

# BUSINESS STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUSINESS ETHICS: EVIDENCE FROM AN EMERGING ECONOMY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to explore the attitude of Kuwaiti business students towards various aspects of business ethics and the effect of their personal background on their attitude. A self-administered quantitative survey was undertaken with a convenience sample of Kuwaiti business students enrolled in Kuwait University and the Gulf University for Science and Technology. The questionnaire was distributed to 400 students; 200 questionnaires returned completed, resulting in 50% usable response rate. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the respondents' level of agreement with various aspects of business ethics. Kruskal Wallis and the Mann Whitney test were employed to detect possible variations in the respondents' attitudes due to their personal background. It is found that the respondents emphasized the role of the market forces and impact of Islamic Shariah principles in governing businesses and businesspersons' ethics. The study also revealed that respondents' characteristics have little effect on their opinion towards various aspects of business ethics.*

**Keywords:** Student's Attitudes, Business Ethics, Education, Kuwait.

## INTRODUCTION

### Business Students' Attitude towards Business Ethics: Evidence from an Emerging

Students' attitude toward business ethics has been subjected to a considerable attention in the business literature. The main issue of the literature is to explore whether taking a course in business ethics and students' characteristics affect their ethical attitude. Empirical studies documented that religious and cultural backgrounds have influence on individual's ethical attitudes. They also demonstrated that the level of study has a significant effect on individuals' attitude toward business ethics. Other studies revealed that there is insignificant difference between males and females' attitude towards ethics. These findings, however, would be questionable for an environment such as the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries due to their unique culture, economic and political systems. These countries are distinguished as being oil producers and their citizens enjoy a high level of per capita income. Governments in these countries are heavily involved in the economic activities and provide advanced infrastructure. More importantly, the citizens of these countries enjoy close family and community ties governed by the Islamic Shariah principles. Hence, the perception of business students in Kuwait

towards business ethics is expected to be different from that reported in previous studies, adding a new dimension to the existing body of the literature. In addition, understanding the attitude of students toward business ethics is important for academicians and decision makers. For the former, it would help in developing existed business ethics courses or introducing new courses in the curriculum or fostering the concept of ethics education to enhance ethical decision-making of future business leaders. For the latter, it would assist in identifying specific ethical standards often mean different things to different people as an attempt to make framework for helping individuals make ethical business decisions.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. A brief review of related literature and previous studies are offered in the next section. The third section presents data collection and research method. The findings and analysis are discussed in section four. The paper ends with a conclusion

## Related Literature and Previous Studies

Business ethics are subjective judgments by individual with respect to sets of thoughts that form several business philosophies (Preble and Reichel, 1988). They can be viewed as a set of traditions of applying business procedures on performance in a fair manner (Adhikary and Mitra, 2015). Business ethics are also described as the perception of what is right and fair behavior (Carroll, 1991). Ho and Lin (2006) reviewed the literature published in the field of business ethics education and noticed that ethics courses to be effective if they guide students to deal with ethical issues, they face in their business careers. According to Wise et al. (2010), there is a conflict between the chase of profit and the practice of ethical conduct in business.

Several empirical studies have been undertaken to examine the attitudes of students towards business ethics (Malaysia: Alam, 1995; Khalizani et al., 2011; Nejati et al., 2011; Finland and USA: Grünbaum, 1997; Amberla et al., 2010. Australia, South Asia, East Asia: Mirskehary et al., 2009; Poland: Maruszewska, 2011; Iran, France and Romania: Bageac et al., 2011; New Zealand and Australia: Zegwaard and Campbell, 2011; Egypt: Khalil and Seleim, 2012; South Africa: Fatoki and Marembo, 2012; Bangladesh: Hussain et al., 2012; Adhikary and Mitra, 2015; Iran: Yousefi et al., 2012; Zarei et al., 2016; Jordan: Hutaibat, 2012; Marie, 2015; Haloub et al., 2016; India: Mishra, 2012; Ramesh and Goel, 2014; Vietnam: Nguyen et al., 2013; Pham et al., 2015; Pakistan: Rizvi et al., 2014; Makhdoom et al., 2014; Botswana: Phatshwane, 2013; Phatshwane et al., 2014). These studies are briefly reviewed in the following section.

Alam (1995) examined the attitude of a group of Malaysian business students toward business ethics. He found that the main manager concern is to secure profit to the organization before anything else. He also found there is a conflict between corporate and individual ethics. He concluded that the academic staff and business school should spend more time and effort to develop students concern needs and the overall advancement in society. Another study conducted by Khalizani et al. (2011) who studied the relationship between the perception on gender, age and academic exposure with business ethics and capitalism among graduate students in Malaysian universities. They demonstrated that once individuals become familiar with their working environment and systems, there is always an opportunity for dishonest risks. They provided evidence of insignificant relationship between gender, age and business exposure and business ethics. Furthermore, Nejati et al. (2011) tested cross-cultural differences in attitudes

towards business ethics by comparing samples from Iran and Malaysia. They established that the Malaysians have lower perceived importance of ethics and social responsibility than Iranians. However, they observed that Malaysians perceived greater importance of ethics and social responsibility in achieving organizational effectiveness than Iranians. The researchers also noticed that Malaysians are concerned with profit before starting business and they are more materialistic when compared with the Iranians.

Grünbaum (1997) look at the attitude of Finnish and American business students from the Southern states toward business ethics. They unveiled that both the Finnish and the American business students, who participated in the survey, believe in honest in business, although they tend to think that people act in their own self-interest, and that people's decisions are based somewhat more on emotions rather on rational argument. Another study undertaken by Amberla et al. (2010) who compared student perceptions of business ethics in Finland and the USA. They found that US students are generally represent more individualistic and harder value; whereas Finnish students represent more collectivistic and softer values. They also found that US students are less concerned about the weight of multiple responsibilities in the forest industries than their Finnish counterparts. They further observed that Finnish students represent a stronger shareholder view than their US counterparts.

Mirskehary et al. (2009) considered the relationship between business ethics and accounting students. They found insignificant differences between Australian, South Asian, East Asian students and other students in their ethical attitude toward academic and business situations. They provided evidence that teaching ethics in the classroom to multicultural groups of students provides an opportunity to accelerate the distribution of knowledge and improve interaction and debate around different styles to ethics among students from different countries.

Maruszewska (2011) explored accounting students' ethical education in Poland. He observed academicians and practitioners are likely to realize that building a professional accounting community requires appreciating ethical practice. He also observed that minority of Polish business schools incorporated ethics into the syllabus so far. He concluded that students trained in fields of ethics would benefit from exposure to life cases regarding tax avoidance.

Yousefi et al. (2012) researched unethical issues in local universities in Tehran. They detected that it rare for students to act in an unethical manner. They concluded that students are in a good condition to avoid unethical behaviors. However, the researchers detected that final year students would behave unethically more than others like cheating in exams, especially students whose period of study takes more than the normal time. Another study executed by Zarei et al. (2016) examined factors that affect accounting and auditing students' ethics in Iran. They found personal and professional factors affect the ethics of accountants in the accounting workplace. They also found that the type of moral attitudes of individual towards accounting is based on their personal philosophies. They further found that religious and cultural backgrounds influence individual's ethical attitudes. The researchers concluded that considerable effort was made to develop professional ethics.

Bageac et al. (2011) surveyed management students' perception of business ethics in France and Romania. They found that Romanian students present more favorable attitudes toward Machiavellianism than French students; whereas, French students valued Social Darwinism and Moral Objectivism more highly. They also found that religious practices do not influence preferences for business philosophies. They further noticed that women have less

favorable attitudes toward Machiavellianism and more favorable attitudes toward Moral Objectivism than men.

Zegwaard and Campbell (2011) investigated professional values and ethics adhered to in the workplace. They found that students are likely to relate well to exploring their experiences as observed in the workplace. They recommended that work placement should present a wealth of opportunities to explore the practice of making ethical or moral decisions.

Khalil and Seleim (2012) looked into Egyptian students' attitude towards the information ethics. They found that students are sensitive to the ethicality of information privacy, information accuracy, and information access. They also found that while the years of education have a major impact on students' attitudes towards property, gender and age have an interaction impact on students' attitudes towards access. They concluded that public universities should revise their curricula in order to integrate ethics into business education.

Fatoki and Marembo (2012) used Attitude towards Business Ethics questionnaire (ATBEQ) to examine attitude towards business ethics by business students in relation to gender, level of study and nationality. They found significant differences in the attitudes toward business ethics in relation to the level of study. They also observed insignificant differences in the attitudes toward business ethics in relation to gender and nationality. They advised governments to take the initiative of promoting good ethical behavior and introduce punishment to reduce the risk of economic problems due to unethical practices.

Hussain et al. (2012) look at the perception of business students toward the inclusion of social business course in the curriculum in a private university in Dhaka. They found that discussion and case study on social business shift the view of students from tools such as charity and corporate social responsibility to social business for alleviating poverty. They also suggest the incorporation of social business in the business curricula. Moreover, Adhikary and Mitra (2015) examined business students' perceptions of ethics in business in Bangladesh. They found that companies in recruitment and managerial decision-making do not properly follow ethical practices. The researchers recommended that a university should include different business courses on ethics in its academic curriculum to shape students' ethical attitude properly.

Marie (2015) surveyed the relationship between gender and the concept of business ethics. The researcher found that the women, who have a bachelor's degree and married and work for industrial firms understand the concept of business ethics. Another study performed by Haloub et al. (2016) studied differences in the attitude of professionals Jordanians and British towards business ethics. They found significant differences between professionals' views to Social Darwinism and ethical relativism in Jordan and UK. They also found that culture and societal factors have higher impact when compared to religion.

Mishra (2012) examined differences in students' attitude towards business ethics due to gender, age and work experience. The researcher found that individual characteristic and knowledge of a course in ethics have no impact of the students' attitude. Another study performed by Ramesh and Goel (2014) investigated the public perception about business ethics. They found insignificant difference between males and females' attitude towards ethics in Indian business. They also found that the educational qualification has a significant impact on the attitude of Indian public towards ethics in Indian business.

Nguyen et al. (2013) tested Vietnamese business students' level of ethical maturity based on gender, education, work experience, and ethics training. They found that gender and work

experience are significant factors in ethical maturity. They demonstrated that respondents that are more educated and those who have completed an ethics course did have a higher level of ethical maturity. They urged organizations, governments and societies to foster sustainable growth, understand the level of ethical maturity of individuals within these environments and building a strong ethical culture. In addition, Pham et al. (2015) used self-administered questionnaire to explore the attitude of Vietnamese business students towards 30 business ethics items based on gender and the experience of having taken a business ethics course. While the study reported similar attitudes on the majority of the items presented in the questionnaire, it has pointed significant differences among those who participated in the questionnaire towards seven items due to gender and four items due the experience of taking a business ethics course. Rizvi et al. (2014) examined the ethical orientation of business student in Pakistan. They found that there are some differences in the attitude of male and female students. They observed that females have more positive attitude than males. The researchers noticed that a business ethics course enhances the level of knowledge and information of ethical and unethical practices in business, and help in the decision-making process. Another study conducted by Makhdoom et al. (2014) looked into students' attitude towards business studies in Pakistan. They found that students are very career conscious and believe that honor is part of their study. They also found that their study will not make them subtle business persons as the practitioners are. They concluded that students should consult their teachers and parents before they select any discipline in order to match their abilities interest and personality.

Phatshwane (2013) explored ethical views of small business managers in Botswana. He found that managers expected employees to be ethical and employees expected managers to be ethical, and both groups expected good ethical conduct from themselves. He also demonstrated that managers are more disapproving of ethically questionable behavior in all responses, placing their answers on the more ethical side of the scale. Additionally, Phatshwane et al. (2014) examined the attitudes of students in finance and accountancy towards business ethics in the University of Botswana. They found that some students believe that business ethics can be taught and there is an encouraging result for a course in its infancy. They also found that students agreed that religion teaches have some ethical values, a sentiment shared by some studies. They concluded that it is not clear whether courses in ethics and auditing have shaped ethical views in any way.

As far as the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) region is concerned, few studies were undertaken to examine the students' perception towards business ethics (see for example, Saudi Arabia: Izzo and Ezzi, 2013; Zin, 2013. Kuwait: Al-Shaik et al., 2013). The following section offers brief review to these studies.

Izzo and Ezzi (2013) studied business students' attitudes in Saudi Arabia. They found students living in a strict Islamic society still see themselves as part of the worldwide Generation C. They also found that there is positive relationship between students' attitudes toward learning through educational video, improving their English-speaking ability, and gaining a greater understanding of multi-cultural issues and differences. Likewise, Zin (2013) examined the impact of culture on the ethical attitudes of business managers in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. He found that there are significant differences between the Saudi and Malaysian business students' views in all the attitudinal statements about business ethics except on the item, export unsafe products. He concluded that culture has a strong influence on management students' attitudes

toward both business ethics in general and various questionable business practices in particular and there are significant differences between the two countries.

In Kuwait, Al-Shaik et al. (2013) examined the ethical orientation of students of business schools. They found that higher academic levels have more positive views towards business ethics compared to lower academic levels. They also added that participation in ethics training programs, as well as working status do not influence the students' attitudes toward business ethics.

It is evident that a limited number of empirical studies have been undertaken on to assess the students' perception towards business ethics. This suggests the need for additional empirical testing. Hence, this study is undertaken to test following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to students' nationality.*
- Hypothesis 2** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to the universities.*
- Hypothesis 3** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to gender.*
- Hypothesis 4** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to marital status.*
- Hypothesis 5** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to age.*
- Hypothesis 6** *There is a significant difference in the attitudes toward business ethics due to academic specialization.*

## Data Collection and Study Methodology

The objective of this study is to explore the attitude of Kuwaiti business students, enrolled in the Kuwait University (KU) and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), toward business ethics. The reason behind selecting these two universities was based on the ground that both are listed on the top Fifty Arab Universities (QS Top universities, 2018) and the business schools in these two universities are members in Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). To achieve this objective, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 400 business students enrolled in Kuwait University and the Gulf University for Science and Technology; 200 questionnaires returned completed, resulting in 50% usable response rate. Descriptive statistics was conducted followed by Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney tests to identify differences between student's answers due to their characteristics. The Mann Whitney test is used for variables consisted of two groups: University: Kuwait University, GUST; Nationality: Kuwaiti, Non-Kuwaiti, Marital Status: Not Married, married; Gender: Male, Female, while Kruskal Wallis used to accommodate more than two groups and it was used for the level of the academic level and academic specialization. To assess the internal consistency of the collected data, Cronbach's alpha test was performed and resulted in 0.76. According to Cortina (1993) Cronbach's alpha  $\geq 0.70$  is acceptable.

## FINDING

## Respondents' Background

It is evident from Table (1) that 100 business students from Kuwait University and 100 business students from the GUST participated in the questionnaire survey and half of them were females. The vast majority of the respondents were Kuwaiti nationals (93%) and a significant proportion of them were not married (89%). Although the respondents represent various age groups, 73.5% of them aged between 21-25 years. Table (1) further revealed that the respondents are coming from different business specialization with concentration in the areas of finance and accounting. The diversity in the characteristics of the respondents in the questionnaire survey assists in obtaining different views about business ethics and this would give credibility to the outcome of the analysis.

<b>University</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
GUST	100	50.0	Male	100	50.0
Kuwait University	100	50.0	Female	100	50.0
Total	200	100	Total	200	100
<b>Nationality</b>			<b>Marital Status</b>		
Kuwaiti	186	93.0	Not Married	178	89.0
Non-Kuwaiti	14	7.0	Married	22	11.0
Total	200	100	Total	200	100
<b>Age</b>			<b>Academic specialization</b>		
Less than 20 years	37	18.5	Accounting	57	28.5
21-25 years	147	73.5	Economics	2	1.0
26-30 years	7	3.5	Finance	109	54.5
31-35 years	7	3.5	Information System	7	3.5
More than 35 years	2	1.0	Management	15	7.5
Total	200	100	Marketing	10	5.0
			Total	200	100

## Respondents' Attitude toward Business Ethics

The respondents were given several statements about business ethics and were asked to express the extent of their agreement with each of them. The result of the analysis of their answers is contained in Table 2. It is evident from Table 3 that the respondents believe that business world has its own rules and the main concern of businesses is to maximize the return on owners/ shareholders' investment. The respondents also demonstrated that ethics in business is not more than an adjustment between people expectations and their behavior. They further believe that business decisions are governed by realistic economic attitudes rather than moral philosophy. In other words, the respondents stressed that business ethics are not existed and the main concern of businesses is to make profit in order to enhance the owners/ shareholders return on investment and maximize their wealth. Yet, the respondents believe that free market economy would serve best the needs of society and restricting competition violates natural law and can

only harm society. In addition, Islamic Shariah Principles encourage individuals to carry out ethical actions and assume social responsibility. Ethical actions are at the heart of the Islamic Shariah Principles and businesspersons in Muslim countries do not need to ethics courses.

<b>Table 2</b>				
<b>RESPONDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUSINESS ETHICS</b>				
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>
The only moral of business is making money	2.8	1.2	1.0	5.0
Ethics in business is an adjustment between expectations and the way people behave.	3.6	1.0	1.0	5.0
Business decisions involve a realistic economic attitude rather than moral philosophy	3.2	1.1	1.0	5.0
Moral values are irrelevant to the business world.	2.0	1.1	1.0	5.0
The main interest of shareholders is to maximize their return on investment.	3.7	1.0	1.0	5.0
For every decision in business the only question I ask is, "Will it be profitable?" If yes – I will act accordingly; if not, it is irrelevant and a waste of time.	3.3	1.2	1.0	5.0
I raise the price of a certain product and mark it "on sale." There is nothing wrong with this	2.0	1.2	1.0	5.0
The business world has its own rules	3.8	1.0	1.0	5.0
True morality is first and foremost self-interest.	3.2	1.1	1.0	5.0
Business ethics" is a concept for public relations only.	2.0	1.1	1.0	5.0
Competitiveness and profitability are independent values (exist on their own)	3.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
Conditions of a free-market economy will serve best the needs of society. Limiting competition can only hurt society and actually violates basic natural laws.	3.3	1.0	1.0	5.0

<b>Table 3</b>				
<b>RESPONDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUSINESSMEN ETHICS</b>				
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>
A person who is doing well in business does not have to worry about moral issues	1.8	1.1	1.0	5.0
Every business person acts according to moral principles, whether he/she is aware of it or not	3.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
Act according to the law, and you cannot go wrong morally.	3.6	1.3	1.0	5.0
Lack of public confidence in the ethics of business people is not justified.	2.8	1.1	1.0	5.0
The business world today is not different from how it used to be in the past. There is nothing new under the sun	2.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
A good business person is a successful business person	3.5	1.1	1.0	5.0
You can judge a person according to his work and his dedication.	3.5	1.1	1.0	5.0
A businessperson cannot afford to get hung up on ideals.	3.1	1.2	1.0	5.0



### The Extent of the Respondents' Ethical Behavior

The respondents were asked to express the level of agreement to individual's ethical behavior. The results of their answers are summarized in Table 4. The vast majority of the respondents demonstrated that they are not prepared to behave unethically to attain personal gains. They disagreed to the proposal that they should switch prices tags in the supermarket, make false or unreasonable claims to the insurance companies, take office supplies from work or claim illness to take time off. They also disagreed with the proposal that self-sacrifices are immoral. On other hand, the respondents believe that employers reward to employees should be based on supply and demand and by taking into account performance. The respondents agreed that truth and personal responsibility are ahead of unconditional love and belongingness. They also stressed that individuals should not consume more than what they produce. The positive individual attitude towards ethical behavior expressed by the respondents may contradict with the proposal that if they want a specific goal, they have to take the necessary means to achieve it. However, necessary means adopted by Muslim individuals observe Islamic Shariah Principles that prohibit any unethical behavior whether by individuals, businesspersons or businesses.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>THE EXTENT OF THE RESPONDENT'S ETHICAL BEHAVIOR</b>				
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>
As a consumer when making an auto insurance claim, I try to get as much as possible regardless of the extent of the damage.	2.8	1.2	1.0	5.0
While shopping at the supermarket, it is appropriate to switch price tags or packages.	2.4	1.3	1.0	5.0
As an employee, I take office supplies home; it does not hurt anyone.	2.5	1.3	1.0	5.0
I view sick days as vacation days that I deserve.	2.7	1.4	1.0	5.0
Employee wages should be determined according to the laws of supply and demand.	3.1	1.2	1.0	5.0
George says of himself, "I work long, hard hours and do a good job, but it seems to me that other people are progressing faster. But I know my efforts will pay off in the end." Yes, George works hard, but he's not realistic	3.1	1.0	1.0	5.0
If you want a specific goal, you have to take the necessary means to achieve it.	3.6	1.2	1.0	5.0
I would rather have truth and personal responsibility than unconditional love and belongingness.	3.5	1.0	1.0	5.0
Self-sacrifice is immoral.	2.5	1.2	1.0	5.0
You should not consume more than you produce.	3.7	1.1	1.0	5.0

### Differences in the Respondents' Attitude toward Business Ethics

To detect possible differences among the respondents' attitude towards business ethics due to their background characteristics, Kruskal Wallis and Mann Witney U tests were performed and presented in Table 5. The table unveiled insignificant statistical differences among the respondents regarding their attitude towards business ethics due to their marital status. One

statistically significant difference appeared among the respondents due their academic major and age. The table further pointed to several significant differences among the respondents due to university and gender. Nationality appeared to have limited effect on the respondents' attitude towards business ethics.

**Table 5**  
**MANN WHITNEY AND KRUSKAL WALLIS TESTS: ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUSINESS ETHICS**

	Mann Whitney Test								Kruskal Wallis Test			
	Nationality		University		Gender		Marital Status		Academic Major		Age	
	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
The only moral of business is making money	-0.7	0.51	-1.0	0.32	-0.1	0.93	-0.4	0.69	9.1	0.10	6.5	0.09
Ethics in business is basically an adjustment between expectations and behavior.	-0.2	0.88	-0.2	0.84	-0.2	0.86	-0.2	0.87	5.9	0.32	2.4	0.49
Business decisions involve a realistic economic attitude rather than moral philosophy	-0.6	0.55	-1.0	0.33	-0.6	0.58	-0.4	0.66	14.6	0.01	3.4	0.34
Moral values are irrelevant to the business world.	-0.8	0.46	-3.0	0.00	-0.2	0.85	-0.6	0.54	4.9	0.42	3.8	0.29
The main interest of shareholders is to maximize their return on investment.	-1.2	0.23	-1.4	0.17	-2.1	0.03	-0.3	0.79	6.5	0.26	1.0	0.80
For every decision in business the only question I ask is, "Will it be profitable?" If yes – I will act accordingly; if not, it is irrelevant and a waste of time.	-1.9	0.06	-1.3	0.19	-1.6	0.11	-1.7	0.09	6.1	0.30	6.3	0.10
I raise the price of a certain product and mark it "on sale." There is nothing wrong with this	-0.3	0.80	-2.4	0.02	-2.1	0.03	-0.1	0.89	2.1	0.84	2.8	0.43
The business world has its own rules	-2.7	0.01	-1.4	0.17	-1.3	0.21	-1.1	0.30	4.5	0.48	5.9	0.12
True morality is first and foremost self-interest.	-0.7	0.47	-1.9	0.06	-1.2	0.25	-0.5	0.61	5.5	0.36	3.9	0.27
Business ethics" is a concept for public relations only.	-0.1	0.93	-3.6	0.00	-0.1	0.91	-0.1	0.96	2.5	0.78	1.4	0.71
Competitiveness and profitability are independent values (exist on their own)	-2.8	0.01	-1.8	0.07	-2.3	0.02	-0.4	0.72	9.5	0.09	4.0	0.27
Conditions of a free economy will serve best the needs of society. Limiting competition can only hurt society and actually violates basic natural laws.	-0.4	0.68	-2.2	0.03	-2.5	0.01	-0.2	0.83	6.8	0.24	12.4	0.01

## Differences in the Respondents' Attitude towards Businessmen Ethics

Table 6 contains the results of Kruskal Wallis and Mann Witney U tests employed to identify possible differences in the respondents' attitude towards businesspersons' ethics. No statistically significant differences the respondents' attitude towards businesspersons appeared in the table due to their background characteristics except for the university. Respondents showed significant differences about the statement that "a person who is doing well in business does not have to worry about moral problems". However, this would result from those who disagree or strongly disagreed with this statement.

	Mann Whitney Test								Kruskal Wallis Test			
	Nationality		University		Gender		Marital Status		Academic Major		Age	
	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
A person who is doing well in business does not have to worry about moral problems	-0.2	0.86	-3.0	0.00	-0.7	0.49	-0.7	0.50	7.9	0.16	3.8	0.28
Every business person acts according to moral principles, whether he/she is aware of it or not	0.0	0.97	0.0	1.00	-0.1	0.94	-0.2	0.87	4.8	0.44	3.9	0.27
Act according to the law, and you cannot go wrong morally.	-0.1	0.91	-1.7	0.10	-0.7	0.47	-0.7	0.50	9.0	0.11	2.6	0.47
Lack of public confidence in the ethics of business people is not justified.	0.0	0.97	-1.1	0.26	-0.2	0.88	-1.1	0.28	1.7	0.89	4.3	0.23
The business world today is not different from how it used to be in the past.	-2.7	0.01	-3.0	0.00	-0.5	0.62	-0.6	0.53	3.8	0.58	0.2	0.98
A good business person is a successful business person	-0.1	0.93	-0.3	0.79	-0.8	0.42	-0.6	0.52	7.8	0.17	3.4	0.33
You can judge a person according to his work and his dedication.	0.0	0.97	-0.3	0.75	-0.7	0.50	-2.9	0.00	5.9	0.32	2.0	0.57
A businessperson cannot afford to get hung up on ideals.	-0.8	0.44	-1.0	0.32	-1.4	0.17	-0.9	0.37	8.3	0.14	1.7	0.64

Table 7 reports the results of Kruskal Wallis and Mann Witney U tests used to detect possible differences in the respondents' opinion towards their ethical behavior. The table revealed that respondents' background has insignificant effect on their ethical behavior except for university and gender. Significant limited differences appeared among the respondents were mainly due those who disagreed or strongly disagreed rather than between those who agreed or disagreed.

Table 7 MANN WHITNEY AND KRUSKAL WALLIS TESTS: EXTENT OF THE RESPONDENTS' ETHICAL BEHAVIOR												
	Mann Whitney Test								Kruskal Wallis Test			
	Nationality		University		Gender		Marital Status		Academic Major		Age	
	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	Z	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
As a consumer when making an auto insurance claim, I try to get as much as possible regardless of the extent of the damage.	-0.4	0.67	-2.0	0.05	-2.6	0.01	-0.2	0.84	1.4	0.93	3.8	0.28
While shopping at the supermarket, it is appropriate to switch price tags or packages.	-0.7	0.47	-3.9	0.00	-2.5	0.01	-0.8	0.41	13.8	0.02	3.2	0.37
As an employee, I take office supplies home; it does not hurt anyone.	-1.2	0.23	-0.2	0.83	-1.2	0.25	-0.1	0.91	4.2	0.52	1.4	0.71
I view sick days as vacation days that I deserve.	-0.7	0.52	-0.2	0.83	-1.4	0.18	-0.3	0.78	2.8	0.73	3.9	0.28
Employee wages should be determined according to the laws of supply and demand.	-0.3	0.76	-1.6	0.11	-1.8	0.08	-1.7	0.10	12.2	0.03	5.7	0.13
George says of himself, "I work long, hard hours and do a good job, but it seems to me that other people are progressing faster. But I know my efforts will pay off in the end." Yes, George works hard, but he's not realistic	-0.2	0.85	-1.8	0.08	-1.0	0.30	-0.4	0.66	4.6	0.47	2.5	0.47
If you want a specific goal, you have to take the necessary means to achieve it.	-0.5	0.64	-0.2	0.83	-1.0	0.34	-0.3	0.76	5.3	0.39	2.5	0.48
I would rather have truth and personal responsibility than unconditional love and belongingness.	-1.1	0.30	-0.9	0.35	-0.6	0.52	-0.4	0.67	4.6	0.47	3.5	0.33
Self-sacrifice is immoral.	-1.0	0.34	-1.9	0.06	-1.0	0.34	-0.4	0.72	3.6	0.60	1.6	0.66
You should not consume more than you produce.	-1.5	0.14	-1.0	0.32	-2.3	0.02	-1.0	0.34	3.9	0.57	7.4	0.06

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to identify students' opinion about business ethics, businessperson's ethics and their ethical behavior. To achieve this objective, an administered questionnaire was distributed to 400 business students from Kuwait University and the Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait were surveyed. 200 questionnaires returned completed, resulting in almost 50% response rate. The respondents in the questionnaire survey

possessed different characteristics. The respondents were divided equally between Kuwait University and the Gulf University for Science and Technology and between male and female. The vast majority of the respondents were Kuwait nationals and not married. Although the majority of the respondents were between 21-25 years old, a reasonable number was below and above this age. In addition, the respondents are enrolled in different business disciplines with a large concentration in the fields of finance and accounting.

The respondents' opinion about business ethics emphasized that the business world has its own rules, the main interest of shareholders is to maximize their return on their investment and ethics in business is an adjustment between expectations and the way people behave. Respondents' opinion about businesspersons' ethics stressed that if they act according to the law, they do not go wrong morally, a good businessperson is a successful businessperson and businesspersons can be judged according to their work and dedication. As for ethical individual behavior, the respondents indicated that individuals should not consume more than they produce, achieving a specific goal requires taking the necessary means and truth and personal responsibility are more important than unconditional love and belongingness.

It can be deduced from the respondents' opinions that they the rules of the market forces and the Islamic Shariah Principles govern business ethics. They ascertain the agency relationship between society and businesses. Society expects businesses to be good Muslim citizens and conduct their business activities in accordance to Islamic Shariah Principles that observe the highest levels of ethical behavior. It is not difficult for the society to identify businesses involved in unethical activities. This will result in boycotting these businesses affecting their survival and growth. Hence, businesses have a great interest in conducting their activities according to the highest ethical practices in order to survive and make profit. Thus, the market forces and Islamic principles can secure ethical business activities, whereas courses in business ethics would have little effect on business behavior. On the other hand, respondents' background appeared to have little impact on their opinion about various aspects of business ethics since Islamic religion has strong impact on their behavior

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