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Moral Disengagement and Suicidal Ideation: Leading to Peace and War Attitude

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Abstract

The study explains that suicidal ideation and moral disengagement can foster or bring change in attitudes towards peace and war. Data was collected through survey method. It was hypothesized that moral disengagement and suicidal ideation effects attitude towards peace and war. Results showed that moral disengagement and suicidal ideation bring change in attitudes towards peace ($B = -.23$ and $-.27$ respectively) and war ($B = -.31$ and $-.20$ respectively). The study highlights attitudes towards peace are correlated with suicidal ideation, attitudes towards war are also correlated with suicidal ideation and moral disengagement. The study climaxes the need to alter the activities leads to moral disengagement and suicidal ideation which ultimately leads to boost attitude towards peace and mitigate attitude towards war.

Key Words: Moral disengagement, Suicidal ideation, Peace & War attitude

Introduction

In a society like Pakistan people usually involves in activities that are morally disengaging and that is because of their development the way their parents raised them. Morally disengaged people and people who have suicidal thoughts usually make a perception about develop an attitude either of war or peace. Attitudes towards peace and war usually play role in civil wars and domestic violence etc.

Moral disengagement means a psychological process in which people validate their problematic behavior, allowing them to behave corruptly without

guilt. In one study of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory states that moral disengagement enables execution of progressively harmful violations and freeing the offenders of guilt. Another research stated that moral disengagement occurs when there is selective detachment of the self-evaluative system that guide morality. (Luo & Bussey 2023). Moral disengagement is also correlated with the exposure of violent video games, and facilitate the relationship between video games and offline aggression (Ak et al., 2021). Moral disengaging behavior is a challenging reality that assumes a linkage of personal, behavioral and environmental factors rooted in the social cognitive theory of moral agency from which moral disengagement is a fraction. (Bandura, 1986). In one study it was stated that morally disengaging behavior and bullying is also crucial in keeping in mind that developments in defining different bullying roles (Bussey et al., 2020). Moral disengagement evolves gradually, with young adults involved in high level of moral disengagement than youngster, commonly hitting the peak in middle adolescence (Paciello et al., 2008). Initial findings suggests that moral disengagement may change depending on different socialization practices among different cultural contexts (Bussey, 2020). Elements like family environment, cultural origins, and fellow relationships influence one's moral values, their self-efficacy to exhibit behaviors, and other modes of self-regulation, which control vulnerability to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1991, 2001).

Morally disengaging behaviour in late childhood may be more significantly shaped by parental involvement, whereas components such as fellow relationships (Caravita et al., 2014) and social competition (Volk et al., 2015) may play a greater role in shaping morally disengaging behavior in adolescence. Gini et al. (2015b) determined that at peer level morally disengaging behavior affected the relationship between aggression and individual disengagement, where youth showed higher level of involvement in bullying other people when they observed their peers also having higher levels of moral disengaged behaviour.

Suicidal ideation are the thoughts or plans about suicide. It can vary from temporary thoughts to in depth planning, but it does not always result in an absolute suicide. Suicidal ideations are mostly connected to mental health state such as anxiety, depression, PTSD etc. Strong predictor of attempted suicide is suicidal ideation. Thinking about, considering, or planning suicide are included in suicidal ideation. (Menezes et al., 2012). Major public health concern is suicide, it significantly enlarging the global burden of disease and mortality (World Health Organization, 2024). In a study stated that someone who wants to take their own life or thinking about it to do so or thoughts of death that impede with their daily life is called suicidal ideation (Allarakha & Uttekar, 2021).

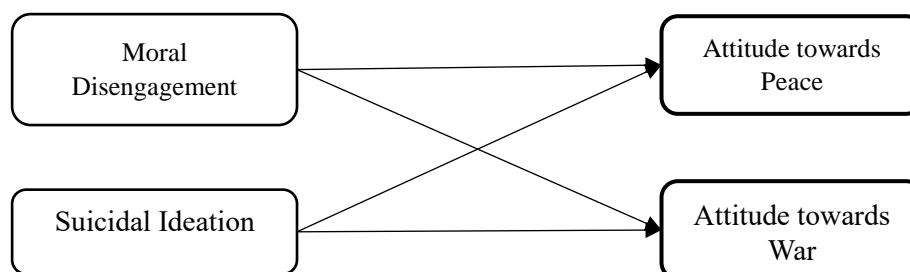
Research shows that there is more suicidal ideation than the actual suicide attempts so we should mostly focus on the preventative measures and efforts (Klonsky et al., 2021). Recent study has explained the sophisticated nature of suicidal ideation, which stem from an amalgum of psychological, biological, and

environmental factors (Klonsky et al., 2016). Environmental stressors, like financial stress, unemployment, and a lack of social support, can aid suicidal ideation (Safaei Lari and Emamgholipour, 2023). In research it was demonstrated that suicidal thoughts are very usual and essential risk factor for suicide attempts (Nock et al., 2008). Studies globally have inspected the risk and preventive factors related with suicidal behavior (Hawton and van Heeringen, 2009). Panagioti et al. (2012) explained connections between entrapment, defeat and suicidal ideation and behavior in people who went through a traumatic event (i.e., physical threats, crimes, serious accidents, natural disasters and combat exposure) whether or not current PTSD. Research explains the major factors behind suicidal ideation in students are academic stress, mental health issues, and feelings of isolation (Fernández-García et al., 2023). High suicidal intention, depression, and hopelessness in suicide endeavorer is correlated with low level of subjective psychological well-being is associated (Sisask et al., 2008).

Empathy, conflict resolution, sense of interconnectedness, being able to understand and appreciate the perspective of others, peaceful society and a strong sense of self etc. all these elements is what an attitude towards peace is composed of. It is the beliefs, feelings and opinion of a person regarding warfare. These attitudes comprise militarism (an ideology or the wish of a government or a public that a country should maintain a strong military and be equipped to use it aggressively to protect and advance national interests.) and pacifism (the ideology that war and violence are unjustifiable and that all conflicts should be resolve in a peaceful way). Regardless of the military operations trying to restore peace in places like Swat and Dir, areas such as Waziristan still fight with upholding peace, where terrorists that are supported by locals, conceal and hire or enlist for their agendas (Mirza & Babar, 2020; Nadeem et al., 2021).

In a study it was mentioned that this current terrorism, especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), shows up as psychological warfare, influencing those directly affected by U.S.-led GWOT in Afghanistan and successive revolt (Schmid, 2005). Patriotism-nationalism has been another factor closely associated to militaristic attitudes (Feshbach, 1990). Patriotism is one's positive emotional attachment toward his country, whereas nationalism is the need to be superior or elite to other nations (Allport, 1927; Mead, 1929). "Personality traits such as hostility were not associated with war attitudes." Said Lester (1994) in a study. Adolescents mostly around the age of 13 in the U.S. were discovered to have more positive attitudes about war and the likelihood of the U.S. winning a war than their Canadian supporter (Covell, 1996). Aron (1986) states that war had long been remained in all civilizations, as well as the examining human nature and the dichotomy peace/war, both ongoing challenges to humankind.

Study Conceptual Model



Study

Hypotheses

H1: Moral Disengagement and suicidal ideation effects attitude towards peace and war.

Method

Measurement Instruments

Participants

The population of this study where we collected data from different location and different people i-e form prisoners, drug addicts and college students. Total 354 individual were involved in participation; data was collected from four different place. The data collected from people out of which prisoners were 33.1% (n=117), drug addicts were 13.8% (n=49), students were 24.9% (n=88) and online participants were 28.2% (n=100). Out of all the participants 79.7% (n=282) were males and 20.3% (n=72) were females. Based on education 23.4% (n=83) were bachelors students, 70.6% (n=250) have done FSc, 5.1% (n=18) have done Matric, 0.8% (n=3) were masters students. Of the participants 34.7% (n=123) were married and 65.3% (n=231) were unmarried. From the participants 105 individuals were prisoners and only 2.5% (n=9) participants mentioned that they some type of mental illness. The treatment of participants, their anonymity, the acquisition of their free and informed consent, and the maintenance of complete confidentiality were all conducted following ethical principles. The purposive sampling method was used in the study and collected data.

Moral Disengagement

The Moral disengagement scale is a 32-item questionnaire developed to measure a child's inclination to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1995). Items were rated on a three point scale (0=Disagree, 1=Not Sure, 2=Agree). The Moral disengagement scale measures eight mechanisms of moral disengagement: Moral justification, Diffusion of responsibility, Displacement of responsibility, Distorting consequences, Attribution of blame, Advantageous comparison, Euphemistic language and Dehumanization. An alpha coefficient for the scale was .82.

Suicidal Ideation

The 10-item Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS; Rudd, 1989) is a screening and assessment tool that gives critical information about the absence or presence of suicidal thoughts, the potency of those thinking, and the presence or absence of previous suicide attempts. The Suicidal ideation scale is scored on a Likert format scale with anchors at 1 (never) to 5 (always or all of the times) based on how the respondents have felt or behaved over the past year (Rudd, 1989). A five points scale (1=Never, 2=Infrequently, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, and 5=Always). The total score ranges from 10 to 50. Based on results from the initial Suicidal ideation scale validation study (Rudd, 1989). The Suicidal ideation scale has high internal consistency of Cronbach alpha = .86, as well as sufficient item-total correlations $r_s = .45$ to $.74$ (Rudd, 1989).

Attitude Towards Peace and War Scale

Attitudes towards peace and war was developed by Bizumic et al. (2013). A 16-items scale with equal number of items for both subscales i.e., attitude towards war and attitude towards peace. The responses differ from (Strongly Disagree= -4 to Strongly Agree= +4) with nine-points scoring. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .83 (Bizumic et al., 2013).

Procedure

In initial stage was taking permission from the authorities of the concern organization\institution. Purposive sampling technique was used to approach students, prisoners and drug addicts in the second step. In the third step, individuals were provided with a comprehensive explanation, emphasizing the voluntary role of their participation and clarifying that no academic credit would be granted as an incentive for participating in the research survey. Questionnaires were distributed among participants, with which spending approximately 15 to 20 minutes on completion. Following the conclusion of data collection, all questionnaire responses were concluded, and the data were inputted into data management software, namely SPSS and AMOS, and subsequently subjected to analyzation.

Analytic Approach

SPSS and AMOS were used to conduct statistical studies. Descriptive statistics were computed based on the sample's characteristics. Regression analyses were used to determine whether the moral disengagement and suicidal ideation significantly predicted attitudes towards peace and war. For this study, the reliability of scales according to Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory.

Ethical approval

Informed consent was taken from the participants, and explained the participants about the purpose of the current research. No such committee exists in our institute; therefore, all the ethical procedures were taken into examination during the entire process.

Result Study

Table 1. Regression Analysis between Moral disengagement, Suicidal Ideation and Attitude towards Peace.

Variables	<i>B</i>	95%CI		<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
		LB	UB				
						.094	.094***
Constant	15.64	[8.88	22.39]	3.42			
Moral Disengagement	-.233***	[-.49	.023]	.130	-.137***		
Suicidal Ideation	-.276***	[-.425	-.128]	.075	-.282***		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval

*** $P < .001$.

Table 1 shows the impact of moral disengagement and suicidal ideation on prisoners, drug addicts and students' attitude towards peace. The R^2 value of (.094) revealed moral disengagement and suicidal ideation explains a 9% variance in attitudes towards peace's level of drug addicts, prisoners and students with $F=8.07$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed moral disengagement ($\beta = -.137$, $p < .001$) and suicidal ideation ($\beta = -.282$, $p < .001$) both negatively predicted attitudes towards peace.

Table 2. Regression Analysis between Moral disengagement, Suicidal Ideation and Attitude towards War.

Variables	<i>B</i>	95%CI		<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
		LB	UB				
						.068	.068**
Constant	16.29	[9.07	23.51]	3.65			
Moral Disengagement	-.315**	[-.588	.042]	.138	-.178**		
Suicidal Ideation	-.206**	[-.365	-.048]	.080	-.201**		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval

*** $P < .001$.

Table 2 shows the impact of moral disengagement and suicidal ideation on prisoners, drug addicts and students' attitude towards war. The R^2 value of (.068) revealed moral disengagement and suicidal ideation explains a 6% variance in attitudes towards war's level of drug addicts, prisoners and students with $F=5.60$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed moral disengagement ($\beta = -.178$, $p < .001$) and suicidal ideation ($\beta = -.201$, $p < .001$) both negatively predicted attitudes towards peace.

Table 3 - Evaluation Table of Correlation among Variables of the study model (N=354)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Moral Disengagement	24.11	6.20	-	-	-	-	-
Suicidal Ideation	12.83	10.74	-.050	-	-	-	-
Attribute							
Attitude Towards Peace	6.50	10.53	-.123	-.279**	-	-	-
Attitude Towards War	5.98	10.99	-.166*	-.189*	.550**	-	-

$p < .001$ *. Correlation is significant at level of 0.01 (2-tailed).

The analysis revealed that suicidal ideation was not significantly with moral disengagement ($r = .050$, $p < .05$). Attitudes towards peace negatively correlated with suicidal ideation ($r = -.279$, $p < .01$) which means that individual with high suicidal ideation tend to have low attitude towards peace. Also attitude towards war significantly associated with moral disengagement ($r = -.166$, $p < .01$) and suicidal ideation ($r = -.189$, $p < .01$) shows that higher level of moral disengagement and suicidal ideation are correlated with a lower attitude towards war. Also there was strong correlation between attitude towards peace and attitude towards war ($r = .055$, $p < .001$) which means that people with higher attitude towards peace also exhibit a higher attitude towards war. These findings suggests that attitudes towards peace and war are significantly associated with suicidal ideation and moral disengagement.

General Discussion

The present study analyzed the data collected from 354 individuals from different institutes already mentioned. The sample both consisted males and females. Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that only right-wing authoritarianism anticipate moral justification for war and diffusion of responsibility and only social dominancy theory anticipate reduces consequences and dehumanizing of blaming the victim (Jackson & Gaertner, 2010).

To test the hypothesis, a model was proposed in the present study whereby it was hypothesized that moral disengagement and suicidal ideation would affect attitudes towards peace and war (H1). The findings partially support our hypothesis. Moral disengagement and suicidal ideation effects attitude towards peace among prisoner, drug addicts and students. Both moral disengagement and suicidal ideation negatively predicted attitudes towards peace which means that if moral disengagement and suicidal ideation increases so the attitude towards peace will likely decrease. Suicidal ideation has stronger negative effect than moral disengagement on attitude towards peace which means that people with higher

suicidal thoughts will have less attitude towards peace than moral disengagement. Suicidal ideation has more impact than moral disengagement.

Our findings also showed that moral disengagement and suicidal ideation also influences attitudes towards war among drug addicts, prisoners and students. Suicidal ideation and moral disengagement both affects attitude towards war as well. Moral disengagement and suicidal ideation both negatively affect attitude towards war. In research it was explained the relationship between the systems of moral disengagement and support for lethal force (Reichert, B., 2019). Suicidal ideation has slightly more impact than moral disengagement on attitude towards war. These negative effects have different causes like disengaging from political and social issue from collective causes. War requires collective causes that requires an investment in group identity or connectedness and lacking of these things may lower the accuracy of war. People who experience suicidal ideation may feel that their lives have no worth which can cause a person less inclined towards involving in fighting for a collective cause. Moral disengagement can sometimes lead to emotional detachment rather than aggression can lead to actively supporting or opposing the war.

Our findings also showed the correlation between moral disengagement, suicidal ideation and attitudes towards peace and war. There was no strong association between moral disengagement and suicidal ideation which means that no matter if people are involve in moral disengagement doesn't impact suicidal ideation. There was a negative correlation between attitudes towards peace and suicidal ideation which means that people who have suicidal tendencies will less care about peace or people who values peace will less likely to have suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, there was a negative association between attitudes towards war and moral disengagement and suicidal ideation which means that people who are involve in moral disengagement and have high suicidal ideation tend to have less positive attitudes towards war. There was also found that there was a strong positive correlation between attitudes towards peace and war which means that higher appreciation for peace also tend to have higher attitude towards war. For maintaining a strong military hold for war is necessary for maintaining peace. Some people supports war to ensure the rights of other humans and stop violence against vulnerable people. All these findings suggest that people don't always see war and peace opposite to each other. People believe that war sometimes is necessary to achieve or maintain peace which is why people who have high attitudes towards peace might also more prone towards war.

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