Gender differences in the moral judgment and behavior of Israeli adolescents in the internet environment

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A questionnaire was administered to 1,072 students in the 7th to 11th grades

# Abstract

This study explored differences between genders regarding adolescents’ behavioral characteristics and moral judgment in the Internet environment. A questionnaire was administered to 1,048 students in the 7th to 11th grades in six different schools, one class in each grade. The questionnaire included personal data, characteristics of Internet interaction patterns, moral dilemmas in daily life, and moral dilemmas in the virtual environment. No significant differences were found between the genders regarding the age usage of the Internet began, Internet experience, and average daily hours of Internet use. We found that boys prefer, more than girls, to surf at school and in Internet cafés. Girls tend to use the Internet more for doing homework and blogs than boys, whereas boys tend to play Internet games more than girls. Gender differences were found regarding immoral behavior. Boys were involved more frequently than girls in behaviors such as cyberbullying, plagiarism, impersonation, and downloading music and movies illegally from the Internet. A correlation was found between gender and moral judgment. Although both boys and girls made relatively little “humane judgment” in the Internet environment, girls tended to make “humane judgment” more frequently than boys. In the Internet environment, boys tended to make “absence of judgment” evaluations more than girls. Girls tended, relatively more, toward “normative judgment” that reflects adherence to peer-group conventions with minimal reflexivity.

# Outcome

In the current significant differences were found between boys and girls with regard to the place where they actually surf (Bouhnik Mor, 2014). Boys tend more than girls to surf at school and Internet cafés. With regard to other locations, there are no differences. With regard to activities on the Internet, it was found that girls use the Internet more often than boys for doing homework. Girls also participate in the reading and writing of blogs more than boys. Boys, on the other hand, play more online games than girls. A significant correlation was found between gender and the general moral judgment profile, the real-life moral judgment profile, and the Internet moral judgment profile. Girls tend to practice “humane judgment” more often than boys, whereas boys tend toward the other types of judgment. Analyzing the gender differences, a connection was found between “lack of judgment” and gender, with boys tending to avoid judging more in the virtual-world dilemmas than in real-life dilemmas. A connection was found between gender
and moral dilemmas about plagiarism, cyberbullying, and virus-spreading. Girls clearly chose “humane judgment” more often in these dilemmas, whereas boys tended toward the other types of judgments. It is not clear why girls chose “humane judgment” specifically in these cases but not in the music and movie downloading dilemma or in the copying computer game dilemma. This research found consistency between humane judgment and moral behavior, concurring with boys’ practice of humane judgment in the virtual environment being less frequent than girls; we also found that boys tend to admit to behaviors that are considered immoral.