

## The Concept of Business Ethics as viewed by Jordanian working women

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**ABSTRACT:** The primary objective of this study is to answer the question: "Does the concept of business ethics differ according to gender?"

The present study surveyed 265-workingwomen .Of the 265 questionnaires returned, 15 questionnaires had to be canceled. The primary instrument utilized was a questionnaire developed by the researcher, with modifications recommended by referees. Questions measured on the 5-point Likert scale.

We find that the women in industrial firms, who have a bachelor's degree, are married and 30 years -less than 40 years report that they understand the concept of business ethics.

**KEYWORDS:** women, Business ethics, and Jordan.

### INTRODUCTION

The principles of ethical reasoning are useful tools for sorting out the good and bad components within complex human interactions. For this reason the study of ethics has been at the heart of intellectual thought since the early Greek philosophers, and its ongoing contribution to the advancement of knowledge and science makes ethics a relevant, if not vital, aspect of management theory.

A code of ethics is often developed by a professional society within a particular profession. The higher the degree of professionalism required of society members, the stronger and, therefore, more enforceable the code. For instance, in medicine, the behavior required is more specific and the consequences are more stringent in the code of ethics for physicians than in the code of ethics for nurses.

Organizations need ethics quality not only to prevent unhealthy behavior but also to inspire superior reasoning and performance. It is only through human nature, and ethics, that we can inspire greater levels of innovation, teamwork, and process breakthroughs that result in sustainable competitive advantages.

Ethical issues are explored starting with international business, then narrowing the focus to domestic business, and finally narrowing it still further to professional ethics.

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*R.H. Gray (1990)* found that business ethics and social responsibility have failed to "root" because (a) they have remained undefined and imprecise, and (b) organisations have neither the mechanisms for, nor the interest in, their adoption

*Gerald Vinten(1990)* explored ethical issues starting with international business, then narrowing the focus to domestic business, and finally narrowing it still further to professional ethics. In so doing, the study touches on areas such as bribery and corruption, social marketing, ethics education, capitalism versus socialism, Free-masonry, the religious dimension and professional codes of ethics.

Philip Johnson (1992) argues that, although it is very easy to be cynical, it is indeed possible to operate ethically in business. Drawing upon the author's experiences in his leadership consulting practice with CEOs and company presidents,

and their executive teams, helping them to create the future of their companies and monitor strategies to reach their new destination, the author describes how ethical leaders lead from within.

Nicholas Mauro, Samuel M. Natale, Anthony F. Libertella,(1999) define ethics and examine the controversy surrounding teaching ethics in business schools and traces the link between personal values and business schools, and discuss strategies for developing and maintaining ethical businesses.

Spero Peppas(2002) believes that if similarities and differences with regard to ethics could be identified, universities and businesses would be better equipped to address ethical issues in their operations.

Paul T. Gibbs (1993) describes the role of marketing intervention, designed to overcome barriers to co-operation and applied to the use of codes of ethical conduct.

Lise-Lotte Lindfelt, Jan-Åke Törnroos ( 2006) made a conceptual and comparative analysis of ethics and value concepts in two research traditions: the stakeholder approach and the business network approach. A conceptual framework is developed that contains tools for conducting research on value co-creation in business networks from an ethical perspective. An exemplifying case study from the paper industry is included.

Mark de Rond ( 1996) reviews ten criticisms concerning business ethics: six of which question the development of the field in general; and four of which challenge common teaching methods

Gael M. McDonald, Raymond A. Zepp ( 1989) addressed the question of the difference between social responsibility and ethics. Guidelines for establishing ethical priorities from both the individual, group and organisational perspectives are provided

Diana Winstanley, Jean Woodall, Edmund Heery ( 1996) suggest a number of alternative ethical frameworks useful in an analysis of HRM, including such elements as: basic human, civil and employment rights, universalism and community of purpose.

*Bodo B. Schlegelmilch, Jane E. Houston ( 1990)* explain a survey on corporate ethics undertaken in the UK and point to some reasons why firms choose to have codes of ethics, and why some firms do not. The study concludes by suggesting that further research is needed, especially on the perceived benefits of a corporate code of ethics to organisations.

David P. Schmidt ( 1992) shows how communication problems and the resolution of interpersonal conflicts present important ethical challenges to networks and presents two overlooked resources in ethical theory – narrative and casuistry – as helpful tools for meeting these challenges and for integrating ethics into networks.

Patrick Maclagan ( 1994) addresses some common misconceptions and offers clarification. The general aims of ethics programmes are considered, and the importance of experiential learning, in addition to lecture-based inputs, is stressed.

Randi L. Sims( 2006) indicate that, while there are some shared views towards business ethics across countries, significant differences do exist between Jamaica and three of the other countries in the study.

Charles Vee, Martin Skitmore(2003) provide results of a small, but representative, questionnaire survey of typical project managers, architects and building contractors concerning their views and experiences on a range of ethical issues surrounding construction industry activities.

All the respondents had witnessed or experienced some degree of unethical conduct, in the form of unfair conduct, negligence, conflict of interest, collusive tendering, fraud, confidentiality and propriety breach, bribery and violation of environmental ethics.

Felix Pomeranz ( 2004) conveys selected Islamic perspectives on business ethics to encourage debate on the subject in the USA. The objective is to better prepare American businessmen for the ongoing shifts to global management. The revival of Muslim interest in accounting marks a revival of a historic pattern which is thought to have anticipated the rise of bookkeeping in the West.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This research has a number of limitations that must be acknowledged. First, that there may be numerous other variables that contribute to the concept of business ethics and that limit the generalisability of the findings. This limitation provides an opportunity for further research.

Finally, limitation of this study is that the researcher designed the questionnaire, used in this study and the sample size is too small.

### **PROBLEM OF THE STUDY**

The primary problem of this study was to answer the question: "Does the concept of business ethics differ according to the nature of firm activity, the education level of the women, the marital status of the women and the age of the women?"

### **METHODS**

The present study surveyed 265 workingwomen, of the 265 questionnaires returned, 15 questionnaires had to be canceled.

The primary instrument utilized was questionnaire developed by the researcher, with modifications recommended by referees. Questions measured on the 5-point Likert scale.

A pilot version of the questionnaire was tested. Following the factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated. The reliability for each variable was above the 0.87 level, which is acceptable.

Each questionnaire included a cover letter from the researcher stressing the importance of the study and requested prompt completion of the survey.

### **SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

A total of 250 women were interviewed. % 45 were married and 33% had a bachelor's degree, while 39% of the sample were in the category between 25- less than 30 years old.

### **HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses were examined:

- H1: There are no statistical differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between women due to the nature of firm activity towards the concept of business ethics.
- H2: There are no statistical differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between women due to the education level of the women towards the concept of business ethics.
- H3: There are no statistical differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between women due to the marital status towards the concept of business ethics.
- H4: There are no statistical differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between women due to the age towards the concept of business ethics.

### **PROCEDURES**

Frequencies, mean, standard deviation and percentages were used in data presentation and descriptive hypotheses testing.

Scheffe test and ANOVA, were used to assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent ones and to assess the degree of relatedness.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

SPSS Package was used to assess the reliability aspect of the questionnaire, which appears to be valid and reliable, and provide consistent results in repeated uses and had an acceptable reliability.

To test hypothesis 1 we used SPSS Package and One-Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA, and we found that there are statistical differences towards the concept of business ethics due to the nature of firm activity.

To know which group is significant we ran Scheffe test and we found that the women in industrial firms reported that they have clear documents, become community Involved, maintain Accounting Control and be respectful.

So we rejected the hypothesis.

Table 1. ANOVA test for Nature of the firm activity

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>				
71.614	34.799	4.340	.016	
<b>Within Groups</b>				
1900.773	8.556			

To test hypothesis 2 we used SPSS Package and One-Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA, we found that there were statistical differences towards concept of business ethics due to education level of the women.

To know which group is significant we ran the Scheffe test and we found the women who have bachelor degree reports that they create a robust culture, defining appropriate values that are used in ways that prevent corruption, structure and design that facilitates ethical behavior, not thwarts it, promotes develops and strengthens character, and hiring employees with a character that has a natural inclination to serve.

So we rejected the hypothesis.

Table 2. ANOVA test for education level of the women

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>				
72.914	36.878	4.777	.01121	
<b>Within Groups</b>				
1900.879	8.656			

To test hypothesis 3 we used SPSS Package and One-Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA, and we found that there are statistical differences towards concept of business ethics due to marital status of the women.

To know which group is significant we ran the Scheffe test and we found the married women reports that they understand the concept of business ethics:

Truth in advertising, Environmental protection, the balance between transparency and openness and Community relations.

So we rejected the hypothesis.

Table 3. ANOVA test for marital status of the women

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	72.656	37.059	4.364	.0089
<b>Within Groups</b>	1900.547	8.654		

To test hypothesis 4 we used SPSS Package and One-Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA, we find that there are statistical differences towards concept of business ethics due to age of the women.

To know which group is significant we run Scheffe test and we find the women 30 years -Less than 40 years reports that they understand the concept of business ethics as: Professionalism, Accountability, Avoidance of harassment and discrimination and occupational health and safety.

So we rejected the hypothesis.

Table 4. ANOVA test for age of the women

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>				
71.614	36.079	4.332	.0188	
<b>Within Groups</b>				
1900.786	8.512			

## CONCLUSION

This study was primarily concerned with investigating the role of a number of variables as predictors towards the concept of business ethics.

The empirical findings of this study indicate that some variables have a significant impact towards the concept of business ethics. This can be considered as an important issue.

We found that the women in industrial firms, who have a bachelor's degree, are married and are in the category 30 years -less than 40 years reported that they understood the concept of business ethics.

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PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS ETHICS

QUESTIONNAIRE

**First Section:**

Mark the appropriate answer with (X):

**1. Nature of firm activity:**

- Services
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Others

**2. Education level:**

- High School (Tawjihi)
- Bachelor's
- Graduate study

**3. Marital Status:**

- Married
- Single
- other

**4. Age:**

- Less than 25 years
- 25- Less than 30 years
- 30-Less than 40 years
- 40 years and more

**Second Section:**

No.	Principles of Business Ethics	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Creating a robust culture					
2	Defining appropriate values that are used in ways that prevent corruption.					
3	A structure and design that facilitate ethical behavior, not thwarts it.					
4	Leadership that promote develops and strengthens character.					
5	Hiring employees with a character that has a natural inclination to serve					
6	Be trustful					
7	Keep an open mind					
8	Meet obligations					
9	Have clear documents					
10	Become community Involved					
11	Maintain accounting controls.					
12	Be respectful					
13	Professionalism,					
14	Accountability,					

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15	Avoidance of harassment and discrimination					
16	Occupational health and safety,					
17	Truth in advertising,					
18	Environmental protection,					
19	The balance between transparency and openness.					
20	Community relations,					
21	Lobbying					
22	Responsible business practice					