

Are Women More Ethical Than Men? - A Study Exploring Gender Behaviour at Work

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Abstract: 'Ethics' is a vital issue for an organization that needs to be handled with proper diligence. Filtering right from wrong and correct from incorrect is a matter of significance. Men are always perceived to be more professional and career centric. There are differences in attitudes, aspirations and intentions of both genders have been accepted universally. So are the ethical issues in both the genders. The study is conducted to see the behavioral deviations of both genders and the drives behind the decisions taken by men and women. This paper is based upon the survey of Indian professionals (men and women). The respondents are from various careers and the paper was aimed to answer the persistent questions.

Keywords: Ethics, Women, Men, Gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

Are women ethically stronger than men? Does gender make any difference in the thought-process? Do women have more ethical clarity than men while taking decision? The above questions are not intended to create any kind of gender discrimination or to encourage feminism, but to analyse the conceptual precedents behind the decisions taken by both genders in different situations. Famous authors Lisa Johnson & Andrea Learned in their book Don't Think Pink gave some hilarious facts about gender behavioral difference. According to the book, while men have more brain cells than women, men typically do not have as much of the connecting tissues that transfer information between right and left brain hemispheres. This leads to the conclusion that women observe deception better and quicker because of their ability to recognize unethical behavior.

In a study initiated by Dr. Janice Lawrence from the University of Nebraska and Michael Shaub from St. Mary's in St. Antonio approached to all newly hired auditors and their trainers. Their study revealed that women used a higher level, principle based reasoning than men. The amusing thing that came into light from this study was that whenever there is suspicion in the work environment, neither male nor female auditors confronted women as often as they did men. This may be due to the perception that women are more trustworthy than men.

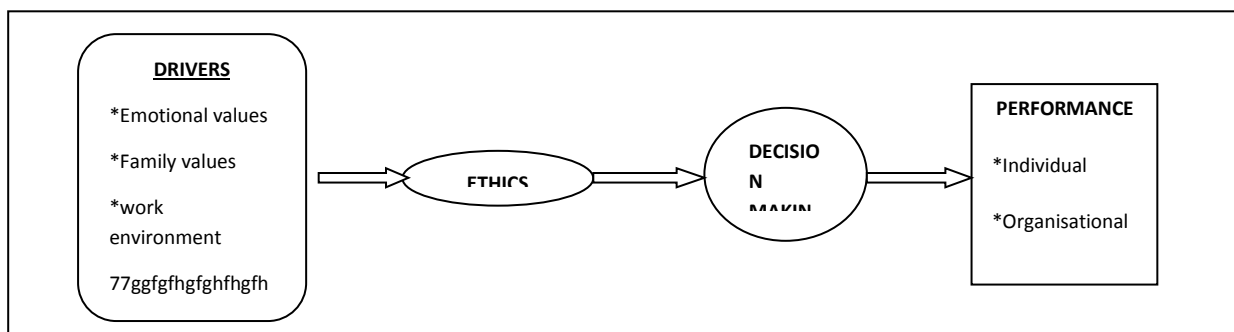
II. ETHICS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The word 'ethics' has been derived from ancient Greek word 'Ethikos' which means essence of values and habits of a person or group. Ethics is about the rules governing the way in which we determine what is 'right' or 'wrong'. The acts which are consist-ent with our beliefs are said to be ethical. The actions which are not consistent with our values are termed as unethical. Ethics are the set of values used by an individual, a group, a professional or an organization that guides them in their actions. It is subjective in nature as it may have different meanings to different people. The golden rule of ethics is "Do unto others as you would have them to unto you". It means that treat others the way as you would like to be treated. Today, almost every profess-ional face the problem of lack of ethics. Ethics ensure the correctness of decisions as it encourages truth in place of false, and prefers fair in place of unfair means. These are the guiding forces that ensure reliability and validness behind an act.

VALUES  ETHICS  CONDUCT

The workplace ethics are an integral part of employment as it assists in decision making that ultimately results into the performance of individuals as well as the organization. Decisions without justified grounds may prove to be fatal. Ethics

that are the driving forces behind a decision, further get influenced by various socio-economic factors with varying influences from person to person.



III. DIFFERENT SOURCES FROM WHERE THE ETHICS COME

What are the main sources of ethical attitudes? Do the sources affecting ethical attitudes differ in men and women? If yes, then what is the extent of difference between these sources in men and women? The sources are enormous in numbers that affect the ethical behavior. Before analyzing the gender behavior at work, the composition of ethical attitudes is to be understood. An electronic survey was conducted through emails in which 261 responses generated. All factors are classified into 6 contributors viz. parents and siblings, spouse, alma mater, religious organization, supervisor and mentor. The respondents were asked to respond to the following question;

“Choose the top three sources who are most influential in development of your business ethical attitudes and rank them 1, 2 & 3 according to the degree of influence.”

The responses given by various respondents were as follows:

Table 1: Influence of parents and Spouse

Gender							
	Total	Parents and Siblings			Spouse		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Total	261	171	45	33	73	72	74
Male	106	70	18	13	30	34	21
Female	155	101	27	20	43	38	33

Table 2: Influence of Alma Mater and Religious organizations

Gender							
	Total	Alma Mater			Religious organization		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Total	261	69	80	54	89	60	55
Male	106	26	38	26	34	30	21
Female	155	43	42	28	55	30	34

Table 3: Influence of Supervisor and Mentor

Gender							
	Total	Supervisor			Mentor		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Total	261	36	74	73	84	62	48
Male	106	20	31	31	36	25	25
Female	155	16	43	42	48	37	23

As shown in the tables, most influencing sources in the formation of ethics are the family, parents and siblings in case of both the genders and the least influencing factors were the supervisors. The tendency of both the genders towards different categories of sources were almost same. The analysis gave the results that in spite of the differences between men and women, they may not really vary that much from each other.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

*H1: There is significant difference between ethical behavior of men and women at work and decisions taken by women are more ethic-based as compared to men.

*H0: There is no such difference between the men and women in the terms of ethics while taking decisions.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the previous study showed the influences of different factors in ethical behavior of men and women and results were concluded that gender has no such bearing on the ethical drivers and both men and women give priority to same factors over others, the degree may vary. This research goes to the next level to check how they react ethically in different hypothetical situations. The research has been done to discover the moral judgement strategies followed by them by giving them different hypothetical situations of moral dilemmas and then they are asked to respond what is right and wrong, fair and unfair. The data were collected from individuals working in various organizations through questionnaires. Out of 250 correspondents, 175 filled in the questionnaires and out of which 140 were usable. So the response rate was 56%. Tabulations were made of the responses and the responses were noted.

VI. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Situation 1- You are a HR manager of an organization and conducting interviews for a vacancy. One of the candidates appeared for the interview, is known to you. He comes to you and greets you. While having conversation, he asks you to prefer him to the interviewers. On the other hand, you know the fact that some of the other applicants are more competent for the post than him. But you have some personal obligations toward that person also. In this situation, what will you do? Will you prefer that person to the interviewers? Or will you not interfere in the process?

Decision	Will prefer	will not prefer	Don't know
Male	59%	35%	6%
Female	31%	60%	9%

*Males were of the opinion that this will not be a case of biasness as they would just refer the person but the last decision was to be taken by the main interviewers. But majority of female respondents straightly declined to refer anyone for the selection as it might affect other applicants' careers who were more efficient.

Situation 2- You are a salesperson in a company selling health supplements. Some of the supplements have given very effective results in the past to the persons who used them. But still the supplements are not tested by any laboratory and are not prescribed by the doctor. In a few cases, some adverse effects are seen to some of the customers and you are doubtful that it might arise due to some allergy problems. Now, a customer who wants to buy that supplement from you has shown some allergy issues. But if you will explain about the adverse effects that may arise by using that product, you may have to lose a big amount of profits. Will you explain the negative effects? Or will you keep quiet about the adversities?

Decision	Will explain	will not explain	Don't know
Male	39%	53 %	8%
Female	72%	23%	5%

*Males were of the view that they have to be loyal to their company and when they are not asked about such issues, they need not have to explain that by themselves. But the grounds behind the decision taken by females was that they wouldn't earn profits at the cost of others life. On the other hand, giving misleading information to ones customer would result in losing one's customers. So they would have explained the reactions and feedbacks of other customers.

Situation 3- You are a salesman of Superia softwares and attending a trade fare. Your major competitor, Excellent Softwares' representative is there. You noticed that the competitor's representative is carrying his company's marketing plan with him. Suddenly you found that he forgot one of the copies of plan in that room and left the fare. You are in a situation to easily access the plan of your competitor without being observed by anyone. Will you take that copy to see the marketing strategy of Excellent Softwares? Or just leave the room as it will be against your morals to do so?

Decision	Will take	will not take	not sure
Male	59%	37%	4%
Female	42%	51%	7%

*majority said that it was opportunity to be used. Would their competitors have been in this situation, they must also have done so. It would be beneficial to their company. Women replied that it would be unethical on their part to use such information.

Situation 4- You are a manager of a departmental store. The festival season is about to come so complementary gifts are being distributed with every sale of significant mounts. A monster toy is in great demand and you have very limited stock of it with you have already promised to give to the customers paying bills. One of the relatives of your employer arrives and asks you for the toy. As you have already promised to sell them to your previous customers, and have no other piece of that monster toy. Will you refuse one of your customers and sell that piece to that relative of your employer too please your boss? Or will you keep your promise with your customers and decline the employer's relative?

Decision	Will sell to him	will not sell to him	not sure
Male	69%	26 %	5%
Female	38%	51%	11%

*males emphasized the fact that they would sell that toy to that relative of their employer and would make it up by offering some other gifts to the previous customers, but women, in majority, declined to sell that to a person just because he's known to them. They strictly mentioned that those who came first had the right to get that.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

These were the 4 situations given to the correspondents and their opinions were taken. The results can be concluded that women and men behaviors in different situations vary because of the differences in their traits. Both the genders contradict each other with their strong viewpoints. This ensures that men and women are guided by different ethics and behave differently. Their reasoning process, priorities, perceptions and other factors make them think diversely. But the question here was that women are more ethical in their reasoning than men. The answer is probably "yes" as in most of the situations, women are more rational, sensitive and trustworthy. At the same time, some females were less and slow decisive.

VIII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research paper is intended to make comparisons of gender differences in ethics and to show the capabilities and readiness of decision making by both. Women are always perceived to be as less career conscious as against men. But the degree of professionalism is much more in them because of their natural traits of organizing everything. And the results in this paper also summed up that they think more ethically than men and are more clear in taking decisions. The findings have several implications for organizations interested in knowing gender sensitivity and maintaining and developing ethics in its employees as ethics is one of the vital issue of an organization nowadays.

IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted on a population of professionals from a limited area that can hinder the applicability of the findings. Moreover, the study did not go deep into the idea behind such decisions. The population was from different professions that have different ethical beliefs are also one of the limitations of the study. The study was not done empirically to take all the issues that have arisen in that area.

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