LEADETHICS
Make the Right Call!

ETHICS: INSIGHTS & INTRICACIES

Uncovering and demystifying the perspectives
and topical issues regarding ethics

INSIGHT PAPER
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Enlightening people to better understand ethics and
its perspectives for enhanced appreciation and conduct

Ethics is often regarded as a philosophical and complex subject matter. Its meaning and consideration tend to vary amongst people and societies who may have different levels of understanding and perspectives, making it a passionate topic of debate amongst philosophers, scholars, professionals, sociologists, and anthropologists, especially when judging what is ethical and what is not.

This insight paper aims to uncover, discuss, and demystify the topical issues regarding ethics in general. It attempts to simplify its understanding and render its adoption and application easier in the business context. The paper draws from ethical theories, models, and empirical findings to explain and discuss the foundations, perspectives, and intricacies of ethics with the ultimate goal of enabling people in the workplace to reinforce their knowledge of ethics and their abilities to better recognise ethical issues, judge and act ethically for the welfare of all.

What is Ethics?

Understanding ethics is the first step towards knowing how to make the right call between what is a right and wrong action.

This fundamental question of *"What is right and wrong?"* has captivated the minds of philosophers across ages. Lots of thoughts, debates, and views have emerged from such a philosophical question in an attempt to find the right answer. However, one would argue that there are different perspectives and contexts, and hence different answers to it. Some philosophers have considered this deep topical question from a religious perspective, whilst others have assessed it from scientific and socio-political standpoints, making what initially appeared to be a simple question into a profound and complex one to answer (Popkin & Stroll, 1969). However, the host of philosophical work undertaken thus far has helped mankind shape up their thought processes, belief systems, views, and behaviours accordingly (SOAS, 2013).

Defining Ethics

The behaviour of individuals or groups of people in an organisation or society is influenced by a myriad of factors that could be prescriptive and behavioural in nature. Written organisational policies, guidelines, codes, and overarching laws typically prescribe how people are generally expected to act and be guided. Likewise, the employee's own views of what is right and wrong, the way their leaders act, and the culture that is permeating within the organisation often dictate how the individual behaves in the business context.

Ethics is commonly defined as a set of moral principles or values that guide human behaviour and decision making in society and at work. To have a deeper understanding of ethics and its perspectives, subject matter experts have put forward various definitions.

Trevino and Nelson (2014) describe ethics as *"the principles, norms, and standards of conduct governing an individual or group"*. Parboteea and Cullen (2013) view ethics as the *"society's perception of what is right or wrong"*. MacIntyre (1998) examines ethics from a moral perspective, i.e., the right and wrong moral behaviours, moral concepts, and moral language.

From these definitions, we can deduce that ethics guides an individual or a group of individuals from the thinking process that occurs in the person's mind (moral conception and intention) all the way to how he or she judges, communicates, behaves and is perceived as being right or wrong (moral judgement and behaviour).

Thus, while some people are driven by their own belief system, guiding values, and judgement, others are guided by how society or other groups to which they belong perceive their actions or behaviour.

Ethics and Morality

The more we ponder deeply on ethics, the more we appreciate the instrumental role it plays in guiding an individual to make the right decision when facing conflicting situations in life: between the need to uphold righteousness and the need to avoid being drawn into improper actions for monetary gains, self-interests, or fulfilling unreasonable demands of others due to adverse pressures. Such situations serve as a litmus test for the individual, determining whether he or she can withstand such adverse pressures and avoid transgressing ethical norms and conduct or will instead relegate ethical principles or moral values to the second field for his or her own self-interests.

Adverse socio-economic pressures can easily put people in such challenging situations and ethical dilemmas where they tend to abstain from making the right call either due to fear of punishment or simply for their own self-interests. It thus puts the spotlight on the person's guiding values, moral system, and inner strength to remain unflinching on the ethical path.

Are they the same thing?

Ethics and morality are often used interchangeably. While they are both intrinsically related, they do not necessarily carry the same exact meaning. There are nuances that one needs to recognise so as to properly understand their meanings and differentiate their subtleties for better appreciation and application.

Both ethics and morality define guiding rules, values, and principles about what is considered right or wrong. However, whilst morality defines our own character and the way we live our personal lives, ethics dictates the guiding principles of what is right and wrong in a social system such as an organisation, society, or group (Gert, 2008). In other words, ethics is based on the moral codes adopted by the people of a particular group, profession, organisation, or society.

Ethics is often regarded as the external standards set forth by institutions, groups, professions, or cultures to which an individual belongs. For example, regardless of their preferences or belief systems, professionals such as accountants, medical doctors, engineers, and lawyers have to abide by the ethical codes and guidelines set by their respective professions.

Professionals will be guided by their ethical codes when deciding what is right or wrong. They are generally expected to demonstrate acceptable behaviour and conduct dictated by their ethical codes, as inherent norms, to pursue their profession and be accepted as worthy of being part of the governing institution or professional body.

Likewise, employees in an organisation are expected to follow the ethical norms set out by the internal systems (e.g., the board or organisational and HR governance systems) to shape the way they are expected to behave, make decisions, and act within the organisation. This could be in the form of charters, code of ethics, code of conduct, or organisational policies and guidelines that every member of the organisation must embrace and abide by, irrespective of their hierarchy level, nature of job, or the role they have to fulfil in the organisation. These codes are meant to be lived such that the right culture and standards permeate the organisation. This inevitably calls for continual efforts from the leadership and key internal stakeholders in communicating, explaining, clarifying, demonstrating, and enforcing such norms and standards for the reinforcement of the ethical culture and climate in the organisation.

Morality, on the other hand, is a person's own set of values and internal guiding principles for what is right or wrong conduct. Most of the time, these moral codes come from religions and are passed down through holy books, religious authorities, belief systems, parents' teachings, and other authoritative documentation. While moral values and codes are expected to be similar among people, we find that what one person considers moral may not be considered so by another.This is explained by the fact that a person's moral compass is also influenced and shaped by the culture and society to which he or she belongs.

Moral codes typically influence how people think and act, as well as how they regard and treat other beings. These personal principles are expected to be lived and upheld by the individuals themselves.

Considering their intrinsic linkages and their common goal as to how human beings ought to act, the aim here is not to overemphasise the distinction between ethics and morality but rather to focus on the bigger picture as to how we differentiate between what is ethical and unethical.

The Evolution

At the beginning of world literature, ethics and moral values originated from several holy books and epic poems from various religions (Hare, 2014). Since then, from ancient Greece through the Middle Ages, ethics has continually received the attention of philosophers and scholars. In the 18th century, Kant (1959) introduced the principle of *"universalizability",* which basically provides the correct rules for everyone to follow, referred to as *"Kantian ethics"* (Lacewing, n.d.). Then, in the 19th century, *"utilitarianism"* emerged, providing a different perspective on the right actions that are likely to produce the greatest happiness or highest utility for most people (Bredeson, 2012). In the 20th century, we saw increasing developments and debates in meta-ethics, applied ethics, and business ethics. Whilst *"meta-ethics"* focuses on the meaning of ethical terms (e.g., what is goodness?) and how people can dissect them and obtain ethical knowledge (e.g., distinguishing between what is right and wrong), *"applied ethics"* is concerned with how people can achieve ethical outcomes by applying moral judgements in a particular situation or context, which is often complex (e.g., business ethics and environmental ethics).

> **Morality guides a person in deciding between right and wrong conduct, whilst ethics is a set of rules or rules of conduct that a person follows as required by the society, company, or professional standards.**
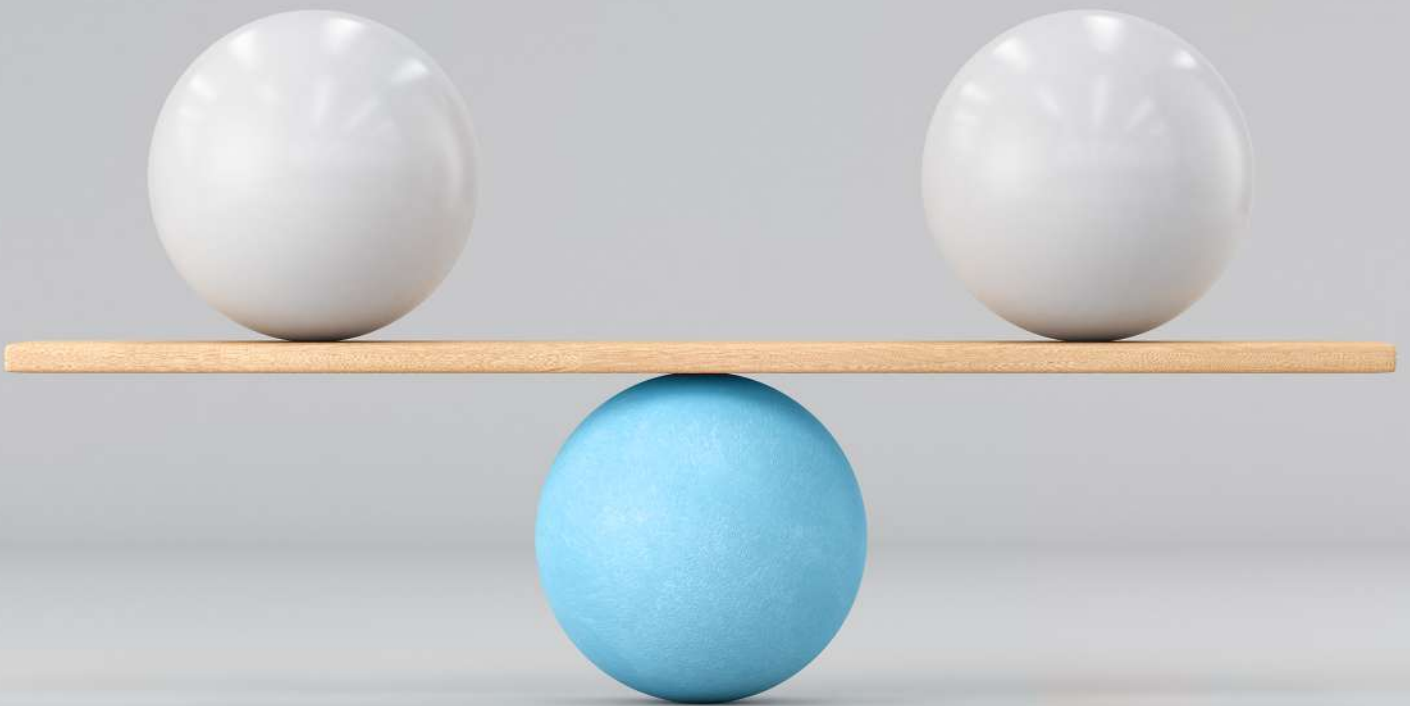
Ethics and Religion

With a view to understanding the behavioural pattern and moral compass of people in a society or in an organisation, it is important to go to the roots of ethics. Most religions put forward vital teachings about moral and ethical behaviour. Through religion, people learn both formal and informal norms, guiding their behaviour within some acceptable boundaries (Fararo & Skvoretz, 1986). Regular exposure to such norms, scriptures, and teachings helps people inculcate moral values, which often provide guidance for what are considered ethical behaviours for most of the world's religions (Fisher, 2001).

In **Christianity**, *The Ten Commandments* are considered ethical and play a vital role for believers and followers (Coogan, 2014). *The Bible* prescribes many such ethical principles, some of which are provided below (King James, 1611):

- The stewardship role each and everyone needs to play for the good of individual human beings and society, and the need to work according to God's standards of what is right and wrong (Ex. 20:4-6).

- The right set of characteristics and behaviours that need to be upheld by people, such as not committing sinful acts of murder, adultery, stealing, or giving false testimony (right conduct) (Ex. 20:13-16).

- The duty to bring stability to the family and society at large (social responsibility / citizenship behaviour) (Ex. 20:12) and the duty to provide the right and truthful view (veracity) and not give false testimony (ethical conduct) (Ex. 20:16).

Likewise, in **Islam**, several such duties, qualities, values, and directives are set for people to adopt, be guided by, live by, and promote accordingly for the welfare of the community (Sadeq, 2002; Mansoureh & Kamaruzaman, 2017). Some of the key examples from *The Quran* relevant to this particular paper are (Itani, 2012; Quran.com, 2023):

- The duty to do good to others (e.g., parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy) through care, kindness, charity, and social service (social responsibility) (2:83).

- The exemplary conduct to be nurtured and lived, such as being truthful (2:42), acting in honesty, fairness, and justice (4:29, 4:58), and doing good deeds (11.23).

- The undertaking of fair dealing and trade with no recourse to excessive charges and interests (usury / "riba") reinforces ethical conduct in business practices (17:35, 2:275, 3:130).

In **Hinduism**, Vedic literature has guided the behaviour and lives of people for centuries. The *Bhagavad Gita* underpins such a philosophy and sets the ultimate goal one needs to achieve: that of attaining absolute perfection of the individual through the consolidation of society and God's consciousness. It sets out many such qualities, values, and duties that an individual needs to fulfil (Prabhupada, 1998):

- The consideration and adoption of 26 right and divine qualities such as fearlessness, purification of the heart, self-control, giving charity, freedom from greed and envy, modesty, forgiveness, non-violence, patience, and compassion for living beings, among others (the principle of being good) (16:1-3).

- The need to give up lust, anger, and greed (considered the three gates to hell) as they bring one's ruin (16:21-22).

- The need for one to understand, through the prescribed rules and regulations, what is the duty to be fulfilled and what is not, and to act in the mode of goodness without the desire for results or attachment, for the gradual elevation of oneself (16:24).

According to Dharmasiri (1992), **Buddhism** is essentially practical in approach and stands as a means to attain the ultimate goal: happiness for oneself and the benefit of others. Buddhist ethics is based on practical perspectives on the law of nature and the unchanging law of cause and effect *("Karma")*. In Buddhism, the good life is considered an ethical life based on the principles of the coexistence of man and nature, and ultimately, compassion (Dalai Lama, 1974). The intrinsic relationship between Buddhist ethical values and nature makes their principles useful to the world.

It can also be noted that the major religions are characterised by monotheistic belief systems and all contain moral principles providing similar moral orientation and guidance (Ali et al., 2000). Field (1979) highlighted that religions impart society members with values, norms, and practices that help to create what he coined as *"reciprocal expectations of predictability"* and which, through continuous exposure and practice, eventually become the norm.

The tangible evidence of ethical and moral teachings across religions, which have been articulated so profoundly in these holy scriptures, suggests already how individuals in general should live and evolve in society through the demonstration of civic virtues and exemplary ethical conduct. Although religious literature shows intrinsic linkages between religion and ethical conduct, it would be interesting to evaluate, gauge, and confirm such relationships from an empirical perspective.

The Emperical Perspective

Drawing from these religious sources and their moral teachings, the conceptual relationship between religion and ethics appears to be strongly present. But different empirical studies show that researchers and scholars have had challenges in reaching a definitive conclusion about the empirical relationship due to differing and mixed research outcomes (Parboteeah et al., 2008; Tittle & Welch, 1983; Weaver & Agle, 2002).

Whilst Agle and Van Buren (1999) found a small relationship between religious beliefs and corporate social responsibility, Hood et al. (1996) and Smith, Wheeler and Diener (1975) found no differences between the ethical behaviours of religious and non-religious individuals. In other studies, it was found that no relationship could be established between religiosity and ethical judgements of managers (Kidwell et al., 1987).

However, the study of Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen (2008) revealed some interesting linkages between ethics and religion from an empirical perspective. They studied 63,087 individuals from 44 countries and considered the dimensions of religions representing the majority of people around the world (e.g., Protestants, Roman Catholics, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam). They found that:

- The degree to which people believe in their religious authorities and their emotional attachment to religious beings, objects, or institutions are related to individuals' being less likely to embrace unethical paths and justify unethical behaviours such as cheating on taxes or using public transport without paying.

- Engaging in religious services and praying reinforce the ethical stance of people and place conformity pressures on individuals to lower engagement with or justification for ethically suspect behaviours.

Furthermore, Conroy and Emerson (2004) argued that people with a belief in God are less prone to engage in unethical acts due to the fear of divine punishment. In such situations, they may take a utilitarian approach in gauging the net effect of conducting something unethical versus the outcomes of such an act (gains versus losses).

These findings support the view that religions play a fundamental role in shaping the values and norms of society. People, in general, are more likely to follow the norms and live the values of the religion they follow or identify with. These have transcended generations as well as geographical boundaries.

The Western, Eastern & Global Philosophy of Ethics

Like the rules of the law would differ from country to country, so would the belief systems, cultures, social norms, and values. In such diverse contexts, an important question comes to mind, i.e., *how is ethics considered in the contemporary world and how does it reconcile with the core moral value system that one would generally tend to embrace in life?*

In an attempt to answer such questions, one needs to understand the underlying ethical philosophies guiding people. Figure 1 provides a holistic view of the ethics foundation and how one can gain a better understanding of the underlying principles from a **Western philosophical perspective**. It shows the underlying theories that support ethics, their respective foci and perspectives, and how they are related. Traer (2013) views *deontological and teleological* as the two main ethical paths in Western philosophy.

Deontological theories are rule-based and primarily focus on duty and rights. They focus on determining whether a particular action or decision is right or wrong, irrespective of the intention or consequences of those actions. For instance, a person has the duty to treat another being fairly and uphold justice at all times. It is about *"universal"* rights and wrongs and responsibilities; e.g., the principle of human rights should be applicable universally, i.e., everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2012).

On the other hand, **teleological** theories focus on the character of being good. For instance, it is about one's philosophy to demonstrate desirable virtues of honesty, benevolence, loyalty, etc. Unlike deontological ethics, teleological ethics focuses on the purpose or intention behind an individual's decision and action. It is based on the evaluation of the consequences or outcomes of a decision or action.

For instance, a decision or action is considered morally right if it leads to the welfare of oneself or others. Actions that are not in the best interests of most people or that are against collective welfare are viewed as morally wrong under the consequence-based principles.

On the other side of the globe, the **Eastern philosophy of ethics** is more concerned with protocol and showing respect. The Eastern cultures view what is right more in terms of what is expected of the individual by their family, society, and culture.

Whilst Western ethics places more emphasis on law and justice and is centred on the self and what is rationally correct, Eastern ethics is duty-based, regardless of whether it originates from Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism (Hwang, 2015). It is driven by an obligation to do what is right and expected from the family, society, religious teachings, culture, and belief systems.

On another dimension, it was observed that with the advent of globalisation and intercultural exchange between the East and West, the concept of *global ethics* emerged from the Universal Ethics Project sponsored by UNESCO (Hwang, 2015). This initiative advocates that every human being must be treated humanely and should observe four categorical imperatives coming from most cultures (Kung & Kuschel, 1993):
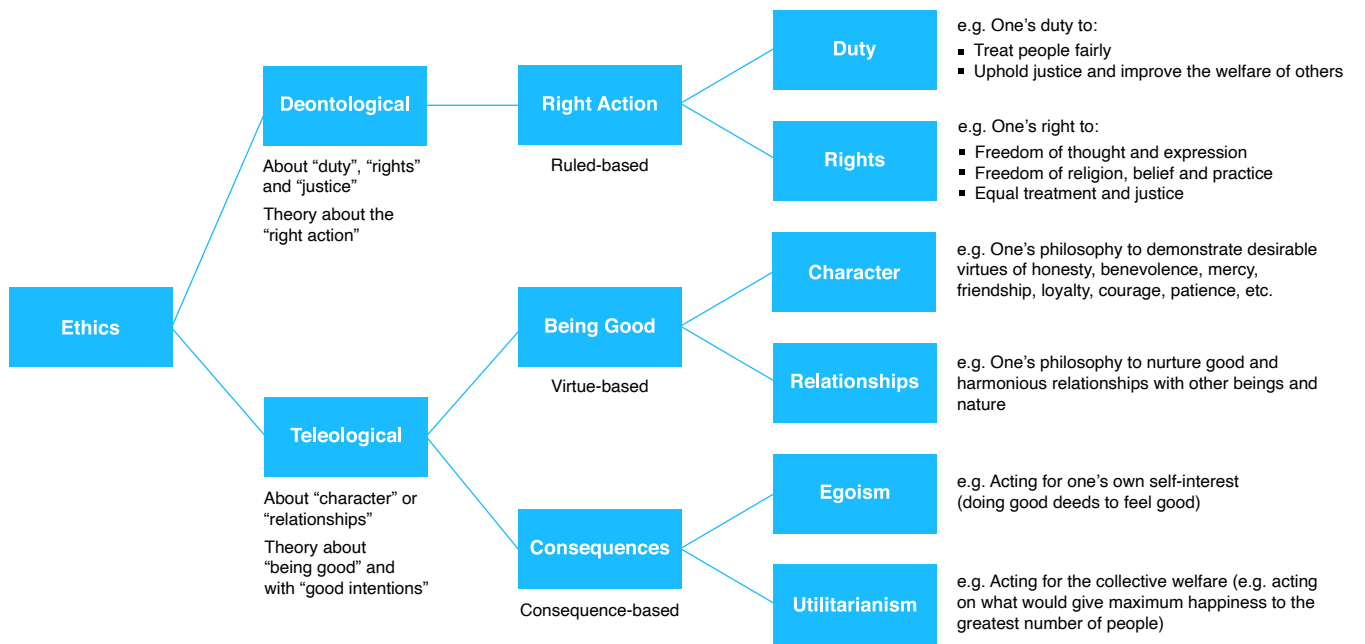
- One shall not kill

- One shall not steal

- One shall not lie

- One shall not commit sexual immorality

This gives a set of more culture-neutral and generally accepted guidelines for someone to easily follow and remain on the ethical path.

FIGURE 1

Ethical Paths in Western Philosophy

			Duty	e.g. One's duty to: ▪ Treat people fairly ▪ Uphold justice and improve the welfare of others
	Deontological	**Right Action**		
	About "duty", "rights" and "justice" Theory about the "right action"	Ruled-based	**Rights**	e.g. One's right to: ▪ Freedom of thought and expression ▪ Freedom of religion, belief and practice ▪ Equal treatment and justice
Ethics			**Character**	e.g. One's philosophy to demonstrate desirable virtues of honesty, benevolence, mercy, friendship, loyalty, courage, patience, etc.
		Being Good		
	Teleological	Virtue-based	**Relationships**	e.g. One's philosophy to nurture good and harmonious relationships with other beings and nature
	About "character" or "relationships" Theory about "being good" and with "good intentions"		**Egoism**	e.g. Acting for one's own self-interest (doing good deeds to feel good)
		Consequences		
		Consequence-based	**Utilitarianism**	e.g. Acting for the collective welfare (e.g. acting on what would give maximum happiness to the greatest number of people)

Source: Adapted from Traer (2013)

Ethics in Business

What would constitute an ethical issue in business?

To answer this question, reference is made to the works of Ferrell and Fraedrich (1991), Berenbeim (1987), and Waters et al. (1986). According to Ferrell and Fraedrich (1991), *"an ethical issue is a problem, situation, or opportunity requiring an individual or organisation to choose among several actions that must be evaluated as right or wrong, ethical or unethical"*.

From this definition, we can gather that it can take the form of a problem, situation, or opportunity. Mostly importantly, there is a need to make a judgement call to determine whether the decision is right or wrong. Scholars and researchers call this process "ethical decision making".

Vitell and Festervand (1987) suggested that it is an issue of conflict, that is, conflict between the organisation's or leader's interests and one's own personal ethics (Jamnik, 2017). This conflict often leads someone to do something that is improper, referred to as *"ethical deviance"* or *"ethical violation"*. Such conflicting and challenging situations often put pressure on the individual to depart from the right path and indulge in an unethical action.

For example, a manager may apply inappropriate pressure or coercion on his subordinates to bypass established policies and procedures of the organisation to fulfil a particular interest or goal. It can take the form of compromising ethical standards to win business deals (e.g., overpromising on products' capabilities or simply not disclosing any material facts about their limitations / defects).

It can also take the form of favouring a particular employee or group of employees based on affinities, or simply failing to discipline any of their inappropriate acts and behaviours. At times, it can also take the form of accepting and fulfilling inappropriate orders from shareholders and superiors at any cost for their own self-interests. Such ethical deviations are often found to be motivated for reasons of gaining a benefit, recognition, or simply for fear of punishment.

Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) posit that the best-intentioned executives are sometimes unaware of their own or their employees' unethical behaviour and at times may perpetuate what is called *"motivated blindness"* (a state of overlooking unethical behaviour when remaining ignorant, benefiting the persons concerned). Such issues and practices transgress ethical norms and boundaries and would gradually fuel malpractices and an unethical climate within the organisation.

In the same way, there are many other forms of ethical issues which were highlighted in a report from "The Conference Board" (Berenbeim, 1987). The following seven issues came out as widely accepted key ethical issues faced by managers:

- Employee conflicts of interest
- Inappropriate gifts
- Sexual harassment
- Unauthorised payments
- Affirmative action (inclusion and equal opportunity issues)
- Employee privacy
- Environmental issues

> **The best-intentioned executives are sometimes unaware of their own or their employees' unethical behaviour and perpetuate *"motivated blindness"* (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2011).**

At the top of the hierarchy, the CEOs gave their perspectives on what constituted ethical issues (Berenbeim, 1987; Jamnik, 2017). They see the issues classified into four main categories, namely:

- **Equity** (e.g., comparable worth or salaries)

- **Rights** (e.g., privacy, equal opportunity)

- **Honesty** (e.g., employee conflict of interest, acceptance of inappropriate gifts, effecting unauthorised payments)

- **Exercise of corporate power** (e.g., workplace and product safety, environmental issues, corporate contributions)

Who is at stake?

Another way to view and evaluate ethical issues is from a stakeholder's perspective. Based on the research conducted by Waters, Bird and Chant (1986), it was noted that the most frequent ethical or moral issues are in relation to the following five key stakeholders:

- **Employees**: in terms of performance feedback, working conditions, and job security

- **Peers and Superiors**: in terms of honesty, telling the truth, loyalty, and support

- **Customers**: in terms of being truthful, telling the truth about the products and services, collusion, and questionable practices

- **Suppliers**: in terms of fair practice, impartial treatment, a balanced relationship, and undue pressure

- **Other Stakeholders**: in terms of adhering to and respecting legal constraints, truth-telling in public relations, and protecting stakeholders' interests

Why does it matter?

Petrick and Quinn (1997) put the spotlight on ethical decision making and highlighted the reasons why people in managerial positions should improve their ethical decision making. They are mainly due to:

- **The cost of unethical workplace conduct**

  Though one may think that ethical transgressions may go unnoticed, that is not necessarily the case. It is almost like an internal *"cancer"* infiltrating and spreading within the organisational body, with likely heavy impacts being visible at some stage, as witnessed by the failures of major corporations across the globe (Lee & Chao, 2011; Treanor, 2009; Wilmarth, 2013). The effects are often irreversible or too late for remedial measures for organisational survival. In other cases, it was also empirically established that unethical culture and practices had a major impact on employees behaviour, morale, health, and performance, the cost of which is inherently heavy and often immeasurable.

- **The impact of a lack of awareness of ethically questionable managerial and role-related acts**

  Ethical culture and practices are reinforced when there is an open platform for discussions of ethical issues, where one gains a thorough understanding of how to distinguish between what is considered ethical and what is not, and where one obtains clarity and advice on how to go about handling ethical dilemmas, especially those that are sensitive and unclear. An absence of such structures in the organisation creates a vacuum, leaving employees to resort to their own limited knowledge and judgement regarding ethically questionable acts. Such deficiencies in ethical awareness or a lack of support to address ethical dilemmas are likely to adversely affect the individuals' ability to operate ethically, overcome ethical challenges, and create a strong ethical culture in the organisation.

- **The widespread erosion of integrity and exposure to ethical risks**

  The pressure to strike the right balance between meeting organisational goals and honouring deontological duties becomes even more challenging as a result of the relentless pressure for value creation, economic gains, and other forms of motives. At times, the pressure to comply with unreasonable demands or orders is so intense that the ethical consideration loses its predominance and is relegated in importance. Such conditions lead to an erosion in ethical best practices and enforcement, and eventually culminate in the collapse of internal order and harmony within the organisation, or simply put its survival at stake.

- **The global corruption pressures that threaten managerial and organisational reputations**

  Recent examples of these pressures have been observed during the pandemic period, which was characterised by unprecedented business and financial disruptions, opening the door to a new wave of corruption, fraud, and other forms of economic crimes (Ernst & Young, 2020). Such conditions call for a robust and effective governance framework to proactively detect, prevent, and remedy ethical deviations, especially when emergency actions and interventions are required in periods of crises. It has been observed from past crises and the recent pandemic era that such states unfortunately made room for transgressing integrity, internal controls, and ethical standards, amongst others.

- **The benefits of increased performance and intrinsically desirable organisational order resulting from ethical leadership and decision making**

  Ethical decision making and behaviour are sine qua non for a healthy workplace and for nurturing harmony amongst employees within the organisation. It also leads to instilling an organisational citizenship behaviour that motivates employees to go beyond their standard call of duty for their organisation's success and welfare. Such healthy conditions promote right conduct and drive employees' and organisations' performance in the long run.

These key dynamics reinforce the critical importance of putting business ethics at the centre of organisational practices and the proactive role that business leaders have to play in role modelling and promoting an effective ethical culture in business for the well-being of their internal and external stakeholders.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that ethics, in general, plays a vital role in the way we live and conduct our activities. A proper understanding of ethics, its perspectives and intricacies, becomes an essential component in one's life as it paves the way for an individual to self-recognise ethical issues, make appropriate ethical judgements, and act ethically in life and business.

" Ethics stands as a guiding compass for someone to steer forward when faced with ethical dilemmas.

People face ethical challenges in everyday life and more so in the business context, where there is a myriad of diverse profiles, characters, value systems with different authority levels, goals, interests, and priorities, compounded by workplace pressures for survival and growth. In such an intense and complex work environment, one is very likely to face ethical challenges. Understanding the context and culture and navigating through these intricacies demands a reference point that one can hold on to and be guided by to be able to judge and act fairly and ethically.

Ethics epitomises such a reference point for an individual, a community and a business. Stemming from the very early and profound holy literatures and scriptures, it acts as the checkpoint in making moral assessments as well as empowering oneself with sound virtues that will uphold one's conscience, conduct, and image.

In the business context, ethics reinforces the way businesses operate and uphold their duties vis-à-vis their clients, employees, and other stakeholders. It shapes and elevates organisational culture, ethical climate, and employee conduct such that harmony exists amongst the team members to honour their duties fearlessly, demonstrate higher engagement and commitment levels, do what is right for themselves and others, deliver beyond their normal course of duties, and ultimately perform consistently.

Leaders regulating workplace pressures and demonstrating civic virtues, people consideration, fairness, respect, and altruism contribute positively towards strengthening the ethical culture within organisations as well as shaping the right behaviour and conduct amongst their followers and subordinates.

Therefore, we must be mindful about our decisions and actions in every situation, as they have an impact on our surroundings, our workplace, and the society we live in. Each individual has a distinct responsibility to make the right and moral call whenever an ethical situation arises.

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About this Paper

This paper forms part of an overarching strategy to share and disseminate the research findings from the author's multifaceted study *"The dynamics of ethical climate: mediating effects of ethical leadership and workplace pressures on organisational citizenship behaviour"* in the business context of Mauritius. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2128250

The main objective of this paper is to discuss about ethics from religious, philosophical and business perspectives.

Through this paper, the author attempts to bring together key concepts, findings, insights, views, and recommendations on the topic of focus in a relatively non-technical format to ease the dissemination to a broader audience for the welfare of the business community. An attempt has also been made to recognise the work of other scholars and researchers through the references, to help bridge the academic and business worlds.

Acknowledgements

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Rishi O. Sookdawoor is a Doctor of Business Leadership from the Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa. He is a multi-functional, strategic and board-level executive with a 20-year track record of spearheading strategic ventures and transforming businesses. With a strong passion and advocacy for ethical leadership, Dr. Sookdawoor aims to contribute to the body of knowledge through his research and opinion papers on ethical leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. In his quest to contribute towards shaping a stronger ethical culture in business organisations, he advocates for the collective drive and stewardship of business leaders in fostering ethical culture and behaviour in the business community.

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About LEADETHICS

LEADETHICS is a platform dedicated to empowering the business community to foster ethical leadership and culture. Through its research, LEADETHICS provides insights on the ethical culture, behaviour and leadership in business organisations in Mauritius. Based on empirical research, insights, and experiences, it puts forward the key ethics related actions required to implement highly effective ethics standards and programmes in the business community.

LEADETHICS aims to bring together policymakers, industry leaders, business drivers, professionals, ethics & governance experts and scholars from Mauritius and all over the world to share their experiences, ideas, resources, and techniques, and make the right call to collectively commit to putting ethics at the top of the leadership agenda and drive the transformation of ethical organisational culture and leadership for the greater good.

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