

What is right or wrong? People have been asking themselves this question since the beginning of the history of society. No wonder considerations on this topic find their place in philosophy, psychology, and other sciences. Morality is a set of rules that determine the answer to this question. However, this is not a simple answer. It is often ambiguous or relative. Many factors will affect moral functioning. One of them is the characteristics of the people who make the assessment. In this project, I will explore morality in people with autism spectrum condition (ASC) and how it is similar or different to people with no diagnosis of ASC.

Morality is an inherent feature of everyday social interactions. People with ASC have difficulty communicating and socializing. This is related to deficits in cognitive empathy, i.e., the ability to put oneself in another 'person's shoes and understand them. Thanks to this skill, one can create strong and stable relationships. Cognitive empathy affects effective communication and allows a person to respond accurately to the needs of others. Its absence often negatively impacts the relationships of people with ASC. The strength of many people with ASC is systematization, i.e., the ability to understand and analyze complex systems, such as machines, organizations, and natural phenomena. People with ASC can break down the system into smaller parts and identify the rules that govern it. It is worth noting, however, that people with ASC differ among themselves significantly in terms of symptoms, strengths, and weaknesses.

Due to the characteristics above, I suppose that individuals with ASC may differ from those not diagnosed with ASC in moral functioning. I'm going to conduct three studies, and in each one, I'm going to measure one of three moral issues: 1.) Moral decisions; are people on the spectrum more or less utilitarian? That is, do they evaluate the value of a given action in terms of profits and losses? Or are they more focused on moral norms?; 2.) Moral values; what moral values are particularly important to people with ASC? What do they value most: justice, loyalty, freedom, authority, sanctity, or care?; 3.) Moral self-assessment – how important is morality to individuals with ASC? Do people on the spectrum see themselves as moral? I will conduct each of the studies with the participation of two groups – a group of people on the spectrum and a group of non-autistic people. Comparing the results will allow me to study whether there are differences between individuals with ASC and individuals not diagnosed with ASC in the above-mentioned moral issues.

People with ASC perceive and understand the world uniquely, which also may apply to moral issues. By examining their moral functioning, we can gain insight into the diversity of moral perspectives and understand how they differ from the beliefs of the general population. Thanks to this project, it will be possible to better understand people with ASC and answer broader questions in the field of psychology, such as: what is the importance of cognitive empathy and systemizing for morality? The results of this project will allow for a deeper understanding of ASC and morality.