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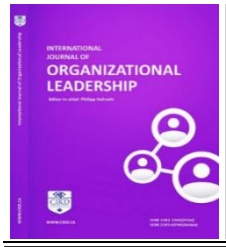

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Business Ethics Views of Working Adults and Managers in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This research with Turkish working adults was initiated to compare the Personal Business Ethics Scores of respondents based on their culture, age, education, and management experience in Turkey. Ethical norms, expectations, and behaviors play important roles in the satisfaction, engagement, and workplace productivity of adults in all cultures. Turkish professionals take pride in their focus on ethics and morality while the country is transitioning towards becoming a powerhouse nation in the Middle East and European economies. This research surveyed 716 Turkish male (323) and female (393) respondents to measure their Personal Business Ethics Scores and determine if various demographic variables (such as management experience, education, age, or gender) make a statistically significant difference in their ethical maturity level. The results show that age, gender, and management experience statistically contribute to moral maturity in business settings. More specifically, the young Turkish generation and females exhibit significantly higher ethical maturity regarding questionable business practices. Despite expectations due to the importance of higher education in society, this study did not find any statistically significant differences between Turkish groups with and without a formal college education. This study contributes to the literature regarding ethical decisions among working adults and the theory of moral development since Lawrence Kohlberg's theory is partially supported. Implications for honesty at work and career planning to attract and retain an ethically mature workforce are provided.

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The discussion of ethics and civility in business and public sector organizations has become more prevalent than ever before (Deshpande et al., 2000; Hyppolite, 2003; Mobley, 2002;

Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011; Noori et al., 2023). This issue of ethical decision-making has become even more critical in the digitalization era and artificial intelligence, where organizational brands can suffer in a matter of minutes due to politics, unintentional errors by employees or any intentional intrusion and theft by cyberspace hackers (Fritzche, 1995; Mujtaba, 2023). Consequently, each organization must be proactive to make sure their employees and managers exercise high levels of ethical responsibility. Of course, the ethical values of managers and leaders have been the focus of global researchers and consultants for many decades now (Ali & Amirshahi, 2002; Cherry et al., 2003; Clark & Clark, 1966; Fritzche, 1995; Mujtaba, 1997; Turner & Heng, 2023). Similarly, nations are also concerned about how investors perceive business cultures so they can receive more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to continue research and development, innovation, and creating more lucrative jobs for their citizens. Countries that are perceived as having a corrupt business culture are likely to discourage local, national, and international investors from making additional deals and agreements in such an environment.

Like all leaders worldwide, Turkish policymakers are concerned about how their business culture is now seen as more corrupt than in previous decades. Turkey received a score of 4.4 out of 10 in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) rankings published by Transparency International in their 2009 Global Corruption Barometer, ranking 56th out of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2010). This indicates moderate perceived corruption among politicians and public officials (Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011). Other countries with similar rankings as Turkey included Malaysia (4.4), Saudi Arabia (4.7), China (3.5), and India (3.3). However, New Zealand (ranked 1) and Sweden (ranked 4) were seen as highly ethical cultures with scores of 9.3 and 9.2 respectively (Transparency International, 2010). In 2023, Denmark earned a CPI score of 90 out of 100, while New Zealand's score was 85 and Sweden's 82 (Transparency International, 2023). Data shows that the CPI score for Turkey in 2023 was 34 out of 100 (ranked as 115 out of 180 nations), next to Sri Lanka, Philippines, Malawi, Indonesia, and Ecuador (which all scored 34), and slightly above nations like Angola, Mongolia, Peru, and Uzbekistan (which scored 33). Consequently, over the last 14 years, the Turkish business culture has been perceived as less ethical and more corrupt based on CPI data. Researchers should continue investigating the root causes of such a downward trend using various theories, such as moral development. Since the authors found no major studies assessing the moral development of Turkish working adults and managers using the personal business ethics scores instrument, which is developed by Western researchers, this study will be an initial attempt to discover the population's level of ethical maturity, as compared to respondents in other similar and diverse cultures. The findings should pave the way for future researchers to continue assessing and developing the ethical maturity levels of workers, managers, and leaders in this important country and region.

Theoretical Background

Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg's theory of moral development highlights that as individuals mature, they develop the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, establish a disciplined framework for their ethical values and judgments, and act morally through the influence of experience, training, and formal education (Rich & DeVitis, 1994). As Mujtaba et al. (2009, p. 434) explain "The term

development usually refers to progressive and continuous changes from the beginning of a person's life until the end." Of course, ethical maturity or moral development occurs through the maturity process and by socializing in the community, at work, and in schools. Researchers have studied ethics for hundreds of years and conclude that a person is moral if they continue to behave ethically based on local norms and expectations (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009; Desplaces et al., 2007; Fritzche, 1995; Gao, 2004; Klein et al., 2007; Lawson, 2004; McGill, 2008). A study by Mirshekary and Lawrence (2009) compared the attitudes of Iranian and Australian students toward unethical behavior. While no significant differences were observed between the two groups regarding business ethics or minor academic misconduct, Australian students demonstrated a higher level of disapproval for serious academic misconduct. The reality is that greed in the business world can strongly influence individuals to engage in unethical behavior in pursuit of clients, profits, or promotions, regardless of the consequences. Therefore, an important research question is to explore whether demographic factors such as work experience, gender, age, education, and management experience within Turkish culture significantly impact ethical decision-making. This study aims to evaluate the Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) of Turkish working adults, taking various demographic variables, including cultural factors, into account since there are no documented studies using this instrument regarding the moral maturity levels of workers and managers. The goal is to establish a baseline of ethical maturity levels through PBES so comparative assessments can be conducted to train and develop Turkish professionals who work with multinational corporations (MNCs) in Turkey or abroad. Such programs will reduce ethical conflicts and philosophical discrepancies among diverse MNC workers.

Studies by Kohlberg (1984, 1972), Mujtaba (1997), and Clark and Clark (1966) clarified that moral development occurs not only through adulthood but also through socialization gradually as a person completes education and grows older and is experienced in an organization locally, nationally, and internationally through face-to-face, hybrid, and remote interactions. Research has documented the role of e-leadership traits with effective management and innovation practices in the modern era (Subramaniam et al., 2023). What young children and adults learn through science, religion, local cultures, standards of good and bad in society, and other behavioral trends and practices in society are passed on by nurture and not by nature. Nurturing is being facilitated increasingly indirectly through social media, online platforms, and computer technologies. Instead of automatically judging situations as right or wrong based on misinformation or disinformation acquired through various online platforms, each person's level of "self-awareness" and ethical maturity enables the individual to make significant progress from one year to the next (Mujtaba, 1997). As such, in this study, we can measure demographic variables in the Turkish culture to see if they are linked to the ethical adulthood of respondents.

Turkish Culture and Ethics

The Turkish culture is a blend of diverse people groups, languages, and philosophies influenced by the Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean. At its core, there is a strong sense of hospitality, respect for tradition, and pride in culture, history, morality, and ethics in society. Turkish people take great pride in their heritage and doing what is right, which is reflected in their love of music, dance, and art. The Turkish culture is steeped in history and diversity.

Family and community are central to Turkish culture, with close-knit relationships and social bonds playing a vital role in daily life (Öztürk, 2015). The emphasis on collective context is reflected in the importance of traditional Turkish cuisine, which brings diverse people groups together in homes and restaurants.

Turkey is generally considered a high-context country, where communication relies heavily on implicit messages, nonverbal cues, and the context of the interaction rather than direct, explicit verbal communication. In a high-context culture, relationships, social hierarchy, and cultural norms play a significant role in how information is conveyed and understood. In a high-context workplace, people communicate in ways that require understanding the situation, such as reading between the lines, understanding body language, and being sensitive to social norms. A culture can also be understood based on its cultural dimensions. The scores for Turkey on Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions are as follows (Hofstede Insights, 2024): 1) Power Distance = 66, 2) Individualism = 37, 3) Masculinity = 45, 4) Uncertainty Avoidance = 85, 5) Long-Term Orientation = 46, and 6) Indulgence = 49.

Turkey has a high-power distance culture, which indicates a hierarchical society where authority and unequal power distribution are accepted among most of the population. Turkey is a collectivist or high-context society where people typically prioritize group loyalty and family ties over individual achievement and independence. Turkey scores moderately on masculinity, which suggests that there is a balance between competitiveness and a concern for the quality of life and nurturing roles among most entrepreneurs and business leaders. Turkey is high on uncertainty avoidance, which shows that there is a preference for clear rules and structured situations to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty. Regarding time, Turkey has a relatively short-term orientation because people often focus on traditions, social obligations, and quick results rather than long-term planning. Finally, Turkey is in the middle range for indulgence, suggesting a balance between enjoying life and controlling or restraining desires through social norms. Overall, these cultural dimensions scores reflect Turkey's cultural tendencies towards ethical norms associated with hierarchy, social relationships, risk aversion, and time perspective in the general population. Of course, since Turkey has diverse cultures with many ethnic groups, there are going to be some differences among minorities.

Business ethics research in Turkey reflects the country's socio-economic dynamics and diverse cultural influences. Initial research and studies predominantly focused on ethical perceptions along with the day-to-day practices among Turkish employees, managers, and organizations. For instance, there is an increasing awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ethical conduct in Turkish businesses, triggering a shift from traditional profit-centric models to more stakeholder-oriented approaches (Engin & Akgöz, 2016). The integration of Western ethical standards, influenced by Turkey's aspirations for greater alignment with universal principles and the European Union, has also played an important role in shaping business ethics discourse in the region. Additionally, recent studies emphasize the impact of socio-political factors on ethical decision-making within Turkish private and public sector organizations. Additionally, issues such as bribery or general corruption, nepotism, and regulatory compliance remain critical areas of concern for researchers and practitioners.

The interplay between local cultural norms, such as collectivism and respect for authority, and the global push towards ethical transparency presents unique challenges and opportunities for ethical business practices in Turkey. Future research directions suggest a growing interest in

exploring the influence of digital transformation and sustainability on business ethics, indicating an evolving landscape that continually adapts to universal trends and local realities (Ekin & Tezolmez, 1999).

Research using the Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) instrument, which is used in this study, involving Muslims can provide insights into the ethical attitudes and behaviors of business professionals. These studies often examine the influence of cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors on personal ethics under stressful situations in business contexts (Tajaddini & Mujtaba, 2010). These studies can show how Islamic principles shape the personal business ethics of the general population in Turkey. For instance, values such as goodness, equality, and social responsibility, which are emphasized in Islamic teachings, tend to positively influence personal business ethics scores among the locals (Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). Of course, the cultural backdrop can foster a strong ethical framework that guides business practices, although the interpretation and application of such values can vary across individuals due to diverse socialization.

Overall, business ethics in Turkey are shaped by a unique blend of diverse Eastern and Western influences, with a strong emphasis on personal relationships, trust, and respect for authority. While Turkey has made significant progress in recent years in terms of educating transparency and accountability, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of corruption and favoritism towards friends, family members, and those within one's network (Turan, 2020). Despite these challenges, most Turkish businesses are committed to upholding high ethical standards, recognizing the importance of ethical leadership, mutual social responsibility, and sustainability for long-term success. Consequently, this study is designed to better understand Turkish adults' personal business ethics based on their socialization in Turkey, as well as due to their biological aging, gender, education, and experience in management. Initially, for comparative purposes with cultures that the authors are familiar with, one research question to be explored is as follows: *Are Turkish adults' level of ethical maturity similar to, or different than, respondents in the United States of America, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan?*

Age and Ethics

Aging can make a person wise and intellectually rich, especially when it is complemented by relevant on-the-job training and education. Through empirical research, it has been found that age affects moral maturity (Freeman, 2007, p. 107). Another study revealed that students older than 40+ are found to be the most, whereas younger groups tend to be less ethical (Huang, 2006). Another study in the banking sector by Chavez (2003) also showed that young employees under 30 had lower scores than older employees. However, Galla (2006) concluded that age had no "significant effect" on moral maturity scores (p. 52). Another research on the IT sector by Heron (2006) suggested "no difference in ethical maturity level between different age groups of IT professionals" (p. 143).

According to Kohlberg (1984), morally, people mature well beyond age 20. This study will compare Turkish participants who are 25 and younger with participants 26+ and find out if there is a difference in terms of age. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is:

Hypothesis 1: Personal Business Ethics Scores of 26+ years old Turkish respondents will be equivalent or higher than Turkish respondents 25 years old or younger.

Management Experience and Ethics

According to Kennedy (2003), perhaps due to a lack of training, education, and/or management experience, "there may be a deficiency in the moral development of business leaders, especially in principled reasoning and emphatic concern" (p. 51) and that an organizational leader's experience does not positively correlate with their moral judgment level (p. 75). Likewise, another study held among Taiwanese managers suggested that the relationship between ethical reasoning abilities and their educational background is not meaningful (Huang, 2006). Similarly, Hyppolite (2003) found no positive correlation between cognitive moral development and education, nor between managers at different ranks and employees.

There are other research studies as well; for example, Cannon's (2001) research shows that experienced adults with 14+ years' experience had "slightly higher" ethics score, but the increase was not statistically significant. The question continues to be whether work experience can predict the moral development of individuals depending on the years of management experience. Cron (1984) and Weeks et al. (1999) suggested that the career stage of an individual, like experience and training, might vary in their attitudes toward ethical issues. And that management experience can positively influence a manager's ethical maturity level. Therefore, this study focuses on the following hypothesis with Turkish adults:

Hypothesis 2: Personal Business Ethics Scores of Turkish managers (those with formal leadership ranks) will be equivalent or greater than those who have not been in management.

Education and Ethics

Just as academic institutions are required to do an assurance of learning for each of their programs as part of their periodic accreditation reviews and renewals, formal education should be evaluated if education has an impact on the moral maturity of a person (Desplaces, et al., 2007). Research indicates a positive relationship between education and moral reasoning. Freeman (2007) and Mujtaba et al. (2009) reported that there is a strong positive relationship between education and ethics. Ethical maturity level is found to be a positive trend among business professional groups who have been educated formally (Evans, 2004; Mujtaba, 1997). As a result, formal education contributes to higher levels of cognitive moral development (Evans, 2004). Kennedy (2003) confirmed a positive difference in organizational leaders' educational level and moral judgment.

Mobley's (2002) research also revealed a positive relationship between education and moral maturity. He concluded that the education variable is the most powerfully associated variable with ethical maturity at a higher level than other variables in the research. Therefore, this study focuses on the following hypothesis with Turkish adults:

Hypothesis 3: Personal Business Ethics Scores of Turkish respondents who have four years of formal college education will be equivalent or greater than those who do not have any formal college education.

Gender and Ethics

With changes in societal expectations throughout most of the world, blatant forms of discrimination, biases, and unearned privileges based on gender have been reduced. Consequently, it becomes more subtle and harder to recognize inequalities and discriminatory

practices associated with gender. Nonetheless, gender inequities do exist, and men are often provided the unearned privilege of receiving management ranks even though women might be more qualified for it regarding ethical maturity levels (Mujtaba, 1997). Unearned privilege is usually not seen as an advantage provided to individuals but is usually not provided to others due to the perception of different characteristics like financial status, gender, body, skin, and position (Mujtaba & Sims, 2011). Johnson (2006) states that "to have privilege is to be allowed to move through your life without being marked in ways that identify you as an outsider" (p. 33). There is one aspect of this case is that "for every social category that is privileged, one or more other categories are oppressed about it" (Johnson, 2006, p. 38). Studies define privilege as unseen advantages that are not earned but can be relied on daily (McIntosh, 2001; Niehuis, 2005). Unearned privileges might be taken for granted, so they might not be aware of the benefits provided to them (Crosby, 1997; Goldstein, 2000; Hurtado & Steward, 1997; Johnson, 2006; Niehuis, 2005). While men who are beneficial or have unearned privileges are not always aware of it, women do notice it and see it as unethical and unfair.

Johnson (2006) explains that "when people hear that they belong to a privileged group or benefit from something like 'male privilege', they do not get it, or they feel angry and defensive about what they do get" (p. 21). Researchers who examined privileges with students agree that participants often find discrimination or racism to be easily recognizable and acknowledge general forms, but they struggle to see that they may be benefiting from privilege due to one of their characteristics (Goldstein, 2000; Niehuis, 2005). Unearned privilege leads to more frustration at work because unearned privilege usually is compensated by others by being in a disadvantageous position, and they provide privileges granted to others. If resources were unlimited, there would be enough benefits for everyone, and providing for some would not result in others being left out. However, this is not usually the case. When one employee is promoted due to gender, other employees are not promoted because of their biological makeup. Considering the Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) and the gender differences related to it, the previous research findings are very inconsistent. There is much research which has shared that female respondents have a higher level of PBES than their male counterparts (e.g., Ermasova & Ermasova, 2021; Mujtaba, 2010; Mujtaba et al., 2011; Nguyen et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2015; Quan, 2014). On the other hand, other research has found that gender is not a significant factor in PBES, and there is no difference between respondents of different genders (e.g., Clark et al., 2020; Crawford, 2018; Mujtaba & Kaifi, 2010; Mujtaba et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sarkessian & Nguyen, 2017). However, other research also shares that male respondents have higher personal business ethics scores compared to females (e.g., Kini et al., 2004; Mujtaba & Afza, 2011).

This is why different researchers use different hypothesis development approaches to test this impact, and as shared before, there is no consensus in the academic world on this relationship yet. Considering these explanations, we hypothesize our hypothesis as below:

Hypothesis 4: The Personal Business Ethics Scores of Turkish male respondents will be equivalent or greater than that of female respondents.

Method

Many researchers (Clark & Clark,1966; Kohlberg,1984; Mujtaba, 2011) have studied levels of ethical maturity in society and the workplace over the past six decades while confirming that the moral development of people starts in early childhood and continues into a person's twenties and thirties (Clark & Clark, 1966; Mujtaba et al., 2009; Mujtaba, 2011; Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011). For comparison purposes with previous studies in the Asian and Western regions, this research uses Clark and Clark's (1966) Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) instrument to assess the moral maturity of respondents in Turkey. The research question focuses on whether demographic variables, including culture, age, education, gender, and management experience, influence the moral development of Turkish respondents. In this context, moral maturity is defined as the dependent variable, while culture, age, gender, management experience, and education are considered the independent variables impacting moral development.

For ethical assessment, the self-administered questionnaires offer anonymity, which can be important when conducting research with various populations since the questions are very personal regarding values, beliefs, and daily practices (Mujtaba et al., 2009). The English version of the survey was translated into Turkish by a native Turkish professor and speaker. To ensure accuracy, the translated survey was then back-translated into English by three university professors.

The Personal Business Ethics Scores questionnaire consists of eleven scenarios that managers and working professionals in any workplace are likely to face. The PBES total scores can be between a low of 11, ethically immature, and an extreme of 55, showing a very high level of personal business ethics or moral maturity for the respondents (Clark & Clark, 1966; Mujtaba, 1997; Mujtaba et al., 2009). The scores for each dilemma can range from 1 to 5 based on the Likert scale. We used Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for data collection and analysis.

Using a convenient sampling methodology, this study targeted Turkish working adults living, studying, and working in Turkey. The surveys came from Turkish respondents who mainly lived, studied, and/or worked in the following cities: Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and other nearby cities.

For this study, 900 questionnaires were distributed to male, female, young, and old workers and those in management via email and face-to-face gatherings to ensure a diverse response rate for various demographic variables. The convenience sample was obtained from Turkish working adults through universities, businesses, and entrepreneurs. The purpose of this research and the importance of confidentiality were emphasized as introductory statements in each survey. The respondents voluntarily completed the questionnaire and were reminded that they could discontinue at any time. Out of the total distributed surveys, 716 surveys comprised a response rate of 80%.

Results

Researchers have established that the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value of instruments should exceed 0.5 to ensure the suitability of data for satisfactory factor analysis (Mujtaba et al., 2009; Mujtaba et al., 2011). This study's KMO value of .82 is sufficient to proceed with factor

analysis. The KMO test of the questionnaire results, as reported by Mujtaba et al. (2009), also supports the appropriateness of conducting factor analysis, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

KMO and Bartlett's Test for This Study (Mujtaba et al., 2009)

Variables	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	KMO and Bartlett's Test		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	*p*
Ethics	.82	857.62	55	.000

Regarding the reliability test, each PBES item is confirmed to have a corrected item-to-total correlation that is greater than .40 and previous studies have confirmed that this instrument is reliable and valid (Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011; Mujtaba et al., 2009). Additionally, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha for PBES is .76 which is good since it is greater than .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

The overall analysis in Table 2 shows a PBES of 36.32 for Turkish respondents, which is significantly higher compared to previous research conducted with respondents in Afghanistan but lower than similar findings with American, Iranian, and Pakistani respondents (Mujtaba, 2011). While people in Afghanistan have been mired in over four decades of war, the average person has not been able to reflect on business ethics, and rampant corruption both in the private and public sectors has been the norm. However, as shown from this comparative data over the recent few decades, due to the stability of government and higher levels of education in places such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the United States of America, the average person is more critical of unethical business practices (Mujtaba, 2011; Mujtaba, Tajaddini, & Chen, 2011). Nonetheless, many individuals in Turkey have shown high levels of ethical maturity scores in this study, which makes them very similar to other working professionals throughout Asian, European, and Western societies.

Table 2

Turkish PBES Scores vs. Others

PBES	Turkish	*American	*Iranian	*Pakistan	*Afghan
Sample Size	716	161	518	231	313
Sample Mean	36.32	39.1	40.85	38.58	34.49
Standard Deviation	12.39	8.03	6.48	8.79	3.615
		t = -2.72	t = -7.60	t = -2.57	t = 2.67
		p = 0.006	p = 0.00	p = 0.01	p = 0.01

Note. *Comparative data source: Mujtaba (2011).

We can conclude that Turkish adults, based on different demographic variables, appear to have similar levels of ethical maturity as well as concerns they face, as observed in respondent groups in the United States, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

While there are some similarities based on demographic variables, our analysis also reveals statistically significant differences in the business ethics perceptions of Turkish adults, particularly in relation to age, management experience, and gender. For instance, as shown in Table 3, younger Turkish respondents (aged 18-25) exhibited a significantly higher level of ethical maturity in these business scenarios compared to those aged 26 and older. It shows that the younger generation of Turkish respondents are less tolerant of corruption or seemingly

questionable practices in business and will be more likely to hold their leaders responsible for unethical decisions.

Table 3

Turkish PBES Scores by Age

Level of Significance	0.05
Young	
Sample Size	102
Sample Mean	39.84
Sample Standard Deviation	12.04
Older	
Sample Size	614
Sample Mean	35.7
Sample Standard Deviation	12.36
Intermediate Calculations	
Population 1 Degrees of Freedom	101
Population 2 Degrees of Freedom	613
Total Degrees of Freedom	714
Pooled Variance	154.36
Difference in Sample Means	4.14
t-Test Statistic	3.14
Two-Tailed Test	
Lower Critical Value	-1.96
Upper Critical Value	1.96
p-Value	0.00
Reject the null hypothesis	

Working professionals are often promoted into the management ranks due to their experience, strategic thinking, leadership skills, and/or having been good role models for others. As such, they are also given more privileges and responsibility along with their concomitant accountability. Managers are involved in more dilemmas and decisions than most non-managers; consequently, since they can be held accountable for negative outcomes, they reflect more on the rightness and wrongness of each action before any major decisions are announced or acted upon. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose and hypothesize that managers will have a higher level of ethical maturity regarding business practices than average employees. This proposition is tested and supported in this research since Turkish respondents with management experience showed a significantly higher level of ethical maturity than those who have never been a manager (Table 4). These findings demonstrate that Turkish managers can be good role models and mentors for ethics in society, which can create a healthier work environment for all (Fryxell & Lo, 2001; Hyppolite, 2003).

Table 4

Turkish PBES Scores for Employees vs. Management

Employees (non-managers)	
Sample Size	432
Sample Mean	33.23
Sample Standard Deviation	10.75
Management Experience	
Sample Size	284
Sample Mean	41.01
Sample Standard Deviation	13.24
t-Test Statistic	-8.63
p-Value	0.000

Another common and rational proposition is to assume that more education should lead to higher levels of ethical maturity since more learning often comes from additional cases of critical thinking. In this research, we compared the ethical maturity of respondents with a high school diploma with some college education versus those with at least a four-year degree or higher education. The results in Table 5 demonstrate no statistically significant differences between those with a college degree and those without a higher education credential. So, college education did not show any statistically significant results regarding ethical maturity among these Turkish respondents using the PBES instrument.

Table 5

Turkish PBES Scores by Education

High School & Some College	
Sample Size	125
Sample Mean	37.06
Sample Standard Deviation	12.66
College Degree – 4 or more years of Education	
Sample Size	591
Sample Mean	36.17
Sample Standard Deviation	12.35
t-Test Statistic	0.73
p-Value	0.46

Gender diversity is said to make a workplace more equitable, just, and more competitive since males and females bring different experiences to work because of their biological makeup and/or socialization norms in society. Turkey has a rich history of different cultures, inclusionary practices, and progressive positions regarding gender equality. In this research, as shown in Table 6, we see that male and female Turkish professionals have statistically significant differences in deciding ethical issues in business. Turkish females have a significantly higher level of ethical maturity compared to their male counterparts, which confirms the findings of Ekin and Tezolmez (1999) with managers in Turkey. In other words, Turkish women are less tolerant of seemingly unethical, illegal, and corrupt practices compared to men in Turkey. Like the findings of Deshpande et al. (2000, p. 179) with Russian respondents, “Female managers considered various activities such as doing personal business on company time, falsifying time/quality/quantity reports, padding an expense account more than 10 percent, calling in sick to take a day off, and pilfering organization materials and supplies more unethical than male managers.” Similarly, Turkish females see the acceptance of gifts and other such favors at work for preferential treatment as wrong and unethical more often than their male counterparts. Companies with more female managers in positions of power and strategic decision-making authority, with an overall heterogeneous workforce, are likely to be more competitive and sustainably successful than those predominantly run by homogeneous males who share similarities in their values (Wal et al., 2008).

Table 6

Turkish PBES Scores by Gender

Males	
Sample Size	323
Sample Mean	34.01
Sample Standard Deviation	11.25
Females	
Sample Size	393
Sample Mean	38.22
Sample Standard Deviation	12.96
t-Test Statistic	-4.59
p-Value	0.00

In this study, despite expectations, since older and more educated Turkish respondents did not exhibit higher levels of ethical maturity, Kohlberg's moral development theory is not fully supported. Perhaps becoming ethical maturity is not necessarily always associated with older age or more education, as claimed in previous studies (Mujtaba, 1997; Mujtaba et al., 2009), unless such interventions are geared toward specific dilemmas within an industry or organization along with reinforcing developmental opportunities. More research is needed in this area to see if there are consistencies across various populations and cultures. However, since those with management experience, regardless of their age, have higher business ethics scores in this study, the moral development theory is partially supported since managers often receive additional training and development opportunities compared to non-management employees. These findings are aligned with several previous studies (Chavez, 2003; Clark & Clark, 1966; Evans, 2004; Freeman, 2007; Galla, 2006; Mujtaba, 1997).

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of "personal business ethics scores" instrument is to assess a person's commitment level to personal integrity, honesty, and business ethics when dealing with various workplace challenges and dilemmas (Clark & Clark, 1966; Mujtaba, 1997; Mujtaba, 2011; Mujtaba et al., 2009). In this study, the target population was Turkish working adults assessed based on their culture, age, education, gender, and management experience. Assessing and understanding a working population's views is important because "business ethics has to do with the establishment and maintenance of vital and significant relationships among human beings—specifically, in this case, among employers, employees, shareholders, businesses, and consumers" (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009, p. 363). Higher levels of ethical maturity should lead to better decisions and outcomes, which are desirable by organizational leaders, employees, shareholders, businesses, consumers, and other stakeholders in each community.

Due to their higher levels of ethical maturity, this study has demonstrated that young Turkish adults and women are vital for the long-term success of businesses and the satisfaction of consumers and shareholders. Since greedy entrepreneurs and businesses often become trapped in a vicious cycle of only focusing on profits, eventually, they will lose good employees and consumers. By recruiting, hiring, retaining, and engaging ethically mature talent in the organization, leaders can feel more comfortable in making sure all their actions are aligned with societal norms in balancing the needs of employees, employers, consumers, and the overall community. "It is business's obligation to consumers not to lie to them and also not to mislead them through the omission of important facts" (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009, p. 366).

Talented and socially responsible employees with high levels of ethical maturity will question decisions that might have a negative impact on any of their stakeholders before any actions are implemented. Local, national, and global organizational leaders hiring decision-makers in Turkey should diversify their workforce by integrating more talented and qualified young professionals and females into positions of authority. Of course, to be aligned with local and federal laws in Turkey, it must be noted that integrating more employees and managers of higher ethical maturity can come from any working adult age group and gender; as such, qualified men and older employees should not be discriminated against or excluded from management positions.

While formal college education was not a statistically significant factor in the ethical maturity of Turkish respondents in this study, informal training, career development, and experience appear to be important factors in the ethical development of professionals. This study has shown that Turkish respondents with one or more years of management experience have a significantly higher level of ethical maturity than others who have never been in management. As such, Turkish organizations can continue their management development programs and make relevant training workshops available for all non-management professionals so they can speak up when they observe or see dubious and harmful practices in the organization. Ethically mature and empowered employees are likely to remain engaged in the organization's affairs by speaking honestly to ensure they succeed in the long term. Of course, honesty applies to businesses in many ways, including the following (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009, p. 367):

- Honoring agreements and contracts, whether verbal or written.
- Acknowledging mistakes made in the production of goods or services, especially when safety is at risk, and taking steps to correct those errors whenever possible.
- Providing an honest day's work for the pay received, ensuring fair compensation for the work performed.
- Setting reasonable prices that allow for a fair, but not excessive, profit margin.
- Delivering the highest possible quality for the price, particularly when people's health and safety are at stake.
- Continuously reviewing business practices at all levels to identify and eliminate dishonesty and corruption.

While honesty is not necessarily the best policy when a family member or colleague asks if he is going to die from an illness or if an outfit makes her look too fat, it should be practiced in all major organizational decisions. After all, employees and college students should be socialized with the value of honesty, and it must be a top priority for all working adults (Gao, 2004; Klein et al., 2007; Lawson, 2004; McGill, 2008; Niehuis, 2005). Employees will speak truthfully when they are encouraged, given the opportunity, and provided relevant training, and when they are not retaliated against for speaking up (Roberts & Mujtaba, 2024). Additionally, talented employees will stay engaged with an organization if they see an inclusive workplace where all workers are given equal opportunities to work and advance (Wesley et al., 2024).

Sadly, the issue of gender often negatively impacts women in society due to biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices, which influence some talented professionals to leave

(Deshpande et al., 2000; Weeks et al., 1999). Since Turkish females and the youngest generation in this study have shown to be less tolerant of questionable business practices, organizational leaders should focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining them through relevant, inclusive strategies, mentoring, and career planning.

To attract and retain an experienced workforce, career planning becomes an important topic for all male and female employees in this age of personal responsibility, "ghosting", and trivial organizational loyalty. Career planning is making a strategic plan on the path one wants to take within his or her profession or industry. A company's employees' career plan can be within the organization they are currently with, a specific industry, and/or a general plan that takes them through the life of their working career. Career planning should involve an objective, the goal, the path to achieve the goal, a gap analysis of the individual and the environment, and a clear strategy or plan on how to get there. The career plan can be revised to accommodate changes that may occur within the environment, the organization, or the individual's personal life. The career plan should have specific timelines with realistic deadlines to ensure the outcome can be achieved. Of course, career planning is the responsibility of the individual and the organization, but more so the individual. Employees must decide what path they desire to take within their careers and what actions they must take to get there. The employees are responsible for informing their supervisor of their goals and where they want to be in the coming years. At this point, the organization's managers can lay out a plan congruent with the employees' plan to ensure they can achieve the desired outcomes. Career planning is a team effort where both parties come together to achieve an outcome that benefits both (employee and organizational success).

Caprino (2008) highlights that women often engage in multitasking and are frequently reluctant to seek help. As a result, many women typically lack the time to reflect on what is working well and what needs improvement to achieve their long-term, meaningful goals. Using real-life roles and timely mentoring, counseling, or coaching Caprino suggests that women should step back to gain a new expanded perspective of what is working or is not, letting go of all actions, beliefs, and behaviors that hold them back and saying yes to themselves for moving toward what they cannot live without.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations regarding the use of a convenient sample population through academic institutions and local businesses that employ professionals. Future studies can avoid this by not including any academic institutions in their study, while targeting a specific population such as healthcare, retail, pharmaceuticals, engineering, aviation, etc. Additionally, since Turkey has a diverse population with many new immigrants, future studies can add a demographic question to the survey regarding place of birth and years of socialization to clarify nationality and years of residency.

This study is based on self-reported questionnaires, which have their own limitations since there is no way to confirm a respondent's position on sensitive issues like ethics. Future studies can supplement this methodology with qualitative interviews of experienced decision-makers to provide more enriching information that may or may not support the quantitative findings.

While the current study's data from Turkish adults were collected during this past year, the comparative data from other nations were from data banks of the past decade. So, it might be

best for future researchers to conduct a cross-cultural comparison by collecting data from all countries during the same year.

It should be noted that this study's findings and implications are limited to the small group of respondents and cannot necessarily be generalized to an entire country that has many diverse philosophies, religions, mores, norms, and traditions. As such, those recruiting and hiring new employees must be careful not to discriminate against qualified applicants in favor of hiring young people or females. The key is to not discriminate against or exclude young people and women from managerial ranks, as their views can make the organization more ethical to internal and external stakeholders in each community.

Conclusion

This research with Turkish working adults was initiated to compare respondents' Personal Business Ethics Scores based on their culture, age, education, and management experience in Turkey. Despite expectations due to the importance of higher education in society, this study did not find any statistically significant differences between Turkish groups with and without a formal college education.

What is new in this study is that our findings conclusively demonstrate that age, gender, and management experience are statistically significant factors in the ethical analysis of Turkish respondents. Younger, college-age Turkish respondents in this study showed a significantly higher level of ethical maturity than their older counterparts. If such findings become consistent in future studies across industries, then it has important implications for diversifying management ranks with qualified college graduates and revising ethics training programs so that diverse teams can guide their firms' ethical positions in each community in Turkey. This diversity will reduce real and perceived levels of corruption, enhance the CPI scores of the country, and lead to more satisfied workers since people are usually proud to work for organizations that do what is ethically and morally right. So, it is very important for all national and international organizations within Turkey to strategically and consciously provide management opportunities for qualified young professionals and women, as their input can lead to more ethical outcomes within each team and department. Since those with management experience and female respondents demonstrated a significantly higher level of ethical maturity, affirmative action programs should be instituted to reward longevity for all leaders and integrate more female candidates into higher leadership positions.

As found in this research, management experience in the Turkish culture seems to help people critically assess questionable business and management practices. Therefore, all institutions and firms need to continue management development training for existing and future candidates wanting to lead their organizations.

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