



CNL-518 Topic 4: The Six Stages of Kohlberg

Scenario: A female adolescent's parents place a low priority on the value of education. In fact, they prefer that she care for younger siblings instead of studying or completing a high school education. It is March. To avoid caring for her younger siblings, she has made up a story that she has mandatory in-school suspension (ISS) for the rest of the school year. Her hope is that she can be able to participate in school activities and pursue her educational dreams.

Directions: Read the scenario listed above. Complete all sections of the matrix provided below from the perspective of an individual in each of the six stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and the information from the provided scenario. Use complete sentences and include proper scholarly citations for any sources used.

Level 1: Preconventional Morality

Stage	Adolescent's Perspective	Rationale for your Responses
Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment Orientation	The adolescent has developed an orientation towards obedience and punishment, where she is focused on avoiding punishment from her parents. This adolescent is neglecting her responsibilities of caring for her younger siblings, by fabricating the ISS story as a means of protecting herself from any potential punishment.	During the first stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals are mainly focused on avoiding punishment and seeking personal benefits (Snarey & Samuelson, 2014). Adolescents at this stage tend to act out of fear of consequences for not meeting their parents' expectations, rather than having a mature understanding of what is right and wrong.
Stage 2: Instrumental Relativist Orientation/Exchange of Favors	During stage 2 the adolescent has adopted an instrumental relativist orientation, where she views the situation as a means to achieve her personal goals. In this scenario, the adolescent is exchanging the truth about her ability to care for her sibling for the opportunity to participate in	During the second stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals prioritize personal gain and reciprocity over moral principles (Colby & Kohlberg, 2011). In this stage, people are more likely to make calculated moves and exchange the truth for a chance to pursue their own ambitions. For

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	school activities and pursue her educational dreams.	instance, the adolescent's decision to fabricate a story about ISS can be seen as a strategic move aimed at exchanging the truth to gain some personal advantage.
Stage 3: Conventional Level/Good Boy or Girl	The adolescent is experiencing a strong urge to balance her own personal goals with the need to maintain positive relationships with her parents. Despite the expectations placed upon her by her parents, she feels a need to pursue her own objectives and make her own decisions.	During the third stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, adolescents tend to be more focused on conforming to societal norms and expectations. At this stage, they may prioritize maintaining positive relationships with their parents and peers, while also striving to achieve their personal goals (Gibbs, 2019). They are becoming more aware of the importance of social order and authority. They may place a greater emphasis on following rules and fulfilling their obligations. This stage is important in shaping an individual's moral compass and laying the foundation for ethical decision-making in adulthood.
Stage 4: Maintaining the Social Order	During stage 4, this adolescent is facing a struggle between meeting her parents' expectations and pursuing her own educational and personal development goals. One way she attempts to navigate this conflict and assert control over her future is by creating a false story about in-school suspension.	During this stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, adolescent's start to think about societal norms and the significance of preserving social harmony (Gibbs, 2019). The adolescent's choice to fabricate a false story to follow her academic aspirations can be interpreted as an endeavor to question the prevailing family dynamics and

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		establish her independence within the broader social structure.
Stage 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights	The adolescent may perceive the situation as a conflict between her desire to pursue education and personal development with her parents' expectations for her to prioritize family responsibilities. By inventing the story about being suspended from school, she emphasizes her right to pursue education and personal growth as an individual.	In Stage 5 of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals consider the social contract, legal principles, and individual rights (Gibbs, 2019). The decision made by an adolescent to use deception as a means to achieve their educational dreams can be seen as a way to uphold their own beliefs and rights in the face of conflicting expectations.
Stage 6: Universal Principles	The adolescent may perceive the situation as a conflict between her inherent right to pursue education, personal growth, and self-fulfillment in contrast to the expectations imposed by her parents to prioritize family obligations. By inventing the story about in-school suspension, she is prioritizing her fundamental moral beliefs and ethical principles regarding the value of education and personal development.	At this stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals begin to rely on universal ethical principles and abstract reasoning to guide their decision-making (Colby & Kohlberg, 2011). The adolescent's decision to deceive her parents to pursue her educational dreams can reflect her commitment to principles of justice, fairness, and individual rights, even in the face of conflicting familial expectations.

References

- Colby, A., & Kohlberg, L. (2011). *The measurement of moral judgment* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbs, J. C. (2019). *Moral development and reality: Beyond the theories of Kohlberg, Hoffman, and Haidt*. Oxford University Press.
- Snarey, J., & Samuelson, P. L. (2014). Lawrence Kohlberg's revolutionary ideas: Moral education in the cognitive-developmental tradition. In *Handbook of Moral and Character Education* (pp. 77-99). Routledge.