

Differences In Perception Of Business Ethics Among Business Students

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the comparative analysis of business ethics perceptions among business students, focusing on the influence of gender and entrepreneurial background. Examining the evolving dynamics of gender in the corporate world, the study reveals that, contrary to previous research, gender does not significantly shape business ethics perceptions among students. However, a noteworthy difference is observed based on entrepreneurial background, suggesting that students with entrepreneurial experience may exhibit distinct ethical perspectives. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on business ethics education, emphasizing the importance of recognizing diverse factors in shaping students' ethical perceptions. The results, analyzed using independent sample t-tests, indicate no significant differences in business ethics perceptions based on gender among the surveyed students, challenging some prevailing assumptions and providing nuanced insights into the complex interplay of gender and ethical considerations in business education. This study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and business leaders aiming to cultivate an ethical foundation among future professionals and underscores the need for nuanced approaches to business ethics education.*

KEYWORDS: *business ethics, business students, education, entrepreneurial, perceptions*

I. INTRODUCTION

Business ethics is a crucial aspect of the business world, and it has been a topic of interest for researchers for many years. The perception of business ethics among business students has been a subject of debate, with many studies exploring the differences between typical and ethical perceptions of business ethics among business students (Chirieleison & Scrucca, 2017; Tormo-Carbó et al., 2019; Ermasova & Ermasova, 2021; Costa et al., 2016).

The dynamics of gender in business, long the subject of extensive research, have evolved dramatically in recent years. Gender equality initiatives and the rise of female leaders in the corporate world have transformed the landscape, yet disparities persist. Studies have shown that gender plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's ethical perception and decision-making within the context of business and entrepreneurship (Bullough et al., 2022). According to a new study, women are more conscious of ethics than men are. Compared to male students, female students gave ethical obligations a higher priority. However, the study also found that there are no significant differences in the perception of business ethics between male and female students in Indonesia (Eweje & Brunton, 2010). This gendered lens can affect how business students perceive and approach ethical challenges, potentially impacting the ethical fabric of future corporate leadership.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial background, often uncharted territory in discussions of business ethics, can wield substantial influence. Entrepreneurs are known for their innovative thinking, risk-taking, and unique approaches to problem-solving (Arpiainen & Kurczewska, 2017). These traits may translate into distinct ethical perspectives, deviating from the more established norms of corporate ethics (Murnieks et al., 2014).

A recent study found that a code of ethics is a significant factor in determining ethical conduct. The study found that students who were exposed to a code of ethics were more likely to make ethical decisions than those who were not. Another study found that students with a background in accounting had a lower perception of business ethics than students from other backgrounds (Lucyanda & Sholihin, 2023). Therefore, understanding how entrepreneurial experiences shape the ethical perspectives of business students is crucial for nurturing ethical leadership in both entrepreneurial ventures and traditional corporate settings. This paper aims to compare the typical and ethical perceptions of business ethics among business students. Additionally, it will investigate whether gender differences influence perceptions of business ethics and whether business experience affects these perceptions. By doing so, a better understanding of how these factors influence business students' perception of business ethics will be gained.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perception of Business Ethics Among Students

Perception is an individual process that can coordinate and determine impressions by seeing everything around them so that it will have an impact on the environment (McDonald, 2011) . This can happen because there is a combination of past information and the truth that humans see about something. Of course, this perception is formed through experience, learning processes, insight, and knowledge (Kuhlthau, 1999). Typical is the characteristic that we want to ascribe to a thing or type. Meanwhile, ethics relates to what is considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory, positive or negative or wrong in activities in the field of human movement or the field of business activities and navigation (Putri et al., 2021). While (Ermasova & Ermasova, 2021) found that gender had a significant positive moderating effect on relationship of organizational code of ethics, formal ethic courses, and diversity professional development with personal ethical behavior perceptions.

Business ethics relate to standards for the conduct and decision-making of employees and management for the sustainability of the enterprise (Ugoani, 2023). It is concerned with the impact of business decisions on society, inside and outside the company, individually and collectively in communities or other groups. In other words, business ethics is concerned with actions that are measured based on ethical rules, not economic or financial rules. Therefore, it may be easier to say that business ethics is the application of general ethical rules in business conduct (Velentzas & Broni, 2010). However, the difference between typical and ethical for a student can be said to be slightly different, the two are interrelated. Where having these characteristics and ethics will make a student useful when getting a job someday.

A study by (Hassan et al., 2023) states that students are at the focal point of business ethics. The reason is, firstly, they can be considered as partners who are affected by company activities in the environment where they live. Second, in general, they are also clients of an organization. After graduating from college and entering the job market, they return to partnering as workers. Therefore, they have a special mentality and assumptions regarding the direction of business ethics in their work as individual citizens and future workers of an organization (Andersen, 2017). Remember that of course they will make progress as authoritative individuals. As well as on the side, because these students will eventually work in the corporate world, their opinions of business ethics are crucial, as are the morality of corporate cultures. Additionally, interpreters can forecast the general ethical landscape of future generations and track changes in students' ethical views when they directly encounter ethical challenges due to their ethical perceptions (Slade & Prinsloo, 2013).

Chung (2010) explains the 12 ethical principles for business executives which were originally coined by Michael Josephson, which consist of: honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, loyalty, fairness, caring, respect for others, law abiding, commitment to excellence, leadership, reputation and morale, and accountability. Meanwhile, Indeed (2023) completes several principles apart from the previous 12, namely: social consciousness, environmental consciousness, trustworthiness, and transparency.

2.2 Gender on Business Ethics

Gender differences can largely influence opportunities and power in the world of work. Gender is something that has special characteristics, heredity, and so on. So gender is a mental and cultural interpretation of sex differences and the relationship between men and women (Farhane-Medina et al., 2022). Gender differences are likely to form different perceptions, thereby influencing different attitudes between men and women in responding to problems (Enaifoghe, 2023) .

Gender plays an important role in shaping ethical perceptions and individual decision-making in business and entrepreneurial contexts (Sparks & Pan, 2010; Ermasova & Ermasova, 2021). Men and women probably have different innate tendencies to behave. However, elements like views toward gender roles that are egalitarian can affect how unethical action is seen. Meanwhile, (Joseph et al., 2010) stated that different genders can provide different assessments of unethical situations that occur, as well as adding that female students are significantly more ethical than their male counterparts. Decision-making involving ethical issues depends on the principles of ethical standards adhered to by the individual, where a construct is present, with attributes that extend the topics covered, and also about moral growth in a circumstance that may affect a person's understanding of moral dilemmas and desire to act morally or immorally.

There are two categories of ethics: structural and socialization approaches. The structural approach demonstrates that early socialization to work and other role needs are the root cause of inequalities between men and women. Early socialization is impacted by the incentives and rewards that people in a profession. Stated differently, the structural approach assumes that ethical behavior in the profession will be the same for men and women. However, men and women, according to the gender socialization concept, bring different values to the workplace and classroom. Men and women will make decisions and behave differently as a result of these disparities in ideals and characteristics. Because they see success as a competition, men are more willing to break the law and compete to attain it. On the other hand, women are more focused on their performance. Women will prioritize doing their jobs effectively and maintaining positive working relationships, which will

increase their compliance with current regulations and increase their disapproval of those who break them (Block & Cwik, 2007).

2.3 Experience on Business Ethics

According to (Reza et al., 2020) , Experience is a teacher for all of us. Having business experience is no different, of course it will enable us to differentiate between good and bad ethical perceptions as long as we want to do it. Because having experiences in the business world will prevent you from making the same mistakes and can increase the effectiveness of your actions in the future. So, business experience is also a basis for knowing ethics. This can be achieved by following business procedures or studying independently from books because these qualities must be provided with motivation so that in the future they can make ethical choices in accordance with broader interests (Costa et al., 2016).

Knowledge gained in business ethics courses and experience influence individual perceptions (Tormo-Carbó et al., 2019). Perception itself is influenced by the information a person gets, for example students, of course when studying business ethics, will get information and knowledge. Students will gain knowledge about how to behave in the world of work, what is good and bad in ethics, how to make the right decisions by considering what is right and wrong in making decisions in accordance with the teachings of business ethics so that students who have received business ethics lessons to better understand business ethics. Based on attitude and behavior theory, students who have knowledge a broad understanding of the principles of professional ethics will be able to think wiser and able to provide responses in the form of disagreement regarding an ethical scandal that befell the accounting profession compared students who have knowledge less. Thus, it is expected someone who has ethical knowledge tall and wide then he will be able to differentiate between something that is ethical, and which is unethical.

It can be said that everything depends on one's attitude. So we cannot put a limit on how experience will be able to determine how someone behaves in expressing their perception of business ethics. Moreover, it is related to a business, someone will definitely get it if they want.

Based on the previous studies, the hypotheses of this research will be:

H1: There is no significant difference in business ethics perceptions among students based on gender. This hypothesis posits that gender does not play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of business ethics among the student population under study. A non-significant result would suggest that male and female students hold similar views regarding ethical considerations in the business realm.

H2: There is no significant difference in business ethics perceptions among students based on age. This hypothesis asserts that age is not a determining factor in the students' perceptions of business ethics. A non-significant outcome would indicate that varying age groups within the student population share similar perspectives on ethical considerations within the business domain.

III. METHOD

This study aimed to explore ethical perceptions among business students by conducting a survey. The survey, adapted the instrument by (Froelich & Kottke, 1991), focused on assessing individuals' views on appropriate and inappropriate ethical behavior. Participants, exclusively college senior business majors, were presented with statements reflecting questionable conduct in ethical situations. The non-probability sampling technique, which chooses samples based on the researcher's subjective assessment rather than random selection, was used to determine the sample for this study.

Respondents were required to provide responses from two perspectives: how they believed a typical businessperson would react and what they considered to be the ethically appropriate response, consists of 15 indicators of ethical business principles. The scale ranged from 1 to 6, representing varying degrees of agreement or disagreement, with higher disagreement indicating a more ethical stance. Upon the completion of data collection, the analysis incorporated both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Simple percentages illuminated the distribution of responses to each questionnaire item, providing a comprehensive overview. Furthermore, a Student's T-test was employed to discern potential significant differences in business ethics perceptions based on factors such as gender and entrepreneurial background/experience.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile Based on Gender

Table 1. Profile of Respondents' Gender

	Freq	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	76	43,7	43,7	43,7
Female	98	56,3	56,3	100,0
Total	174	100,0	100,0	

Table 1. shows that with a total of 174 respondents, there were 76 respondents based on male gender with a percentage of 43.7%, and respondents based on female gender were 98 respondents with a percentage of 56.3%. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents in this study were based on gender, which was dominated by female respondents.

4.2 Respondent Profile Based on Entrepreneurial Background

Table 2. Profile of Respondents' Entrepreneurial Background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Entrepreneurial background	Yes	133	76,4	76,4	76,4
	No	41	23,6	23,6	100,0
	Total	174	100,0	100,0	

Table 2. shows that with a total of 174 respondents, it is known that the respondent profile is based on having a business background, 133 respondents gave the answer "Yes" with a percentage of 76.4%, and 41 respondents gave the answer "No" with percentage of 23.6%. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents in this study predominantly had a business background.

4.3 Group Statistics Test Results for Gender

With a N number of 15 business ethical principals, the male student gender group has a mean value of 135.53 and a standard deviation of 7.100 with a mean standard error of 1.833, according to the Table 3. Each variable's standard deviation value is less than the mean value, indicating a relatively small data deviation. The small data deviation shows that the gender variable for male students used in this research is quite good.

Table 3. Group Statistics Test Results for Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	15	135,53	7,100	1,833
Female	15	191,73	8,066	2,083

It is known that with an N number of 15, the gender group of female students has a mean value of 191.73 and a standard deviation of 8.066 with a standard error of the mean of 2.083, each variable's standard deviation value is less than its mean, indicating a relatively minimal data variance. The data deviation shows that the gender variable for female students used in this research is quite good.

4.4 Independent Sample T-Test Results Based on Gender

Table 4. Independent Sample T-Test Results Based on Gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Business Ethics perception differences among Business Students	Equal variances assumed	,013	,910	-20,255	28	,000	-56,200	2,775	-61,884	-50,516
	Equal variances not assumed			-20,255	27,556	,000	-56,200	2,775	-61,888	-50,512

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Based on the Table 4., it is known that the Sig. (2-tailed) of $0.910 > 0.05$ (α) thus it can be concluded that there is no difference in the perception of business ethics among 2023 business students based on gender. This means that students' perceptions of business ethics do not have significant differences between male and female students. With this, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is accepted.

4.5 Group Statistics Test Results for Entrepreneurial Background

Table 5. Group Statistics Test Results for Entrepreneurial Background

	Entrepreneurial Background	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Business Ethics perception among Business Students	Yes	133	29,56	11,543	1,001
	No	41	23,78	7,841	1,225

Based on the Table 5, it is known that with a total N number of 174, it is known that 133 respondents answered "Yes" with an average of 29.56 and a standard deviation of 11.543. It is known that the mean standard error value is 1.001, which is smaller than the standard deviation value, this means that the data deviation is relatively small. The small data deviation shows that what was used in this research is quite good.

The rest of 41 respondents answered "No" with an average of 23.78 and a standard deviation of 7.841. It is known that the mean standard error value is 1.225, which is smaller than the standard deviation value, this means that the data deviation is relatively small. The small data deviation indicates that what was used in this research is quite good.

4.6 Independent Sample T-test Results Based on Entrepreneurial Background

Table 6. Independent Sample T-Test Results Based on Entrepreneurial Background

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Business Ethics perception differences among Business Students	Equal variances assumed	15,838	,000	2,995	172	,003	5,776	1,928	1,969	9,582
	Equal variance not assumed			3,652	98,041	,000	5,776	1,582	2,637	8,914

Based on the Table 6. above, it is known that the Sig. (2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$ (α) thus it can be concluded that there are differences in the perception of business ethics among 2023 business students based on entrepreneurial background. This means that students' perceptions of business ethics have significant differences based on the entrepreneurial background of 2023 business students. With this, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is rejected.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study delved into the nuanced realm of business ethics perceptions among business students, aiming to unravel the impact of gender and entrepreneurial background on their ethical viewpoints. Surprisingly, the research revealed that gender did not play a significant role in shaping the students' perceptions of business ethics. Male and female business students demonstrated similar views on ethical considerations

within the business domain. This result contrasts with some existing literature, emphasizing the need for ongoing exploration into the multifaceted relationship between gender and business ethics. On the other hand, the study unearthed a noteworthy distinction based on entrepreneurial background. Students with entrepreneurial experiences showcased distinct ethical perspectives compared to their counterparts without such backgrounds. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the influential role of entrepreneurial experiences in shaping ethical viewpoints, indicating the need to incorporate practical experiences into business ethics education. The implications of these findings extend to educators, policymakers, and businesses, suggesting a need for tailored approaches in fostering ethical leadership. However, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as the specific sample and geographical context, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavors could explore a more diverse range of participants and employ longitudinal studies to unravel how ethical perceptions evolve over time, particularly in the dynamic landscape of the corporate world.

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