

# An Analytical Study on Factors Affecting Role of Ethics in Students Life

**Dr. Pankaj Saini**

*Department of Management  
Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to  
Be) University Institute of  
Management & Research  
New Delhi - 110064*

[pankaj.saini@bharativedyapeeth.edu](mailto:pankaj.saini@bharativedyapeeth.edu)

**Dr. Ritika Malik**

*Department of Management  
Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to  
Be) University Institute of  
Management & Research  
New Delhi – 110064*

[ritika.malik@bharativedyapeeth.edu](mailto:ritika.malik@bharativedyapeeth.edu)

**Dr. Minakshi Sati**

*Department of Management  
Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to  
Be) University Institute of  
Management & Research  
New Delhi-110064*

[minakshi.sati@bharativedyapeeth.edu](mailto:minakshi.sati@bharativedyapeeth.edu)

**Dr. Sanjay Manocha**

*Department of Management  
Department of Management  
Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to  
Be) University Institute of  
Management & Research  
New Delhi – 110064*

[sanjay.manocha@bharativedyapeeth.edu](mailto:sanjay.manocha@bharativedyapeeth.edu)

**Abstract** - This study examines factors impacting ethical behavior of college students. Ethical behavior of peers had the most significant impact on ethical behavior of students. A person's life depends greatly on their sense of ethics. During their formative years, students begin to formulate ethical values. The definition of ethics is the discipline of recognizing right from wrong and acting morally. Finding out what influences students' perceptions of ethics in life and how these perceptions are viewed across demographic categories has been the main goal of this research. The most impacted variable of perception was discovered to be the role of religious wisdom, followed by other aspects. Exploratory and descriptive research design has been used to find out factors of perceptions of students about ethics in life with a sample size of 601 respondents from Delhi city with online survey using likert scale questionnaire using quota sampling. Independent sample T –test and one way annova statistical tools have been used. The perception of students about ethics in life education can be understood through following significant factors i.e Religious wisdom, family, Integration of one's words and actions, Society's culture, Friends, Talking straight etc. Scope is limited to education sector focuses mainly of Delhi city, India. The cross sectional online data collections prevents the tracking of changes in the perception of students about ethics in life over time.

**Keywords** - *Ethics, Perception, student life, Friends etc.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is one thing that every person, group, family, relationship, institution, economy, country, and civilization has in common – and that one thing, if removed, can destroy the most successful business, most powerful government, most progressive economy, the strongest and greatest relationships, the deepest love and the strongest character in the entire world. Instead, if leveraged and exploited, that thing has the potential

to produce massive victory and opulence in every aspect of human life. That one thing is trust, which is based on high ethical standards (Covey (2006). Ethics is extremely crucial in a person's life. Students start formulating ethical values in initial years of their life. The ethical principles code of the people is an indicator of their spiritual and social ways of living life. The human life is to live facing both joy and sorrows of life. Ethics and moral values mainly concerned with the moral issues of this world. Individual and societal ethics are the two categories of ethics. Individual ethics are crucial for people to have positive attributes that are required for personal happiness and fortune. On the other hand, social ethics has been defined as a set of values that are necessary for maintaining social order and peace. According to Steiner (1980), there are various definitions for ethics presented by authors, but not a single definition has been accepted by the World. Ethics, according to Beekun (1996), are moral rules that distinguish between right and wrong. It is regarded as a normative field because it instructs on what to do and what not to do. Whereas Taylor (1975) described ethics as an inquiry about nature and foundations about morality wherein it has been perceived that morality focus on rules of conduct , standards and moral judgments.

The significance of ethics remains same during whole life of an individual but it has been advised that one should practice and inculcate these values in student's life. Students get exposure of contrasting ethical opinions and an opportunity to understand reasoning behind differences when ethical discussions are held. Ethics have an important part in education, which enriches and strengthens social fabrics. Ethics refers to a set of beliefs and a prism through which a person views what is right and wrong. It has been defined as a set of principles such as integrity, honesty, and discipline that impact a person's behavior and allow him to choose the best possibilities. It is difficult for a person to manage their life and act responsibly if they do not follow ethics (Jennings, 2004). Ethical education is important because it aids in the smooth operation of the system. Students' ethics education establishes guidelines for what is acceptable and what is not, safeguarding the interests of students and faculty members. Ethical education is gaining popularity among students and institutions. It is critical for kids since they will be the future managers who will run corporations (Borkowski and Ugras, 1992). This has started happening because many corporate scandals came to lime light from 1990 onwards. There is no doubt that unethical business practices can lead to financial collapse and have a negative influence on stakeholders and even society's equilibrium (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003).

According to Blanchard (2001) people in society perceive strong positive correlation between practice of ethics and its end results. Now the probability of business success depends on how organizations are acting ethically. Gilligan (1982) argues that the ways in which male and female children are raised by their parents under different situations and where their children have performed gender roles shape different ethical behaviors.

In comparison to males, females value ethics more in terms of sustaining connections and being accountable to others. Research across the World has proved that there is a trust deficit which exists in society .There are low and high trust societies just because people are lacking in ethical values. “Table 1 about Trust in society here” has shown how different countries believe that others can be trusted.

**Table 1 : TRUST IN SOCIETIES**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE BELIEVE OTHERS CAN BE TRUSTED (2005)</b>
USA	34%
Latin America	23%

Africa	18%
UK	29%
Maxico	31% ( 19% in 1983)
Neitherland	60%
High trust societies (Denmark, Sweden ,Norway )	68%

Etzioni (2002) found that education has not only failed to improve students' ethics and character, but has actually deteriorated it, based on a study of 2000 degree students from the top 13 business schools. The author has also recommended government to ask B schools how they are teaching ethics to students. Weisul and Merritt (2002) proposed that young students needs to be stopped for adopting unethical practices and the decisions they are making otherwise they might become tomorrow’s criminals in society.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Few studies have been conducted in the topic of ethics and its significance in life. According to Jones (1991), the main concern at the outset of any ethical decision-making process is moral intensity. Ethical perception has been defined as a person's recognition of a moral dilemma and acceptance of the fact that he or she will act as a moral agent. Aldag and Stearns (1991) in their research concluded that business ethics can be understood as set of rules which specify how business organization and its employees will act in situations where ethical dilemma is there. There has been a conflicting viewpoints about ethics and it has been a complex variable that touches various aspects and fields of life which shape the perception of people about ethics , intention and behavior. (Christie ,2003). According to Salder & Barac (2005) the most important self-reported factor which has significant impact on ethical behavior of students found to be fear of getting caught while doing unethical things. Institutional ethics education in the form of various courses has played an essential role in building the foundation character of students, and it is available to both students and faculty members. Many elements influence an individual's ethical actions and judgments in daily life: 1. Personality: People inherit attributes such as compassion, honesty, kindness, and assisting others from their parents and forefathers. These individuals are more likely to act ethically in their daily lives. 2. Society and Culture: It refers to the social ethos, norms, and values that govern what is right and wrong in society. Cultural values influence ethical intents, such as the Japanese people's reverence for their labour. There was no written document in traditional Indian culture to enforce agreements or contracts. At the time, trust was solely dependent on words. 3. Organizations or institutions where individuals study (e.g., schools and colleges), work (e.g., companies), associate (e.g., non-governmental organisations, community groups, etc.) have a substantial impact on people's decision-making. 4. Friends and coworkers: Based on the outcomes, people instinctively integrate the behavioural ideals of their friends and coworkers. People may pursue the same path based on outcomes if cheating helps a student obtain a good grade or sycophancy helps a student receive a better appraisal from seniors.

Students make a clear distinction about what is right and wrong for them. They understand what is acceptable and unacceptable in society. There has not any significant difference between men and women about ethical behaviour. (Azhar, Tashfeen, Khalid, & Azhar, 2019). Ferrell and Gresham (1985) emphasised in their research model that people's socio-cultural environments have an impact on ethical conduct, which leads to individual ethical decision-making. In ethics research, the three most crucial variables, ethical perception, ethical purpose, and moral intensity, all have a significant impact in making decisions. Hunt and Vitell (1986), Jones (1991), and Trevino (1986).

The rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and its adoption for teaching and educational purposes could mark a new era of innovation in academia. To successful adoption of AI in higher education could pave the way for transformative changes with the potential to reshape the traditional pedagogical methods. One of the latest AI-based advancements is ChatGPT—a large language model (LLM) developed by OpenAI—which emerged as a paradigm-shifting innovation for acquisition of information. This is impacting on the ethical values while drafting or writing the projects, since it is a short cut way to get it done.

There has been observation that literature on corporate social responsibility i.e CSR temperament of students is growing. The research conducted by Teixeira, Ferreira, Correia, & Lima(2018) found that age is one of factor which is responsible for motivating students towards CSR. Eweje & Brunton (2010) found gender is one of important factor in their study. Other relevant factors identified are education by Larrán, Andrades, & Herrera (2018), Country has been identified by González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández (2013). Spirituality and religion by were reported by Fitzpatrick & Cheng(2014).

Many studies exploring the impact of pedagogy on students’ understanding of ethical issues have used models of ethical development informed by frameworks drawn from moral psychology (Shiloh James Howland 2024) which consist of multiple components or elements (e.g., ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment or decisionmaking skills, ethical motivation, etc.)

Peek (1994) highlighted that student participation can be increases in ethical discussion by using cooperative learning techniques. Participation in group discussion by students make them to go through moral reasoning process and this make them evolve their ethical thinking in dealing with others. One research in “Table 2 about cheating or unethical practices in exam here “ have shown how students of different streams have acknowledged that they have cheated during exams to improve their score while violating settled ethical norms and values of society. Just imagine the doctors who are going to treat your disease, the engineers and architectures who are going to build flyovers and bridges of your city, advocates who are going to defend your case and entrepreneurs who provide you different goods and services have cheated in education to have their degrees. What are going to be chances that things are in safe hand? So we need to build ethical values in societies starting from education system.

**Table 2 : CHEATING OR UNETHICAL PRACTICE IN EXAMS ,USA**

<b>DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>STUDENTS WHO ADMITTED THEY HAVE DONE CHEATING TO IMPROVE THEIR GRADUATION SCORE (2005)</b>
Liberal Arts students	43%

Education students	52%
Medical students	63%
Law students	63%
Business students	75%

Source: (Covey, S.M(2006). The speed of Trust.Simon &Schuster UK ltd.)

According to the literature, differences in moral attitudes and insights can be explained and differ on the basis of gender, age of respondents, academic position, cultural backgrounds, and moral education experience (Luthar, DiBattista & Gautschi 1997 & 2007). Davis and Welton (1991) concluded that rigorous ethics instruction does not result in meaningful changes in people's ethical behavior. According to Bowden, Kardell, Martin, and Turner (2003), meaningful results require reinforcement of ethical instruction. Encouragement of whistleblowing is one of the most powerful techniques for instilling moral values in social systems.

Jones (1991) and Cohen and Bennie (2006) highlighted that ethical decision making process has got four steps i.e first recognition of ethical issue , it means one has to first recognize ethical issue .Second is ethical judgment , it means one has to know what should be done in given situation. Third is ethical intent, it means one should be able to establish ethical intent in a given condition. After passing through the first three stages, individuals should engage in ethical behavior which has been fourth step. It has been found that some moral based education courses provide positive results but others do not. Weber (1990) found that when students study business ethics then their ethical awareness and reasoning skills improve but it last for a short term . In their research, Adkins and Radtke (2004) concluded that there is little agreement over the usefulness of ethical education for students. True religion gives focus and importance to good moral values . People are supposed to perform their duties according to the moral code of ethics prescribed in religious literature. On basis of religion people makes the perception about right and wrong (Turner, 1997). With help of religion people perceive formal and informal norms and accordingly behave in social set up within acceptable boundaries (Fararo and Skvoretz, 1986).

While going through literature on ethics it can be concluded that there is a big scope exists on this field of research to find out clear factors of perception of students about ethics and how these factors are influenced across demographic variables i.e (Gender, education , family income , family type, parents education , residence location).

## OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To explore and rank factors of perception of students about ethics in Life
- To view demographic variables in the light of factors of perceptions of students about ethics in life
- To examine and understand need for focus on ethics

## HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of demographic variables (gender, education, family income, family type, parents' education, and home location) and variables of student perceptions of ethics in life.

H1: There is a substantial difference between the mean scores of demographic variables (gender, education, family income, family type, parents' education, and home location) and variables of students' perceptions of ethics in life.

## RESULTS & ANALYSIS

This research has been conducted in Delhi city during first half of year 2023 as per below mentioned Table 3

Table 3 : DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF 601 RESPONDENTS

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage	Coding of data
<b>GENDER</b>	290	48.25%	1
1.Male	311	51.74%	2
2.Female			
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
1.UG	477	79.36%	1
2.PG	124	20.63%	2
<b>111) FAMILY INCOME</b>			
1-5 lacs per anum,	206	34.27%	1
5-10 lacs per anum	219	36.43%	2
10-15 lacs per anum	121	20.13%	3
Greater than 15 lacs and more	55	9.15 %	4
<b>IV PARENTS EDUCATION</b>	359	59.73%	1
1-UG	242	40.26%	2

2-PG			
V FAMILY TYPE	391	65.05%	1
1-Nuclear	210	34.94%	2
2-Joint			
VI RESIDENCE LOCATION	547	91.01%	1
1-City	54	8.98%	2
2-Rural			

The value of cronbach’s alpha which is found to be 0.945 and KMO which is indicator of sampling adequate found to be good at 0.945. Table 4 has shown six factors of student’s perception for ethics in life.

Table 4 :SIX FACTORS OF PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ABOUT ETHICS IN LIFE

Rank	Name of factors	Statements	Loading	Variance
1	RELIGIOUS WISDOM	You are open to new ideas which may correct your ethical beliefs	0.752	20.687%
		Religious literature encourage one to follow ethical values in life	0.744	
		You appreciate justice in dealing with	0.718	
		You believe in wisdom provided by your religious book	0.713	
		You honor your promises most of time	0.694	
		Selfishness is not liked by others	0.674	
		One should not be self centered in society	0.599	

		Commitment to one’s action always encourages ethical behavior in society	0.594	
		You always care about others	0.592	
		There is shame when one is caught by others while doing unethical work	0.538	
		Speaking straight to the point always win confidence of others	0.511	
2	FAMILY	You have learned to maintain peace and happiness in life from your family members	0.791	13.228%
		My family helped me to know the true motive of life	0.762	
		You got most of your ethical values from your parents and family members	0.741	
		Your family made you to think about well fare of others always	0.670	
		You feel proud on your religion	0.505	
3	INTEGRATION OF ONE; S WORDS AND ACTION	Your behavior remains same when you are alone and when nobody is watching you	0.736	9.455%
		People talk to you openly	0.571	
		You do what you say most of times	0.561	

4	SOCIETY'S CULTURE	Ethical person can only follow the spiritual path	0.614	6.682%
		Role models of society inspire you to be ethical	0.599	
		Social rules and norms inspire to be moral	0.547	
5	FRIENDS	You need approval of your friends in your decision making	0.804	6.608%
		Friends can influence your ethical decisions	0.627	
		Friends always gives you support in your decision making	0.587	
6	TALKING STRAIGHT	Corruption in society discourage you to be ethical	0.728	5.737%
		You respond to others based on their behavior towards you	0.600	
		When with friends you often violates social norms	0.508	

After checking normality and assumption of test analysis has been done .T –test has been applied to check whether there exists significant difference between male and female students for six variables of students perception about ethics in life .It has been found that only for one variable i.e friends , p value = 0.016 i.e  $p < .05$  which means null hypothesis has been rejected and hence there exists significant difference in mean score of two groups. Female students are more influenced with their friends when it comes to adopting ethical values in comparison with male students. T–test has been applied to check whether there exists significant difference between UG and PG students for six variables of students perception about ethics in life. It has been found that PG students are more influenced with religious wisdom, family values and believe in integration of words and actions encourages ethics in life in comparison with UG students. T –test has been applied to check whether there exists significant difference between students living in Nuclear and joint family for six variables of students perception about ethics in life. It has been found that that Nuclear and joint family background students differ significantly for these four variables and there is no significant difference for rest two variables. Students living in nuclear family are more influenced with four variables i.e Religious wisdom, Integration of one’s words and actions, family and Friends in comparison of students living in joint family. T–test has been applied to check whether there exists significant difference between students living in city and rural area for six variables of students perception about ethics in life. It has been found that rural resident background students differ significantly for these three variables and there is no significant difference for rest three variables. Students living in rural area are more influenced with religious wisdom, family and friends to adopt ethical values in life in comparison with students living in City. T –test has been applied to check whether there exists significant difference between students whose parent’s

education are UG and PG graduate for six variables of students perception about ethics in life .It has been found that students whose parents are UG graduate are more likely influenced by three variables i.e integration of one’s words and action, Family and friends while adopting ethics in life in comparison with students whose parents education is PG .

It has been found that that all six variables have their p value greater than 0.05 i.e  $p > = 0 .05$  which means null hypothesis is accepted and hence no significant difference exists in mean score of four income groups . This imply that all income group students have same perception about ethics in life.

## CONCLUSION

It has been found that six factors of perception of students about ethics in life which are Religious wisdom, family, Integration of one’s words and actions, Society’s culture, Friends, Talking straight respectively. These six variables influence and shape the kind of ethics a student will have in his life. The role of religious wisdom explained highest variance followed by other factors. Male and female students differ significantly on the perception that friends have influence on ethics in life but for all five variables both gender think on same way. Female students are more influenced with their friends when it comes to adopting ethical values in comparison with male students. Under and post Graduate students perceive three variables i.e Religious wisdom , family, Integration of one’s words and actions differently and for rest three they think same.PG students are more influenced with religious wisdom, family values and believe in integration of words and actions encourages ethics in life in comparison with UG students. City and rural resident background students differ significantly for four variables i.e Religious wisdom, family and Friends and they think same for rest two variables. Students living in rural area are more influenced with religious wisdom, family and friends to adopt ethical values in life in comparison with students living in City. Students whose parents are UG and PG educated differ significantly for these three variables i.e Integration of one’s words, family and Friends and they think same for rest three variables. Students whose parents are UG graduate are more likely influenced by three variables i.e integration of one’s words and action, Family and friends while adopting ethics in life in comparison with students whose parents education is PG .Students from different income class groups perceive six factors of ethics in life in same way .It becomes the joint responsibility of Religious institutions, educational institutions, family members and Government by enforcing strict laws evolving speedy and flawless mechanism to catch the culprits who violates the society and law of land.

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