Dealing with a Moral Dilemma by Five Groups of Children from Five States of the EU

Abstract

One of the most important roles of family is to raise children to become independent individuals, emotionally, socially as well as morally mature. It is a long-lasting process which is by no means easy. The already existent social norms play an important role. The aim of this paper is to map the ethical attitudes of children at the age of 11 to 14, evoked by L. Kohlberg’s dilemma (Joe’s dilemma). The reaction to Joe’s dilemma enables us to assess the level of the child’s moral discretion, and at the same time it more or less reflects the relationship of the child respondent with their parent. The research sample consisted of 511 children from 5 states of the EU (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain). We constructed a 12-item questionnaire, and the statements (items) were constructed in such a way that they enabled the children respondents to answer in accordance with L. Kohlberg’s stage theory (1984).

Orthogonal system Varimax (NCSS) was used; critical level was |0, 40|. Three independent factors were generated: Authoritarian father, Keeping the promise, Son’s rights.

All the respondents significantly agreed with factor 1; rather significantly agreed with Factors 2 and 3. They proceeded to the autonomous phase where there is a number of the respondents.

The girls are more ‘critical’ than the boys when assessing the father’s behaviour, both in the positive as well as negative meaning of the word itself. Children from divorced families much more than children from complete families disagree with father’s right to ask for money. Moral development of a child in a family is strongly influenced by the relationship between parents and children as well as among the children (siblings) themselves.