so as to legitimize positions already affectively endorsed. Linguistically, this is reflected in categorical evaluations, appeals to shared norms, and deontic modality showing certainty and obligation (van Leeuwen, 2007).

Dual-Process Theory sheds light on the reason why people do not consistently use their highest level of moral reasoning when joint with Kohlberg's theory. Because it is based on internalized norms and institutional expectations, conventional thinking, especially Stages 3 and 4, closely resembles intuitive processing (Greene et al., 2004). On the other hand, insistent usage of System 2 processes, such as abstraction and critical reflection, is necessary for post-conventional reasoning (Rest et al., 1999). Deliberative participation is further constrained by emotional intensity and moral salience, particularly when identity or perceived threat are involved (Haidt, 2012; Greene, 2013).

1.4 Kohlberg's Theory and Discourse

One of the most important models for analyzing how moral reasoning evolves throughout the course of one's life is Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Kohlberg, 1971, 1984). Three levels—Pre-Conventional, Conventional, and Post-Conventional—each with two stages are suggested by the theory. Rather than variations in moral behavior per se, these stages represent different patterns of moral justification. According

to this viewpoint, moral development is a cognitive process that is influenced by education, social contact, and introspection.

Kohlberg's theory is especially helpful from a discourse-analytic perspective since it highlights justification as the primary sign of moral reasoning. Moral maturity is not demonstrated by decisions alone, but rather by the way people justify and explain them. This is consistent with linguistic theories that hold that references to social norms, authority, and evaluative language are the sources of meaning. Kohlberg's stages can therefore be analyzed as discursive orientations that are expressed through patterns of moral legitimation, modal expressions, and linguistic choices.

This emphasis is analytically fruitful in situations where legality, authority, and social order are the dominant moral reference points, despite criticism that the theory favors justice-based reasoning and underrepresents care-oriented and culturally embedded moral systems (Gilligan, 1982; Fraenkel, 1976). Kohlberg's theory enables a methodical examination of institutional morality as it manifests in discourse in such contexts. Critically, the model also takes into consideration how moral thinking varies depending on the situation. Depending on the demands of the situation, people may switch between philosophical, institutional, and interpersonal arguments. For discourse research, where moral thinking is constantly negotiated rather than set, this dynamic feature is crucial. Kohlberg's stages are viewed in this study as thinking modes that are triggered under particular sociocognitive circumstances rather than as fixed developmental endpoints.

1.5 Research Problem and Objectives

Empirical research on moral cognition and discourse is still limited, despite the cultural and political conse quences of the Kurdistan Region. Existing studies often focus on linguistic structure without addressing underlying cognitive mechanisms. This study addresses this gap by examining moral reasoning as a cognitive–discursive phenomenon.

The study seeks to:

1. Classify essential stages of moral reasoning in Kurdish discourse.
2. Study the impact of cognitive load on moral judgment.
3. Explore the role of demographic variables in retrieving post-conventional reasoning.

2. Conversation Analysis and Its Foundations

2.1 Conversation Analysis

The primary means for individuals to participate in social life is through language, which reflects shared cultural values and cognitive patterns. Through language acquisition, speakers internalize not only grammatical structures but also culturally embedded norms and social expectations. Accordingly, learning a language demand acquiring socially meaningful ways of interpreting and constructing reality (Hussein, 2021). Within this view of language as social action, Conversation Analysis (CA) offers a systematic approach to examining naturally occurring interaction. It signifies the way participants shape conversation, coordinate actions, and collaboratively construct meaning in real-time interaction. Although everyday conversation often appears spontaneous, it is governed by highly structured interactional principles shaped by psychological, social, and cultural factors (Encyclopedia of Biometrics, 2009).

To reveal the organizational features of interaction, particularly turn-taking, sequence organization, and the strategies speakers use to start, maintain, and end conversations is what CA is focusing on. As Sacks and Schegloff (1973) established the principle that provide meaning to speeches through their sequential order rather than from individual linguistic form. Different from traditional linguistic approaches that priotize abstract grammatical structures, CA sheds light on how participants display understanding, negotiate roles, and orient to norms during interaction by themselves (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The active role of listener is emphasized by CA. Meaning is co-constructed through responses, confirmations, hesitations, and repairs, making interaction inherently reciprocal (Hameed, 2012). By going beyond language structure, both Discourse analysis and CA include a wider social dimension that includes emotion, identity, gender, power, and moral positioning. Through this perspective, morality, in language, is vigorously negotiated and legitimized rather than just being expressed (Speech Analysis Research Group, Imperial College).

2.2 Foundational Values of Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis rests on the assumption that social order is produced through interaction. Several analytical dimensions guide the interpretation of conversational data. First, social position, cultural

background, institutional role, and level of expertise of the language user, must be taken into consideration as these aspects impact linguistic choosing and levels of authority. Second, listener's role in the other hand is equally essential; meaning is created and delivered through sharing communication which is created by expectations and responses. Third, inorder to understand interactional stratigies, it is fundamental to classify the function of communicative discourse such as persuasion, justification, instruction, or warning. Fourth, coherence and effectiveness are contributed through the structural organization of discourse, including openings, topic progression, transitions, and closings. Fifth, the goal-oriented nature of discourse describes the mobilization of specific linguistic resources. Sixth, discourse must be analyzed within its contextual environment, including physical setting, temporal moment, and motivating circumstances. Finally, CA examines interactional methods such as requests to authority, institutional legitimacy, emotional configuration, and evidential reasoning, revealing how speakers pursue to influence recipients and reach social objectives.

3. Discourse Analysis in Kurdish Created by Kohlberg's Theory

In this study, Kohlberg's model's Conventional (Level II) and Post-Conventional (Level III) stages are depended on as the main methodological framework for analyzing moral reasoning in Kurdish discourse. Both level II and III basically focus on social norms, institutional authority, and abstract ethical concepts, these stages are especially well-suited for researching adult moral discourse. As for Level I (The Pre-Conventional level), it is eluminated as it focuses on the moral development of children and adolescents. Kohlberg elaborated the developmental psychology framework established by Jean Piaget and refined his theoretical contributions. In spite of the fact that ethical improvement in both hypothetical systems is respected as a consecutive handle related to cognitive development, Kohlberg places more noteworthy accentuation on ethical thinking and ethical defense in comparison to behavioral results. Thus, both similarities and dissimilarities between the two approaches, particularly in their manner of dealing with moral judgment, social interaction, and cognitive development.

Table 1, Piaget and Kohlberg's Theory

Shared Focus	Accentuate the importance of cognitive development (to variable degrees) as foundational to moral development.	Accentuate the importance of cognitive development (to variable degrees) as foundational to moral development.
Shared Moral Concepts	Approve on the cultural origin of moral notions like love, justice, and authority.	Approve on the cultural origin of moral notions like love, justice, and authority
Age and Moral Development	Approve that chronological age or a specific stage can be designated as a significant factor and distinct trajectory for moral development.	Approve that chronological age or a specific stage can be designated as a significant factor and distinct trajectory for moral development.
Justice	Reflects justice a fundamental concept for moral development and achieving social balance (Khan: 1991: 231).	Reflects justice a fundamental concept for moral development and achieving social balance (Khan: 1991: 231).
Cognitive Emphasis	Fewer focuse on cognitive development.	Greater focuse on cognitive development.
Number of Stages	Two phases of moral development.	Six discrete phases, each showing a significant shift from the preceding one (Al-Umari: 1998: 68).
Highest Moral Development Age	Elected 18 years as the highest age.	Elected 25 years as the highest age (Al-Ghamdi: 1979: 310).

3.1 Kohlberg's Levels of Moral Analysis

Kohlberg divided morality into three major stages built on cultural and social foundations, with each level encompassing two stages of moral development.

Level I: Pre-Conventional Morality

At this stage, a child's reaction to cultural norms (good/bad, right/wrong) is determined by outside, palpable outcomes, such rewards or penalties. Sometimes people alter their behavior to get the moral authority figure's notice and favor.

- **Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment Orientation:** Regardless of social or cultural norms, the youngster concentrates on the tangible results of acts and the distinction between right and wrong. The moral value is avoiding punishment and the scrutiny of authority. This is not true respect; it is imposed morality. Although the youngster is aware that they are breaking societal norms, their primary goals are to please the authority and stay out of trouble (Kohlberg: 1975: 670).
- **Stage 2: Individualism and Exchange:** Satisfying one's own needs and interests is the definition of right action. In this endeavor, the relationship level is important. Equality, justice, and mutual benefit are fundamental values that are frequently expressed practically and materially. The basis for actions is the sharing of interests rather than appreciation, deference, allegiance, or love. Self-interest is pursued by the individual, who sees all ideas and deeds as fulfilling personal needs and understands that human relationships are founded on reciprocal material or tangible exchanges (a "deal"). The primary motive is self-interest (Ronald: 1975: 16–17). *For instance, a contract between a physician and a lab or pharmacy.*

Level II: Conventional Morality (The Focus of this Study)

Individuals are greatly influenced by their external social ties. The anticipation of reward and acceptance motivates the group or family to value maintaining these relationships. This level involves proving allegiance to and defending social norms and laws, which eventually shape a person's or a group's identity.

- **Stage 3: Good Interpersonal Relationships (Social Conformity):** Good behavior is seen as actions that bring joy or aid to the recipient. Good conduct becomes a social identity and is accepted by society, striving for emotional approval and social reputation rather than material reward (Durkheim: 1961: 126). *Example: Being a "good man" or "good son."*
- **Stage 4: Maintaining the Social Order (Law and Order):** For the sake of social conformance, actions and behaviors are given a formal, legal foundation. Respecting authority and carrying out one's responsibilities are the hallmarks of proper and proper behavior. Another trait is the protection of social foundations. Authority and the application of formal and social laws are the main sources of morality. In order to maintain social roles for the benefit of society as a whole, the individual closely complies with formal and social obligations and is conscious of the social structure that governs conduct (Norman: 1969: 28–35). *Example: Compliance with environmental or traffic legislation.*

Level III: Post-Conventional Morality (The Focus of this Study)

The application of moral values and principles becomes an intrinsic part of the identity of the individual or group holding them; they are recognized by these values.

- **Stage 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights:** In this level, moral principles include taking into account the individual's general rights that have been experienced and accepted by society. The application of all social and personal principles and norms is clearly and somewhat recognized. These values may have been decided upon and created by a democratic process or a constitution. They may, however, turn into a personal right. In the end, morality may influence or enrich most laws, but morality cannot constitute the foundation of laws. Constitutional amendments or democratic consensus can alter these societal values. Here, motivation and commitment entail respecting and adhering to moral and ethical standards (Mindell: 1974: 646). *Example: A person's dedication to their faith, not legal requirements, determines whether they perform the Hajj or Umrah ceremonies.*
- **Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles:** Moral values in this stage are tied to self-chosen ethical principles that are universal and abstract (e.g., the Ten Commandments, which fundamentally form the basis for justice, equality, and the protection of individual dignity) (Kohlberg: 1971: 410).

Kohlberg (1974, 1975) conferred a hypothetical **Orientation to Beliefs, the seventh stage**, is tailored for Level III. This stage concludes the highest level of belief in life itself and is categorized by linking to and belief in all levels and stages that came before it. "What is the purpose of the ultimate belief in life?" is the question it answers. In a world full of inequity, people who firmly believe in the values of equality practice this stage. Rather to being self-centered, orientations are focused on the world. During this phase, the concepts of independence, existence/reality, and monotheism undergo major development (Kohlberg: 1975: 670).

4. Analysis of Morality in Kurdish Discourse via Kohlberg's Theory (Empirical Section)

This section outlines the empirical aspect of the study, employing Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development as a framework to investigate moral reasoning in the Kurdish language. It details the study's design, characteristics of the demographics and sample, methods of data collection, processes for ensuring validity and reliability, statistical methods utilized, and the way the findings are presented and analyzed. The primary aim is to explore the scope and nature of moral values articulated in Kurdish discourse, with particular emphasis on variations related to gender, age, and occupation.

4.1 Research Population and Field of Study

The population in this study is intrinsically diverse as moral discussions are engaged in by individuals across all demographics and social groups. Since it would be unfeasible to encompass every aspect of Kurdish society, the study's focus was constrained by both geographical location and social status. The key areas of interest included the governorates of Sulaymaniyah and Halabja, as well as the particular administrations of Raparine and Garmian. These regions were chosen to guarantee a variety of socio-professional, cultural, and demographic characteristics. Participants represented a broad spectrum of professions, comprising educators, legal practitioners, civil servants, and artisans, with ages ranging from 18 to over 60. Respondents included both men and women to facilitate a comparative analysis based on gender. This diversity enabled a comprehensive examination of moral reasoning patterns across different social strata within Kurdish society.

4.2 Sample Design and Distribution

In order to ensure representativeness, the research employed a purposive sampling method that considered population proportions within the selected areas. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed. Eighteen forms were deemed unsuitable, and 432 surveys were considered valid for statistical evaluation after discarding invalid or incomplete responses.

Table 2, Number and gender of participants

Male	233	53.9
Female	199	46.1
Total	432	100.0

The last sample was dispersed geographically as follows: Sulaymaniyah (280 respondents, 64.8%), Raparine (74 respondents, 16.5%), Garmian (59 respondents, 13.6%), and Halabja (22 respondents, 5.1%). This dispersal reflects population density variations across the study areas and enhances the external validity of the findings.

Table 3, Geographical Distribution of the Study Sample

Sulaymaniyah Governorate	280	64.8%
Halabja Governorate	22	5.1%
Garmian Administration	59	13.6%
Raparine Administration	74	16.5%
Total	432	100.0%

4.3 Data Collection Instrument: The Questionnaire

A systematic questionnaire designed specially to evaluate moral thinking in accordance with particular stages of Kohlberg's theory was used to gather data. Three main sections comprised the questionnaire. A translated short moral tale that served as a unique moral conundrum made up the first segment. A realistic and culturally relevant scenario served as the foundation for respondents' moral assessments. There were two themes in the second segment. In order to make subgroup comparisons easier during analysis, Theme One concentrated on demographic and personal data, including gender, age, place of residence, and occupation. Theme Two, which addressed moral reasoning problems from Kohlberg's two levels of theory, was covered by the Conventional Level (Level II) and the Post-Conventional Level (Level III). The Pre-Conventional Level was excluded due

to the study's focus on adult moral reasoning. Four moral stages were examined: Stage 3 (Social Conformity), Stage 4 (Law and Order), Stage 5 (Social Contract and Individual Rights), and Stage 6 (Universal Ethical Principles). Each stage was represented by five items, resulting in a total of 20 moral reasoning questions**.**

4.3.1 Validity and Reliability

Experts in linguistics, measurement, and evaluation examined the questionnaire to guarantee its content validity. Through their input, the items were guaranteed to appropriately represent the theoretical frameworks of the chosen moral phases. The appendix lists these specialists' names and areas of expertise. Using the Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient, reliability was evaluated.

The overall reliability of the instrument was **α = 0.772**, which is considered high for social science research. Reliability values for individual stages ranged from **0.753 to 0.832**, indicating strong internal consistency across all dimensions of the questionnaire.

Table 4, Reliability of Survey Instrument Items via Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

1	Social Conformity (Stage 3)	5	0.812	Reliable
2	Law and Order Orientation (Stage 4)	5	0.753	Reliable
3	Personal and Social Values (Stage 5)	5	0.764	Reliable
4	Universal Morality (Stage 6)	5	0.832	Reliable
5	**Overall Instrument**	20	0.772	**Highly Reliable**

4.3.2 Data Analysis Procedures and Statistical Tools

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To examine the collected data, a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used. The sample's demographic features were described using percentages and frequencies. To evaluate response variability and central tendency, arithmetic means and standard deviations were computed. Each moral claim's degree of support was measured using agreement ratios. T-tests were used to assess the significance of mean differences, factor analysis was performed to look at underlying dimensions in the moral reasoning responses, and F-values from Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to compare several groups.

4.3.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

According to the demographic data analysis, the sample's gender distribution is well-balanced, with males comprising 53.9% and women 46.1%. According to the age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents (41.5%) were between the ages of 30 and 45, with the 45–60 age group coming in second (29.6%). The lowest percentage of participants (10.4%) were 60 years of age or older. Professionally, the sample was equally divided among the four targeted occupational groups, with government employees making up the largest group (26.8%) and tradesmen making up the smallest (23.4%). The balance of this distribution suggests careful and comprehensive sampling.

Table 5, Age and professionality of participants

18 to 29 Years	80	18.5
30 to 45 Years	179	41.5
46 to 60 Years	128	29.6
60 Years and Above	45	10.4
Total	432	100.0
Profession	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage ()**

Teacher (مامۆستا)	111	25.7
Lawyer/Legal Professional (مافناس)	104	24.1
Public/Private Employee (فەرمانبەر)	116	26.8
Tradesman/Self-Employed (کاسبکار)	101	23.4
Total	432	100.0

A critical examination of the data presented in Table 5 reveals a high degree of statistical parity among the professional groups. The largest subset of the study population is comprised of Employees, representing 26.8% (n = 116) of the total sample. In contrast, Tradesmen constitute the smallest cohort, accounting for **23.4%** (n = 101).

5.Results and Statistical Analysis of Moral Reasoning in Kurdish Discourse

5.1 Statistical Analysis of Respondents' Attitudes toward Social Confirmity

The statistical findings on respondents' opinions on social appropriateness show the following values: a mean score of 3.19 and a computed t-value of 105.72 suggested a neutral position ("undecided"). There were 431 degrees of freedom and a standard deviation of 1.209. Overall, 63.9% of respondents agreed. The significance level (p = 0.000), which is lower than the typical threshold of 0.05, indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the items. The aggregate mean score of 3.19 for the five attitudinal measures was higher than the expected mean of 3.00. This result suggests that the goods were generally well-received by the respondents. Additionally, the agreement rate (63.9%) standard deviation (1.209) supports a moderate level of agreement.

Table 6, Level of Social Confirmity

Q1	13.7	44.2	7.6	19.9	14.6	2.775	1.313	55.5
Q2	16.0	45.1	9.5	18.5	10.9	2.631	1.256	52.6
Q3	9.5	28.9	19.9	31.3	10.4	3.041	1.183	60.8
Q4	8.8	14.6	12.5	42.4	21.7	3.537	1.227	70.7
Q5	3.7	9.0	7.2	42.8	37.3	4.009	1.068	80.2
Overall	10.0	28.4	11.3	30.9	19.4	3.198	1.209	63.9

Table (6) presents respondents' attitudes toward social appropriateness across five items. Each item was analyzed using percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranking.

Item 1: *"Love for one's family may compel a person to think about stealing."*

34.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, according to the data, while 7.6% were unsure. Most people opposed or strongly disagreed (57.9%). With a standard deviation of 1.313 and an agreement rate of 55.5%, the mean score was 2.775, or "disagree" on the Likert scale. This suggests that most respondents disagreed with the notion that stealing is acceptable out of familial love.

Item 2: *"Any action is justified if it saves a human life."*

9% were unsure, 61.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and about 29.4% agreed or strongly agreed. With a 52.6% agreement rate and a 1.256 standard deviation, the mean score of 2.631 indicates an uncertain inclination that leans toward disagreement. This implies that respondents were hesitant to fully support utilitarian arguments.

Item 3: *"Should a court release a thief who stole in order to save a human life?"*

Results indicate that 41.7% supported or strongly supported this position, 19.9% were undecided, and 38.4% opposed it. The mean score (3.041) reflects indecision, with a standard deviation of 1.183 and an agreement rate of 60.8%. These results demonstrate uncertainty and moral ambivalence regarding judicial leniency.

Item 4: *"The court must commit to enforcing the law."*

A majority (64.1%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 12.5% were undecided and 23.4% disagreed. The mean score (3.537) indicates agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.227 and an agreement rate of 70.7%. This reflects strong endorsement of legal authority.

Item 5: *"Love for one's family motivates protecting them."*

More than half of the respondents (50.3%) agreed or strongly agreed, 11.3% were undecided, and 38.4% disagreed. The mean score (4.009) indicates agreement, with a standard deviation of 1.068 and a high agreement rate (80.2%). This result confirms strong emotional and familial values.

5.2 Attitudes toward Law Enforcement and Legal Norms

With a mean score of 3.631 ("agree"), degrees of freedom 431, and a standard deviation of 1.242, the overall statistical results for respondents' attitudes toward law enforcement and legal regulations produced a t-value of 114.22. The degree of agreement was 72.62%. Statistically significant differences between the items are indicated by the significance level (p = 0.000). The aggregate mean score (3.631) is higher than the theoretical mean, indicating that more respondents are in favor of following the law and legal standards.

Table 7, Commitment to Law Enforcement and Rules

P1	15	20	31	118	248	4.305	1.025	86.1
P2	69	130	49	145	39	2.895	1.276	57.9
P3	7	38	30	142	215	4.203	1.012	84.1
P4	9	36	36	200	151	4.037	0.977	80.7
P5	30	69	55	165	113	3.606	1.225	72.1
Overall	130	293	201	770	766	3.809	1.10	76.18

Table (7) illustrates respondents' views across five statements related to law enforcement.

Important results show a high level of agreement that: • Stealing is socially unacceptable in any circumstances. • It is never appropriate to breach the law, even when done with the best of intentions. • Stealing should never be justified.

• Business owners have the right to report infractions to law enforcement. With most items having agreement rates above 65%, the mean scores for each item ranged from 3.277 to 4.250, indicating continuous agreement. These results demonstrate a strong normative orientation toward the validity and authority of institutions.

5.3 Personal and Social Values

An agreement rate of 81.36%, a mean score of 4.132 ("agree"), a standard deviation of 0.917, and a t-value of 167.134 were obtained from the examination of respondents' attitudes toward social and personal values. Statistically significant variations between items are confirmed by the significance level (p = 0.000). Strong support for moral and social ideals is indicated by the elevated mean score.

Table 8, Personal and Social Values

P1	0.7 (3)	0.9 (4)	0.7 (3)	26.6(115)	71.1(307)	4.667	0.613	93.3
P2	1.4(6)	3.5 (15)	2.5 (11)	35.9(155)	56.7(245)	4.430	0.820	88.6
P3	4.4(19)	18.1 (78)	14.8 (64)	38.2(165)	24.5 (106)	3.604	1.165	72.0
P4	0.6 (3)	5.8(25)	8.6 (37)	41.7 (180)	43.3 (187)	4.210	0.877	77.9

P5	4.1 (18)	14.1 (61)	10.0 (43)	46.1 (199)	25.7 (111)	3.750	1.112	75.0
Overall	**2.3** (49)	**8.4** (183)	**7.3** (158)	**37.7** (814)	**44.3** (956)	4.132	0.917	81.36

Most respondents concurred that:

• People shouldn't take advantage of one another, particularly when things are tough. • Theft creates instability and undermines societal cohesiveness. • It is morally necessary to preserve social customs. • People experience guilt when they are unable to provide for their families. • Stealer behavior is frowned upon by society. Strong moral unanimity was reflected in the mean ratings, which varied from 3.604 to 4.667, with agreement rates frequently surpassing 75%.

5.4 Global Moral Values

The statistical analysis of global moral values resulted in a *t*-value of 134.224, a mean score of 3.809, a standard deviation of 1.10, and an agreement rate of 76.18%. The significance level ($p = 0.000$) indicates statistically significant differences among items. Overall, respondents demonstrated strong alignment with universal moral principles, such as respect for life, property, and ethical responsibility.

5.5 Gender Differences in Moral Reasoning

Gender variations in moral sentiments are shown in Table (9). Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were observed in a few selected categories, such as beliefs regarding moral obligations related to family and reporting offenders to the court. The majority of the time, the mean scores for men and women were nearly equal, suggesting that moral reasoning tendencies are generally the same for both sexes with little item-specific variance.

Table 9, Differences in moral attitudes based on gender

1	Family love obliges him to consider stealing.	Male	2.57	1.24	1.24	3.55$	0.000	**Significant**
		Female	3.01	1.35	1.35			
2	To save a human life, any action is taken as justifiable.	Male	2.56	1.21	1.21	1.17	0.242	Not Sig.
		Female	2.70	1.29	1.29			
3	Should the court set the thief free as the motive was saving a life?	Male	3.06	1.15	1.15	0.43	0.666	Not Sig.
		Female	3.01	1.21	1.21			
4	The court must strictly implement the law.	Male	3.57	1.23	1.23	0.77	0.438	Not Sig.
		Female	3.48	1.22	1.22			
5	Love for family boosts him to save his family members.	Male	3.98	1.14	1.14	0.55	0.579	Not Sig.
		Female	4.04	0.97	0.97			
6	Socially, stealing is an abhorrent act in all its formulae.	Male	4.24	1.21	1.21	0.10	0.919	Not Sig.
		Female	4.25	1.14	1.14			

7	Illegal acts are justifiable when the intent is to save lives.	Male	3.10	1.32	1.32	1.26	0.207	Not Sig.
		Female	2.95	1.15	1.15			
8	Under no circumstances is stealing justified.	Male	3.58	1.30	1.30	1.63	0.103	Not Sig.
		Female	3.78	1.23	1.23			
9	Humans should not resort to theft under any pretext.	Male	3.81	1.28	1.28	1.92	0.056	Not Sig.
		Female	4.03	1.11	1.11			
10	The pharmacist has the right to impeach to defend his property.	Male	3.39	1.22	1.22	2.04	0.041	**Significant**
		Female	3.14	1.35	1.35			
11	Humans should not dominate one another, particularly in times of hardship.	Male	4.62	0.65	0.65	1.54	0.124	Not Sig.
		Female	4.71	0.56	0.56			
12	Theft disrupts social order and creates chaos.	Male	4.45	0.81	0.81	0.66	0.504	Not Sig.
		Female	4.40	0.82	0.82			
13	He should refrain from stealing to preserve social traditions.	Male	3.63	1.22	1.22	0.68	0.496	Not Sig.
		Female	3.56	1.09	1.09			
14	He would feel a pang of conscience if he did not try to help his family.	Male	4.20	0.88	0.88	0.11	0.906	Not Sig.
		Female	4.21	0.86	0.86			
15	Resorting to theft results in social blame/reproach.	Male	3.80	1.10	1.10	1.06	0.288	Not Sig.
		Female	3.68	1.11	1.11			
16	Religion forbids him from stealing.	Male	4.23	1.07	1.07	1.52	0.128	Not Sig.
		Female	4.38	0.96	0.96			
17	The pharmacist has a right to profit.	Male	3.05	1.28	1.28	2.84	0.005	**Significant**

		Female	2.72	1.24	1.24			
18	Caring human life is above all other interests.	Male	4.18	1.05	1.05	0.33	0.742	Not Sig.
		Female	4.22	0.95	0.95			
19	One must not touch others' property under any circumstances.	Male	4.03	1.07	1.07	0.16	0.872	Not Sig.
		Female	4.04	0.84	0.84			

Family Attachment (Item 1): How men and women view family duty differs statistically significantly ($t = -3.55$, $p = 0.000$). The mean score for female participants was higher ($M = 3.01$) than for male participants ($M = 2.57$) when it came to the assumption that family love could make someone think about stealing. This implies that the female sample prioritizes interpersonal ties above impersonal rules, leaning more toward Kohlberg's Stage 3 (Interpersonal Concordance).

Property Rights and Profit (Items 10 and 17): Regarding the pharmacist's rights, notable variations were discovered. Male participants had higher mean scores ($M = 3.39$ and $M = 3.05$) than female participants ($M = 3.14$ and $M = 2.72$) in Item 10 ($p = 0.041$) and Item 17 ($p = 0.005$). This suggests that while the female cohort is more inclined to give the humanitarian side of the problem precedence above the pharmacist's right to make money, the male group statistically values Stage 4 (Law and Order) and contractual rights more.

Factor Analysis: Morality in Kurdish Discourse

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical technique used to reduce the dimensionality of data by identifying fewer latent variables (factors) that explain the connections between a larger range of observed variables.

This study employs factor analysis to determine the primary dimensions of moral judgment in Kurdish discourse and to determine which variables have the greatest effects on the research goal.

1. Data Suitability and Sampling Adequacy

To ensure the data were appropriate for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted.

Table 10, KMO and Bartlett's Test for Moral Dimensions in Kurdish Discourse

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.816
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square (chi 2)	2133.976
	Degrees of Freedom (df)	190
	Significance (Sig.)	0.000

Table 10's results show that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis because the KMO value of 0.816 is higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.60. Additionally, the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix was rejected using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which produced a significant result ($p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that the information is appropriate for detecting structures.

6. Conclusion

This study examined moral reasoning in Kurdish discourse by combining Dual-Process Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. Through focusing on how moral judgments are linguistically justified in ethical conflict situations, the research places morality at the intersection of language, cognition, and sociocultural environment. This offers a comprehensive description of the Kurdistan Region's moral thinking.

The findings demonstrate that Law and Order orientation, or conventional-level moral reasoning, predominates. In evaluating moral quandaries, respondents consistently prioritized institutional authority, social order, and legal norms, even when these conflicted with interpersonal values such as familial devotion or humanitarianism. Despite being universally accepted, Stage 3 (Social Conformity) values—which

prioritized familial relationships and social acceptability—were usually compromised to meet institutional obligations. According to the framework of the study, it is shown that the primary moral tenets of Kurdish moral discourse are obligation and legality.

From cognitive view, these results align with Dual-Process Theory. Stage 4 thinking is very similar to System 1 processing, which is based on internalized norms and socially accepted principles that can be readily and swiftly engaged with minimal cognitive effort. However, post-conventional reasoning requires System 2 processing, which includes abstraction, critical reflection, and the capacity to evaluate or challenge established laws (Stages 5 and 6). The data revealed that this type of reasoning was less prevalent and unequally distributed throughout the sample. Cognitive load has a major role in shaping these patterns. Since moral issues need people to simultaneously mix emotional, social, and legal factors, they place a significant cognitive strain on them. Respondents characteristically resort to cognitively efficient techniques, mainly law-based and authority-oriented judgments, when cognitive load increases. This "moral regression" toward Stage 4 should be understood as an adaptive answer rather than a shortage, enabling moral certainty and social legitimacy under cognitive pressure.

While women displayed slightly greater Stage 3 interpersonal inclinations, males placed more emphasis on Stage 4 legal and property-based reasoning, despite the fact that gender differences were minimal in demographic research. Participants who were older and more educated had more access to Stage 5 reasoning, highlighting the significance of education and cognitive maturity in post-conventional moral growth. Age and professional background were also associated with more significant differences.

By considering Kohlberg's stages as discursively activated, context-sensitive modes of thinking rather than as fixed developmental endpoints, this work makes a theoretical contribution. By elucidating the reasons behind people's moral stage transitions in response to situational demands, the integration of cognitive theories responds to criticisms of Kohlberg's paradigm. Practically speaking, the results highlight the value of teaching strategies that encourage critical thinking and ethical conversation, both of which assist students in engaging with increasingly complex moral reasoning. In short, institutional structures, cultural values, and cognitive constraints interact dynamically to form Kurdish moral discourse. Due to its cultural foundation and cognitive flexibility, law-oriented morality is prevalent. Getting an understanding of this relationship lays a strong basis for further study as well as for civic and educational programs meant to promote morally sound thinking.

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