The role of negative moral emotions (anger and disgust) in ethical decision making

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Abstract—Moral emotions are subset of basic emotions and linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent. These are emotions that respond to moral transgression or motivate individuals to choose a certain moral behavior. The purpose of this research is to observe the role of moral emotions (especially negative moral emotions) in ethical decision making. Ethical decision making is a decision upon options which comply to society or group' standard or conduct. The research was conducted in experimental setting (post facto experimental method) with a control group. Sampling was conducted using availability sampling and the subjects were 137 students of Psychology Faculty of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. Moral emotions as treatment were inducted using three vignettes with different impact on subject's emotion. Ethical decision making will be assessed by several items with ethical dilemmas. Data analysis was conducted using one way ANOVA. The results showed different moral emotions have different effect on the ethical decision making. Disgust as a moral emotion affects ethical decision making significantly greater than anger. Theoretical and applied implementation of the results by this research also will be discussed.

Keywords—Anger; disgust; ethical decision making

I. INTRODUCTION

When you see a beggar at a crossroad with posters sticking to not give a beggar, what do you do? Keep giving despite knowing that city regulation forbids? Or not give beggars because obeying the rule? Or depends on whether you feel sorry for or not at the beggar's condition? The above situation is one example where life often confronts us in the choice of obeying a rule or act according to feeling.

The incorrect choice does not always mean that someone is doing evil. But all the evil at the most is the result of an incorrect choice. Choosing decisions of dishonest acts, for example, happens everywhere in the form of corrupt behavior, embezzlement, theft, plagiarism, all of which are the result of the choice of doing the wrong thing. In intellectual circles, it should be a difficult thing to make rational considerations about the right thing. But the choice of unethical action still happens. Having a rational cognitive ability to weigh properly is not enough to guarantee a person to make ethical decisions.

One study shows that businesspeople who behave dishonestly at work turn out to have a record of dishonest acts in college as well [1]. These findings suggest that students who act only prioritize personal interests, make decisions that will ethically possess great possibilities of making unethical choices as well in the workplace later. Obviously, if the findings of this study apply also in Indonesia, it will have serious implications for the future of the nation's leaders and the welfare of the people.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Ethical Decision Making

Decision-making preceded by an assessment of the wrong or true action in the context of group standards is referred to as ethical decision making. In many references, ethical and moral words are often used interchangeably and are considered to have the same meaning. The fundamental difference between moral and ethical concepts [2] is that morals tend to be heavily loaded with cultural or religious values and meanings, both of which are very influential in the formation of our values and initial views. Moral values are values that are separate from professional values. Moral is the attitude learned from personal and family life while ethics is an attitude outside the domestic sphere. Morals are in the realm of personal and subjective nature while ethics is in the realm of impersonal and objective.

Aristotle is one of the leading ethical theorists who emphasized the importance of ethics to improve human life in other words essential ethics is owned so that people can live well. In order to apply ethics, human understanding of ethics must be developed through care and habituation, and ethical behavior is generated through applied, emotional and social skills. The themes of Aristotle's ethical teachings centered on how to achieve eudemonia (happiness or flourishing) and the characteristics of the arête (virtue or superiority) which are the characters needed to live as well as possible [3]. Aristotle divides virtue again into two types: intellectual virtue, the reasoning ability in thinking about moral issues and ethical virtues, the tendency that is generated by the habit of having the right feeling for moral issues.

The ethical view of David Hume is based on an empirical theory of the mind. His theory is famous for the four related theses, namely that reason cannot be a motivator of desire, and yet the reasoning serves human passion; Moral distinctions do not come from reasoning but moral distinctions are derived from moral sentiments of feelings of approving and
disagreeing; and that the virtues and vices are natural in nature [4]. The two classical views have mentioned the role of emotion in ethical decision making. Correct emotion on an issue can provide individual clues to ethical decision making as it acts as an appraiser that agrees or not on a single moral issue.

Model of the Four Components of Morals from Rest [5], suggests there are four components, all of which engage actively directing individuals to act moral behavior. These four components are the basis of a person's moral functioning capacity. One of the important stages in this model is the initial stage of the introduction of moral issues, namely to feel the existence of moral content in certain situations and view the situation from a moral point of view. According to Rest [5] in addition to the ability of perception of objects and creating abstract scenarios about the possibilities in the situation, the ability of affective stimuli (e.g. anger, apathy, anxiety, empathy, and disgust) contributes to the interpretation of the moral situation.

But in many Rest model implementations, such as in the model of cultural influences [6], ethical decision process decision model [7], Jones's issue-contingent model [8] and individual differences models in ethical decision-making [9], this affective factor is less of a concern because the emphasis of applied ethical decision-making is on the logical side of moral reasoning.

Theories developed later, begin to balance the functions of rational reasoning and emotional side in ethical decision making. Moral emotions begin to be mentioned in the Social Intuitionist model [10]. This model doubts the use of moral reasoning in ethical decision making. In most ethical decision making, quick and automatic responses (intuitive) are more common. Moral considerations often arise suddenly without effort in individual consciousness, without consciousness through information-seeking steps, weighing the evidence or making inferences. In the decision-making model, new moral reasoning emerges after consideration to support the decision-making results. According to Haidt, in individual moral intuitions there are moral emotions that are more covariance with behavior than rational moral reasoning.

According to Prinz [11] moral emotions differ from basic emotions or ordinary emotions or non-moral emotions in terms of having a strong intentionality or intention that leads to moral behavior. This moral emotion leads the individual to form an intuitive moral standard so that the individual knows his or her part on a moral issue. Haidt [12] explains that moral emotions are emotions that respond to moral violations or motivate individuals to choose certain moral behaviors. The two main criteria of the moral emotion to distinguish from basic (non-moral) emotions are: mobilizing person who has no relationship to the disinterested elictor and has the ability to move the tendency toward prosocial behaviors.

A person's affective reaction when observing activated moral issues and moving toward pleasure or displeasure is applied in the observation of moral or ethical issues. The reaction of moral emotion is part of the emotional capacity to appraise an object. Assessment processes are defined as processes within the subject that change the stimulus that comes into a broader meaning for the fulfillment of the individual's welfare and motives [13]. The process of appraisal in ordinary (non-moral) emotions has a diversity in its type and complexity, ranging from the simplest of the simplest affects to the complicated combinations of some affective responses that can be transformed into action tendencies [14]. Moral emotions have the impulsion of a greater tendency to action from ordinary emotions to actions that are perceived to be true by the individual.

According to Prinz [11], which makes individuals approve or disapprove of a moral issue, there are two types of moral emotions: reactive moral emotions and reflexive moral emotions. Reactive moral emotions are emotions that arise when other people or groups are judged according to or violate a moral rule such as blame, moral contempt or moral contempt. These three emotions are derived from the basic emotions of anger, contempt for the object and contempt. Reflective moral emotion is when individual judges whether he or she is obeying or breaking moral rules (e.g. when feeling guilty or ashamed).

The various ethical decision-making models proposed have not yet deeply focused on the role of moral emotions that have more complex forms of emotional (non-moral) experience in ethical decision-making. Moral emotional involvement in student life is also very likely, but not much research has been studied. This study will examine the possibility of moral emotions, especially negative moral emotions, among students in everyday decision making that has the potential to be an ethical dilemma.

Based on the background description, the main question of this dissertation research is: Are there differences in negative moral emotional influences on ethical decision making?

- Moral Emotions and Actions

To understand the structure of moral emotions, we turn to the subject of emotions in general. Basic emotions are described as feelings or affections that arise in a person because of a stimulus, often involving physiological reactions such as palpitations or watery eyes, involving conscious experience, leading to expressions of behavior such as smiles or sullen faces [15]. Moral emotions show the same reaction when an individual faces an ethical or moral problem.

One of the essential essences of emotion is feeling, which is closely related to pleasure and pain. The affective valence or direction of the feeling is the next criterion. According to Ortony, Clore, and Collins [16], emotions are reactions that have valence or direction. Elster [17] adds that emotions are conscious experiences of an event that has a meaning of being valiant or having a particular direction. The existence of an element of affection, pleasure or pain, makes the experience of human emotions or feelings different from other types of experience and cannot be deduced or reduced to the experience of cognition or ordinary physical sensation [18].

Pleasure and pain are the result of a higher level of emotional capacity that is appraisal. Assessment processes are defined as intra-subject processes that change the stimulus that comes into a stimulus that has affective meanings and a broader meaning for the well-being and fulfillment of individual motives [13]. Thus, emotions can be defined as
reaction processes that contain judgments on objects of emotion that can be a situation, a person or a particular issue. While moral emotions are reaction processes that contain judgments based on moral principles on objects of emotion that can be a situation, people and moral issues.

The process of judgment in emotion has a diversity in its type and complexity, ranging from the simplest form of the sudden onset of automatic affects derived from stimuli that directly cause pleasure or pain [19] to the intricate integration of some affective guides that are interpreted as barriers or incentives in the achievement of goals or as a precautionary mechanism of the individual [14].

The definitive capacity of other emotions is its ability to give motivation to act for the individual. The emotional and emotional attitudes that humans perceive suggest an impulse to behave, desire for something or be in a state of a certain motive. These drives are triggered by judgment on an event, perceived as wishing and guiding impulsive action, devoid of planning and not controlled by thinking about future consequences. The desire to act here is a desire to initiate and control an action, very different from the planned habits or behavior. In this case emotions can also be referred to as passions, a readiness to take action triggered by an event or object that is fully controlled. The state of being ready for action is an act or behavior to defend or alter an individual's relationship with the world around him or herself [18] [20].

The action taken can approach, move away or protect yourself or stop interference or face something. This readiness to act is also called the tendency to act. The emotions that arise and cause the individual to act have gone further than the definition of emotion that requires only pleasure or pain. The tendency to decide to act ethically is an emotional reaction that can be a simple impulse because of the habit of doing something that feels right or is a delicate consideration of feelings that will be felt when doing an action.

Emotions can even make individuals change something they believe in (belief), in which case emotions operate with cognition. The cognitive action that occurs simultaneously with the concrete action this in individual performs is the definitive aspect of emotion as a passion and a tendency to act. This action is not planned in advance or can be changed tendency by the will of the individual because more influenced feelings that precede it [18] [20]. Passion not only promotes achievement in a direction but also gives readiness for obstacles, delays or other difficulties, making the individual strongly committed to doing something. Even passion makes the individual insensitive to the reward (insensitive) [17]. A person keeps doing what he or she will do despite knowing that the action is bad, for example when an individual is in love, hate, greed, or addiction to something. Passion also makes one cannot reject the food smells good or loves someone who cannot have [18]. Strong stimulus forces make a person who has certain passion tendencies cannot help but act towards the stimulus, although it may be refused.

The emotional capacity to judge and encourage individuals strongly performs these actions is the underlying assumption that moral emotions can lead individuals to do right or wrong, ethically or otherwise. A righteous or ethical act is sometimes accompanied by true or not cognitive (belief) changes, but may be led by a passion that has directed the action in a certain direction without the individual doing much.

- **The Shape and Dimension of Moral Emotions**

According to Weiner [21] there are twelve forms of moral emotion: admiration, anger, jealousy, envy, Schadenfreude, gratitude, guilt, anger toward injustice or irritation, humiliation, regret, humiliated, sympathy / pity. Weiner classifies those emotions based on the dimensions of cause (locus), controllability and stability that these moral emotions possess. Moral emotions that cannot be controlled because the causes cannot be controlled are jealousy, humiliation, shame / humiliation and sympathy. That can still be controlled because the cause of that emotion can be perceived and there is a form of controlling effort: anger, admiration, gratitude, guilt, anger toward injustice or irregularity, jealousy, schadenfreude and regret.

Haidt [12] identifies four moral emotions (anger, elevation, guilt, and compassion) having a high tendency in two opposing dimensions of withdrawal and the tendency of prosocial action. Other moral emotions within the range of intermediate influences include gratitude, shame, disgust, and disparagement, varying in their degree of influence in the tendencies of prosocial action and impartiality.

- **Form of Moral Emotions and Ethical Decision Making**

There are several opinions about basic emotional characteristics that will underlie the view of moral emotions and their relation to ethical decision making. One group, Barrett [22] and Russell [23], believes that all forms of emotion can naturally be classified as negative and positive emotions. Or rather all emotional states can be determined by a dimension of the valence scale or the direction that shapes it, suggesting the contrasting characteristics of positive-negative, fun-painful, or useful-harmful.

The Briesemeister, Kuchinke and Jacobs [24] study found that positive and negative emotions are independent of each other, not a continuum with two poles, evidenced by the possibility of emotional ambivalence in a person. The empirical results of this study prove that emotional ambivalence allows a person to experience anger and satisfaction all at once, rather than a negative emotion negating the opposite positive emotions.

Peters [25] proposed the classification of the role of different types of affects in decision making. Affect is the feeling that the individual experiences about a stimulus, either incidental or integral [26]. Incidental affects are the feelings experienced by the individual without any connection with the problem of decision making. The integral affective is the feeling that is caused by the problem to which the decision is to be made. In the discussion of Zeelenberg, Nelissen, Breugelmans and Pieters [27] affective integrals are parallel to endogenous emotions while affective incisions are parallel to endogenous emotions. Peters assumes that the function of affects is (1) giving information about the value of an object (similar to Slovur's idea of affective heuristics), (2) as a spotlight for decision makers on information needed in the decision making process (3) as a
motivator, which gives direction for approaching or away for decision makers or exerting effort to process information and (4) as an appraiser of whether the assessment and making decisions can be compared with other problems or situations [20] [27] [28].

The framework for thinking that specific types of emotions have different functions in decision-making above is supported in part by research conducted by Lerner and Keltner [29]. The study found that although both had a negative valence, fear and anger generated different perceptions of risk that gave a different effect on decision making. Anger makes one more lead to an optimistic assessment while fear leads to a pessimistic situation assessment.

- **Negative Moral Emotions**

Angry moral emotions, social disgust and belittling are conditions in which individuals react intuitively and emotionally to violations of moral norms [12]. When individuals observe events that violate the moral basis (caring, justice, grouping, authority, and purity) that leads to suffering, hierarchy, or purity, moral emotions such as guilt, triviality, resentment, anger, respect and disgust appear.

Several studies have shown that there is a difference between the moral responses of anger and disgust [30] [31]. Other studies have failed to find a clear separation between such emotions as the study of Nabi [32] which suggests that these terms may represent a single negative emotional response to moral violation behavior. So, more research is needed to confirm the difference in emotional anger, social disgust and dismay, especially in the realm of decision making.

Anger is the most powerful affective response in encouraging action [20], especially when it comes to a breach of responsibility. Anger often leads to evil "eliminating" reactions, retaliating by aggressive actions, going away from or withholding some good for anger [21]. Anger in both social and non-social contexts promotes the tendency of approaches in the form of attacks [33] [34] [35]. Consequently, results of anger in higher energy expenditure, evidenced by greater autonomous passion and behavioral activation [36]. This also results in a willingness to take greater risks [29] [37]. As a moral emotion, anger is a stimulus that leads to a balance of justice. The main cause of anger of the Indonesians is hurt (both physically and psychologically) on a par with expectations of something not being met [38].

Of the several commonly mentioned moral emotions, moral disgust or social disgust include those rarely discussed or researched [30], whereas social disgust is a potential emotion for prosocial behavior. Weiner [21] does not even regard disgust as moral emotion because it does not have the qualities of directing individual behavior toward prosocial action. However, Widyarim's research, et.al. [38] suggests that most respondents associate disgust with disgust at a bad or immoral act committed by a person, not a social or physical environment. Since the antecedents of disgust are here closer to the social emotions that allow the escalation of action away from the source of disgust, social or moral disgusts can be inferred in the moral emotions.

The results of the Moll, et.al. [39] studies show that emotional response to disgust can arise with anger or arise purely without angry emotion. The areas of the social processor's brain of disgust and anger overlap but also differ, especially in the frontal and temporal regions of the lobe. So the experience of disgusted and angry emotions may happen together or completely apart, asserting that these two emotional responses are different affective states.

Although in everyday life these two emotions can be expressed in almost identical forms of reaction, the antecedents and consequences of the two forms of moral emotion are different. One study from Hutcherson et.al. [40] suggests that anger and social impact have different correlations with various social action trends and assessments and have different aspects of bias towards perception and social assessment when induced in experimental studies. In Winterich's research, Mittal and Morales [41], disgust increases the tendency of self-protection and does not think about others, increasing the tendency of people to engage in unethical and even fraudulent behavior. A person's anger can reduce the tendency of one's ethical decision-making [42]. Thiel, Connelly and Griffith [43] added that anger is moderated by an assessment of the certainty of a situation that tends to reduce the ethical quality of individual decision making. When a person is angry and judges the absence of certainty in an ethical situation, the quality of his cognitive strategy declines, thus decreasing the tendency of more ethical decision-making.

Different characteristics of anger and social disgust in influencing individual actions (angry attacks and social disgust away from emotional objects) deserve further investigation in the process of action or decision-making. Is it by feeling the moral emotions of anger or disgust making someone choose ethical decision? This question serves as research framework.

- **Research Hypothesis**

Negative moral emotions (anger and disgust) have different role in ethical decision making

**III. METHOD**

- **Experimental Design**

To test the hypothesis there is influence of negative moral emotions to ethical decision making, experimental research with post-treatment design using random assignment with control group.

Taking into account the possibility of negative and positive moral emotional differences, in experimental studies are tested the influence of the manipulation of the anger and disgust on ethical decision making. Calmness are induced in the control group. The experimental design is outlined in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table.1 Experimental Design</th>
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<tr>
<td>Induction of Moral Emotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative (Anger) - X3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction of Moral Emotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative (Disgust) - X4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction of Neutral Emotion</td>
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</table>
• Respondents

The research subjects for the experiment were 137 undergraduate students at Faculty of Psychology Gadjah Mada University (UGM) Yogyakarta. Participants consisted of students aged 17-23 years and consisted of 96 women and 41 men.

• Measure Tools

Decision making are rated using ethical dilemmas with the usual ethical cases students encounter. Reliability coefficient Alpha Cronbach of the measurement is 0.832.

• Treatments

Induction of moral emotion is given to different groups (random assignment) using vignettes (selected short stories) to elicit emotional moral responses of anger (Law in Indonesia), disgust (Dirty House) and calm (A New Day). The validity of the vignettes was examined by the lowest Euclidean distance method [44].

• Data Analysis

Data analysis using variance analysis to examine the main influences in ethical decision making.

IV. RESULTS

The results of the variance analysis test show that the moral emotions of anger and disgust differ significantly in influencing ethical decision making (F = 4.785, df = 2, p = 0.010).

Further post hoc tests show in table.2 that the average difference of groups of anger and disgust as well as groups of contempt and calm are significant. Disgust showed the highest decision making rate among the three groups. This shows that disgust raises the highest ethical decision making.

Table 2. Post Hoc Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral emotions</th>
<th>Mean Difference (D)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>-1.056*</td>
<td>.37509</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>-1.132</td>
<td>.38325</td>
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</table>

To support this result, a qualitative analysis of the induced results of each vignette was performed. The result of the measurement of the induced induction manipulation of angry vignette entitled Law in Indonesia shows that the real emotion arising at the time of research with the highest average score is sad (X̅ = 5.39) followed by the average emotional score of upset (X̅ = 4.82). The sad emotions (X̅ = 4.77), disgust (X̅ = 4.70) and tears (X̅ = 4.41) also had a fairly high score. These emotions have higher mean scores of angry emotions (X̅ = 4.14) that should have been caused by this vignette.

The result manipulation of disgusted emotional contempt with vignette titled Dirty House shows that actual emotion arising at the time of the highest average score research is sad (X̅ = 5.06) followed by the mean emotional score (X̅ = 4.79). The emotion of shock (X̅ = 4.34) and tears (X̅ = 4.06) also has a fairly high score. These emotions have a higher mean score than the disgusted emotions (X̅ = 4.00) that the vignette is actually causing.

The results of the calm induced by vignette titled A New Day titles arising at the time of the study showed that the highest average scores generated by this vignette were inspired (X̅ = 5.06) followed by the mean emotional score (X̅ = 4.79). And happy (X̅ = 4.18). This vignette has generated the expected calm emotion.

From these results, the emotional scores of the emotionally angry and disgusted emotional groups, among the real emotions that arose in the study were tested by pairwise ANOVA to find out what emotional meanings made the emotional group angry and disgusted differ significantly. It turns out the emotional average of shocked, disgusted, anger, disgust and irritation between the two groups were significantly different (p <0.05).

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the affective process generated by the negative forms of moral emotion while not related to the given ethical case may contribute to ethical decision making. The moral emotions in this study are similar to those of affective incident [25] or endogenous emotions in discussions of feelings experienced by individuals without any connection to decision-making issues but has a role in it [26]. Induction of moral emotion experienced by participants in this study is not related to the dilemma case faced so it can be called an emotional response/affective incidental or endogenous.

In line with Peters [25] opinion, negative emotional forms of emotion can serve as (1) giving information about the good value of an object, (2) as a spotlight for the decision maker on the information needed in the decision-making process, (3) as a motivator, which gives direction for approaching or away for decision makers or exerting effort to process, and (4) Judgments and decisions made can be compared with other problems or situations information [20] [26] [27].

Negative moral emotions, especially disgust, provide information about a situation surpass than the anger let alone the usual calm feeling. This emotion also points the direction of attention for decision makers to avoid a bad situation, so it tends to approach what feels comfortable to make the right decisions. Emotional disgust accompanied by sadness in this study proved to be a motivator large enough for individuals to do good things. While it may be intuitively done, this disgust gives the basis for judgment for decision making. The explanation of this is the possibility of individuals wanting to balance the unpleasant feelings that are felt after miles of decisions that induce disgusting moral emotions by making
ethical decisions. Apparently, the affective stimuli generated in this study not only help build interpretation but also are the basis of active assessment.

The results of this study support that emotions, especially moral emotions have a big role in the consideration and individual choices as expressed by Paul Slovic with the term heuristic affect [45]. These affective heuristics may be the case in this study, when individual considerations are more directed by feelings of likes or dislikes and accompanied by only a few prudent reasoning. The results of this study also support partial arguments from Haidt [10] in the Social Intuitionist model. In the model, Haidt doubts that rational stages are always used in ethical decision making. In most ethical decision making, quick and automatic responses (intuitive) are more common. In reality, moral judgment often arises suddenly without effort in the consciousness of the individual, without consciousness having gone through the steps of information retrieval, weighing existing evidence or making inferences.

The results revealed that moral emotions and disgusted moral forms have significant differences in ethical decision making. Participants induced by disgusted moral emotions showed the highest mean otherwise reverse-induced moral anger participants showed a low average. These results are in line with the research [42] [43] which find that anger related to lowers ethical decision-making efforts. However, the results of this study contradict the Wintchert [41] study that found that disgust dismissed the possibility of individuals making ethical decisions. The explanation of this seems to exist in the characteristics of the vignette used. Moral induction angry with vignette entitled Law in Indonesia is a matter that does not arouse or motivate participants because it can’t do much to change the situation. While the disgusted moral emotion induction with the title of Dirty House touches and evokes participants to do something.

This study indicates that true emotions despite negative emotions can lead individuals to make ethical decisions. When an individual feels discomfort from disgust, he will try to balance his internal state by doing something that makes him feel better. This can be used in academic settings by showing unpleasant and disgusting situations for students to generate more ethical decision-making.

Some of the weaknesses in this study still have to be improved and the possibility of development still to be done. Because it is still done in the experimental setting, the results of this study should be continued with more systematic practical research in improving students’ ethical decision making. The form of moral emotion under study is also limited so it must be developed with other forms of moral emotion, negative and positive. Research should also be continued into the practical realm, whether students who often experience feelings of disgust will always be consistent to make ethical decisions in everyday life and future.

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