

## Un pequeño cambio en la ética del profesor universitario

*A Small Change in the Ethics of the University Professor*

*Uma pequena mudança na ética do professor universitário*

Víctor Hugo Robles-Francia

Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, México

[vicrob13@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:vicrob13@yahoo.com.mx)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1046-4768>

### Resumen

Este artículo reporta el efecto en el juicio moral de 36 profesores universitarios producido por una intervención basada en la discusión emocional de dilemas morales. Para ello, se asumió el juicio moral como variable dependiente, el pretest y el postest de la intervención como variable independiente y se controló el experimento mediante la covarianza de la edad. El efecto del tamaño de la intervención fue nulo a partir del valor de la eta parcial al cuadrado. Pero el cambio del juicio moral de los académicos fue positivamente pequeño en 4.41 puntos. Sin embargo, el valor correspondiente de la edad evidenció un efecto mediano en el incremento del juicio moral. De hecho, se pudo apreciar que la estructura del razonamiento moral en adultos, como los académicos estudiados, es flexible aún, y no tan inmutable como se ha reportado en otras investigaciones. En este sentido, conviene revisar los dilemas morales emocionales considerando la edad como parte del diseño del dilema.

**Palabras claves:** dilemas-morales, discusión-emocional, intervención, juicio-moral, profesores-universitarios.

## Abstract

This article reports the effect on the moral judgment of 36 university professors produced by an intervention based on the emotional discussion of moral dilemmas. For this, the moral judgment was assumed as a dependent variable, the pretest and the posttest of the intervention as an independent variable and the experiment was controlled by the covariance of age. The intervention size effect, the partial eta squared was zero. But the change in the moral judgment of the academics was positively small at 4.41 points. However, the corresponding value of age evidenced a median effect in the increase of moral judgment. In fact, it could be seen that the structure of moral reasoning in adults, like the academics studied, is still flexible, and not as immutable as has been reported in other investigations. In this sense, it is convenient to review emotional moral dilemmas considering age as part of the design of the dilemma.

**Keywords:** Moral-dilemmas, emotional-discussion, intervention, moral-judgment, university-professors.

## Resumo

Este artigo relata o efeito no julgamento moral de 36 professores universitários produzido por uma intervenção baseada na discussão emocional dos dilemas morais. Para tanto, o julgamento moral foi assumido como variável dependente, o pré-teste e o pós-teste da intervenção como variável independente e o experimento foi controlado pela covariância da idade. O efeito do tamanho da intervenção foi zero do valor da eta parcial ao quadrado. Mas a mudança no julgamento moral dos acadêmicos foi positivamente pequena em 4,41 pontos. No entanto, o valor correspondente da idade evidenciou um efeito mediano no aumento do julgamento moral. De fato, pode-se ver que a estrutura do raciocínio moral em adultos, como os acadêmicos estudados, ainda é flexível, e não tão imutável quanto foi relatado em outras investigações. Nesse sentido, é conveniente rever os dilemas morais emocionais considerando a idade como parte do desenho do dilema.

**Palabras-chave:** dilema-moral, discusión-emocional, intervención, juicio moral, profesores universitarios.

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## Introduction

According to Boroel and Arámburo (2016), teachers of the various disciplines recognize the importance of the university as an ideal place for teaching and ethical training and morality, which happens because they play the role of moral agent to continue with the functions restrictive of parents and family (Shelina and Mitina, 2015). This means that the degree of performance as a teacher is related to the level of moral judgment (Cartwright and Simpson, 1990), which is not usually assumed by teacher preparation programs (Zagorin, 1998).

This, obviously, can generate multiple disadvantages, because if the professors do not know the phases of the moral decisions, then they will be unable to gestate their own change and to favorably affect the students (Douglas, 2006), since as Rojas and Deulofeu express it (2015), what really impacts its students is the coherence of the teacher around what he says and does, hence the need to perfect the competence of the moral judgment of the teacher to face contemporary morality (Sileo, Sileo and Pierce, 2008). This is indispensable because several studies have shown that a low level of moral judgment competence can promote dishonest actions.

As an example of this statement we can take the study by Diez-Martínez (2015), who in his research points out the indifferent attitude that some teachers usually take in the face of inappropriate behaviors such as plagiarism, the purchase of tasks by students or the lack of transparency in accreditations. What happens, as explained by Pečujlija, Cosić and Ivanišević (2011), is that the morality of teachers depends on the particular situations in which they find themselves, as well as on the moral conscience to base their reasoning on decision-making (Angulo and Acuña, 2005). In other words, ethical commitment does not

simply happen through deontological behavior, but rather through the conviction and commitment with the work done, which consists in the formation of better human beings (Rojas , 2011).

For this reason, this investigation seeks to expand research on the increase in moral reasoning of teachers around the consequences and the choice between different courses of action through emotional deliberation on individual and collective rules, called in this case as a competence of the moral judgment of university professors (García, 2010), which is becoming a foundation of effective teaching and provision, through the development of new programs that begin to conceive of moral development as an essential subject (Johnson, 2008). This with the purpose of offering "additional endowments" to train a democratic and equitable educator.

On this aspect, the work of Johnson (2008) demonstrates, on the one hand, that moral judgment is a key construct of the teacher's disposition because it allows him to recognize the multifaceted dimensions of students' moral judgment and, on the other, that Teacher behavior affects students in their moral education, in which they use their own experiences as moral dilemmas to obtain a more realistic meaning.

Also, on the moral judgment of teachers it is worth commenting on the research of Al-Shurai (2012), who found a predominantly conventional reasoning of Kohlberg's taxonomy in the participants of his study (100 secondary teachers of Kuwait whose average age was 28.6 years). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the interventions in moral development considers the cognitive basis exposed by Kohlberg (1958), who points out that people reach adult life in a conventional stage and exceptionally achieve a reflective post-universal level of universal principles. For this author, the moral judgment is established in a logical stage or cognitive structure of the subject, which ponders the actions of others with respect to his and encourages him to balance the situation in a fair position. In this sense, Lind (2004) defines moral judgment as a consistent competition that encourages the individual to act.

The interventions in the moral judgment assume the precept of the cognitive stage, the personal basis of logical dissertation on the right or wrong of an action, by means of which the stimulus is deliberated and urged to make a decision about the correctness of the

story or of the dilemma, resembling Kolberg's (1992) process in the dilemmas during his interview. The theory of moral judgment of Kohlberg (1958, 1964, 1992), based in turn on Piaget's stadium construct (1974), has supported the work developed by Rest and Narváez (1998), Pérez (1997), Lind (2005). ), Heredia (2013), Carrillo (1992), among others. This has marked a time about the cognition of the rules, their fulfillment and the sense of justice through the six stages of moral judgment.

However, Amorim Arantes De Araújo and Sastre Vilarrasa (2003), as well as Greene and Haidt (2002) show uncertainties about the predominance of emotional thought in the juicio and in the moral character. The statements of these authors, in addition to the meager results of the interventions based on cognitivist theory, which supports the discussion of moral dilemmas, made by Gutiérrez and Vivó (2005), Hernández-Mendo and Planchuelo (2014) and Robles (2011a) , they oblige us to consider the emotional component as an important part of the intervention of moral judgment, since this aspect influences various intrapsychic and interpersonal processes (Tracy and Robins, 2004). From this, the following hypothesis was formed:

### **Hypothesis**

The discussion of emotional moral dilemmas favorably affects the competence of the moral judgment of teachers. Operationally, the intervention by discussing dilemmas and emotions with the literal  $K_e$ , the literal C with C and the increase with  $\Delta$ , we have:

$$\text{Si } K_e \Rightarrow \Delta C$$

### **Method**

In the present investigation an experiment was carried out, in the sense of comparing the modifications that an independent variable or a directed action can cause in a dependent variable, as suggested by Rodríguez (2011). Specifically, the experiment consisted in contrasting the changes caused by the method of discussing emotional moral dilemmas about the moral judgment of teachers. To analyze the effect of the intervention, the univariate

variance test was run using the statistical software SPSS (version 22.0), and the result of the value of the partial square eta was observed on the pretest and posttest of the moral judgment. Moral judgment was quantified using Lind's C index (2004) as a dependent variable, the test (pretest and posttest) as a fixed factor and age as a covariate (López-Roldán and Fachelli, 2015).

### Participants

The participants were 36 university professors (27 with a master's degree and 9 with a bachelor's degree) from a technologist from southeast Mexico, with an average age of 36.89 years (14 females and 22 males) and with an average of 13.59 years of professional experience. Likewise, with a school performance in his last grade of studies of 9.05 out of 10, and 19.98 school years taken (Table 1).

**Tabla 1.** Datos de los participantes

Edad promedio	Género	Experiencia profesional	Desempeño escolar	Grado académico	Años escolares cursados
36.89	14 femeninos 22 masculinos	13.59	9.05	27 maestría 9 licenciatura	18.98

Fuente: Elaboración propia

### Instrument

All the participants completed, before and after the intervention, the Moral Judgment Questionnaire CJM of Lind (2008). The CJM quantified the C index of moral judgment (Lind, 1999), which measures the subject's reasoning consistency and focuses on its quality. The CJM has two stories that form two respective dilemmas, six arguments in favor and six against the decision made by the protagonist of the story. In this each argument represents one of the six basic orientations described by Kohlberg (1992). Thus, the items make up an experimental 2x2x6 design, answer about their degree of agreement with the resolution of the dilemma and the level of acceptance of each of the items corresponding to the six Kohlbergian stages, on a scale differentiated from -4 to +4.

## Intervention

The applied procedure followed what was suggested by Robles (2011b), with five sessions in a week, of 90 minutes each. In addition, in the fourth and fifth sessions, the design and exposure of a specific dilemma of the participants was integrated:

- a. *Exhibition by the teacher.* In each of the first three sessions, a different emotional moral dilemma was presented to the participants, which were narrated by the facilitator. The participants were encouraged to participate through questions that were asked to try to know their emotional feelings during the presentation of the dilemma. Then, they were invited to share their perceptions and to reflect with the other participants in small groups, which sought to stimulate an increase in moral judgment (Robles, 2011b).
- b. *Elaboration and discussion of dilemmas:* In this part of the procedure (fourth and fifth session) the participants themselves designed a dilemma based on their disciplinary contexts. This was exposed and discussed among all, integrating part of the discussion procedure of dilemmas of Robles (2011b) and a fraction of the intervention program of Hernández-Mendo y Planchuelo (2014).

## Results

The C index, the competence of the moral judgment of the 36 participating teachers, before the intervention was 12.94 points out of 100, with an average deviation of 0.128 and a standard error average of 0.0213, while after the intervention it obtained 17.35 points, an average deviation of 0.104 and a standard error mean of .0173 (Table 2). This represented a favorable change (4.41 points) with less standard deviation and less average standard error.

**Tabla 2.** Estadísticas de grupo

	TEST	N	Media	Desviación estándar	Media de error estándar
Índice C	Pretest	36	12.94	.128	.0213
	Postest	36	17.35	.104	.0173

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Likewise, the Shapiro Wilk normality test was carried out on the difference between the C, pretest and posttest index, which gave a value of 0.268 higher than 0.05 (Table 3), which rejects the null hypothesis, since it is shown that It has a normal distribution.

**Tabla 3.** Prueba de normalidad de la diferencia pretest y postest

	Shapiro-Wilk		Sig.
	Estadístico	Gl	
Diferencia pre-pos-test	.963	36	.268

Fuente: Elaboración propia

### Statistical analysis and hypothesis testing

The analysis was carried out in the following way: according to the size of the groups and the normality condition, the parametric test of the analysis of variance that has a normal distribution was applied, as suggested by Gómez-Gómez, Danglot-Banck and Vega -Franco (2013). To observe the result of the intervention, the univariate analysis of variance was performed, particularly observing the size of the effect through the partial square eta. For this, the C index was established as a dependent variable, as an independent variable (fixed factor) the test (pretest and posttest) and as a control variable (covariate) age (López-Roldán and Fachelli, 2015).

The hypothesis was partially supported. The intervention through the discussion of emotional moral dilemmas favorably impacted on the Moral Judgment Competition of the CJMP Professors. The CJMP, quantified by the C index, had a positive change of 4.41 out of 100, while in the change in the moral judgment, a lower standard deviation and a lower average standard error were observed (Fig. 1). However, it can be seen that the effect of size, from the value of the partial eta squared test (pretest and posttest) of 0.004, was zero in the C index. Conversely, the value of the square partial age recorded a value of 0.125, evidencing a median effect of age on the increase of the C index (Table 4). Likewise, the intersubject effect test recorded a p-value of 0.009, less than 0.05, a corrected significant model of the C-index through the test and age variables, where the test variable (pretest and posttest) had a p-value



of 0.604, greater than 0.05, showing that it does not affect the C index; the p-value of age 0.003 less than 0.05 does explain the index C (Tabla 4).

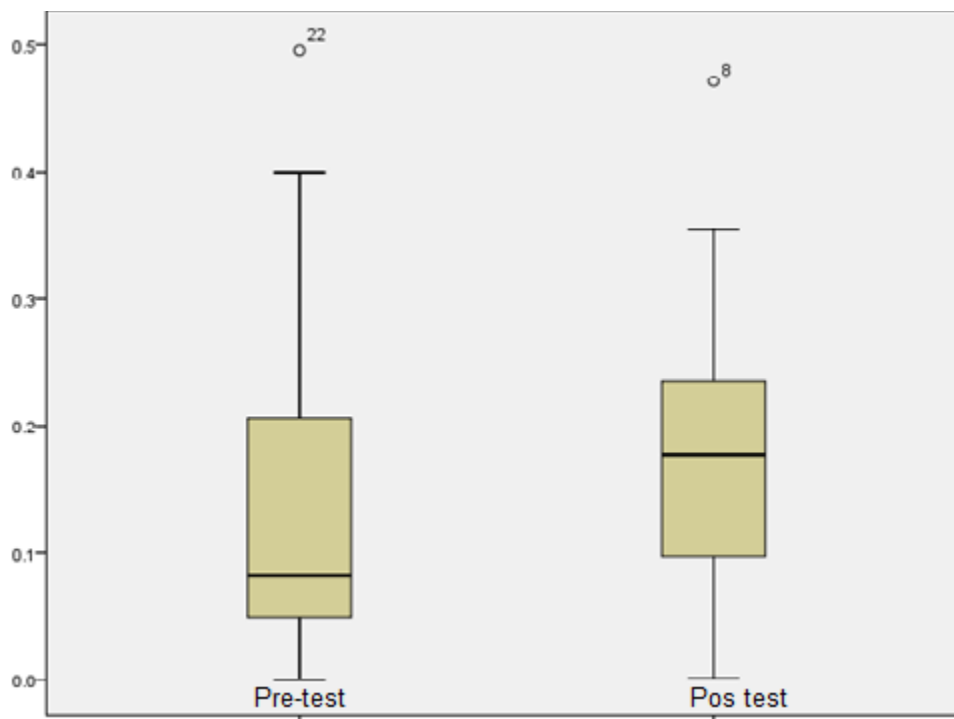
**Tabla 4.** Prueba de efecto inter-sujetos

Variable dependiente: Índice C						
<u>Origen</u>	<u>Tipo III de suma de cuadrados</u>	<u>Gl</u>	<u>Cuadrático promedio</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>	<u>Eta parcial al cuadrado</u>
Modelo corregido	.154 <sup>a</sup>	3	.051	4.203	.009	.156
Interceptación	.008	1	.008	.677	.414	.010
TEST * edad	.000	1	.000	.040	.842	.001
TEST	.003	1	.003	.272	.604	.004
Edad	.118	1	.118	9.686	.003	.125
Error	.828	68	.012			
Total	2.633	72				
Total corregido	.981	71				

a. R al cuadrado = .156 (R al cuadrado ajustada = .119)

Fuente: Elaboración propia

**Figura 1.** Resultados promedios del índice C producidos por la intervención



Fuente: Elaboración propia

## Discussion

The increase of 4.41 points, with less standard deviation and less average of standard error, of the competence of the moral judgment of the teachers of 36.89 years, after the intervention through the discussion of emotional moral dilemmas, did not represent any effect. This is similar to that found by Gutiérrez and Vivó (2005), who did not report significant changes in the experimental group intervened in adolescents of secondary level, although they did register an average increase. On the other hand, previous results of Robles (2011a) on the competence of moral judgment in adults had negative results. In this sense, the slight increase in adulthood studied is valuable.

The positive change in the competence of the moral judgment of teachers in the present investigation is similar to that found by Hernández-Mendo and Planchuelo (2014), although in children from 8 to 11 years, whose level of moral judgment had a small change of pre-conventional to conventional. The intervention procedure in the present study integrated

a stage where the participants designed and exposed their own emotional moral dilemma, similar to the stage where Gutiérrez and Vivó (2005) caused the adolescents to make, expose and discuss a moral dilemma. From this, according to the results of Gutiérrez and Vivó (2005) and Hernández-Mendo and Planchuelo (2014), rescuing the discussion of dilemmas, and by virtue of the results of this research, emotions in the design and discussion of the moral dilemmas.

Likewise, and although it was not part of the hypothesis of this investigation (it was only a control variable), age did have a medium effect on the competence of moral judgment. In fact, it could be seen that the structure of moral reasoning in adulthood of the academics studied is still malleable, and not so solid and unbreakable, as pointed out by Kohlberg (1992) and as pointed out by Pérez (1997). In this sense, it is convenient to review the emotional moral dilemmas considering age as part of the design of the dilemma, as well as the procedure to adjust it to the corresponding ages of the discussion of the proposed conflict.

## **Conclusions**

The small increase in the moral judgment of teachers is an incentive to delve into the search for their perfection in adulthood through interventions based on emotions in moral dilemmas. Likewise, a proactive process where participants expose, discuss and create dilemmas based on their own contexts facilitates the conditions for the development of moral judgment, as part of an intervention.

In addition, although the increase in the competence of the moral judgment was not an effect of the intervention, age represented a median effect in such competition, since it was perceived that the structure of moral reasoning in adulthood (specifically of 36.89 average years in this research) is elastic and not so immutable, as stipulated in the cognitivist theory of moral judgment.

In the intervention carried out, finally, the changes produced in the C index were compared, addressing the changes produced by an artificial situation, in this case the effect of the method of discussion of emotional moral dilemmas on the competence of the moral judgment. This study is an initial effort on the affectation of emotions in dilemmas and their intervention in

moral judgment in an adult population, this with the purpose of providing a solution on the need to develop key competences, as well as the improvement of the discussion to give a change in the teaching-learning, in this case, of the competence of the moral judgment of the academics.

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