Implications

Following section outlines implications of the present findings for future research.

Examining More Indigenous, Non-Western Worldviews Using Emic Approaches

The first implication of the present findings is to examine indigenous worldviews and concepts using emic approaches, especially of non-WEIRD and underrepresented cultures to broaden the scope of moral psychology. The Indian worldview is centered on duty. Within the worldview, duty is at the very core of *dharma* (Bhangaokar, 2020). The *Mahābhārata*, describes a wide range of duties from following universal principles pertaining to truth and nonviolence to specific principles based on one's life stage and social roles (Radhakrishnan, 2008). According to Western moral worldviews, an individual is fundamentally free to act, as long as their actions don't hinder the liberties and rights of others. In contrast, the Hindu concept of *dharma* or duty implies inherent obligations, sacrifices and righteous action towards individuals in their social networks (Bhangaokar & Kapadia, 2019; Mascolo & Bhatia, 2002; Miller, 1994) and beyond (Bhangaokar, 2020).

Children, adolescents and adults in the present study used indigenous concepts of duty such as *faraj, zimmedari, kartavya* and *jawābdari.* Future research on these concepts would contribute important knowledge about their respective meanings and development, as well as interconnections among these indigenous concepts (Mistry, 2011; Raeff, 2011). For example, do children, adolescents and adults in India attribute the same meanings to these concepts? How are these duty concepts differentiated and integrated over the course of development? Research on the meanings and development of fairness, for example, is abundant. Duty, however, has received far less attention in general even though it is integral to several cultural worldviews. For example, research suggests that adults in non-Western cultures (vs. Western cultures) were more likely to associate moral obligations towards others with positive emotions, a sense of personal

agency and an opportunity for self-development and refinement, rather than as a compulsion (Buchtel, 2020; Miller et al., 2011; Tripathi et al., 2018). Similarly, the indigenous concept of *beizzati* (loss of honor) is understudied. While much research has focused on the study of honor in the other cultures (Gul et al., 2021; Uskul & Cross, 2019, 2020), there is a lacuna in research conceptualizing honor, its psychological processes and behavioral outcomes in India. Yet, these are concepts that may well be important across cultures for varied meanings and their implications on moral behavior.

Including more Socialization Contexts in the Study of Moral Reasoning

While Study 1 was designed to provide in-depth insight into the nature and development of children's moral reasoning in India, the analyses also pointed to ways that socialization contexts were both similar and different for the high- and low-SES children. The moral development literature has overwhelmingly focused on the micro-contexts of parents, schools, peers, and friends (DiBianca Fasoli, 2021; Jensen, 2015). The present findings, however, highlight the need to broaden this focus. Urban and high-SES children in many majority world countries are significantly influenced by globalization, which the present findings along with other recent research have shown to promote Ethic of Autonomy reasoning (McKenzie, 2018, 2019). For low-SES children in majority world countries, neighborhood and work are often important socialization contexts. The present low-SES children lived in close-knit neighborhoods. Mutual dependency and close living quarters, at least in part, explain why both the younger and older low-SES children (but not the high-SES children) reasoned in terms of social sanctions as a majority type. In their neighborhood, as they explained, someone will see what you are doing. If you transgress, neighbors may talk about you in negative ways, or shame you, or beat you. You may lose honor, "*beizzati ho jaaegi*". Understanding the importance of

neighbors and work to low-SES children's daily lives and livelihood casts new light on their moral reasoning and development.

Additionally, participants from the low SES used Punishment Avoidance as a major subcode in middle childhood and early adolescence. This finding is striking and merits attention. It highlights that the fear of authority and punishment are imbibed as primary determinants of moral choices and reasoning among the low- SES participants. Such a great emphasis on punishment not only limits the use of other moral concepts but also has potential developmental consequences beyond moral development. As mentioned in the Method, children from the low SES were not used to sharing their own ideas and opinions. While moral judgment was not difficult, reasoning beyond Punishment Avoidance was negligible. It is also important to note that this fear of punishment was reported for various socialization contexts such as the school, family, neighborhood and society in general. These institutions will benefit from reviewing their practices and policies decisions to provide a more conducive environment for healthy development. More research on processes and contexts of socialization (Raeff et al., 2020) will therefore, benefit the understanding of moral development within and across cultures.

More Research on the Use of Divinity in Childhood and Across the Lifespan

The Ethic of Divinity, as expected, was already used by middle childhood. The analysis of majority types and the children's quotations lend support to the argument presented in the Introduction that this early emergence is tied to the way that divinity is conceptualized and practiced in India. The children echoed long-standing Indian religious and philosophical traditions that merge material and immaterial conceptions (Tripathi & Ghildyal, 2013). Thus, the children regarded divinity as immanent in nature when they explained how divinity is imbued, for example, in the self, other persons, and animals (such as kittens). The children's moral

reasoning also showed how they drew upon ways that religious devotion commonly finds expression in tangible activities that are part of everyday life. The children's discussion of indigenous concepts of *paap* and *kartavya* further supports this argument. However, there is not much research available on the use of Divinity, let alone the understanding of Divinity in the early years of life. In recent years, moral development researchers have overwhelmingly focused on concepts within the Ethic of Autonomy, such as harm, rights, and fairness. Perhaps because so many of the research participants have come from wealthy Western societies, research has seldom addressed the extent to which autonomy concepts are significantly premised on having economic resources (Henrich et al., 2010). Nor has this mainstream literature delved into diverse duty concepts or younger children's ability to address moral issues in terms of divinity. The present results suggest that such research in the future could fruitfully include Indian samples.

Implications for Applied Interventions and Policies

The final implication for the present findings pertain to applied developmental programs, interventions and policies in India. First, interventions and policies need to be attuned to and implemented in the contexts of relevance to individual lives. For example, certain media, such as radio and television, provide a compelling context or means for applied interventions because most Indian families are exposed to some media whether at home, work, school, or other places. Additionally, applied programs for development and social change will greatly benefit from using indigenous terms and concepts salient to the people's thoughts, feelings and everyday behaviors. For example, the concept of duty, which is integral to the Indian moral worldview, will resonate well and therefore, prove to be effective in bringing about social and behavioral change. For example, an advertisement by an Indian radio station uses a popular Bollywood movie dialogue that centers on one's *kartavya* as a family member and citizen to urge all Indians

to get vaccinated and comply with COVID norms for the sake of a healthy family and society. Such purposeful use of indigenous moral concepts in health, education, and social campaigns can have a powerful impact on individuals, thereby initiating positive change.

Another example pertains to programs for adolescent development. India has seen a steady increase in mental health concerns and wellbeing issues among adolescents. There is a simultaneous increase in the need for effective counseling, therapy, rehabilitation and life skills programs for this age group. However, these programs are largely based on Western theories and intervention models where there is an inherent emphasis on the ideal of the autonomous self, the need for individual freedom, self-esteem, self-confidence and associated life skills among adolescents. However, the lived realities and worldviews of Indian adolescents are vastly different from that of the West.

Based on the findings of the present study, we can suggest that adolescent development programs in India need to be contextualized such that they strengthen the idea of the self in relation to others, create awareness of roles and the understanding of how best adolescents can use virtues in everyday life and circumstances to become functional and well-adjusted in the Indian society. An accurate understanding of *Dharma* includes *kārmic* efficiency and intelligent discernment (*vivek)*. These are highly individuated concepts that do not always conceptualize the self exclusively in social relationships. Rather, a stable sense of self is a prerequisite for a person to become capable of relating harmoniously with others for greater good. Programs should encourage and enable adolescents to engage with the idea of *dhārmik* self in their immediate contexts such as families, schools, and communities to develop clarity and confidence in their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, building an awareness of civic responsibilities, civic habits and providing opportunities for active social engagement among Indian adolescents has

the potential for positive development, grounded in the pursuit of *dharma* and therefore, relevant to their selves and realities (Bhangaokar & Mehta, 2012).

Lastly, mature adult responses from the present study indicate that the interface of the self and the divine, where the performance of one's *karma,* by fulfilling one's *dharma* and upholding firm *shraddhā* can result in individual happiness and wellbeing. Programs for intervention in India will benefit from adopting such indigenous, culturally relevant frameworks of development to facilitate change in behavior, wellbeing and healthy development. For example, employers/organizations can facilitate workplace spirituality based on principles of *Karma Yoga, Swadharma* or the *Trigunā*s (Pandey, 2017; Pardasani et al., 2014) to ensure the wellbeing of their employees and therefore, facilitate better work outcomes and relationships at work. While work place spirituality is gaining popularity in management sectors and corporates, they are not included in areas of intervention involving the family. Family therapy and counseling, for example, can benefit from using principles of *Karma Yoga* and *Antaranga Yoga* (yoga for inner transformation) to enhance individual and familial wellbeing and deal with stress. Similarly, programs that elevate one's *shraddhā* in one's own efforts may help raise confidence in one's abilities and build an optimistic frame of mind for individuals.