The impact of education, diversity, professional development and age on personal business ethics of business students in Russia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate how individual differences predict personal business ethics of business students with a particular focus on how these factors moderate the relationship between ethical organizational interventions and personal business ethics perception.

Design/methodology/approach – Totally, 488 participants completed Clark's Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) survey. ANOVA analyses were then performed.

Findings – Significant correlations were observed between personal business ethics and diversity professional development, age, and education. The authors found significant difference on ethical behavior and diversity professional development. Professional development focusing on diversity was positively related to reports of ethical behavior for women but no significant relationship was observed for men. Furthermore, professional development focusing on ethics was positively related to reports of ethical behavior for younger employees but no significant relationship was observed for older employees.

Research limitations/implications – Researchers and scholars in cross-cultural management and business ethics fields can benefit from this study as it provides more empirical results in understanding the impact of demographic, educational, and cultural factors on the ethical maturity of business students in different countries.

Practical implications – Leaders, managers and practitioners, can benefit from this study as it provides managerial implications in managing this workforce in the most effective and efficient manner. The results from this research suggest that ethics education and diversity training play the critical role in creating an ethical climate on workplace.

Originality/value – This study fills the gap within the literature and offers a unique analysis of the personal business ethics of Russian business students. Determining the types of business ethics education and training that are the most effective in Russia would be beneficial to researchers and practitioners.

Keywords Russia, Business ethics, Ethics training, Business education, Organizational interventions

Paper type Research paper

Overview

Business education plays a fundamental role in positioning ethical behavior. There has been an increased research interest in the area of business ethics, at both national and international levels, during the last four decades. Business ethics issues such as conflict of interest, bribery, accounting fraud, consumer fraud, etc, have become more complex and culturally diverse (Nguyen *et al.*, 2014). In an effort to reduce the amount of unethical behavior in organizations, scholars are increasingly interested in the role of business ethics

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education (Birtch and Chiang, 2014; Mayer *et al.*, 2010; Nguyen *et al.*, 2014; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). Many scholars are attempting to better understand how business ethics, diversity and business law education can help limit the possibility of unethical behavior at workplace. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between organizational interventions promoting business ethics and self-reported ethical behavior of business students in Russia.

Introduction

There have been extensive studies on business ethics and ethical behavior (Burns, 2012; Carlson and Burke, 1998; Cannon, 2001; Jazani and Ayoobzadeh, 2012; Nguyen *et al.*, 2014, 2015; Wang and Calvano, 2015). Business ethics issues such as conflict of interest, bribery, accounting fraud, consumer fraud, etc, have become more complex and culturally diverse (Nguyen *et al.*, 2014). Managers need to be able to recognize ethical issues, cultural context of the organization and the individual factors that can influence individual ethical behavior in an organization in order to deal with them more effectively and create an ethical organizational culture (Deshpande *et al.*, 2000; Ferrell *et al.*, 2015; Victor and Cullen, 1988; Wimbush and Shepard, 1994).

Second, students tend to hold rather different views on business ethics generally to those who have been in the workforce for long time. Venezia *et al.* (2011, p. 26) highlighted that business schools "must take every measure to ensure that they are fulfilling their moral duty to their students, the business community, and society as a whole by integrating ethics into the business student's education." Jazani and Ayoobzadeh (2012, p. 162) found that "taking ethics courses affect the level of adherence of people to educational ethics and personal ethics; moreover, such influence on business ethics was significant in people who had work experience." The present study focuses on business students in Russia and advances the business ethics literature by examining the relationship between their experience of an organizational code of ethics, ethics-related and diversity professional development on personal business ethics. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effects of ethics-related organizational interventions on the perceptions of students on business ethics in Russia. Moreover, this study examines how individual differences predict personal business ethics with a particular focus on how these factors moderate the relationship between organizational interventions that promote business ethics and personal business ethics perception.

Third, this study provides novel insights into the impact of business students experiencing ethics-related organizational interventions, which is important to extend our understanding of the development of professional ethics (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2010; Andreoli and Lefkowitz, 2008; Birtch and Chiang, 2014; Cullen *et al.*, 1993; Mayer *et al.*, 2010; Victor and Cullen, 1988). Many scholars provide research evidence that national cultures vary and that business ethics, strategic management, managerial skills, and leadership vary across national cultures (Nguyen, Ermasova, Pham and Mujtaba, 2013; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). According to Puffer and McCarthy (1996), Russian managers differentiate unethical behavior for business with outsiders and unethical behavior with insiders. The question of what is considered "Wrong-Right" and/or "Good-Bad" in business ethics practices in Russia remains relatively unexplored in academic literature. This study provides novel insights into perception of ethical behavior of Russian business student that is important for global leaders to understand cross-cultural awareness and practice, and to develop and sustain effective leadership strategies for long-term change.

Lastly, in a practical sense, an improved understanding of the relationship between business ethics training, diversity training, organizational business ethics climate and unethical behavior enables educators to develop appropriate ethical learning strategies and policy responses to help build ethical foundations that students and working adults carry forward with them into the workforce.

Literature

Business ethics in Russia

Empirical studies on business ethics recognize the influence of national culture on ethical attitudes and behaviors. Beekun *et al.* (2005) examined ethical criteria that guide business people in Russia and the USA by using cross-cultural map of moral philosophies. The authors found that Americans influenced by the justice criterion, while Russians accentuate utilitarianism. Nguyen *et al.* (2015) found that "Russian respondents with no management experience have higher PBES (personal business ethics) scores than those with management experience. Education and work experience appear to make a difference in the ethical maturity of respondents." Thelen and Zhuplev (2002) studied the attitudes of American and Russian undergraduate business students on a series of ethical issues. The students chose a solution to dilemmas that were ranked according to five levels of severity of the decision, e.g., the least severe solution was "continue to negotiate in good faith" and the most severe solution was "for the company to use 'muscle' to get the business partner to see things their way" (Thelen and Zhuplev, 2002). There were significant differences between the two samples; the Russians and the Americans differed on all severity levels, with the Russians choosing the most severe decision alternatives, while the Americans chose less severe alternatives (Thelen and Zhuplev, 2002). The business behavior of Russian employees is based on considerations of personal loyalty and in-group allegiances, not on universal considerations of right and wrong, or of potential impact on community and society (Avtonomov, 2006). The contracts and business goals are more relation-oriented than result-oriented in Russian business (Nguyen, Ermasova, Pham and Mujtaba, 2013).

Jaffe and Tsimerman (2005) conducted a survey of MBA students from the Moscow State University, the Russian Academy of Foreign Trade, and the State University Higher School of Economics (Moscow). Nearly all respondents indicated a presence of efficiency and independence in their work environment and a majority indicated a presence of rules and instrumental behavior, while nearly half indicated a presence of caring (Jaffe and Tsimerman, 2005). This research showed that students believe that in order to succeed, one must compromise their ethics. These findings indicated that the students, future managers, would not act any more (and perhaps less) ethically than existing managers in Russian business enterprises. Jaffe and Tsimerman (2005, p. 95) found that "The high proportion of students who believe that it is necessary to compromise one's ethics (probably at a low threshold to begin with), and the emphasis on self-interest rather than that of one's organization or of society is also alarming."

Ahmed *et al.* (2003) administered and analyzed the results of structured survey to business students from six national environments: Egypt, Finland, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA. The results of the study showed that Russian respondents perceived less harm in all scenarios than students from the other countries surveyed, and indicated that they would follow the same action if they were in the managers' position (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003). Ahmed *et al.* (2003) explained that "The recent introduction of market-based (private entrepreneurial) reforms in Russia has not been conditioned by long-term market-based reputational effects and, thus, respondents in these countries appear more accepting of opportunistic product representations (or skeptical of existing product claims)." Mujtaba and Sims (2006) and Jadack *et al.* (1995) suggested that people can develop their moral judgment by socializing in schools, workplace and the community.

Ethics-related organizational interventions

During the last three decades, researchers have not only analyzed business ethics but also started to investigate business ethics instruction and training and their effectiveness.

Glenn (1992) highlighted the importance of instructional programs to enhance business ethics. Many researchers found that ethical educational courses motivate people to walk into moral paths (Eynon *et al.*, 1997; Carlson and Burke, 1998; Glenn, 1992; Hiltebeitel and Jones, 1992; Hosmer, 1999; Langlois and Lapointe, 2010; Owens, 1998; Perri *et al.*, 2009). Liao and Teng (2010) suggested that "ethics training positively influenced corporate-responsibility practices and those corporate-responsibility practices positively influenced employee satisfaction" (p. 9). Neubaum *et al.* (2009) highlighted that "college education has been shown to be a powerful experience in the moral development of all students, including those from the business school" (p. 20). Social interactions and work environment can impact ethical values and behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Detert *et al.*, 2007; Mayer *et al.*, 2009; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2010). In a meta-analysis of 25 studies business ethics instructional programs, Waples *et al.* (2009) found that the impact of such interventions was, on average, moderately positive but also highly variable. Unethical behaviors arise from both situational and individual factors (Higgins *et al.*, 1984; Saks and Ashforth, 2000; Vardi, 2001).

Ethics training provides employees an overview of ethical policies and rules, outlines key ethical challenges, and teaches appropriate behaviors for completing job assignments (Knouse and Giacalone, 1997; Loe and Weeks, 2000; Minkes *et al.*, 1999; Palmer and Zakhem, 2001). Ethics training can also introduce many of a company's important ethical values and standards (Knouse and Giacalone, 1997; LeClair and Ferrell, 2000; Sims, 1991). Ethical discussions can be supported with active role-playing and participative exercises to reinforce comprehension of ethical principles and provide a forum for exchanges of ethical issues and problems (Loe and Weeks, 2000; Treviño and Nelson, 2007). Ethics training can be a feedback mechanism so that managers can better respond to work challenges (Treviño and Nelson, 2007). Jazani and Ayoobzadeh (2012) found that taking ethics courses affects the level of adherence of people to educational ethics and personal ethics; moreover, such influence on business ethics was significant in people who had work experience.

Multicultural education, intercultural education, nonracial education, culturally responsive pedagogy, ethnic studies, peace studies, global education, social justice education integration – these terms are used to describe different aspects of diversity education around the world (Nkomo and Vandeyar, 2009). Ludlum and Mascaloinov (2004) found that most students felt that ethical behavior depends on cultural diversity. Stewart *et al.* (2011, p. 582) highlighted following factors that make up a positive diversity climate: "personal demographics, professional characteristics, department structural diversity, perceptions of department climate for diversity, perceptions of the institution's commitment to diversity, and personal experiences with diversity." Stewart *et al.* (2011, p. 584) suggested that perceptions of perceived diversity climate and perceived ethics climate work together to "fulfill the ethical responsibility, diversity climate through perceptions of treating people with respect, and ethical climate by creating perceptions that the organization complies with an established code of ethics."

Based on the theory and research reviewed above, the present study made the following predictions:

H1. Experiencing a business's code of ethics is positively related to personal business ethics.

H2. Experiencing business ethics professional development is positively related to personal business ethics.

H3. Experiencing diversity professional development is positively related to personal business ethics.

Individual differences and personal business ethics

A number of individual differences related to ethical judgment and behavior have been identified through empirical research. For instance, gender differences in ethical thinking have various theoretical foundations (Eagly, 1987; Gilligan, 1982) and numerous studies, across multiple cultures, have observed that women tend to be more ethical than men (Albaum and Peterson, 2006; Nguyen, Mujtaba, Tran and Tran, 2013; Nguyen, Mujtaba and Cavico, 2015; Roxas and Stoneback, 2004; Wang and Calvano, 2015). A study on Russian students and working adults by Nguyen, Ermasova and Ermasov (2015) indicated that Russian female respondents were found to be more ethical than male respondents. Gilligan (1982) found that while males are learning rules as part of their moral development, females are learning about caring, helping, and relationships.

Age is another individual factor that research has shown to be related to moral cognizance or ethical development (Ariail, 2005; Cannon, 2001; Nguyen, Mujtaba and Cavico, 2015). One review of empirical articles found that nearly 50 percent of relevant studies found significant positive relationships between age and ethical judgments (Loe *et al.*, 2000). Nguyen, Mujtaba and Cavico (2015) found significant differences in business ethics perception between Vietnamese working adults who are younger than 26 years of age and those who are older, except the above 55 age group. Nguyen, Ermasova and Ermasov (2015) found that 26 years old and older Russian working adults perceived business more ethically than 25 years old and younger. Older Russian respondents seemed to have a higher level of ethical maturity than younger respondents. Management experience is believed to have some impacts on ethical perception. Nguyen, Ermasova and Ermasov (2015) also found that Russian respondents with no management experience have higher ethical awareness than those with management experience. Russian managers have to deal with ethical dilemma more often in their daily business decision making thus become more tolerant of unethical behavior in business practices. A double standard in the economy and specific ethical standards are serious ethical issues in Russia (Apressyan, 1997; McCarthy and Puffer, 2008). Venard (2009, p. 73) showed that "Russian firms are greatly influenced by the unfair behaviors of their competitors and multinationals in their choice of corrupted behavior when dealing with governments."

Furthermore, educational attainment has also been found to be positively related to ethical thinking (Jeffrey, 1993; Ponemon and Glazer, 1990). Lopez *et al.* (2005) found that students who are near the completion of their undergraduate business degree are significantly less approving of the unethical behavior concerning deceit, fraud, and coercion than those who were just started their program. Morgan and Neal (2011, p. 126) concluded "ethics coverage in the curriculum has a positive effect making the student more critical to ethical breaches." Ross and McGee (2012) showed that more educated people in India and the USA. demonstrated strongest opposition to tax invasion in their respective countries. The moderating influence of individual differences on the effectiveness of ethics-related organizational interventions has received less attention in the empirical literature. The present study endeavored to extend the empirical literature in this area by testing the following hypotheses:

H4. Age moderates the relationship between ethics-related organizational interventions and personal business ethics with stronger relationship observed for younger than older individuals.

H5. Gender moderates the relationship between ethics-related organizational interventions and personal business ethics with stronger relationship observed for females than males.

H6. Level of education moderates the relationship between ethics-related organizational interventions and personality business ethics with stronger relationship observed for more highly educated individuals than those with less education.

Method

Participants

The questionnaires were made available as a webpage that could be attached to e-mail, as well as a hard copy that could be handed out directly to business students in National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Service under the President of the Russian Federation, Moscow State University, Saratov State University, Saratov State Technical University, Chelyabinsk State University, Ulyanovsk State University and the Alumni Associations of these Universities. Informed consent, explanation of study, procedure of maintaining confidentiality, and detailed instructions on how to complete the questionnaire were included. The English version of the survey went through a rigorous back translation procedure to insure the validity of the instrument. There was no significant difference between the original version and the back-translated version. The authors used the self-administered survey method to eliminate the errors caused by the subjectivity of interviewers and provide greater anonymity for respondents.

The respondents were from 32 regions in 13 different activities: advertising, marketing, or sales; accounting or finance; communications or public relations; economics or statistical engineering; government relations or grants; medical or healthcare; human resources (HR), personnel, or training; legal or legal assistance; manufacturing or production; science; technology or computer science; restaurant business. Majority of respondents in Russia were from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kazan, Chelyabinsk, Saratov, Samara, Novosibirsk, and Ulyanovsk. In total, 448 surveys were completed by Russian firm managers, MBA students, firm managers and executives. The majority of respondents were business students under 36 years old (85.7 percent). More than half of respondents have a bachelor degree (58 percent). More than half of respondents have less than six years of work experience (53.7 percent). In all, 25 percent of respondents had less than one year of work experience. 29.2 percent of students are full-time students and have not work experience. Other students had working experience. There was only one respondent who had over 30 years of work experience (0.1 percent) (Table I). In total, 93 percent of respondents are business students in Universities from Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Saratov, St Petersburg, Kazan, Samara, Novosibirsk and Ulyanovsk. In total, 34 percent of respondents are full-time BBA students; 58 percent of respondents are MBA students, and 1 percent are PhD students in Universities from Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Saratov, St Petersburg, Kazan, Samara, Novosibirsk and Ulyanovsk.

Procedure and measures

In this study, we used Clark and Clark's Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) measure (Clark, 1966). This questionnaire consists of 11 vignettes (mini scenarios) which asks respondents if they approve or disapprove the action in each scenario. The total score of the 11 question represents the PBES. The PBES ranges from 11 which indicates very low-personal business ethics perception for the 11 scenarios, to 55, which indicates very high-personal business ethics perception for these dilemmas. Each dilemma is scored based on a five-point Likert scale. The PBES scores from 50 to 55 shows very high range personal business ethics perception for these dilemmas; the PBES scores from 44 to 49 demonstrates high range; the PBES scores from 38 to 43 – moderately high range; the PBES scores from 32 to 37 – moderately low range, and the PBES scores from 26 to 31 – demonstrates low range personal business ethics perception for these dilemmas. Table II shows the PBES scores and descriptions.

The illicit nature of business ethics perception for these dilemmas implies that respondents may be reluctant to give details about their hidden and forbidden behaviors. In order to get true answers from respondents, some precautions were undertaken. Instead of an a priori perception of what is "ethical," the respondents are asked to establish

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Age				
17-25	301	61.5	61.5	61.5
26-35	118	24.2	24.2	85.7
36-45	57	12.5	12.5	97.7
46-55	6	1.2	1.2	98.9
56 and above	5	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	488	100.0	100.0	
Gender				
Male	133	27.3	27.3	27.8
Female	355	72.7	72.7	100.0
Total	488	100.0	100.0	
Education				
High school diploma	101	21	21	21
Two years of college	64	13	13	34
Bachelor degrees	282	58	58	92
Master degrees	7	1	1	93
Doctorate degrees	22	5	5	98
Other	12	2	2	100.0
Total	488	100	100	
Work experience				
Less than 1 year	122	25.0	25.0	25.0
1-5 years	140	28.7	28.7	53.7
6-15 years	75	15.4	15.4	68.1
16-30 years	13	2.6	2.6	70.7
Above 30	1	0.1	0.1	70.8
Full-time students	134	29.2	29.2	100.0
Total	488	100.0	100.0	
Note: $n = 488$				

Table I.
Demographic
variables

Scores	Descriptions
50-55	Very high range
44-49	High range
38-43	Moderately high range
32-37	Moderately low range
26-31	Low range
11-25	Very low range

Table II.
PBES scores and
descriptions

the case in accordance with their cultural and personal perspectives. Our standardized survey instrument provides each subject with business scenarios with ambiguous ethical behavior, where full information is either withheld or distorted by one party to a transaction. Subjects are asked to evaluate the propriety of the described behavior and assess the potential damage it could cause.

The example of one business scenario from survey is following:

Sabato is a sales representative of Ajax Tool Company. Sabato has been instructed by Maynard, Vice President of Sales, to adopt a sales policy Sabato considers unethical. Maynard and Sabato have discussed the policy at length; and it is apparent Maynard thinks the policy is quite unethical too. Maynard nonetheless, due to the firm's worsening financial condition, orders Sabato to follow the policy; and Sabato reluctantly does so. What is your opinion of Sabato's actions?

Results
Analysis of the data began by examining correlations between variables studied, as presented in Table III.

As seen in Table III, for many of the hypothesized predictors of PBES, observed correlations failed to achieve statistical significance, including those for the relationship between PBES and ethics code and ethics professional development. Furthermore, the respondent's gender, tenure, and management experience were not significantly correlated with PBES. However, significant correlations were observed between PBES and diversity professional development ($r = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$), age ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), and education ($r = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$).

PBES was regressed on all the predictors simultaneously in order to examine the combined and unique relationships. In combination, as seen in Table IV, the predictors were significantly related to PBES ($R = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). The unique relationships between PBES are displayed in Table IV by unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) regression coefficients.

As with the correlational analysis, age ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$) and education ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$) had significant, positive relationships with PBES at 0.01 level. Management experience ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.05$) also had a significant positive relationship with PBES but at 0.05 level. These findings support previous studies in concluding that people can develop their moral judgment by socializing in schools, workplace and the community (Jadack *et al.*, 1995; Mujtaba and Sims, 2006). However, PBES did not have significant

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. PBES	3.05	0.69	–								
2. Ethics code	1.55	0.50	−0.01	–							
3. Ethics professional development	1.73	0.44	0.04	0.24**	–						
4. Diversity professional development	1.79	0.41	0.10*	0.26**	0.46**	–					
5. Age	1.56	0.83	0.18**	−0.07	0.04	0.10*	–				
6. Sex	1.72	0.45	0.04	0.13*	0.10	0.05	−0.06	–			
7. Education	2.64	1.12	0.19**	0.00	0.03	0.06	0.30**	0.07	–		
8. Tenure	3.06	1.95	0.01	0.39**	0.12**	0.13**	−0.14**	0.18**	−0.09	–	
9. Management experience	1.69	0.46	0.07	0.09*	0.09*	0.08	−0.30**	0.13**	−0.06	0.18**	–

Notes: $n = 488$. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table III.
Correlation matrix of studied variables

Criterion = PBES Predictors	b	SE	β
Ethics code	−0.06	0.07	−0.04
Ethics professional development	−0.05	0.07	−0.03
Diversity professional development	0.15	0.09	0.09
Age	0.13**	0.04	0.16**
Sex	0.05	0.07	0.04
Education	0.07**	0.03	0.13**
Tenure	0.01	0.02	0.03
Management experience	0.07	0.07	0.11*
$R = 0.30$**			

Notes: $n = 488$. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table IV.
Regression of PBES on predictor variables

unique relationships with ethics code, ethics professional development, diversity professional development, sex, or tenure.

Moderated regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses that the relation between ethics-related organizational interventions and PBES would be influenced by employee characteristics, including age, gender, and education. As presented in Table V, the relation between PBES and the presence of an organizational code of ethics was not moderated by age, gender or education.

Table VI presented the analysis of the moderating effects of employee characteristics on the relation between PBES and ethics professional development. No moderating effects of gender or education were observed; however, age did moderate the relationship between ethics professional development and PBES ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < 0.01$). As described in Table VII, follow-up analysis indicated that the relationship between ethics professional development and PBES was significant and positive when the age of employees was lower ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$);

Criterion	Step	Predictors	R	ΔR^2	β
PBES	1	Main effects	0.050	0.00	
		Organizational code of ethics			0.05
		Sex			−0.01
	2	Moderating effects	0.05	0.00	
		Sex X organizational code of ethics			−0.00
PBES	1	Main effects	0.19*	0.04*	
		Organizational code of ethics			−0.01
		Age			0.19*
	2	Moderating effects	0.19*	0.00	
		Age X organizational code of ethics			0.02
PBES	1	Main effects	0.19*	0.04	
		Organizational code of ethics			0.42
		Education			0.18
	2	Moderating effects	0.35	0.04	
		Education X Organizational code of ethics			−0.01

Table V.
Regression analyses for moderators of the relationship between organizational code of ethics and PBES

Notes: $n = 488$. *$p < 0.05$

Criterion	Step	Predictors	R	ΔR^2	β
PBES	1	Main effects	0.06	0.00	
		Ethics professional development			0.04
		Sex			0.04
	2	Moderating effects	0.06	0.00	
		Sex X ethics professional development			0.01
PBES	1	Main effects	0.19*	0.04*	
		Ethics professional development			−0.52*
		Age			0.06
	2	Moderating effects	0.23*	0.02	
		Age X ethics professional development			−0.13*
PBES	1	Main effects	0.20*	0.04*	
		Ethics professional development			0.03
		Education			0.19*
	2	Moderating effects	0.22*	0.01	
		Education X ethics professional development			−0.09

Table VI.
Regression analyses for moderators of the relationship between ethics professional development and PBES

Notes: $n = 488$. *$p < 0.05$

however, when the age of employees was higher this relationship was not significant ($\beta = -0.11$, ns).

Table VIII presented the analysis of the moderating effects of employee characteristics on the relation between PBES and diversity professional development. As presented in Table VII, the relation between PBES and diversity professional development was not moderated by age or education. However, gender did moderate the relation between diversity professional development and PBES ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.05$). As described in Table IX, for female respondents, the relationship between ethics professional development and PBES was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$) whereas this relationship was not significant for male respondents ($\beta = -0.07$, ns).

Discussion

This study advances our understanding of business ethics of business students in Russia and, more specifically, how the ethical and diversity organizational interventions may influence its students' and working adults' unethical behavior. Age and education had significant, positive relationships with perception of business ethics behavior. We found

Criterion	Age	Predictor	R	R^2	β
PBES	Lower (1 SD below mean)	Ethics professional development	0.23*	0.05	0.15*
	Higher (1 SD above mean)	Ethics professional development	0.23*	0.05	-0.11^{ns}

Notes: $n = 488$. Follow-up regression analyses for the moderating effect of age on the relationship between ethics professional development and PBES. *$p < 0.05$

Table VII.
Follow-up regression analyses for the moderating effect of age

Criterion	Step	Predictors	R^2	ΔR^2	β
PBES	1	Main effects	0.11*	0.01*	
		Diversity professional development			0.10*
		Sex			0.04
	2	Moderating effects	0.15*	0.01*	
		Sex X diversity professional development			0.11*
PBES	1	Main effects	0.21*	0.04*	
		Diversity professional development			0.07
		Age			0.18*
	2	Moderating effects	0.21*	0.00	
		Age X diversity professional development			−0.02
PBES	1	Main effects	0.21*	0.05*	
		Diversity professional development			0.09*
		Education			0.19*
	2	Moderating effects	0.21*	0.00	
		Education X diversity professional development			−0.03

Notes: $n = 488$. *$p < 0.05$

Table VIII.
Regression analyses for moderators of the relationship between diversity professional development and PBES

Criterion	Sex	Predictor	R	R^2	β
PBES	Men	Ethics professional development	0.07	0.00	0.07
	Women	Ethics professional development	0.17	0.03	0.17

Note: Follow-up regression analyses for the moderating effect of sex on the relationship between diversity professional development and PBES

Table IX.
Follow-up regression analyses for the moderating effect of gender

that business students who have higher level of education and experienced diversity professional development were less likely to engage in unethical behaviors.

We further demonstrated that gender and educational characteristics act as important moderators of the ethics intervention-unethical behavior relationship. Gender and educational characteristics made the differences in the personal business ethics perceptions. Particularly, female respondents were found to be more ethical than male respondents. The findings of this study supports the study by Nguyen, Ermasova and Ermasov (2015).

In this research we observed significant difference on PBES and diversity professional development but didn't find significant difference on PBES scores between Russians who experienced code of ethics and those who did not experience code of ethics. It can be explained by social learning theory and supports the studies by Birtch and Chiang (2014); Deshpande *et al.* (2000); Nguyen *et al.* (2014); and Treviño *et al.* (1998). Ethical climate is the values, practices, and procedures that exist within an organization that pertain to moral behaviors and attitudes. It plays a significant role in influencing what is considered ethically correct behavior. Ethical climate reflects shared perceptions about what is considered ethically correct behavior. Venezia *et al.* (2011, p. 26) suggested that "business managers, executives, entrepreneurs, and especially leaders must have a "moral compass"; that is, they must have a moral sense and ethical judgment as well as the moral character and integrity to do what they know is the right thing to do and not do what they know is wrong."

The results of this study reflected the current ethical reality in Russia as reviewed in the literature (Apressyan, 1997; Beekun *et al.*, 2005; McCarthy and Puffer, 2008; Nguyen, Ermasova, Pham and Mujtaba, 2013; Nguyen, Mujtaba, Tran and Tran, 2013; Nguyen, Ermasova and Ermasov, 2015). Russian working adults seemed to be aware of unethical behaviors in current business practices. To analyze "ethical context" in Russian organizations, we asked open-ended questions about business ethics in Russia. Respondents in our survey wrote following comments (translation by the authors):

(1) You can provide many reasons, for example, Russian mentality, low wages, but I think that people do not become unethical because of the situation. In my opinion, the situation reveals the man in front of others and themselves!

(2) Most managers even do not realize that their actions are not ethical (e.g. pumping money from customers for them unnecessary extra services). Most managers will actively follow the instructions of top managers because on this depends their salary, career, success. The employees either accept the rules of the game, or change the company (find the job in another company).

(3) Codes of business ethics are usual developed because it is now fashionable, and then in reality this code are not used. Management must make some effort to put codes of business ethics into practice in the company.

(4) Most of the proposed situations combines casual attitude toward the business ethics of professional activity. Unfortunately, currently business ethics goes to second plan, if there is a chance for personal profit.

(5) Unfortunately, using business ethics in modern conditions often leads to loss of revenue. Therefore, when there are only two options: a) compliance with ethics and loss of business or b) non-compliance with ethics and business profitability – is preferable option "b." The existence of an honest business and healthy competition in the modern Russian conditions, unfortunately, is problematic.

(6) Often I chose the answer " I doubt it," because you cannot unequivocally condemn or endorse the actions of listed individuals in situations, because the wrongful or dishonest act often were pushed an urgent need, often – not personal, but company urgent need.

(7) Business ethics is a very ambiguous concept. For the employee business ethics takes a back seat (second plan) when it comes to his salary, career development, etc. Own needs pushed back all the "pangs of conscience (soul)."

(8) The sides with the owner of the company – two sides of medal (two facets) of business ethics: if you want to be open and honest, not dodgy and unethical in conditions of the Russian market, you will be hungry!. If you want to have a profitable business, you want to give to others to work under your start – be able to remain on the "float" in all storms and troubles, you will use all methods – ethical and unethical, or almost any methods. This situation is the harsh reality of Russian business. It is purely personal opinion of mine.

(9) We have not business ethics in Russia […] And maybe in reality this business ethics is nowhere."

We can see from these responses that individuals learn what types of ethical behaviors are acceptable by observing cues and information from their environment (Apressyan, 1997; Beekun *et al.*, 2005; McCarthy and Puffer, 2008; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978;). These answers support the findings by McCarthy and Puffer (2008) that "for the foreseeable future, Russian managers and other stakeholders will likely continue to exhibit behaviors that reflect traditional Russian norms and values, and these behaviors might often be seen by Westerners as unethical" (p. 14).

People learn ethical or unethical actions from one another through observation, identification, and imitation on workplace and their interactions and experiences with others (Bandura, 1986; Peterson, 2002). Mayer *et al.* (2009) suggested that a strong ethical climate is likely to promote convergent norms and shared values in terms of ethical values and behavior. In our example we can see that strong unethical climate in Russian organizations is likely to encourage low level of ethical behavior.

Limitations of the study

Like many other studies, this study has been associated with some constraints. One of the main limitations is its small sample size. The sample size is small and includes mainly business students in several cities such as Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Saratov, St Petersburg, Kazan, Novosibirsk, Samara, and Ulyanovsk. Future studies can expand the sample to include more people from different work backgrounds from other cities and regions in the country. In addition, future studies can examine the personal business ethics perceptions of business students from neighboring countries to see if there is similarity or difference between Russians and them.

Given the sensitivity of respondents to a questionnaire on ethical issues, anonymous electronic questionnaire was used in this study and the rate of return was relatively low. Another limitation of this study is the lack of pretest and posttest designs. If a questionnaire survey could have been performed before and after such courses in ethics for those who had them in their own curriculum, the confidence level for results would have been more. In spite of some limitations, the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are still important to researchers and organizations.

Conclusions

Determining the types of business ethics education and training that are the most effective in Russia would be beneficial to researchers and practitioners. To reduce unethical behavior, the results suggest that managers should not only have business ethics code and emphasize the organization's stance on maintaining ethical practices but also communicate the organization's value of diversity to workers. As an organization,

being ethical can result in positive public attitudes, which in turn will help the organization succeed in the long run. According to Mayer *et al.* (2010, p. 13), "an ethical climate serves a sense-making function for employees so they know how to respond to ethical issues." Our findings have practical implications for managers. Our study shows that HR practices, policies, and procedures should emphasize the value of being an ethical employee in organization. HR should provide diversity training as well as improve awareness of ethical issues and employees' ethical behavior. The results from this research suggest that ethics education and diversity training play the critical role in creating an ethical climate on workplace.

Researchers and scholars in cross-cultural management and business ethics fields can benefit from this study as it provides more empirical results in understanding the impact of demographic, educational and cultural factors on the ethical maturity of working adults in different countries. This study sheds light on the ethical maturity of Russian working adults based on age, gender, education, management experience, professional development and diversity education. Leaders, managers and practitioners, can benefit from this study as it provides managerial implications in managing this workforce in the most effective and efficient manner. We propose that national culture and demographic differences impose constraints on the perception of ethical and unethical behavior of Russian business students. This study fills the gap within the literature and offers a unique analysis of the perception of business ethics of Russian adults.

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