

Meta-Synthesis on Business Managers' Moral Intelligence: Designing a Model of Drivers, Outcomes, and Dimensions

Mohsen Ghomi Avili¹, MohammadJavad Taghipourian^{2,*}, Davood KiaKojouri³ and Reza Verij Kazemi⁴



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¹ PhD Student, Department of Public Administration, Chalous Branch, Islamic Azad University, Chalous, Iran; [id](#)

² Associate Professor, Department of Management, Chalous Branch, Islamic Azad University, Chalous, Iran; [id](#)

³ Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chalous Branch, Islamic Azad University, Chalous, Iran; [id](#)

⁴ Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chalous Branch, Islamic Azad University, Chalous, Iran; [id](#)

* Correspondence: mj.taghipourian@iau.ac.ir

Abstract: Moral intelligence is defined as the capacity to distinguish right from wrong and as the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles should be applied to our values and objectives. The present study aims to conduct a meta-synthesis on business managers' moral intelligence and design a model encompassing its drivers, outcomes, and dimensions. Using a systematic review and meta-synthesis methodology, the researcher analyzed the results and findings of previous studies. By following the seven-step method proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso, two categories of influencing and influenced factors of moral intelligence were identified: individual factors and organizational factors. Additionally, two components forming the dimensions of moral intelligence were identified: the emotional dimension and the cognitive dimension. Within the classification of factors influencing moral intelligence, six individual factors and three organizational factors were discovered. Regarding factors influenced by moral intelligence, nine individual factors and four organizational factors were identified. Furthermore, in the classification of moral intelligence dimensions, eight factors were identified for the emotional dimension and sixteen factors for the cognitive dimension.

Keywords: Moral intelligence, business, meta-synthesis method.

1. Introduction

In a general sense, intelligence is defined as the ability to think, learn, and adapt to new situations, encompassing various dimensions such as intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral intelligence. Intelligence also implies the ability to respond appropriately to stimuli. Broadly, intelligence is a term used to organize and describe human capacities, which gain meaningful expansion depending on cultural diversity and abilities [1]. Adhering to ethical principles and fostering moral intelligence in organizations promotes employee morale, subsequently improving service quality, increasing employee commitment and accountability, and ultimately achieving customer satisfaction and organizational sustainability [2].

Moral intelligence refers to the human mental capacity to determine how universal human principles relate to values, goals, and actions. It also reflects an individual's enthusiasm and ability to prioritize superior standards over self-interest or even considerations such as effectiveness in personal reactions. Individuals with moral intelligence integrate ethical principles into their actions [3]. Moral intelligence is one dimension of intelligence that provides a framework for appropriate human behavior and serves as a predictor of their actions [4-6].

The importance of moral intelligence lies in its ability to reduce conflicts, strengthen social bonds, improve communication skills, and facilitate better relationships. Individuals with moral intelligence consistently link their actions to ethical principles, fostering increased commitment and accountability, thereby enhancing both individual and group efficiency [7].

The role and significance of moral intelligence in refining interpersonal relationships and social interactions, particularly in professions that directly involve people and their lives, are highly pronounced [8-10]. Moral intelligence is a determinant of life conditions, defined as the ability to apply universal ethical principles to one's ethics, goals, and interactions systematically. It reflects an individual's willingness and capability to pursue non-personal objectives and address issues beyond personal interests, structuring dynamic and enduring rules that identify their activities within their environment [5, 11, 12].

In this study, the researcher aims to conduct a meta-synthesis on business managers' moral intelligence to design a model of its drivers, outcomes, and dimensions by analyzing the results and findings of previous studies. To achieve this, the researcher employed the seven-step method proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso.

2. Methodology

In this study, the researcher used the meta-synthesis method to propose a model of moral intelligence for managers. Meta-synthesis involves analyzing the findings of previous studies. Specifically, it focuses on qualitative studies, which may not necessarily include extensive theoretical frameworks. Instead of providing a collective summary of findings, it creates an interpretative synthesis of them (Zimmer, 2006).

To achieve the research objective—identifying the components of moral intelligence, along with its influencing and influenced factors—the study employed the seven-step method developed by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007).

3. Findings

Step One: Formulating Research Questions

This step utilizes a four-question algorithm to address the components of moral intelligence. The questions are categorized into four sections: what, who, when, and how to conduct the research.

Step Two: Systematic Review of the Literature

At this stage, the researcher systematically searched articles and studies published in various reputable domestic and international scientific journals, as well as general resources and websites of credible organizations. The goal was to identify reliable, valid, and relevant documents within an appropriate timeframe. Initially, related keywords were selected. Then, using search engines and credible websites, articles, theses, and materials were searched with the chosen keywords in both English and Persian.

Step Three: Identifying and Selecting Suitable Texts

In this step, the quality of studies was evaluated. The aim was to eliminate articles and books whose findings were deemed unreliable. Once articles were reviewed for relevance to the study components, the researcher assessed the psychological quality of the studies. Articles with findings deemed untrustworthy were excluded. Based on consultation with experts (university professors and specialists), the resources identified in the previous stage were reviewed step by step according to acceptance or rejection criteria. These criteria included ten questions designed to evaluate the quality of the initial qualitative studies.

The ten questions focused on the following:

1. Research objectives (evaluating whether the article has clear and specific goals).
2. Methodological rationale (assessing whether the chosen method is logical, appropriate, and scientific).
3. Research design (ensuring the researcher has clearly defined the topic, its significance, objectives, questions, methods, tools, and resources).
4. Sampling method (evaluating whether the sample was selected using a predefined method).
5. Data collection (determining whether standardized and common tools were used for data collection).
6. Reflexivity (examining the relationship between the researcher and participants).
7. Ethical considerations.
8. Accuracy of data analysis.
9. Clear presentation of findings.
10. Research value.

The researcher assigned quantitative scores to each question, created a form, and aggregated the scores to facilitate the evaluation of all articles at a glance. After this refinement process (as shown in Figure 2), 20 studies were excluded, and 36 studies were selected for data analysis from an initial set of 75 studies.

Step Four: Extracting Information from Texts

Findings from the selected studies were extracted and categorized based on references, including the names of the researchers, country, article title, and year of publication. The final articles were studied using the text analysis method.

Step Five: Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

In this study, qualitative findings were analyzed and synthesized using open coding. Initially, all factors extracted from the studies were considered as open codes. These codes were then grouped into similar concepts

based on their meanings, forming the themes of the research. The following tables summarize the influencing and influenced factors.

Categorization of Influencing and Influenced Factors:

1. **Individual Factors:** Factors derived from individuals' personal characteristics.
2. **Organizational Factors:** Factors related to the organization's impact on moral intelligence.

Table 1. Categorization of Factors Influenced by Moral Intelligence

Dimension Derived from Articles	Researcher's Categorization
Ethical Climate	Organizational
Job Satisfaction	Individual
Cultural Sensitivity	Individual
Organizational Atmosphere	Organizational
Goal Orientation	Individual
Resilience	Individual
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Organizational
Job Adaptability	Individual
Organizational Innovation	Organizational
Psychological Safety	Individual
Professional Judgment	Individual
Psychological Well-being	Individual
Internet Addiction	Individual

Table 2. Categorization of Factors Influencing Moral Intelligence

Dimension Derived from Articles	Researcher's Categorization
Moral Growth	Individual
Job Characteristics	Organizational
Happiness	Individual
Ethical Training	Individual
Life Skills	Individual
Ethics	Individual
Work Conscience	Individual
Religious Counseling	Organizational
Ethical Leadership	Organizational

Categorization of Moral Intelligence Dimensions:

1. **Cognitive Dimension:** Encompasses the intellectual aspects of moral intelligence.
2. **Emotional Dimension:** Focuses on the emotional and interpersonal aspects of moral intelligence.

Table 3. Categorization of Components of Moral Intelligence

Row	Dimension Extracted from Articles	Researcher's Categorization
1	Integrity	Emotional Dimension
2	Compassion	Emotional Dimension
3	Responsibility	Cognitive Dimension
4	Forgiveness	Emotional Dimension
5	Spontaneous Concern for Others	Emotional Dimension
6	Ability to Forgive One's Own Mistakes	Cognitive Dimension

7	Ability to Forgive Others' Mistakes	Cognitive Dimension
8	Taking Responsibility to Serve Others	Cognitive Dimension
9	Admitting Mistakes and Failures	Cognitive Dimension
10	Commitment to Promises	Cognitive Dimension
11	Responsibility for Personal Decisions	Cognitive Dimension
12	Perseverance and Advocacy for Justice	Cognitive Dimension
13	Honesty	Emotional Dimension
14	Acting Based on Principles	Cognitive Dimension
15	Devotion to God	Cognitive Dimension
16	Prioritization of the Afterlife	Cognitive Dimension
17	Fairness and Justice	Cognitive Dimension
18	Truthfulness	Cognitive Dimension
19	Kindness	Emotional Dimension
20	Generosity	Emotional Dimension
21	Self-Control	Emotional Dimension
22	Reflection and Deliberation	Cognitive Dimension
23	Knowledge	Cognitive Dimension
24	Awareness of God	Cognitive Dimension
25	Ethical Values	Cognitive Dimension
26	Communication Skills	Cognitive Dimension
27	Social Capital	Cognitive Dimension
28	Self-Awareness	Cognitive Dimension

Step Six: Quality Control

This study made an effort to utilize credible scientific sources. Resources with insufficient scientific credibility based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Step Two were excluded from the meta-synthesis process. To maintain the study's quality, the Kappa index was employed.

The researchers also consulted with another expert (holding a PhD in Public Management and specializing in behavioral studies) to verify the extracted concepts from the reviewed studies. For this purpose, two multi-question questionnaires were developed: one for the influencing and influenced factors, and another for the dimensions. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 19 to calculate the Kappa coefficient.

Table 4. Kappa Index Interpretation

Kappa Index Value	Agreement Level
Less than 0	Poor
0-0.20	Insignificant
0.21-0.40	Moderate
0.41-0.60	Suitable
0.61-0.80	Reliable
0.81-1.00	Excellent

Table 5. Kappa Coefficient Calculations for Influencing and Influenced Factors

Measurement	Value	Approx. Std. Error	Approx. T-Value	Approx. Significance
Kappa Measurement	1.000	0.000	6.495	0.000
Number of Valid Cases	22	0		

Table 6. Kappa Coefficient Calculations for Dimensions of Moral Intelligence

Measurement	Value	Approx. Std. Error	Approx. T-Value	Approx. Significance
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Kappa Measurement	1.000	0.000	8.325	0.000
Number of Valid Cases	28	0		

The results indicated that the Kappa index value for both the influencing and influenced factors and the dimensions of moral intelligence was 1.000, placing them in the "Excellent" agreement level according to Table 4.

Step Seven: Presenting Results

After finalizing the indices and classifying the codes, the final research model was presented.

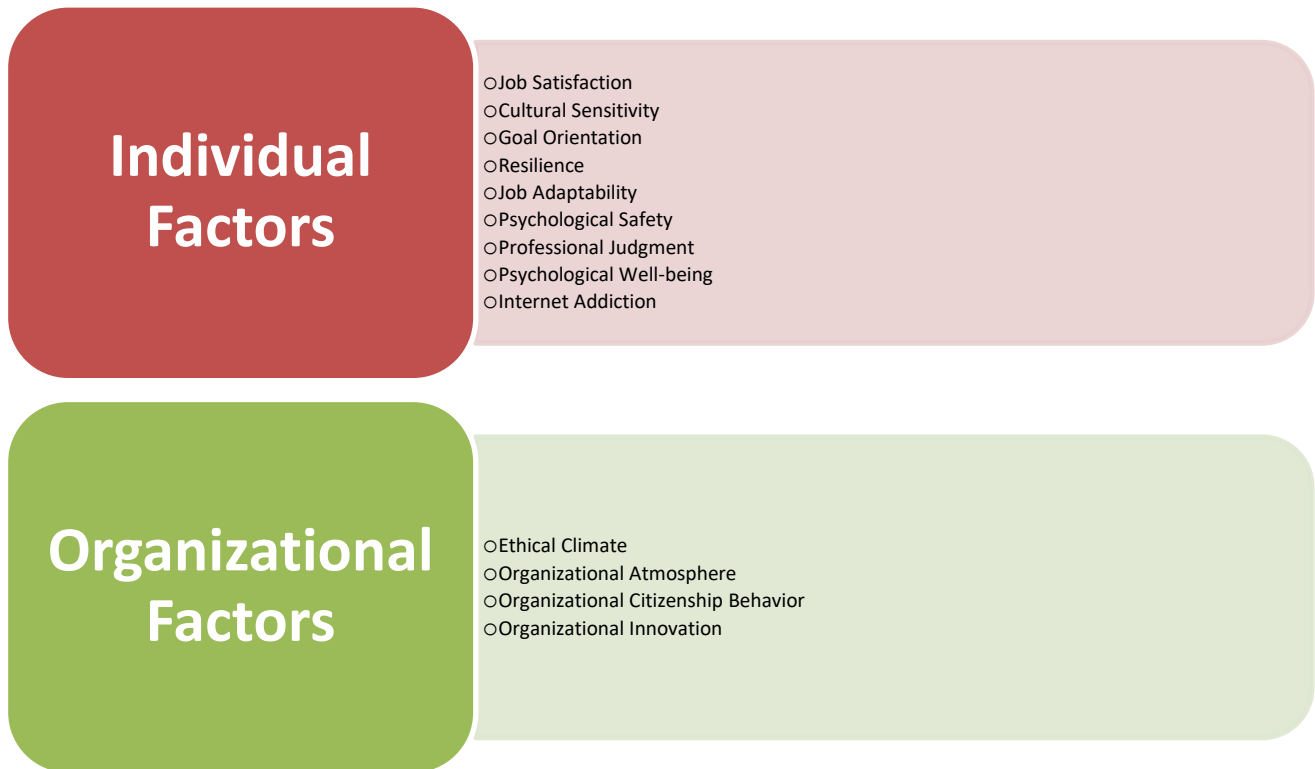


Figure 1. Categorization of Factors Influenced by Moral Intelligence

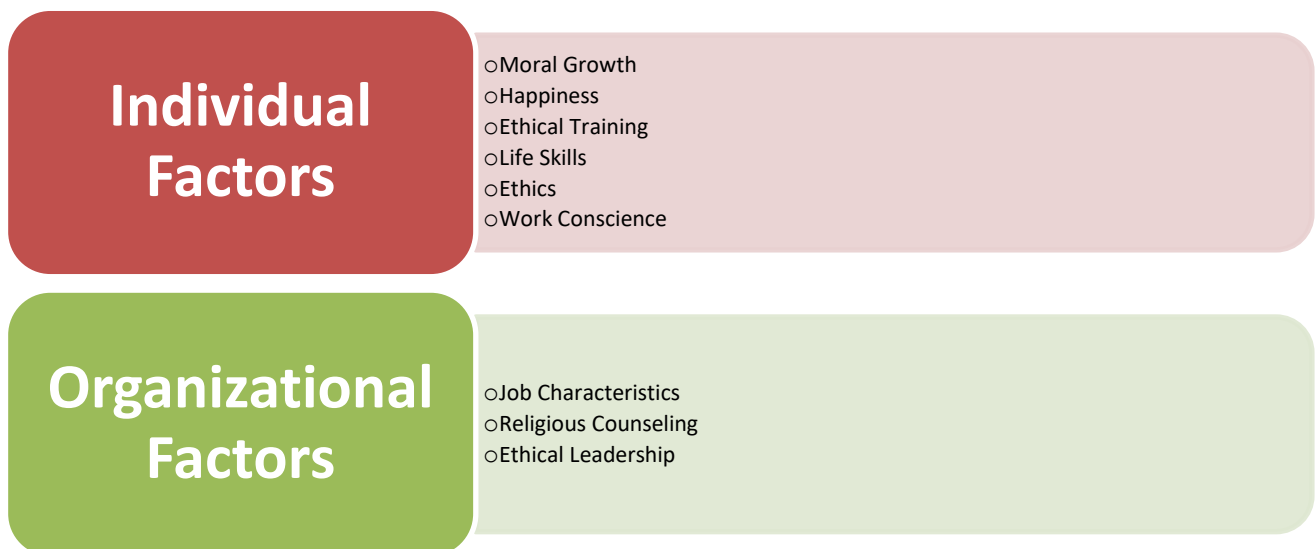


Figure 2. Categorization of Factors Influencing Moral Intelligence

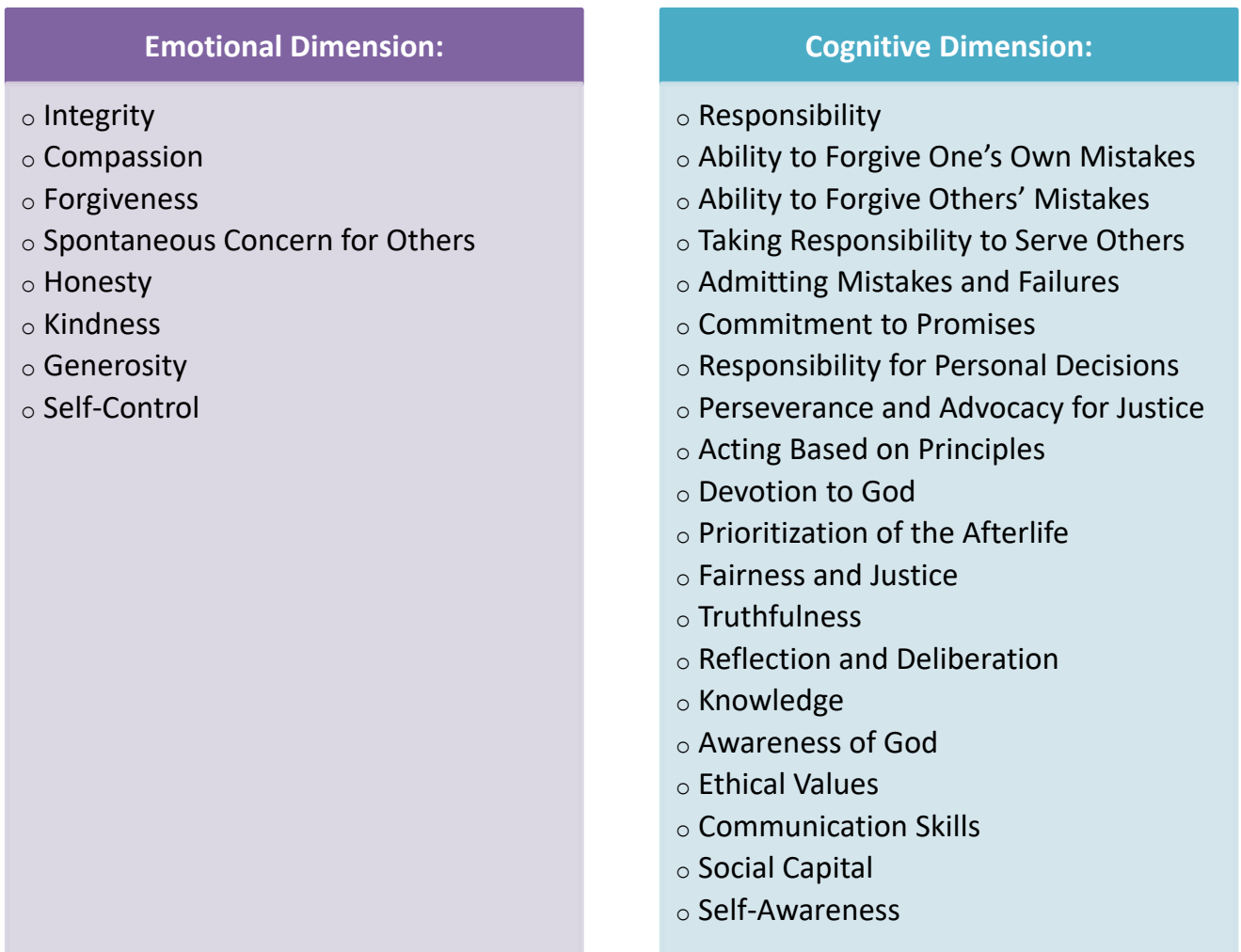


Figure 3. Categorization of Components of Moral Intelligence

4. Discussion and Conclusion

To achieve the objective of this article, namely conducting a meta-synthesis on business managers' moral intelligence and designing a model of its drivers, outcomes, and dimensions, the seven-step method of Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) was employed. The meta-synthesis sample consisted of selected qualitative studies relevant to the research questions.

In the first step, which involved formulating research questions, a four-question algorithm was used. These questions addressed the components of moral intelligence, including what, who, when, and how the research was conducted.

The second step involved a systematic review of the literature. The researcher systematically searched articles and studies published in various reputable domestic and international scientific journals, as well as general resources and credible organizational websites, to identify reliable and relevant documents within an appropriate timeframe.

The third step focused on searching for and selecting suitable texts. The goal of this stage was to exclude articles and books whose findings were deemed unreliable. After refining the resources (as shown in Figure 2), 20 studies were excluded from an initial set of 75, and 36 studies were selected for data analysis.

In the fourth step, the findings of the selected studies were extracted, and articles were classified based on references, including authors' names, countries, article titles, and publication years. These articles were analyzed using the content analysis method.

The fifth step involved analyzing and synthesizing the findings. In this study, open coding was used for qualitative data analysis. Initially, all factors extracted from the studies were considered open codes. These codes were then grouped into similar concepts, forming the themes of the research.

In the sixth step, quality control was conducted. Two questionnaires were designed: one for the influencing and influenced factors of moral intelligence and another for its dimensions. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS 19 to calculate the Kappa coefficient.

In the final step (seventh), the indices were finalized, and codes were classified. The final model was developed through open coding and clustering within the framework of concepts and components. Influencing and influenced factors of moral intelligence were categorized into two groups: individual factors and organizational factors. The dimensions of moral intelligence were also categorized into two main factors: the emotional dimension and the cognitive dimension.

In this study, the researcher analyzed previous findings and results through a systematic review and meta-synthesis using the seven-step Sandelowski and Barroso method. The conceptual model was categorized into two factors for influencing and influenced factors (individual and organizational) and two factors for the dimensions of moral intelligence (emotional and cognitive). Among the influencing factors, six individual factors and three organizational factors were identified. Among the influenced factors, nine individual factors and four organizational factors were discovered. Additionally, eight factors were identified for the emotional dimension and 16 for the cognitive dimension.

Research on the moral intelligence model of managers indicates that moral intelligence is recognized as a key factor in improving organizational performance and behavior. Managers' moral intelligence not only impacts individual decision-making but also contributes to fostering a positive and sustainable culture in businesses.

In this study, two main dimensions of managers' moral intelligence—cognitive and emotional—were examined. The cognitive dimension includes the ability to identify ethical issues and analyze them logically, helping managers evaluate various options and make the best decisions when facing ethical challenges. The emotional dimension encompasses the ability to empathize and build positive relationships with others, enabling managers to make more ethical decisions by understanding the feelings and needs of others.

The findings show that businesses that focus on enhancing their managers' moral intelligence can create healthier work environments, increase public trust, and improve job satisfaction. Such businesses also perform better in addressing crises and social challenges, as managers with high moral intelligence are capable of making rational and humane decisions.

Moreover, strengthening managers' moral intelligence can reduce corruption and unethical practices in businesses. By increasing ethical awareness and reinforcing human values, managers can serve as role models for others and promote an ethical culture.

Finally, it is recommended that businesses design educational programs and practical workshops to enhance their managers' moral intelligence. These programs should cover topics such as identifying ethical issues, improving empathy skills, and teaching ethical decision-making techniques. This approach can help businesses improve overall performance and increase stakeholder satisfaction.

In general, developing moral intelligence in managers benefits not only individual businesses but also has positive impacts on society and the administrative system. This requires serious commitment from managers and policymakers to establish appropriate infrastructure that fosters the growth and flourishing of moral intelligence.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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