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Raimonda Agnė Medeišienė

# Influence of Applied Drama Methods on the Moral Competence of Middle-Managers

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**Academic supervisors –**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raminta Pučėtaitė** (Vilnius University, Social Sciences, Management, S003). Period of supervision 01.10.2017 – 02.01.2020. and 01.02.2021 – 30.09.2022)

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aurelija Novelskaitė** (Vilnius University, Social Sciences, Management, S003). Period of supervision: 02.01.2020 – 31.01.2021)

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vilma Tamulienė** (Vilnius University, Social Sciences, Management, S003). Period of supervision: 01.10.2016. – 01.10.2017)

**Chairman** – Prof. Dr. Eglė Vaidelytė (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Sociology, S005)

**Members:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ramunė Balevičiūtė (The Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Humanities, Arts Studies, H003)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rasa Daugėlienė (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Management, S003)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Suvi Heikkinen, (The University of Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics, Social Sciences, Management, S003)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ingrida Šarkiūnaitė, (Vilnius University, Social Sciences, Management, S003)

The dissertation shall be defended at a public meeting of the Dissertation Defence Panel at 10.30 a.m. on 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 in Room 10 of the Kaunas Faculty, (Muitinės street. 12, Kaunas Lithuania), Phone: +370 37 422 523; Email: [info@knf.vu.lt](mailto:info@knf.vu.lt)

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Raimonda Agnė Medeišienė

# Taikomųjų teatro metodų įtaka vidurinės grandies vadovų moralinei

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### **Mokslinė vadovė –**

**doc. dr. Raminta Pučėtaitė** (Vilniaus universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003). Vadovavimo laikotarpis: 2017-10-01 – 2020-01-02; 2021-02-01 – 2022-09-30;

**doc. dr. Aurelija Novelskaitė** (Vilniaus universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003). Vadovavimo laikotarpis: 2020-01-02 – 2021-01-31);

**doc. dr. Vilma Tamulienė** (Vilniaus universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003). Vadovavimo laikotarpis: 2016-10-01 – 2017-10-01.

Gynimo taryba:

Pirmininkė – prof. dr. Eglė Vaidelytė (KTU Socialinių, humanitarinių mokslų ir menų fakultetas, socialiniai mokslai, sociologija, S005)

Nariai:

doc. dr. Ramunė Balevičiūtė (LMTA Teatro ir kino fakultetas, humanitariniai mokslai, menotyra, H003)

doc. dr. Rasa Daugėlienė (KTU Socialinių, humanitarinių mokslų ir menų fakultetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003)

doc. dr. Sivi Heikkinen (Juveskiulės universiteto Verslo ir ekonomikos mokykla (Suomija), socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003)

doc. dr. Ingrida Šarkiūnaitė (VU Kauno fakultetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, S003)

Disertacija ginama viešame Gynimo tarybos posėdyje 2023 m. rugsėjo mėn. 8 d. 10.30 val. Vilniaus universiteto Kauno fakulteto 10 auditorijoje (Muitinės g. 12, Kaunas Lietuva), tel. +370 37 422 523; el. paštas [info@knf.vu.lt](mailto:info@knf.vu.lt)

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After all, each of us has our own ocean to navigate.

# 1. RATIONALE FOR THE CHOSEN TOPIC

**Relevance.** Corporate scandals that have occurred in the last two to three decades, such as the Volkswagen emissions scandal, the Fukushima accident, the Enron debacle, and the Nokia water pollution scandal, have underscored the necessity of systematically examining ethical issues within organizations (O'Brien, 2009; Pohling et al., 2016; Weber, 2015; Segon and Booth, 2015). This need has been further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-led war in Ukraine, which have intensified or brought to the forefront existing tensions between an organization's economic objectives and ethical values.

When it comes to decision-making, international surveys conducted among business students have produced concerning results, revealing that they exhibit higher levels of narcissism compared to students from other disciplines, and rank empathy the lowest among a set of ten leadership attributes (Baker, 2017; Weber, 2017). Finance students in particular tend to score lower on empathy than students pursuing other majors within business schools, often perceiving empathy as inappropriate in a business context (Holt and Marques, 2012; Hummel et al., 2018). As Park and Elsass (2017) assert, "the past few years have engendered an enduring sense that these were the most trying of times" (p. 447), referring to the state of ethical and moral education among management professionals.

These observations raise critical questions regarding the content and efficacy of current and future executive education programs in light of socioeconomic, geopolitical, and global challenges. For the long-term success of organizations and the sustainable development of society, managers must make responsible decisions, considering legal standards, as well as economic, environmental, and social consequences. These aspects underscore the significance of managers' ability to balance the interests of diverse stakeholders, make decisions that account for their potential long-term impacts, and act responsibly. These competencies embody the central concept of this thesis: moral

competence, which is crucial to develop within the context of the repercussions of global crises.

Moral Competence (MC) holds relevance not only for top managers but also for middle managers (MMs) working in both public and private sector organizations. Middle managers are categorized as employees occupying intermediate positions, typically serving as heads of regions, branches, divisions, or departments. They bear responsibility for the organization's communication, decision-making, and the quality of products or services. Their influence significantly impacts the organization's reputation, innovation, and the department's microclimate in which they operate (Hiekkataipale and Lamsa, 2016; Santoro and Kumar, 2018).

Hiekkataipale and Lamsa (2016) classify the ethical dilemmas faced by MMs and emphasize the prevalence of unresolved ethical problems within institutions. These unresolved ethical problems pose a threat to innovativeness, well-being, organizational reputation, and ultimately the achievement of organizational goals. Consequently, the issue of moral competence among MMs holds relevance for both private and public sector organizations. Analyses of the performance of those responsible for handling institutional emergencies (Pohling et al., 2016; O'Brien, 2009) support the notion that appropriate moral competence among MMs can help anticipate and manage organizational problems effectively. The challenges posed by globalization, including increased diversity in nationalities, ages, cultural and social backgrounds within organizations, unique communication requirements (Cannon, 2008), the need for high-quality work performance, and meeting deadlines, further underscore the importance of strengthening moral competence among MMs across all types of organizations. In today's world, employees may be dispersed across different countries and time zones, often relying on remote collaboration with colleagues. These issues have been analysed in a global context (Anwar and Chaker, 2003; Hurn, 2013; Morley, 2004; Regan, 1992) and are increasingly relevant in Lithuania as well. Furthermore, the significance of strengthening moral



competence extends beyond the professional realm, as there is a documented link between moral competence and citizenship education (Heinrichs et al., 2013). Moral competence plays a vital role in discussions on political decision-making processes, thereby enhancing perceptions of fairness and community benefits (Nowak, 2016).

Therefore, it is highly relevant to strengthen the moral competence of MMs by developing modern and influential methods for their education and updating the content accordingly. This dissertation addresses the need for innovative interventions to enhance the leadership capacity of MMs in both public and private sector organizations.

**The level of research of the scientific problem.** Despite acknowledging the significant role of MMs in organizations, the leadership literature has not devoted sufficient attention to their development (Dean et al., 2010; Hiekkataipale and Lamsa, 2016). Furthermore, there remains limited understanding of the ethical issues that arise within MM activities, including their causes, consequences, potential solutions, and associated behaviours. Researchers examining day-to-day ethical challenges faced by MMs have noted that approximately one third of these issues stem from factors such as rule ambiguity (Dean et al., 2010), self-serving motivations, neglect of responsibilities, lack of accountability, absence of transparency, discrepancies between objectives and available resources, and conflicting relationships with subordinates (Hiekkataipale and Lamsa, 2016). Moreover, the exploration of MMs' moral competence is characterized by a dearth of research. While some studies have focused on specific dimensions of moral competence, such as moral sensitivity, moral awareness, moral deliberation, or ethical decision-making (Ford and Richardson, 1994; Kohlberg, 1973; Lind, 2008; Schmocker et al., 2020), these investigations neither encompass the entirety of moral competence components nor specifically target MMs as subjects.

Within the broader field of leadership studies, managers' moral competence is evident in the concept and discourse of ethical leadership (Kalshoven et al., 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Treviño et al., 2000). Ethical leadership has received considerable attention in the literature, highlighting its role as a foundation for sustainable partnerships between leaders and their followers, organizations, and stakeholders, and fostering mutually beneficial collaborations. Consequently, Dust et al. (2018) suggest implementing targeted programs to enhance the ethical leadership capacity of managers within organizations. However, the lack of awareness regarding the ethical dimensions of MM activities is coupled with a lack of potentially impactful approaches to strengthen the moral competence of MMs. While research literature has documented various approaches to bolster specific areas of managers' moral competence (e.g., moral awareness or sensitivity), ranging from dilemma-solving exercises (Cannon, 2008; Lind, 2016; Nowak, 2016; Desplaces et al., 2007; Mestvirishvili et al., 2020; Toom et al., 2015) to case studies (Molewijk et al., 2008; Ploum et al., 2019; Santoro and Kumar, 2018) and experiential art interventions (Freeman and Newkirk, 2011; Freeman et al., 2015; Wilkins and Holtham, 2012), there is a need for standardized instruments to assess objective changes in moral competence. While some studies analyse the content of feedback from training participants (Freeman et al., 2015) or attitudes towards the usefulness of specific training topics for enhancing skills or awareness, employing content analysis, questionnaires, or vignettes to evaluate shifts in moral reasoning (Schmocker et al., 2019), there remains a gap in terms of comprehensive assessment tools.

Despite the existence of documented teaching methods and processes, the current literature lacks comprehensive instruments for objectively assessing changes in MC. Some studies utilize feedback from training participants (Freeman et al., 2015), examine attitudes towards the usefulness of specific training topics for individual skills and awareness, and employ content analysis, questionnaires, or vignettes to assess shifts in moral reasoning (Schmocker et al., 2019).

However, an exception to this gap is the Moral Competence Test (MCT), developed by Professor Lind, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Discussion Theatre (DT), one of the Applied Drama Methods (ADM), in cultivating moral competence. The MCT has undergone testing and validation in Lithuania (Kriaučiūnienė, 2008; 2009; Kriaučiūnienė & Lind, 2021) as well as by researchers in other countries (Nowak & Urbańska, 2017; Nowak et al., 2021; Lajčiaková, 2013; 2016a; 2016b). Kriaučiūnienė's (2008; 2009) study unveiled the distinctive expressions of moral attitudes among future foreign language teachers and the prerequisites for their development at the university level. In a study conducted by Nowak and Urbańska (2017), DT and MCT were employed to explore aggression prevention with delinquent young people in Poland and Switzerland. Additionally, Nowak et al. (2021) investigated the correlation between MC of future healthcare providers and the quality of their services. Lajčiaková (2016a) conducted a study to elucidate current discourses in psychological counselling, specifically related to experiences of powerlessness when working with clients in dilemma situations. This research aimed to identify the nature of ethical dilemmas, methods for and barrier to their resolution. The researcher concluded that moral decision-making competence in students pursuing auxiliary professions, such as theology and psychology, can be effectively enhanced using the DT method as an alternative to traditional forms of discussion.

These findings suggest that other ADMs may also have a significant impact on strengthening managers' MC. This assumption is supported by the influence of ADMs in various contexts such as education, community strengthening and development, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), personal development, and democracy building, as reported by practitioners in the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland, and Brazil (Ackroud, 2007; Boal, 1993; Boal, 2014; Rosenberg, 2015; O'Connor & Anderson, 2017; Spolin, 1999; Snyder-Young, 2013; Lind, 2016). It has been argued that these methods are effective for analyzing and resolving sensitive and

complex issues (Rittel and Weber, 1973). ADMs have been utilized in studies aiming to enhance performance in the healthcare sector (Pässilä and Oikarinen, 2014; Pässilä et al., 2015) and in group discussions investigating improvements in work quality and the micro-framework of organizations (Kerr, 2014; Tuokko et al., 2013; Ackroud, 2007). The results of these studies imply that ADMs can enhance moral sensitivity.

However, the application of ADM in the context of moral issues within an organization, particularly as a tool for MC development, remains unexplored. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge regarding how ADM can influence the moral competence of MM and how to effectively assess this influence. Drawing upon research methodologies proposed for drama educators (Ackroud, 2007), ADM can be employed to evaluate changes in MC. Such an endeavour necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, fostering collaborations between diverse researchers. This underscores the need to develop a research-based methodology specifically tailored to the realm of MM leadership activities, enabling the assessment of MC's influence and its subsequent changes.

To summarize the existing research on the thesis topic, there exists a significant gap in scientific knowledge pertaining to both the enhancement of moral competence in MMs and the application of innovative experimental research methodologies to assess this phenomenon. However, previous research provides compelling evidence suggesting that ADM can be effective when targeted towards real-world MMs and aligned with the content of their experiences.

**The scientific problem addressed in this dissertation** centres around the influence of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers.

**The object of the dissertation** is the influence of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers.

**The aim of the dissertation** is to reveal and elucidate the influence of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers.

**This work aims to achieve the following objectives:**

1. Systematize the theoretical definitions of moral competence in middle managers, methodological approaches to researching it, and the practical nuances involved in its implementation;
2. Conceptually justify the potential for strengthening the moral competence of middle managers;
3. Systematize knowledge regarding the functions of Applied Drama Methods within the context of Art-Based Research and their applicability in the field of social sciences;
4. Conceptualize the impact of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers;
5. Empirically assess the influence of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers.

**Dissertation structure.** The dissertation is structured as follows: it begins with a list of definitions, followed by a list of tables and figures. The introduction is followed by the study, leading into two main parts, which are then followed by conclusions and a scientific discussion. The dissertation concludes with a comprehensive list of references and appendices. The first part of the dissertation delves into the concept of moral competence (MC), exploring various scholars' perspectives and the elements they propose to describe MC. Additionally, it justifies the potential for enhancing the moral competence of middle managers (MM) through the application of Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002). Furthermore, it establishes the connection between Applied Drama Methods (ADM) and Arts-Based Research (ABR), defining ABR's position within the field of social sciences. This first part ends with the construction of a conceptual model that illustrates the influence of ADM on the moral competence of MM.

The second part of the dissertation focuses on the research methodology and design, providing a thorough justification and description. The results of the exploratory study are presented, followed by a detailed account of the process and outcomes of the empirical study, which assesses the change in moral competence

through the utilization of the Moral Competence Test (MCT) and ABR methodology. The findings of the study are then analysed and discussed in a scientific discussion section, leading to the formulation of conclusions.

In total, the dissertation spans 134 pages, excluding the appendices. The extensive research conducted for this study drew upon 196 sources, complemented by the inclusion of 19 tables, 12 figures, and 12 appendices.

**Work and research methods.** To thoroughly explore the phenomenon, the dissertation employed methods of comparative analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature for conceptual analysis. The analysis of scientific literature aimed to uncover the theoretical and empirical aspects related to Moral Competence, Applied Drama Methods, and the enhancement of Moral Competence among Middle Managers.

For this dissertation, a pre-experimental mixed design study (Kinnear and Taylor, 1996) was selected as the research method. The intervention involved the utilization of three different Applied Drama Methods (ADMs): the Karl Popper Debate, the Discussion Theatre, and the Forum Theatre. To measure the changes in MC, a quantitative research instrument known as the Moral Competence Test (MCT) (Lind, 2008) was employed in conjunction with the Arts-Based Research (ABR) approach. Additionally, interviews with the actors involved in the interventions were conducted to gather qualitative data.

The collected data for the quantitative assessment were analysed using statistical analysis methods, while the qualitative assessment employed the method of content analysis of the interviews (Žydzīūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017; Leavy, 2015; 2018). This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Applied Drama Methods on Moral Competence.

**Scientific novelty and theoretical significance of the dissertation.**

1. The primary theoretical significance of this dissertation lies in its conceptual exploration of the impact of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers. By establishing a conceptual foundation, the study contributes to the theoretical understanding of this field.

2. Another key contribution is the development of a novel methodological approach for assessing changes in MC using Arts-Based Research (ABR). This methodology, which combines art and ethics, represents a relatively new trend in scientific inquiry. The interdisciplinary nature of this dissertation aligns with the concept of performative social science, as recognized by scholars such as Leavy (2015) and Saldaña (1999). Future research can further validate and expand upon this innovative approach.

3. Through empirical evidence, the dissertation demonstrates the significant impact of Applied Drama Methods on enhancing the moral competence of middle managers. It reveals that these methods have a greater influence compared to passive techniques that primarily focus on cognitive enhancement and verbal intelligence. Additionally, the study highlights the impact of ADMs on spatial and kinetic intelligences. By linking Applied Theatre methods to Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002) and the Art of Ethical Decision-making model (Elm, 2014), the dissertation contributes to the theoretical discourse on executive learning.

4. A tool for quantitative assessment of change in moral competence, the Moral Competence Test (Lind, 2008), was first tested with middle managers. The use of this instrument did not confirm the validity of the instrument, in contrast to previous studies by Lind (2016; 2019), Kriaučiūnienė (2009), Nowak and Urbańska (2017); Nowak et al. (2021), and Lajčiaková (2013; 2016a; 2016b). It is assumed that the situations used in the MCT are too far removed from the specifics of the work of middle managers and should be adapted/changed. This is an area that requires further research work in the future.

**The practical significance of this dissertation** primarily lies in its methodological orientation. By establishing a conceptual

foundation and conducting practical tests on the impact of ADM on the enhancement of moral competence in MM, this study proposes an innovative, updated, and effective training methodology for developing their moral competence.

Building upon this research, curricula designed to enhance moral competence can be updated both in terms of content (contextually relevant to MM) and form (incorporating various applied drama methods). The integration of arts in MMs' moral competence development represents a genuine interdisciplinary collaboration, combining scientific knowledge and methodologies mastered by artists and applying them to everyday practices within the relevant context.

For senior managers seeking to consistently develop moral competence among MMs in their organizations, this study offers a long-term training strategy that combines theoretical knowledge with experiential learning.

Furthermore, curators and lecturers responsible for moral competence programs at universities can directly benefit from this research by updating their programs and implementing them in collaboration with social partners, such as professional actors in urban theatre. This mutually beneficial cooperation not only enhances program quality but also fosters meaningful social partnerships within urban communities.

In the field of business ethics, there is a growing recognition of the need for a broader range of approaches to develop moral competence (Gentile, 2017; Gino et al., 2009; Toom et al., 2015; van den Hoven and Kole, 2015; Milkman et al., 2009). By incorporating Applied Drama Methods into business ethics education, this study expands the array of approaches and, based on the theory of intellectual diversity, provides more influential means of analysing and perceiving situations, thus reinforcing fundamental human beliefs.

In conclusion, this thesis fills a research gap and empirically demonstrates the impact of ADM on the development of moral competence in MM. Its findings contribute to the field by offering an innovative training methodology, facilitating curriculum updates,



fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and enriching business ethics education.

**Thesis statements:**

1. Applied Drama Methods (FT, DT, KPD) as tools for Arts-Based Research are suitable for strengthening the moral competence of MM.

2. Forum Theatre, as an applied drama method, exerts a positive impact on the moral competence of middle managers by enhancing and reinforcing it.

3. Quantitative methods of assessing the impact of ADM on the moral competence of MM are not sufficient to reveal the nature of this impact.

4. Dilemma situations need to integrate elements of the professional context when using a Moral Competence Test to assess the change in the moral competence of MMs.

5. In addition to the subject's self-reflection, external evaluations, such as insights from artistic researchers, are also important for assessing the impact of the ADM on the moral competence of the MM.

**A conceptual model of the influence of Applied Drama Methods on the Moral Competence of Middle Managers.** The following key concepts are employed to accomplish the aims and objectives of the dissertation:

- **Moral Competence [MC]** encompasses the conscious decision-making and actions displayed in situations of responsibility. It entails the ability to identify moral dilemmas, adhere to personal moral principles, and act responsibly, taking into consideration legal standards, as well as the economic, ecological, and social consequences of one's actions (Lind, 2016; Dwyer, 2019; Lennick & Kiel, 2007; Mele, 2012; Jung et al., 2016).

- **Applied Drama Methods [ADM]** are tools derived from theatrical practices that incorporate elements from various other fields of science and art, such as psychology, literature, music, and media. These methods are employed in group settings to facilitate critical pedagogy, stimulate critical consciousness, align with the stages of Transformative Learning Theory, and contribute to the development

of moral competence among middle managers (Denzin, 2006; Saldaña, 2011).

- **Middle Manager [MM]** is a manager who belongs to the category of mid-level management (Hiekkataipe & Lamsa, 2016; Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Santoro & Kumar, 2018);

- **Arts-based research [ABR]** entails research conducted by artist-researchers during the process of practical creation, leading to the generation of novel knowledge and experiences (Frayling, 1992). In this dissertation, ABR is considered as a distinct research paradigm (Leavy, 2018). The application of artistic principles within social research projects provides an opportunity to analyse multiple experiences that traditional textual representations may fail to capture (Flicker et al., 2014; Leavy, 2017; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014).

In this dissertation, the leadership of middle managers (MM) is conceptualized as "a process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader in order to achieve common goals" (Silva, 2016, p. 3). Although Silva's (2016) definition of leadership does not explicitly mention 'responsibility', the assumption is that taking responsibility at the appropriate time is an integral aspect of leadership.

The examination of theories presented in this dissertation validates the notion that moral competence (MC) is a developable competency. The effective development of MC in middle managers necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that integrates multiple theories and applies an appropriate methodological framework to establish their interconnectedness. To the best of our knowledge, Applied Drama Methods (ADMs) have not been employed specifically to enhance the MC of middle managers. Nevertheless, based on the evaluated theoretical foundations, such an approach is deemed feasible. These foundations include the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008), Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002), the MC framework (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013), the Art of Ethical Decision-making Model (Elm, 2014), the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2011), and the ADM impact framework.

The MC framework (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013) aligns with Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002) and the Art of Ethical Decision-making model (Elm, 2014) (see Table 1). The derivative of knowledge is directly connected to the need for knowledge (Elm, 2014), while the disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1990) arises from the need for new knowledge when existing knowledge proves inadequate. The moral reasoning component is closely associated with being present in the moment (Elm, 2014) and appreciating the contextual factors (Mezirow, 1990). The moral sensitivity component combines emotion (Elm, 2014) and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990), thereby confirming the significance of emotional and cognitive aspects in augmenting MC. The moral motivation component combines practice (Elm, 2014) and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1990), suggesting that the enhancement of MC is perceived as an ongoing process that necessitates conscious effort (motivation for action) and can encompass transforming meanings, structures, context, processes, and preconditions.

**Table 1.** A comparison of the elements of the MC system and the components of the ethical decision-making art model and the stages of the Transformational Learning Theory

The components of MC (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013)	The Art of Ethical Decision-making (Elm, 2014)	Stages of Transformational Learning (Mezirow, 1990)
Rules (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes)	Knowledge	A disorienting dilemma
Moral reasoning	Being Present in the Moment	Context (professional, social, personal)
Moral sensitivity	Emotion	Critical reflection
Moral motivation	Practice	Perspective transformation

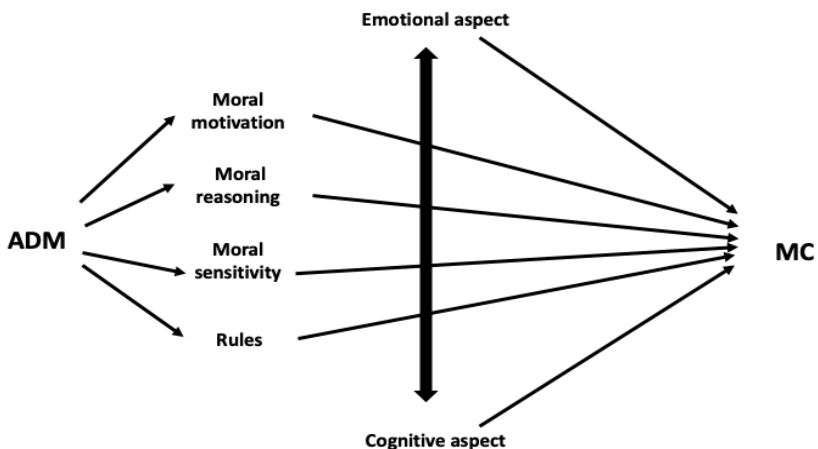
This contrast (see Table 1) underscores the significance of adopting an interdisciplinary approach. The MC framework developed by De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013) within the realm of public administration enables the integration of insights from business ethics

(Elm, 2014) and adult education (Mezirow, 1990), facilitating the development of a model depicting the impact of ADM on the moral competence of MMs.

ADM as a part of ABR holds the potential to offer valuable suggestions for addressing complex challenges in our rapidly evolving society. In accordance with the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2011), Forum Theatre (FT) engages three intelligences: linguistic, spatial, and kinetic. The underlying assumption is that information presented through this medium is better comprehended, deeply internalized, and capable of stimulating active engagement.

Drawing from psychological, educational, and leadership perspectives, the theoretical approaches lead to the assumption that ADM has a substantial impact on the moral competence of middle managers. The model illustrating the influence of ADM on the moral competence of MM (Fig. 1) is constructed based on the analysed theories.

**The model of the influence of ADM on the moral competence of MM** (Fig. 1) is constructed based on the theories analysed above.



**Figure 1.** The model of ADM influence on MM moral competence

According to De Schrijver and Maesschalek (2013), the MC system consists of several components, namely rule-following, moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, and moral motivation, which encompass the components of the Art of Ethical Decision-making model and the stages of Transformative Learning Theory (refer to Table 1). In the ADM model illustrating the impact of ADM on the moral competence of MMs, the components of the MC system are presented vertically. The Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008) identifies two crucial components: emotional and cognitive. Assessing the intensity of these aspects in a particular part of the MC system proves challenging, thus the model (Fig. 1) visually represents them as running through all the MC components. Recognizing that attitudes are attributed to individuals rather than groups (Lind, 2008) emphasizes the significance of context: individual attitudes can be influenced by and can influence others within a specific situation. ADMs influence the MC components, which, in turn, are influenced by emotional and cognitive aspects throughout the process. It is assumed that this process has an impact on MC (refer to Fig. 1).

This assumption will be further empirically substantiated based on the model depicting the influence of ADM on the moral competence of MMs (Fig. 1).

## 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF APPLIED DRAMA METHODS ON THE MORAL COMPETENCE OF MIDDLE MANAGERS

The aim of the study is to empirically evaluate the impact of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of middle managers.

Research aims:

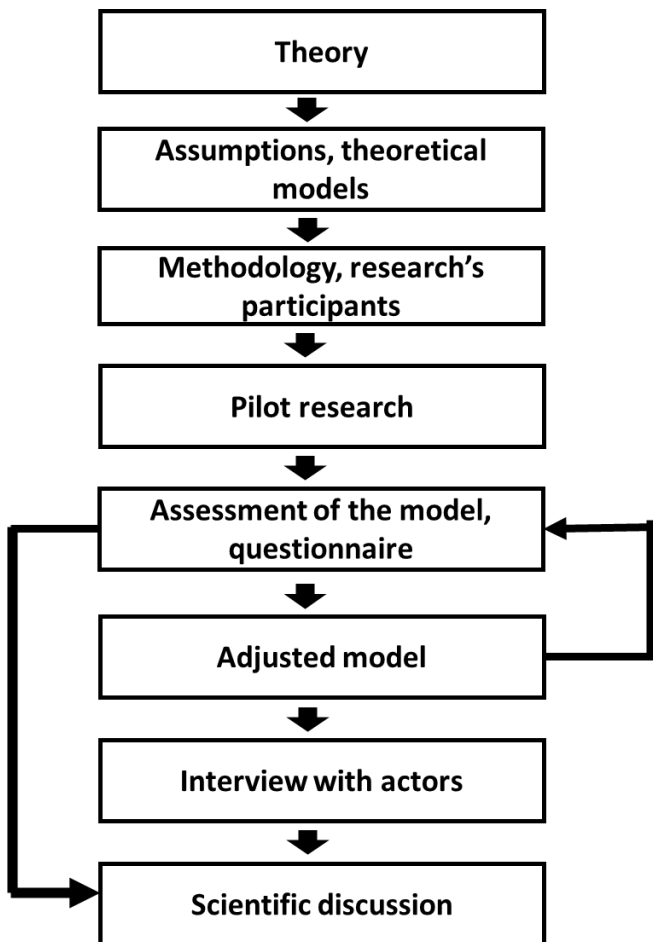
- to assess the impact of applied theatre methods on the moral competence of middle managers using MCT;
- to reveal the determinants of the influence of Applied Drama Methods in enhancing the moral competence of middle managers from the perspective of professional actors (ABR approach).

### 2.1. Empirical Research Strategy

The empirical research in this study was conducted with a pragmatic approach, incorporating principles of embodied cognition, abductive research logic, and a mixed-research methodology. The mixed-research methodology utilized both a quantitative change measurement tool, the Moral Competence Test (MCT) developed by Lind (2008), and an Arts-Based Research (ABR) approach following the framework proposed by Leavy (2015; 2018). The logical sequence of the study (Fig. 2) was designed based on the principles and concepts derived from these research paradigms.

Pragmatism, as a research paradigm, advocates for the use of diverse methods and emphasizes the importance of selecting the most suitable philosophical and methodological approaches to address specific research problems. It often involves a combination of multiple methods and allows for a flexible and reflective research design (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019; Leavy, 2015). In this study, a single-group experimental design was adopted, without a control group, following the classification of Gomm (2009), Bhattacharjee (2012), and

Frankfort-Nachmias et al. (2015) as a pre-experimental design with pretesting and post-testing.



**Figure 2.** The sequence of research

The Moral Competence Test (MCT) was employed as the instrument to quantify and control the effectiveness of the experiment, specifically measuring attitude change. To establish a baseline, a pretest was administered prior to the Applied Drama Methods (ADM)

intervention, while a post-test was conducted after the intervention to assess the impact.

The study aimed to examine the impact of a topical Forum Theatre (FT) intervention on the moral competence (MC) of the participants. The research contributes to the existing MC literature by extending the application of theories such as the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008), the theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2011), and the Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002) to the development of moral competence in middle managers (MM). This study is also the first empirical investigation to introduce ADM approaches in analysing MC and to apply a theoretical art model of Ethical Decision-making (Elm, 2014). By expanding on the findings derived from the statistical analysis of MC, the study proposes to evaluate the effectiveness of FT as one of the applied drama methods in enhancing moral competence.

**The Moral Competence Test (MCT)**, developed by Lind (2008), is a quantitative assessment tool used in the study. It consists of two complex dilemmas: one involving job loss for company employees and the other concerning physician-assisted euthanasia. Each dilemma is followed by a single summary sentence, and participants are asked to rate the overall acceptability of the decision made by the actor on a 7-point Likert scale (-3 = "I strongly disagree" to +3 = "I strongly agree"). Additionally, there are six "for" statements and six "against" statements related to each dilemma. These statements represent the six stages of moral development identified by Kohlberg (1964) and are presented in a random order within each group. Participants rate these statements using a 9-point Likert scale (-4 = "I strongly disagree" to +4 = "I strongly agree") based on the semantic differential method.

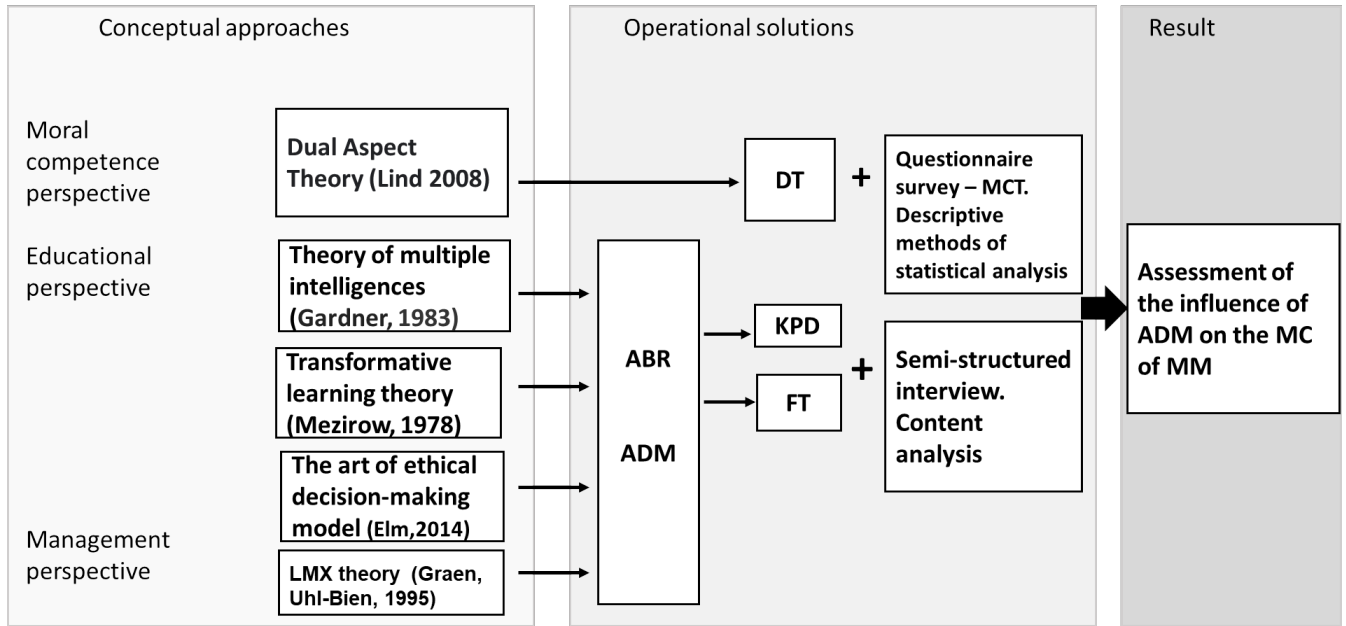
To assess the consistency of participants' responses, the C-index is calculated. This index reflects the competence of moral judgment and can range from 0 to 100. A higher C-index indicates that the subject consistently applies moral principles when evaluating



arguments, while a lower C-index suggests that the choice of arguments is influenced more by opinion rather than moral principles. The author of the MCT does not provide explicit guidance on how to differentiate between moral principles and opinion.

**The inclusion of performing arts** in the enhancement of moral competence for middle managers involved several components. These included developing a script for the Forum Theatre (FT) intervention, conducting rehearsals with professional actors, performing the FT for seventeen target groups (comprising middle managers from law enforcement and law-making sectors), and conducting five expert interviews with the professional actors involved in the research. The purpose of the expert interviews was to explore whether working with applied drama methods, specifically FT, can have an impact on the audience's moral competence from the perspective of the actors. The responses from the expert interviews are presented in audio format in the appendix of the dissertation, and a content analysis of these interviews was performed to address the research question related to the impact of ADM on the audience's moral competence.

**The research design** is derived from the conceptual approaches discussed in Part 1 of the dissertation, as well as the operational solutions suggested by these approaches. Based on these foundations, a model for evaluating the impact of Applied Drama Methods (ADM) on the moral competence of middle managers is developed (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** The model for assessing the influence of applied drama methods on the moral competence of middle managers

The three conceptual approaches, namely the moral competence perspective (the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour), the educational perspective (the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, the Art of Ethical Decision-making model, Transformative Learning Theory), and the managerial perspective (the LMX theory), are translated into practical solutions. For instance, the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008) offers an interventional Decision-making Training (DT) approach (Lind, 2019), which is incorporated into the Moral Competence Test (MCT) (Lind, 2008) as a tool for measuring change. The results of the MCT will be analysed using descriptive statistical methods. From an educational perspective, the operational solutions include the Applied Behavioural Research (ABR) approach and the Applied Drama Methods (ADM). Both forms of ADM, namely KPD (exploratory study only) and FT, have been selected as interventions for the development of moral competence in middle managers, complementing the DT proposed by Lind (Lind, 2019). In line with the ABR approach, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with FT actors serving as artist-researchers (Wang et al., 2017). The empirical study's outcome will involve summarizing the results obtained from the content analysis of the quantitative change measurement tool (ABR), as well as the insights gained from the semi-structured interviews with the actors.

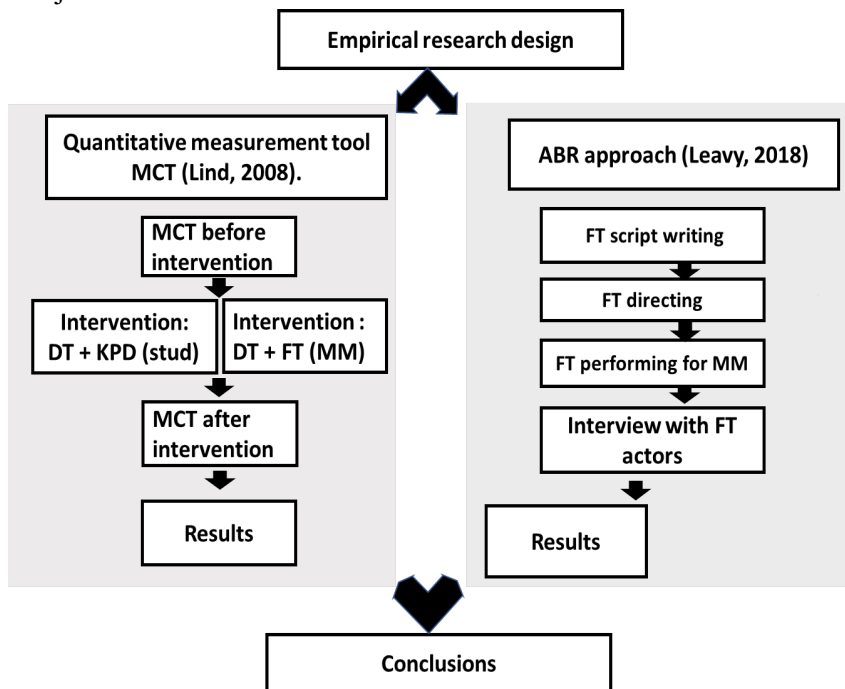
The empirical research design (Fig. 4.) encompasses both an exploratory study and an empirical study. The empirical study employs the experimental method, which is commonly used in explanatory research and is based on causal logic or cause-and-effect relationships (Leavy, 2018). Kardel (2007) argues that experiments are designed to test causal relationships by manipulating experimental conditions. While all experiments include at least one experimental group, not all experiments incorporate control groups (Leavy, 2018). In this empirical study, a pre-experimental design was chosen due to objective constraints that prevented controlling a group of independent variables. As explained by Leavy (2018), pre-experimental studies do not involve randomly assigning subjects and are frequently employed

in educational and management research, where access to specific institutions or companies is available. It is important to note that pre-experimental samples do not necessarily meet the criterion of representativeness (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Leavy, 2017). Consequently, only experimental groups were utilized in this study, comprising participants subject to an experimental intervention (Leavy, 2018).

The groups included in the empirical study fully adhered to the requirements of the pre-experiment design. The exploratory study involved groups of university students from two different countries, with the researcher playing no role in their selection. Students were chosen as participants in the pre-experimental study due to the target group, middle managers, being busy professionals. Selecting students for the exploratory study ensured optimal conditions for their participation in the experiment. These students fulfilled one of the criteria for managers, namely the likelihood of facing difficult moral decisions in their future professional environments (Freeman and Newkirk, 2011; Lämsä et al., 2008). The student groups were intentionally diverse in terms of age, education, culture, and place of residence. Although the intervention ADM and the MCT were administered to the student groups, neither group was designated as a control group, and thus, the results obtained are not directly comparable. The primary aim of this study was to establish similarity between the groups, leading to the adoption of a representative case selection sampling method (Bitinas et al., 2008).

The groups of MMs who received the ADM intervention were involved in the training project "The Impact of Hate Crime and Hate Speech: Characteristics of Communication with Victims," organized by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The participants in the project were selected and managed by the project administrators, with the training coordinator maintaining the lists of participants. All the MMs belonged to the law enforcement and legislative field, and the composition of the groups, as per project requirements, consisted of an equal number of investigators,

prosecutors, judges, and an equal distribution of men and women. Each group had a total of 18-20 participants. Although the groups shared similarities, neither group was designated as a control. However, the chosen groups were comprised of professionals from the same field, specifically law enforcement and legislative sectors, participating in the same project with a shared focus on common objectives.



**Figure 4.** The model of empirical research

According to the original research design, the MCT and ADM interventions were initially chosen. However, due to questionable results obtained from the MCT, it was decided to broaden the scope of the study by incorporating the ABR approach.

The validity of the empirical study is supported by parameters of internal and external validity (Cook et al., 2002; Rolling, 2010; Leavy, 2015; Barone and Eisner, 2011; Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas, 2017).

Internal validity pertains to the accuracy of the research results in reflecting reality. The non-random grouping of study participants is justified based on the specific circumstances of the study. The duration parameter is justified by the uniform and appropriate length of the experimental exposure, ensuring participants did not experience any physiological or other changes associated with prolonged experiments. Testing, as a crucial indicator, was carried out strictly following the guidelines of Lind (2008) to assess the effect of the MCT.

External validity, on the other hand, refers to the generalizability of the study's findings to different groups and settings. Population validity is established through the inclusion of student groups from two higher education institutions (HEIs) in the exploratory study and middle managers participating in the project "The Impact of Hate Crime and Hate Speech: Characteristics of Communication with Victims." The validity of personality factors is supported by the practical application of selected instruments and measurements in the research groups using two different approaches. The ecological factors' validity is based on conducting the experiments in familiar settings for the subjects, such as classrooms for students, venues chosen by middle manager groups for their training, and interviews conducted in locations chosen by the actors.

This pre-experimental study meets the validity conditions by conducting the study in similar groups, utilizing the same quantitative research methodology to assess changes in moral competence (Lind, 2008), and extending the study to middle manager groups using the ABR approach (Leavy, 2018). The results obtained can be applied to similar groups, aligning with the study's objectives of investigating the impact of ADM on the moral competence of middle managers. The findings are presented in a summarized form, accompanied by conclusions and recommendations.

## 2.2. Methodology and results of the exploratory study

The purpose of the exploratory study was to examine the impact of relevant content Applied Drama Methods (ADMs) on the moral competence (MC) of the participants, based on the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008). This study served as a preparation for the empirical study investigating the influence of ADM on the moral competence of middle managers (MMs) and helped assess the feasibility of conducting a classical experiment in the future.

The design of the exploratory study involved a single-group experimental testing, where no control group was present. Therefore, the study is categorized as a pre-experimental study with pre-testing and post-testing instruments (Gomm, 2009; Bhattacharjee, 2012; Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The Moral Competence Test (MCT; Lind, 2008) was employed as a quantitative tool for measuring changes in moral competence. For the ADM intervention, the methods chosen were KPD and DT.

**The Discussion Theatre (DT)** process is implemented based on Lind's (2019) guidelines. During DT, semi-life dilemmas are presented that may not directly involve the participants but evoke emotional responses and prompt them to address conflicts of moral values. The discussion within DT is grounded in mutual respect and the free expression of each individual's opinion. The moderator's role is that of a facilitator who does not impose their own viewpoint. By engaging in the resolution of such dilemmas, participants are encouraged to explore their moral feelings (Kriaučiūnienė, 2009).

**The Karl Popper Debate (KPD)** process follows the instructions provided by the Karl Popper Debate Clubs. This approach establishes clear roles and time limits for all participants, which are strictly adhered to during the debate. The structured nature of KPD ensures that the discussion remains focused and allows for a balanced exchange of ideas and arguments.

**Conducting the exploratory study.** The study was carried out with two groups of students in universities located in different countries: the University of Coruña (UDC) in Spain and Vilnius University (VU) in Lithuania. The study aimed to maintain maximum similarity between the groups while accounting for slight differences.

In both the UDC and VU studies, all students within each group were invited to participate in the study. To ensure the confidentiality of the results, participants were asked to create a unique code that would maintain their anonymity. It was emphasized that participation was voluntary, and students were assured that their decision to participate or not would not have any impact on their academic performance. Furthermore, all individuals who took part in the study had the opportunity to access their own research results if they wished to do so. This provided transparency and allowed participants to have insight into the outcomes of the study related to their own moral competence.

In the UDC study, the participants were postgraduate students enrolled in the International Business Administration program, representing various countries such as Spain, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, Romania, and Switzerland. Their undergraduate studies covered a range of disciplines, including civil engineering, economics, business administration, law, engineering and sports marketing, manufacturing engineering, and more. Out of the 30 students in the cohort, 18 chose to participate in the study, and 11 completed the Moral Competence Test (MCT).

The VU study involved first-year students from the Republic of Lithuania who were enrolled in four-year bachelor's degree programs. These students had diverse academic backgrounds, studying subjects such as philology, philosophy, psychology, economics, political science, pharmacy, journalism, geography, medicine, biochemistry, finance, criminology, publishing and advertising, and biology. They specifically chose a gender studies course. A total of 99 students were enrolled in the gender studies course and were divided into two



groups. In the experiment, 69 students participated, and 51 of them completed the MCT.

Two independent experiments were conducted to assess the impact of Applied Drama Methods (ADM) on Moral Competence Test (MCT) education. For UDC students, the ADM intervention took the form of Karl Popper Debate (KPD). On the other hand, VU students experienced ADM through both Discussion Theatre (DT) and KPD formats. The assessment of moral competence was done using the C-index, which was derived from the MCT results.

**Data analysis.** The data analysis for the study was conducted using SPSS 23.0 software for MS Windows. The analysis involved several steps to assess the impact of the ADM intervention on the participants' moral competence. First, the C-index, which is a measure of moral competence, was calculated before and after the training for the target group. The mean values of the C-index were used for this calculation. To determine if the results were statistically significant and to assess the effectiveness of the ADM intervention, a one-sample t-test was performed on the pre- and post-training C-indexes for the target group. To provide a more detailed understanding of the changes in attitudes, the frequencies of the minimum, maximum, median, and quartile values were calculated for both the target and control groups. These calculations were done with a 95% confidence interval. Additionally, the C-indexes in the target group were compared using the non-parametric Wilcoxon coefficient. This comparison aimed to confirm or reject the null hypothesis that the attitudes of the trainees remained unchanged after the intervention. Any outliers in the data were identified and removed before conducting the statistical analysis. For more specific statistical information and details, please refer to Annex 5.

**MCT results.** Statistical comparative analysis of the descriptive results shows that changes in minimal values after the ADM intervention enhanced the moral competence of UDC students. After the ADM intervention, respondents were most likely to choose a neutral (value 0) position - neither agree nor disagree. In contrast,

before the ADM intervention, respondents were slightly more likely to agree with the actions described. This suggests that the ADM encouraged people to reflect on their choices.

Regarding the main descriptive statistics of the MCT for UDC students, both before and after the ADM intervention, the average C-index falls within the typical range for educated individuals (C-index ranging from 10 to 29). Specifically, the C-index was 22.30 before the intervention and 8.40 after the intervention, indicating a significant absolute effect size of 13.9 ( $t = 3.58$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

The results of the main descriptive statistics of MCT in VU students show that the average C-index of MKT both before and after the ADM intervention is in the so-called average range of MCT; this is typical for educated people (C-index ranges from 10 to 29).

The mean MCT C-index before ADM is = 18.69, and after ADM is = 13.75; the absolute effect size is 5.37. This is also a statistically significant difference ( $t = 2.34$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Further analysis using Wilcoxon's non-parametric coefficient tested the null hypothesis that participants' attitudes remained unchanged before and after the training. The results rejected this hypothesis ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant change in attitudes following the ADM intervention.

To explore the change in moral competence in more detail, an additional factor analysis was conducted. The hypothesis was that the number of construct components would decrease after the intervention, indicating increased consistency in participants' judgments. The results supported this hypothesis, as the number of components decreased from 7 before the intervention to 5 after the intervention for UDC and VU students' responses to the ADM. This finding confirms that the thinking associated with moral competence became more consistent after the intervention.

**The exploratory study** aimed to investigate the impact of ADM on strengthening MC. Through student reflections, it was noted that methods such as KPD and DT facilitated the development of critical thinking skills, tolerance for different perspectives, and critical moral

reasoning, potentially influencing MC. However, despite the students' active engagement and interest in the study activities, the results did not support the assertion that the methods employed in the study improved moral reasoning skills.

The findings revealed similarities between the two groups of students. The ADM intervention led to a decrease in C-index values, and the differences in C-index before and after the intervention were statistically significant for both groups. However, quantitatively, the reduction in the C-index was greater for UDC students compared to VU students (13.99 and 5.37 points, respectively). This indicates that the ADM intervention was more effective in enhancing moral competence in UDC students compared to VU students.

The observed differences in results can be attributed to several objective factors:

- absence of a working relationship. The students involved in the study had no working relationship with private or public sector institutions at the time, which may have influenced their perspectives, potentially leading to more liberal thinking;

- ADM scenarios and MCT dilemmas. The ADM scenarios were developed and tested within the context of the students' study programs, but the MCT dilemmas presented to them were hypothetical situations, which may have influenced their responses;

- Different time intervals. There were variations in the time intervals between the ADM intervention and the second MCT. The UDC students took the second MCT immediately after the intervention, while the VU students had a three-week gap before the final test. This difference in timing may have affected the results;

- Situational factors. The VU students had a test before the second MCT, causing them to be under stress and potentially shifting their focus away from the MCT. On the other hand, the UDC students were in a better position to complete the second MCT without such additional stressors.

- ADM intervention design. The UDC students experienced a combination of KPD and DT, whereas the VU students participated in

DT with a KPD. The different intervention designs may have influenced the outcomes;

- KPD topic. The topic was chosen according to the curriculum, i.e. the students of the UDC Business Administration course debated the topic "Whistleblowing in the workplace", and their international group had a debate about the political situation in the country and the phenomenon of whistleblowing. Students from the VU Gender Studies programme debated the topic "The man is a housewife";

- Students' age: Although detailed age statistics were not collected, it was observed that the UDC master's students were generally 2-3 years older than the VU Bachelor's students. Age differences could have influenced their perspectives and responses;

- International experience and cultural differences. The UDC students represented at least seven different nationalities and countries, while the VU students were a homogeneous group from the Republic of Lithuania. The presence of diverse cultural backgrounds may have influenced their perspectives and reasoning;

- cultural differences. In the case of UDC, a more open Latin American culture; in the case of VU, a more reserved Baltic culture;

- Both groups of students were participating in this type of research and experiencing ADM for the first time. It is important to note that based on existing theoretical and research-based information, moral competence (MC) is considered educative, and a single ADM intervention may not be sufficient to generate a noticeable impact.

he results showed a shift towards choosing a neutral position (0 value) after the ADM intervention, indicating that the intervention encouraged participants to reconsider their choices. However, the methodology proposed by Lind and the estimates of MCT did not fully support a strong relationship between the ADM intervention and changes in students' MC.

The study suggests that ADM interventions are impactful and inclusive in education, catering to students from different nationalities and programs. It aligns with constructivist learning theories and

critical reflection as part of assessment. However, alternative forms and instruments for impact assessment should be explored.

While we are confident in the current findings, further examination of ADM interventions combined with MCT would provide stronger and more robust results, allowing for testing the long-term impact of ADM interventions on MC. The inclusion of a control group in future studies would enable a classical experimental design. Additionally, expanding the study to other types of ADM interventions would broaden our understanding of their impact on enhancing MC.

### 2.3. Assessing the impact of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of mid-managers using the Lind Moral Competence Test

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of relevant content ADM on the MC of the respondents, drawing on the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008) and Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 1997). The measurement tool used to assess the change is the Moral Competence Test (MCT) (Lind, 2008). The specific dilemma utilized in the research is Laura's dilemma (see Appendix 6 in the dissertation).

**Research background and subjects.** The study was conducted with master's students who participated in the training project titled "The Impact of Hate Crime and Hate Speech: Characteristics of Communication with Victims," organized by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The project consisted of 17 training sessions held in Vilnius, Panevėžys, Kaunas, Klaipėda, and Šiauliai between June 2019 and January 2020.

The participants were individuals associated with Public Service Institutions, with the size of their subordinate staff group varying depending on their work nature and city of employment.

**Ethical agreements.** In accordance with the Data Protection Act, participants were requested to create an identification code known

only to them, ensuring anonymity. This code was used to label both the pre-tests and post-tests, and the resulting test data were encrypted.

A total of 340 individuals participated in the training program, and 225 test questionnaires were distributed. To maximize the validity of the study, incomplete MCT questionnaires were not included in the analysis. Ultimately, a total of 163 valid tests ( $n=163$ ) were considered and analysed.

**MCT results.** The data were analysed using SPSS 23.0 for MS Windows software. Initially, the C-index was calculated for the target group before and after the training, using mean values. To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference and assess the effect of ADM on MC, a one-sample t-test was conducted on the pre- and post-training C-indexes in this group. Additionally, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed rank test was employed to compare the C-indexes in the target group and confirm or reject the null hypothesis of unchanged attitudes among the trainees.

The comparison of pre- and post-training C-indexes in the target group provides some insight into the effectiveness of the ADM intervention, although a definitive trend cannot be established. To fully interpret the obtained results within a study conducted under maximally equal conditions, a more detailed contextual description would be necessary.

A statistical comparative analysis of the descriptive outcomes, including minimum, maximum, median, mode, and quartile values, reveals that changes in the minimum values led to an increase in MC after the training. However, no significant trend of change is observed in the 25% and 75% quartiles. Although the 25% quartile shows a slight improvement in attitude coherence, the increase in the number of participants does not support the idea of reinforcement.

Prior to the ADM intervention, respondents were slightly more inclined to endorse the described behaviours. However, after the intervention, respondents tended to adopt a neutral stance (0 values), neither agreeing nor disagreeing. In conclusion, the ADM intervention resulted in a slight softening of participants' positions.

Regarding the difficulty of the questionnaire (assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates "very easy" and 10 indicates "very difficult"), the average response before the ADM intervention was 7.6, which increased slightly to 7.8 after the intervention. As for the time taken to complete the MCT, participants took an average of 11 minutes for the first test and 12 minutes for the second test. These findings suggest that participants comprehended the MCT questionnaire and the presented moral dilemmas, thus ensuring the reliability of the study results for further research.

In summarizing the C-index obtained by all participants, it is worth mentioning that the results of the MCT do not indicate an increase in MC (see Table 2). Notably, the data in Table 2 demonstrate that the C-index before training reflects higher MC, as expected for educated individuals (Lind, 2008). However, law enforcement and legislative MMs exhibit the lowest C-index (13.8) compared to UDC students (22.3) and VU students (18.69). Based on the obtained C-index, it can be inferred that students possess a higher competence in moral judgments.

**Table 2.** Comparison of C-index

Respondents	C indeksas	N=	C-index
MM	Pre-test	163	13,8
	Post-test	163	10,4
UDC students	Pre-test	10	22,3
	Post-test	10	8,4
VU students	Pre-test	48	18,69
	Post-test	48	13,75

Furthermore, the mean MCT C-index is lower in all cases after the ADM intervention. The pre-ADM C-index for MM participants was 13.8, which decreased to 10.4 post-ADM. Similarly, UDC students had a pre-ADM C-index of 22.3, which decreased to 8.4 post-ADM, while VU students had a pre-ADM C-index of 18.69, which decreased to 13.75 post-ADM. The absolute effect size for MM

participants was 3.4 points. These findings indicate a relatively low C-index among the educated population. The results of the factor analysis conducted before and after the ADM intervention indicate no significant decrease in the component scores; they remain largely unchanged. However, it is worth noting that after the ADM intervention, the responses to the MCT predominantly clustered into one component. This suggests that a slight change in MC does exist, albeit in a more focused manner.

In conclusion, the study suggests the following key points:

- The inclusion of TADM in training increases trainees' engagement in analysing situations and raises their awareness. The reflections of the trainees support the potential impact of ADM on MC.

- There are limitations in the use of MCT as an instrument to assess MC;

- A single ADM intervention per group is not sufficient to influence the subjects' MC, but there is no reason to say that ADM does not have such an impact;

- The MCT as an instrument may be appropriate to measure the impact of ADM on the development of MC when ADM interventions are repeated for the same group;

- There is a need for an alternative approach, method, or instrument to accurately measure the impact of ADM on MC.

To address these gaps in the academic discourse, further experimentation and exploration are necessary to develop ways to measure the impact of ADM on MC. The integration of ADMs in the evaluation of MC enhancement options opens up new avenues for exploration and understanding.



## 2.4. Assessing the impact of Applied Drama Methods on the moral competence of mid-managers using the Arts-Based Research Methodology

*„ You cannot put this experience into words. It's like music. I know the notes, I can play the melody in my head, but when I hear that music being played, that's another thing. It's the same with the word. You can read it, and you can play it, live it, create a reality, but a stage reality. It's much stronger. “*  
*Interviewee A\_2*

The research aimed to explore the ABR (Arts-Based Research) approach in studying the MC of the MMs. Specifically, the study focused on investigating the influence of FT (one of ADMs) on the moral competence of the MM, from the perspective of the actors involved in the process. The actors in this study had extensive experience working with MMs and had participated in FT with this group on 17 occasions. They were able to effectively identify, analyse, group, and summarize the suggestions received from the audience during FT sessions. Additionally, the actors engaged in reflective interviews to further analyse these suggestions. Given their deep involvement and understanding of the FT process, selecting actors as research participants to evaluate the impact of ADM on the moral competence of MMs is appropriate and well-justified.

**The rationale for evaluating the influence of Applied Drama Methods (ADM) on the Moral Competence of Middle-Managers (MM) from the actors' perspective** is as follows. The FT scenario, titled "Hate Crime Investigation" (Appendix 7), was specifically developed by the author to depict challenging situations that arise within the professional environment of law enforcement and legislative MM. This scenario explores several critical issues, including the role and leadership of MMs in hate crime investigations, victims' experiences with law enforcement MMs, reasons behind not contacting law enforcement, and the rights and support available to

victims after a crime has occurred. To construct this scenario, the author drew upon high-profile cases, interviews with law enforcement MM specialists from different departments, confidential investigation materials, and publicly available information from diverse media sources.

**The FT methodology** employed in the study involves three actors and a moderator on stage. The role of the moderator is to serve as a mediator between the audience and the actors, observing the point at which the on-stage action transitions into a discussion and signalling its conclusion. Additionally, the moderator manages the interaction time between the actors and the audience, predicts the FT's duration, and facilitates the ensuing discussions and reflections. A total of five actors were involved in portraying the characters, and one moderator was responsible for the facilitation during the training sessions.

**The rationale for utilizing a survey method** and a 100% participation sample of professional actors who have worked in FT with the MM subjects is to examine how expert actors perceive the impact of ADM on the audience. The aim of conducting expert interviews is to gain insights into the actors' perspectives on the effectiveness of ADM in engaging and influencing the audience's moral competence. By including actors who have experience in FT production with the MM group, the study seeks to gather valuable feedback on the potential of FT as an ADM to enhance the moral competence of MMs.

To assess the impact of ADM on MM moral competence, interviews with actors were chosen as the data collection method. This study adopts an Arts-Based Research (ABR) perspective, which aims to generate new knowledge and experiences through practical creation (Frayling, 1992). By focusing on FT production as an ABR method, the research aims to comprehensively understand the impact of ADM on MM moral competence, exploring the context and potential of FT from the actors' perspective. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the capacity of FT, as an ADM, to strengthen the moral

competence of MMs, satisfying the curiosity of both artists and researchers in understanding this specific phenomenon.

**The interview questionnaire** used in the study is a semi-structured interview, as outlined in Annex 8. It comprises three parts: introduction, main interview, and conclusion. These parts are further divided into four thematic blocks: professional experience, character, audience, and artistic intervention as an option for moral competence education. These thematic blocks were developed based on the analysis of information conducted in the initial part of the dissertation, which led to the formulation of a model illustrating the impact of ADMs on the moral competence of MMs (Fig. 1).

**Ethical considerations** were taken into account during the interview process. The interviewees were fully informed about the study's purpose and provided voluntary participation in face-to-face interviews. They signed informed consent forms, which outlined their rights and the relevant information related to the study.

**The interviews and selection of interviewees** for the study follow the Arts-Based Research (ABR) approach. All five participants are professional artists with backgrounds in acting or directing, and they possess diverse professional experiences in traditional theatre, television, film, production, and events. Additionally, all informants have between two and five years of professional experience in applied theatre.

The analysis of the interview data followed the methodological recommendations of Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016). A three-step procedure was employed, involving the reduction of data volume, reorganization of the data, and presentation in the form of categories, subcategories, and descriptive codes. These codes consist of combinations of words. The analysis focused on the themes addressed in the interview questionnaire, with the unit of analysis being the sentence. A total of fourteen units of analysis were identified (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Coding of interviews

Category	Subcategories
Experience in ADM	Experience gained before working in one team
	Experience gained working in the same team
	Consistent work (duration)
Comparison of traditional and applied theatre	Specifics of traditional theatre
	Improvisation in traditional theatre
	The role of the director in traditional theatre
	Specifics of applied theatre
	Audience engagement in applied theatre
Created characters for MC development	The field of law
	The field of education
	Business area
Moral dilemmas of MM	Profit and decency
	Professional responsibility and inner beliefs
	Justice and attitudes regarding nationality, gender, sexual orientation
	Unfulfilled personal expectations and environment
The change of the character	The intensity of the change
	The nature of the change
	The reason for the change
The effect of character transformation on the audience	Surprise and support seeing others' realizations
	Observing the result
	Involvement, complex analysis of the situation
	Understanding the importance of body language
Audience comments	Radical suggestions and comments
	Vulgar suggestions and comments
Strengths of including ADM in training for MC education	Development of critical thinking
	Values
	Links between theory and practice
	Mood

Category	Subcategories
	An emotion that prompts action
	The possibility of a deeper impact
Weaknesses of including ADM in training for MC strengthening	No weaknesses
	Becoming a form of audience entertainment
	Denial of the situation
Possibilities of deepening MM's moral reasoning	Limiting the number of participants
	Experimentation
Evaluation of ADM for MC strengthening	A positive assessment
	The importance of continuity and reflection
	Inclusion of emotions (affective engagement?)
Inspirations to change your moral competences	Environment
	Experience
	Other forms of art
Assessing change in moral attitudes	No need to rate
	Assessment options
Experience in MC developing in other contexts of professional activities	No experience
	Pedagogy
	Other events

A detailed matrix of the units of analysis and their corresponding interview responses can be found in Annex 10.

In summary, the evaluation of Applied Drama Methods (specifically the FT approach) on the moral competence of mid-managers from the actors' perspective reveals several key aspects. According to the actors' insights, ADM places a strong emphasis on the audience, creating a context that facilitates equal dialogue and guarantees audience involvement, thereby modelling the possibility of change. Recognizable situations allow the MMs to identify with the characters and develop empathy. The visible transformation of MM moral competence attitudes is objectively evaluated by the audience,

leading to meaningful discussions during training and subsequent reflection on organizational situations.

ADM enables a holistic view of problematic situations, encouraging the exploration of causes rather than merely masking the consequences. The actors believe that ADM helps MMs understand the prevalence of moral dilemmas in their professional environment, where time constraints and limited knowledge often complicate decision-making. Through the FT approach, MMs witness morally debatable behaviour, the use of stereotypes, the blending of personal ambition with leadership perception, and the pressure to prioritize profit or desired outcomes above all else. MMs utilize actors as tools to transfer knowledge and experiences, prompting them to identify moral dilemmas, reflect on them, and take appropriate action. The MMs exhibit increased moral sensitivity, recognize moral problems, offer suggestions for resolving situations, and aspire to ideal leadership qualities. ADM allows MMs to understand and navigate conflict situations from various characters' perspectives, promoting moral reasoning.

According to the actors, working with MMs in ADM (FT) has a profound impact on their moral competence, influencing all components of moral competence: rule-following, moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, and moral motivation. The audience notices deviations from the rules and learns appropriate behaviour even in emotionally charged situations. Character transformation after audience involvement serves as a crucial indicator of moral competence change, demonstrating the recognition of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and the ability to suggest solutions (moral sensitivity). ADM enables viewers to understand conflict situations from different viewpoints (moral reasoning). Emotions are also recognized as important in addressing moral dilemmas, either as tools for achieving goals or for objective evaluation, highlighting their role in moral motivation.

The influence of ADM (FT) on MMs' moral competence is viewed positively by all interviewees, who assert that the work

environment has a greater impact on moral competence than the family. Therefore, the occupational field is deemed a suitable medium for influencing MM moral competence. Organizations aiming to impact MM moral competence need to prioritize long-term strategies and consistent cooperation, as such changes take time. The preparedness of the ADM company is highlighted as an important factor, with well-prepared companies being aware of and managing potential weaknesses in the ADM process.

ADM artistry is not disconnected from reality; it strengthens moral motivation, leadership, responsibility, moral courage, and problem-solving skills by example. The unique characteristics of ADM justify its methodology and its positive impact on MM moral competence.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The literature analysis and synthesis in the field of moral competence reinforcement have revealed a lack of empirically based approaches that have been identified as effective. Previous studies (Day et al., 2021; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020; Dean et al., 2010; Hiekkataipale and Lamsa, 2016) have highlighted this gap, indicating the need for innovative strategies. Applied Drama Methods (ADM) emerges as a promising avenue for enhancing moral competence, particularly in the context of managerial development programs. ADM can contribute significantly to the content of such programs and foster the courage of followers to challenge unethical decisions made by top managers.

To address the complexity of moral competence as a phenomenon, a wicked problem, the research approach of pragmatism and the use of mixed methods have proven to be valuable. This approach allows for flexibility and reflexivity in the research design, enabling a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities in strengthening moral competence among mid-managers. Drawing on leadership, educational, and cognitive psychology perspectives, this thesis aligns with Soltes' (2017) assertion that contemporary management science is a multidisciplinary field that requires collaboration and expertise from diverse scholars.

The study provides support for the insights of the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008) in the context of moral competence in mid-managers, highlighting the integral role of both emotional and cognitive components. By investigating the influence of both MCT and ADM on mid-managers' moral competence from the actors' perspective, the study justifies the significance of emotions as an integral aspect of moral competence. ADM creates a conducive environment for mid-managers to experience and reflect on the unity of these emotional and cognitive components. The theatrical tools employed in ADM facilitate the observation, assessment, and control of emotions, while also



highlighting the coherence and structural importance of thoughts, reactions, and behaviour. Consequently, the study establishes conceptual and theoretical connections between ADM and cognitive psychology, offering a theoretical framework for understanding the recognition and raising of moral dilemmas, as well as the importance of moral sensitivity and moral reasoning. However, the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour does not fully explain the lack of consistent progression to moral behaviour or action after the stages outlined in the theory. To address this gap, insights from the Dual Response Theory (Pennycook et al., 2015) may be relevant. This theory proposes that the relative influence of controlled and automatic processes on attitude change depends on factors such as message complexity, personal relevance, salience, and recognizability. Complex moral competence issues may lead individuals to rely more on automatic, unconscious responses, while simpler situations may elicit more deliberate, controlled reasoning about the moral implications for mid-managers. Although this theory has not been applied in the context of moral competence studies, it could be a valuable avenue for further exploration, particularly in assessing the influence of ADM on enhancing moral competence in mid-managers.

Incorporating insights from behavioural ethics into the study of moral competence can provide a deeper understanding of the connection between moral reasoning and moral action. By examining how individuals actually behave when faced with ethical dilemmas, researchers can gain valuable insights into the complex relationship between moral reasoning and subsequent actions. This approach, as proposed by Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011), allows for a more comprehensive understanding of moral decision-making and behaviour in real-world situations.

In this dissertation, the application of Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 2002) to enhance moral competence is grounded in the strong intrinsic incentive to act morally. This perspective aligns with Lind's (2016) moral decision model, which

emphasizes the role of disorienting dilemmas as strong emotional stimuli that prompt individuals to reevaluate their attitudes and beliefs. The emotional aspect and moral dilemmas discussed in Lind's Dual Aspect Theory of Moral Behaviour (2008) are intertwined with the transformative learning process. Transformative Learning Theory also highlights the significance of the personal, social, and professional context (Mezirow, 1990) in shaping moral competence in mid-managers. This contextual influence aligns with Lind's (2016) emphasis on the role of critical reflection and moral reasoning in the moral decision-making process. The transformation of perspective, a key aspect of transformative learning, corresponds to the influence of moral competence highlighted in Lind's model. However, it is important to note a distinction between the two theoretical models. Transformative Learning Theory implies a transformation of perspective as a result of critical reflection, whereas according to Lind's (2008) moral judgment model, the next step may not necessarily be moral behaviour or action. Lind's model recognizes that the choice not to act can also be understood as part of moral competence.

According to Mezirow (1995; 2002), the strength of the catalyst or disorienting dilemma is a crucial factor in facilitating perspective transformation. The study's findings on the influence of ADM on the moral competence of mid-managers, as perceived by actors, provide support for the notion that the theatrical reality created by ADM intensifies the moral dilemma and acts as a catalyst for transformation. Mezirow's model is conceptually aligned with the structure of theatrical dramaturgy, which typically includes a prologue, action set-up, progression, climax, denouement, and epilogue. Similarly, in playwriting, characters often experience emotional tensions across various contexts, such as professional, social, and personal. The theme is introduced in the prologue, initiating the action, and the character undergoes a process of re-evaluating attitudes and values (critical reflection and course of action), drawing conclusions (transformation of perspective and climax), and ultimately experiencing a profound

transformation (epilogue). Thus, Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1995; 1997) provides theoretical support for the influence of the ADM approach on the moral competence of mid-managers, and the empirical research (ABR) confirms its potential implications for mid-managers' moral competence education and for the broader field of ADM.

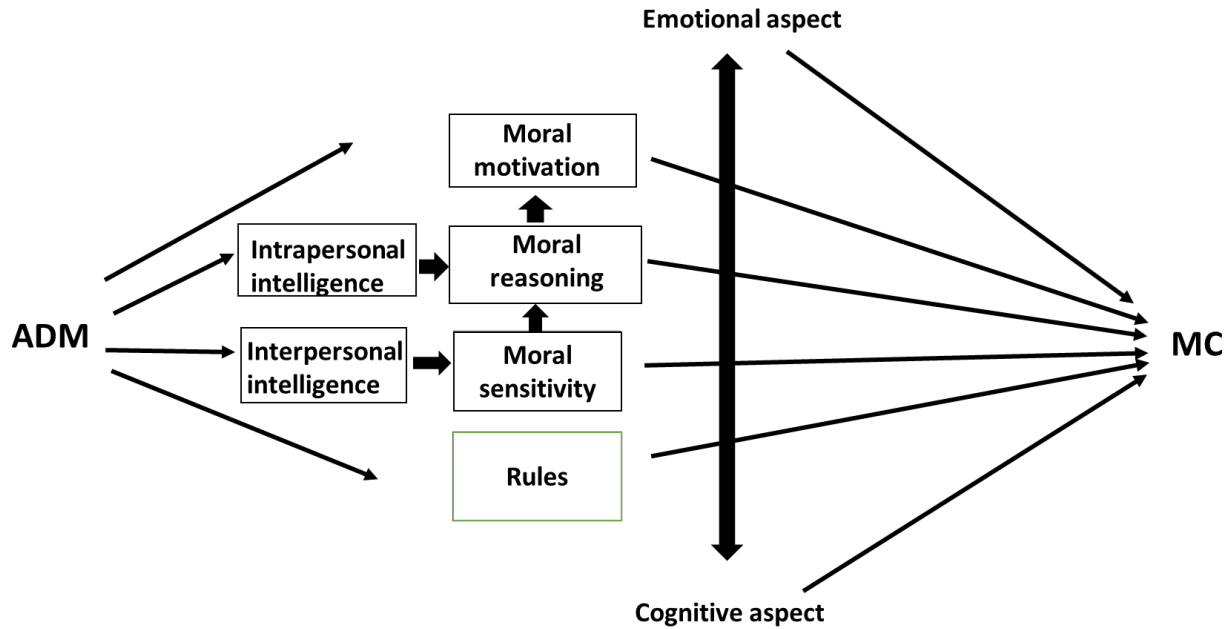
The methodological approach employed in this dissertation aims to establish strong connections between theory and practice. In this regard, the interviewees' observations regarding the specific nature of ADM in "implementing" theoretical concepts are highly significant.

One compelling reason for "implementing" theories in ADM is the careful development of scenarios that address the specific needs of the target group. For mid-managers, who require leadership qualities in their roles and responsibilities, an ADM scenario aligns with the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. It sets the stage to demonstrate the significance of a reciprocal dyadic relationship between leaders and followers/members, emphasizing the long-term benefits of successful dyadic relationships. Interviewees in the ABR study recognized that the specificity of ADM enables them to understand and appreciate the importance of taking or avoiding responsibility, as well as verbal and non-verbal communication. From a leadership perspective, the role of top managers is crucial for developing the moral competence of mid-managers, as the understanding and resolution of ethical issues within the organization are integral to the overall strategy. Mid-managers cannot succeed alone; they can propose ideas that are implemented with the support of top managers. In this way, moral action and moral courage of mid-managers become productive and yield the expected results.

A significant strength of ADM lies in its recognition of the importance of context. The emphasis on perceiving body language as a non-verbal expression is a distinct feature of ADM, justifying its analysis from the perspective of Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (2011). The ABR study confirmed that ADM and FT engage five intelligences: linguistic, spatial, kinaesthetic,

interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The emphasis on kinaesthetic intelligence is a valuable methodological advantage of ADM in influencing the enhancement of mid-managers' moral competence, supporting the uniqueness of the AT methodology and its impact on interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Based on these insights, an enhanced model illustrating the influence of ADM on mid-managers' moral competence is presented (Fig. 5).

Thus, the selected ADM approaches in the study (DT, KPD, FT) impact all components of moral competence. However, it is important to highlight that the enhancement of moral sensitivity leads to an increase in moral reasoning capacity due to the influence of interpersonal intelligence, which is influenced by intrapersonal intelligence. This, in turn, has an impact on the moral motivation component. The effects on all four components of moral competence, particularly on moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, and moral motivation, indicate that specific ADM approaches have a significant influence on mid-managers' moral competence.



**Figure 5.** An enhanced model of the influence of ADM on the moral competence of MMs

**MCT results and evaluation.** The Moral Competence Test (MCT) developed by Lind (2008) was employed as a quantitative tool to assess the impact of ADMs on the moral competence of MMs. The evaluation of the MCT is discussed from several perspectives, including the estimation of the C-index, the change in the C-index estimate, and the specifics of the MCT tool itself.

Estimation of the C-index: According to Lind (2008), the C-index can be categorized as low (C-estimate of 1-9), medium (C-estimate of 10-29), or high (C-estimate of 30-49). The data collected in this study, (see Table 16), indicate that all three groups exhibit an average level of competence in moral judgments. However, it is worth noting that the law enforcement and legislative MMs have the lowest C-index (13.8) compared to the UDC (22.3) and VU (18.69) students. Based on the obtained C-index values, it can be concluded that the competence in moral judgment of the studied students is higher than that of the studied MMs. This suggests that the academic and professional environments of the MMs under investigation may not prioritize the enhancement of moral competence.

#### Change in the estimate of the C-index.

In summary, the results indicate a marginal effect on participants' MC following the application of ADMs. The slight softening of participants' stance suggests a shift in their moral reasoning. This finding is supported by the results of the factor analysis, which reveal a reduction in the number of components and a greater coherence in moral reasoning among participants. Specifically, in the study with the group of MMs, their answers to the MCT questionnaire after the ADM intervention cluster around a single component. Based on these findings, it can be argued that a change in MC has occurred because of the ADM intervention. However, it is important to acknowledge that the observed effect is modest and further research is needed to explore the long-term impact and sustainability of this change.

Specificity of the MCT tool. The respondents in the MM highlighted that the wording of the MCT statements and questions is at times confusing. They found phrases such as "some people say

that..." and "it is possible that..." to be confusing and unclear, making it challenging to grasp the intended meaning. This imprecise and confusing wording may have posed an obstacle in obtaining reliable data from the respondents.

Among the dilemmas presented for the MCT assessment, the doctor's dilemma, which involved deciding on euthanasia for an oncology patient, emerged as the most controversial for the participants. This dilemma often triggered strong emotional reactions due to personal experiences and beliefs. Some participants outright refused to consider this dilemma, while a few became visibly emotional, with some even bursting into tears. It is important to note that emotions such as grief, anger, disgust, sadness, guilt, shame, and empathy have been found to influence moral judgments (Baker, 2017; Haidt, 2001; Piazza et al., 2013). Moreover, mirror neuron neuroimaging studies have shown that when individuals observe someone experiencing pain or joy, their brains respond, indicating a significant emotional influence. Therefore, participants' emotional reactions during the assessment could have influenced their moral judgments and responses. Upon reflection, the participants concluded that, regardless of the ongoing debate on the legalization of euthanasia, the sensitivity and emotional nature of the topic suggest that it should not be included in training or assessment due to its potential to evoke strong emotional reactions and biases. This highlights the importance of carefully selecting and designing assessment tools to ensure clarity and minimize the potential influence of emotional factors on participants' responses.

Observing the participants' reactions raises legitimate concerns about the potential effectiveness of developing MMs' moral competence using the doctor's dilemma. The participants argued that hypothetical situations that do not directly pertain to their specific professional field do not sensitize them to a significant extent, and the benefits of such exercises in strengthening MMs' moral competence are questionable. They emphasized that evaluating hypothetical dilemmas without considering the country-specific legal framework is

impossible and even counterproductive for professionals in law enforcement and legislation. As a result, the participants suggested that professional training should focus on real moral dilemmas within their specific professional contexts, while sensitive topics should be addressed through appropriate channels such as psychotherapy.

The existing literature supports the participants' perspective on the limitations of hypothetical dilemma-based approaches. Researchers such as Park and Elsass (2017), Soltes (2017), and Gentile (2017) have argued that the methods employed in business ethics programs are not sufficiently effective due to their reliance on hypothetical situations, which creates a disconnect between ethics education and the actual situations that MMs encounter in real professional settings. Similarly, Kriauciūnienė (2008), based on an analysis of moral judgment research conducted globally, highlights the need to focus on individuals' ability to translate values into everyday practices. It is plausible that the results of the C-index would have been different if the dilemma situations presented in the MCT were more closely aligned with the professional context of the MMs in the study. This assumption could be explored and validated in future research studies.

To summarize the study's findings on the impact of ADM (FT) on the moral competence of MMs from the actors' perspective, several key aspects emerged based on the insights provided by the interviewees. These aspects include the significance of the professional field, the importance of perceiving, reflecting, and managing emotions, the recognition of the complexity inherent in ethical situations, and the effectiveness of ADM techniques and methods. These aspects are interconnected and mutually influential in shaping MMs' MC.

The findings from the actors' perspective align with the principles advocated by behavioural ethicists, indicating that the chosen method and its design in the form of ADM (FT) align with contemporary aspects of MC education. The utilization of ADM allows for an in-depth exploration of complex and problematic issues, going beyond



surface-level consequences and delving into the underlying causes, consistent with Elm's (2014) theoretical model of ethical decision-making. By incorporating insights from actors, ADM empowers MMs to understand the significance of body language, particularly how discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal communication can impact the perception of MC, thereby enhancing their leadership capabilities.

According to the actors' perspectives, ADM assists MMs in recognizing that they encounter moral dilemmas more frequently than they may initially realize. This realization highlights the challenges they face in their professional environments, where MC may not receive the deserved attention. Furthermore, the actors emphasized that through the context of ADM, MMs become more aware of morally questionable behaviour in situations that require moral competence. This includes instances where stereotypes are employed, personal ambition is equated with leadership, the pursuit of profit or desired outcomes overshadows ethical considerations, or certain dispositions lead to conflict or the need to protect one's ego. The interviewees noted that the audience displayed a clear understanding of the role of emotions in problem-solving, conflict resolution, and moral dilemmas, suggesting that emotions could be harnessed to achieve goals, alleviate tension, and assess situations more objectively.

The empirical study conducted through ABR interviews from the actors' perspective provided substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of ADM as a methodological tool for emphasizing the significance of MC in MMs. The development of ADM training scenarios in collaboration with field experts allows for the analysis of specific organizational challenges, and the utilization of the FT format ensures inclusivity and leaves a profound impact. Following their exposure to these ADMs, the MM group demonstrated a heightened comprehension of the moral dilemma's context, the underlying causes of moral issues, potential solutions, and the MM's role in selecting appropriate courses of action.

By summarizing the study's findings on the impact of ADM on the moral competence of MMs from the actors' perspective and comparing them with the results obtained through the MCT, it can be confidently asserted that the chosen MCT approach in this thesis has generated new knowledge and experiences for the MMs. The integration of ABR insights and the exploration of moral competence through ADM has enriched the understanding and application of MC among the MMs, providing them with valuable perspectives and practical insights that extend beyond the limitations of traditional assessment methods.

**Limitations and recommendations for future research.** One of the limitations of the study pertains to the MCT itself. However, this limitation also presents an opportunity for MC researchers to improve the existing MC quantification tool by considering important components:

- updating and adapting the dilemma situations to align them with the specific professional contexts of MM participants. Tailoring the dilemmas to domain specializations would enhance the relevance and applicability of the assessment.

- considering cultural context. Researchers should take into account the cultural context of the country, including traditions and educational backgrounds, when formulating and presenting the dilemmas. This would ensure that the scenarios resonate with participants and capture the nuances of their cultural values and perspectives;

- improving question comprehension. Future studies should aim to formulate test questions in a manner that is easily comprehensible to the participants. It is important to emphasize that the ability to read is not synonymous with the ability to fully comprehend a text. Clear and concise language should be used to minimize confusion and facilitate accurate responses.

It is suggested that a future study could be conducted using an improved version of the MCT to assess potential differences in the

MM's C-index results between the improved and current versions of the tool.

Secondly, the application of the ABR approach to assess change in MM MC had limitations. Follow-up assessments with trained MMs over a longer period would provide insights into the long-term benefits of ADM on their MC. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of other ADMs, beyond FT, would allow for comparisons to determine the most influential forms of ADM on MMs.

Thirdly, the absence of a control group limits the reliability of the results. Future research should consider incorporating a control group and conducting real experiments to provide a more robust assessment of the effects of ADM on MM MC.

Furthermore, future researchers should broaden the theoretical justification of such studies by including more scientific fields, such as neuroscience, as suggested by the interviewees. This multidisciplinary approach would offer deeper insights into the underlying processes of MC development among MMs.

Lastly, it would be beneficial to adapt the FT scenario to the professional context of other public and private sector MMs in future studies. This would allow for a comparison of results and explore potential variations in the impact of ADM on moral competence, considering the specific dynamics and attitudes prevalent in different professional environments, particularly in law enforcement and legislative MM where relationships with authority and rule-following are prominent.

Summarizing the scientific discussion, the empirical research conducted in this thesis has shed light on the following key findings:

- moral issues frequently arise within MMs across various types of organizations, and these issues are often categorized as wicked problems, which require careful and time-consuming resolution. Neglecting or disregarding these issues can have detrimental effects on organizational performance;

- the emotional dimension significantly influences the decision-making process of MMs and their moral competence. The use of FT as an ADM proves to be a suitable and effective tool for enhancing the moral competence of MMs. It allows them not only to consider the reasoning behind their decisions but also to engage empathetically with simulated situations;

- The development and updating of the MCT should consider the specific professional domains of MMs (e.g., IT, medical, education, law enforcement, legislation) as well as additional factors such as respondents' age, education, cultural context, etc. While an improved MCT can serve as a tool for measuring certain aspects of moral competence, a comprehensive assessment requires the integration of a broader contextual evaluation tool;

- a personalized approach is crucial for successfully and effectively enhancing the moral competence of MMs. Further practical experimentation with a wider range of traditional and artistic approaches is needed.

In summary, the impact of conceptually based ADM approaches on the moral competence of MMs is reinforced by the empirical study, emphasizing the necessity of an interdisciplinary perspective for achieving success in this field.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The conceptualization of MM MC draws from theories of cognitive psychology and ethical decision-making. Within the cognitive psychology theory of the Double Dimension of Moral Behaviour, MC is conceptualized from two perspectives: emotional and cognitive, which are integrated into the components of MC including rule-following, moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, and moral motivation. These components capture an individual's ability to consider the consequences of their decisions or actions not only for themselves but also for others. The interplay between the emotional and cognitive aspects of MC provides criteria for assessing changes in MC, which are incorporated into the moral competence test (Lind, 2008). This test evaluates the moral criteria employed in moral reasoning, assessing whether an individual's reasoning reflects egocentricity or universal justice. The application of the MCT within a discussion theatre intervention, following Lind's methodology, allows participants to freely express their opinions on emotionally evocative life situations, even if they are not directly related to their professional activities. However, the MCT format and the Discussion Theatre do not capture the individual's motivation to act in accordance with rules and moral norms, suggesting the need for alternative methodological approaches to assess changes in MC. It is important to highlight that enhancing the moral competence of MM is an ongoing process.

2. Given the limited situational awareness and emotional complexity involved in MM activities, which become evident through the quality of their relationships with superiors and subordinates, opportunities for enhancing their MC are informed by the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. This theory connects the improvement of MC to the progressive enhancement of relationship quality through the development of mutual respect, loyalty, high levels of trust, and reciprocity. To elucidate this change, transformative learning theory is employed, facilitating the transformation of an adult individual's MC by stimulating critical reflection and consolidating evaluations through the experience of disorienting dilemmas within

their specific context. By recognizing the significance of their personal and professional experiences and their relevance within the organization, adults can transform their perspectives. Critical reflection on the disorienting dilemmas faced by MMs aids in translating beliefs into moral action. Therefore, a personalized approach that considers the context of MMs' professional activities—such as time pressure, practical constraints on judgment, position within the organization with potential power leverage, and the quality of interpersonal relationships between top managers and subordinates—is vital for enhancing MC.

3. By framing the theoretical definitions of ADM within the context of art-based research, it is apparent that these methods represent a sector of performative art, whose inherent qualities can be adapted into methodologies employed in the social sciences. The aim is to induce attitude changes, foster reflection, and potentially drive action among individuals. Through ADM interventions, research occurs within the artistic practice domain, expanding the application of knowledge and encouraging participants to heighten their awareness of power dynamics and the tensions they generate. The structuring of knowledge surrounding ADM practices suggests that while they are often employed in community-based research, they can also be applied within organizational contexts. Theoretically informed ADMs bring a compelling performance pedagogy into the realm of social science. Performance pedagogy stimulates critical consciousness, nurtures sociological imagination, aids in dispelling stereotypes, and facilitates consensus-building in challenging circumstances. In the context of social sciences, ADM serves as a tool to foster critical thinking, foster an appreciation for historical and sociological contexts, and enhance ethical self-awareness, self-reflection, and consciousness. These dimensions correspond to the conceptual components of MC, including respect for rules, moral sensitivity to the cultural and social specificities of societal and organizational contexts, moral reasoning, and the motivation to respond to breaches of moral norms and rules, challenge stereotypical attitudes, and initiate systemic changes.

4. The influence of ADMs on MMs' MC is observed through the utilization of visuality and contextualization. This effect aligns with the instrumentalization tactic of the Multiple Intelligences theory, which emphasizes engaging multiple intelligences to achieve optimal outcomes. ADM tools effectively engage at least five intelligences: linguistic, spatial, kinetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 2011). By perceiving contextual experiences in this multifaceted manner, the quality of interpersonal relationships improves, enriching both the emotional and cognitive experiences of individuals. The integration of the emotional and cognitive dimensions serves as the foundation for ADM's impact on MMs' MC, as seen through the lens of the Dual Dimension Theory of Moral Behaviour (Lind, 2008) in cognitive psychology. Experiencing emotions while navigating complex and disorienting moral dilemmas through ADM scenarios leads to changes in attitudes towards rule-following, reflection on the moral principles that underpin reasoning and motivation to act, and a deepening of moral sensitivity. These changes reflect alterations in the components of MC and can be explained through the framework of Transformative Learning Theory. In summary, ADM has the potential to influence MMs' MC through visual representation, contextualization, and the cultivation of balanced dyadic relationships and high-quality connections with followers and senior managers.

5. Based on the empirical study's findings, we conclude that the utilization of Applied Drama Methods such as FT, DT, and KPD serves as an influential approach for enhancing MMs' MC. The study's results validate the hypothesis that the influence of ADM on improving MMs' moral competence operates through the emotional-cognitive component.

The influence of ADMs on the MC of MMs was partially captured by the Moral Competence Test. Following the intervention with FT, DT, and KPD, the subjects exhibited a slight relaxation in their attitudes towards the presented dilemma situations, as evidenced by changes in the C-index of the MCT and the results of factor analysis. However, it should be noted that the MCT is a standardized tool that assesses MC irrespective of the context. Certain dilemmas in

the test, such as the one involving a seriously ill relative, may have been perceived as more hypothetical and emotionally less challenging when the instrument was originally validated in the 20th century. In the 21st century, where many individuals have personally experienced caregiving or loss in similar situations, the evaluation of such scenarios may be approached with less consideration. Consequently, the current format of the tool may not be entirely reliable for assessing the moral competence of MMs and its changes.

The analysis of interviews with the actors involved in the intervention provides insights into the nature of ADM's influence on the moral competence of MMs. The engagement of professional actors creates a secure environment for discussing relevant problematic situations, acting as mediators, and allowing MMs to freely express themselves without concerns of professional consequences. Forum Theatre, as one of the employed ADMs, enables the researcher to personalize the intervention to a maximum extent by addressing issues directly relevant to the MMs' professional environment. This prompts MMs to reflect upon their own behaviour, the moral principles guiding their reasoning, and the motivations behind their actions or inactions.

The utilization of the ABR approach, both in influencing the target group and empirically assessing the change in the MC of MMs, validated the notion that ABR can be effectively applied in social research. Unlike the MCT, ABR enables the capture of qualitative aspects of MC change. The unique characteristics of FT as an ADM provided middle managers with the opportunity to observe and evaluate the significance of assuming or avoiding responsibility, as well as the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in the decision-making process. Moreover, the scenarios presented in FT stimulated the moral sensitivity of MMs, allowing them to envision different courses of action and reflect upon their potential consequences. This engagement of at least five intelligences further contributed to the effectiveness of the intervention. It is worth noting that the involvement of kinetic intelligence represents a methodological advantage of FT as an ADM when compared to traditional methods of enhancing MC, such as case studies.



## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

To address the potential negative consequences of a lack of MC on the reputation of an organization, profession, or service, and to ensure ongoing enhancement of MC, the following recommendations are proposed for senior managers at both the general and functional levels of management:

1. Prioritize moral excellence as a fundamental criterion in Human Resource Management practices, including selection, career planning, appraisal, and development. By establishing moral excellence as a key factor, organizations can foster a culture that encourages morally grounded decision-making and actions. It is essential to recognize that the success of middle managers in promoting MC relies on the support of top managers and collaboration with subordinates.

2. Building upon the study's findings, which suggest that regular reinforcement of middle managers' moral competence through a personalized approach diminishes selfish behaviour, aligns individuals' interests with those of society, reduces the likelihood of malpractice and misconduct, and prevents interpersonal conflicts among employees, it is recommended to integrate tasks that stimulate the components of moral competence (compliance, moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, moral motivation), cognitive and emotional perspectives, and self-development issues into ethics training programs, socialization programs for new employees, and programs aimed at developing employee autonomy.

3. As ADM scenarios, which enable personalization of situations and are tailored to specific organizations and professions, may incur higher costs compared to traditional approaches to MC education like case studies, it becomes imperative for top managers to allocate an appropriate budget to this form of MM education. Conducting MM training utilizing ADM at least once a year would not only strengthen individuals' MC but also facilitate the identification of organizational practices that require adjustment based on contextual MC factors.

Furthermore, it would allow for the development of a continuous scenario adapted to the organization's needs, thereby solidifying the transformation of attitudes inspired by ADM.

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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1. Lämsä, A.-M., Pučėtaitė, R., Kujala, J., Heikkinen, A., Riivari, E. ir Medešienė, R. A. (2017). Teaching and learning business ethics in a multicultural group. *International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies*, 8 (1/2): 83–98.

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## ABOUT THE PhD CANDIDATE

Raimonda A. Medešienė's field of expertise is Applied Drama Methods, i.e. Forum Theatre, Playback Theatre, Improv Theatre, Process Drama, Social Drama, etc. She is the founder and creative director of the applied theatre 4ROOMS (<https://www.4roomstheatre.com>); the company works with business and public organizations, educational communities, NGOs, correctional homes, and foreign Lithuanian communities.

Raimonda A. Medicinė is an associate professor at the Faculty of Arts of the Lithuanian Academy of Performing Arts, curator of the Master's programme in Applied Theatre, and above all, a happy person.

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9 Saulėtekio Ave., Building III, LT-10222 Vilnius  
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