

Attitude towards business ethics after the Arab Spring: Influence of Religiosity, Gender and Political Affiliation

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Abstract. In the last two decades, business ethics has drawn increased interest from academicians as well as practitioners. While some of this interest has resulted in investigating employees' perception of ethics, their ethical beliefs, ideologies, and business practices, research investigating adolescents' ethical beliefs after the Arab Spring have not been touched fully. This exploratory study aims to explore the influence of religiosity, gender and party belongingness on attitude of Lebanese adolescents towards business ethics after the Arab spring. The scale of Attitude Towards Business Ethics Questionnaire (ATBEQ) was adapted. To test for differences on intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of religiosity the Religious Commitment Inventory Scale (RCI-10) was used. Results showed that intrapersonal religiosity was a significant determinant to attitude towards business ethics but interpersonal religiosity was not. Comparisons were also made across several demographic characteristics with regards to business ethics. There was no significant difference between genders. Significant difference was found in business ethics across different party belongingness.

Key words: intrapersonal religiosity, interpersonal religiosity, attitudes towards ethics, ethics, gender, political belongingness.

1 INTRODUCTION

The ethical behavior of companies and individuals working at these firms has become a concern for the public interest. It has become fashionable since the scandals involving corporate giants like Enron and WorldCom or the uncovered fraudulent figures of Transmile in Malaysia in 2007, as well as economic and financial crises. The public perceived that business does not put too much emphasis on ethical considerations in their operations (Alam, 1995) and that the fundamentals of these scandals are not lack of intelligence, but lack of ethics (Giacalone, 2004).

Since the pioneering work of Baumhart (1961) about business ethics, it has emerged as one of the most important areas for management research (Cardy & Selvarajan, 2006). Researchers and practitioners started to regard business ethics as an important matter and the subject of business ethics as the most important topics to research. Research has indicated that unethical practices of organizations were heavily responsible for recent financial crises (Sedmak & Nastav, 2010). The neglect of ethical notions can cost in reputational as well as financial risk and that the cost of running businesses in a corrupted environment is much higher than in environment with high integrity (Phau & Kea, 2007).

Many antecedents can be attributed to the cause of ethical behavior within organizations, yet researchers did not deeply investigate religion and political belongingness for answers on ethical decision making (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). The ethical decisions

individuals make widely manipulate through their political belongingness, religiosity (intrapersonal and interpersonal), and gender. This study deals with the attitude of graduate students for ethical practices in business in Lebanon after the Arab Spring and also by keeping in mind that religiosity and political belongingness are very influential in ethical decision making. In addition, empirical research found that females practice ethical responsibilities more, and adolescents who are religious exhibit better moral character (Saat et al, 2009; Al-Shaikh et al, 2012; Fatoki & Marembo, 2012; Arnould et al., 2004). As such, the two objectives of this study are: a) to investigate the influence of religiosity (intrapersonal and interpersonal) with attitudes towards business ethics and b) to explore whether there is a significant difference between gender and political affiliation with attitude towards business ethics.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Business ethics

Researchers in business ethics categorize business ethics into two approaches- conceptual and empirical (Preble & Reichel, 1988). The conceptual approach tries to explain how a company integrates core values such as honesty, trust, admiration and fairness into its policies, practices, and decision making (Braybrooke, 1983; Hoffman & Moore, 1984; Hellriegel et al., 2008). It is the standards used to judge the rightness or wrongness of a business' relations to others (Smith et al., 2007). It aims at clarifying the meaning of business ethics, moral conduct and social responsibility. In contrast, empirical approach examines perceptions and attitudes of business people, general public, and university students, the prevailing ethics and the philosophies underlying their concept of business ethics (Preble & Reichel, 1988). In general and as Rossouw (2004) points out that business ethics is about identifying and implementing standards of conduct that will ensure that, at a minimal level, business does not detrimentally affect the interests of its stakeholders. Business ethics therefore involves people participating in economic transactions and at the same time serving their own as well as others' interests.

2.2 Religiosity

Durkheim defines religion as a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs and practices about sacred things. It serves four major social functions namely social solidarity, social control, providing meaning and purpose to life and providing psychological or emotional support. Therefore, religious beliefs reinforce group identity, offer solace in times of crisis, and promote morality (Durkheim (1954), as cited by Renzetti and Curran (1998)). Huffman (1988) confirms in his study that religion is a strong determinant of values than any other predictor. Foxall & Goldsmith (1994) assert that religious beliefs are intertwined with cognitive components to form the basis of knowledge that justify and control attitude and behavior.

Religiosity, on the other side, is used to describe an individual's or group's intensity of commitment to a religious belief system (Renzetti and Curran ,1998; Johnson et al., 2001). According to Delner, (1994) pro-religious individuals are likely to be more dogmatic and more conservative than are non-religious individuals and those who strongly committed to religion are both attitudinally and behaviorally capable of making decisions consistent with moral conscience (Pargament et al., 1988; Delener, 1994).

The role that religiosity plays in affecting ethical attitudes is well documented. Both in area specific studies, including student cheating (Allmon et al., 2000; Barnett et al., 1996), insider trading (Terpstra et al., 1993), environmentalism (Wolkomir et al., 1997), and in

broader studies (Siu et al., 2000; Smith and Oakley, 1996; Miesing and Preble, 1985), the degree of religiosity is generally associated with higher ethical attitudes.

Recent research in the context of business ethics points to the fact that the major monotheistic religions contain universal moral tenets, such as the Ten Commandments as applied to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (Ali et al., 2000), as well as other Biblical traditions that provide instructive moral guidance (Friedman, 2000). O'Leary and Radich (2001) find that students who fear getting caught have a significantly lower willingness to act unethically.

Allport (1950) segregated religious commitment into intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity is defined as "religion as meaning-endowing framework in terms of which all life is understood" (Donahue, 1985, p.400) while extrinsic religiosity refers to "the religion of comfort and social convention, a self-serving, instrumental approach shaped to serve oneself" (p.400). This segregation created one of the greatest impacts on the empirical study of religiosity. Vitell and Paolillo (2003) hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between intrinsic religiosity and ethical beliefs, yet future research on this relationship is still needed. This is consistent with the findings from Vitell, Paolillo & Singh (2005) in which there is a positive relationship between intrinsic religiosity and consumer ethics. As for extrinsic religiosity, it is less likely to be correlated highly with religious commitment since this construct does not measure religiousness per se, but measures one's attitude toward religion as a source of comfort and social support (Donahue, 1985, 404). Donahue's (1985) study demonstrates that intrinsic religiosity correlated more highly than extrinsic religiosity with the importance of religious commitment.

However, despite the above conceptual tie between religions and ethics, research has provided mixed conclusions on the relationship (Tittle and Welch, 1983; Weaver and Agle, 2002). Some empirical research has failed to find a strong positive relationship between religious belief and ethical attitudes. For instance, Clark and Dawson (1996) find that the religious, defined as those who have high scores on the Intrinsic /Extrinsic Revised Scale of religiousness developed by Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) have lower levels of ethical sensitivity. Kidwell et al. (1987) found no relationship between religiosity and ethical judgments of managers while Agle and Van Buren surveyed (1999) found a small positive relationship between religious beliefs and corporate social responsibility. Brammer (2006) working from a sample of over 17,000 individuals from more than 20 countries and representing several major world religions find no stark general preference of corporate social responsibilities among those expressing a religious affiliation than those with no such affiliation.

On the other hand, a number of studies find a positive relationship between religion and ethical standards. For example, Terpstra et al. (1993), in studying the ethical attitudes of undergraduate business students, find that religious beliefs may be an important determinant of ethical attitudes. Smith and Oakley (1996) likewise find that business students for whom religion is "very important" have stronger ethical standards when reacting to hypothetical business scenarios. Conroy and Emerson (2004) find that students who attend church regularly are less tolerant of unethical behavior described in vignettes relating to business situations. In a survey of business professionals, Longenecker et al. (2004) discover that respondents for whom religion is highly or moderately important demonstrate a higher level of ethical judgment than those for whom religion held little or no importance.

2.3 Gender

Gender is one of the most researched demographic variables in the literature of ethics in evaluating ethical perceptions and judgments (Roxas and Stoneback, 2004). There are many studies that have investigated the role of gender in ethical decision making, beliefs,

perceptions and attitudes. However, there is a debate about whether females are more ethical than males in the literature. Some studies found that females are more concerned about ethical issues than males. On the other hand, some researchers claim that gender has no significant effect on ethical judgments (Glover et al., 2002). Therefore the gender issue in ethical research is still a matter of controversy. (Eaton and Giacomino, 2001; Becker and Ulstad, 2007; Atakan et al., 2008).

Based on the meta-analysis of empirical studies from 1985 through 1994, Borkowski and Ugras (1998) reported that female students exhibit stronger ethical attitudes than male students. Albaum and Peterson (2006) surveyed 2942 undergraduate business students from 58 universities and colleges in 32 states in the US and found that females are significantly more ethically inclined than male participants. Becker and Ulstad, (2007) found that female students find the cheating behaviors to be much less acceptable than do male students in their study.

Atakan et al. (2008) investigated the ethical perceptions of the Turkish university students and their study revealed that female students have more ethical perceptions about the Turkish business climate, behavior of employees, and the ethicalness of the behavior of the employees in comparison with their male counterparts. Aydemir and Demirci (2008) surveyed 701 students in Turkish public universities and found that female students are more ethical than male students.

From the gender socialization approach, males and females have distinctive different values and traits due to gender creating different moral orientations and resulting in different decisions and practices (Roxas and Stoneback, 2004). Many ethics studies that investigate gender differences find females to be more caring, more concerned with relationships, more likely to define themselves through relationships, and more prone to behaviors that support relationships which are likely to gain approval by others (McCabe et al., 2006). Females may be conditioned to reject less ethical actions to obtain desired outcomes because they have been conditioned to take actions which gain the approval of others. On the other hand, males may be conditioned to accept less ethical actions to obtain desired outcomes because they have been conditioned to be more aggressive and competitive (Becker and Ulstad, 2007). Males and females have had very different moral orientations, with males being more "justice" oriented and females being more "cause" oriented (Albaum and Peterson, 2006). Although males conceptualize moral questions as problems of rights and obligations, females conceptualize them as problems of care involving empathy and compassion (Betz, O'Connell and Shepard, 1989).

On the other side of the controversy are studies that found no significant ethics differences based on gender. Such research studies have also been conducted in different environments, industries, and cultures. Some of the studies were conducted with student samples while others were done with managers in different parts of the world (McCabe et al., 2006). In short, earlier research is inconclusive pertaining to the issue of gender differences in moral development or levels of ethical sensitivity. Research has acknowledged the role of socialization in developing one's ethical system where sex role differences in addition to religious and cultural backgrounds have an impact on ethical attitudes of individuals (Stead et al., 1990). This point is specifically important when addressing the interplay of gender and ethics in the Arab context. Traditions, cultural practices, and early socialization play a central role in how people behave in social and business settings. Jamali et al. (2005) point out several social and cultural constraints that face women, especially working ones, in Arab societies.

2.4 Political affiliation

Belonging here tell us of ‘what it means to be situated in particular places... the various ways people attached and attach themselves (affectively) into the world’ (Grossberg, 1996: 185-6). These are inextricably tied to how individual team members construct self-understandings, identifications, and imagine their own social space in terms of what is considered ‘proper’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. How to live and work together – the shared space of ‘being’ shaped by social practice, difference, and lived action (Lefebvre, 1991). It also stresses the importance of conceiving of belonging and its links to ethics beyond the view of subjectivity, to incorporate the notions of responsibility and community. Looking at the actual modes of belonging can help us to understand what has been called the ‘sharing of being’, which is critical to our notions of freedom and autonomy (Nancy, 1993: 70-71) – and thus, of ethics.

2.5 Background

Research focusing on business ethics in the Middle Eastern region is not extensive and far from being comprehensive (Al-Khatib et al., 2004). There are only few studies that addressed business ethics in different parts of the region for example, Saudi Arabia (Bhuiyan et al., 2002), Kuwait (Al-Kazemi and Zajac, 1999), Egypt (Al Khatib et al., 1997), and Lebanon (Zgheib, 2005). It is still premature to draw any general conclusions from these investigations.

Lebanon’s history has been molded by many cultural traditions reflecting the diversity of its inhabitants. Unfortunately, however, the Lebanese civil-war (1975-1990), and Israeli war (2006) and the last two years of Arab Spring severely impacted its economic, political, and social structures. Since emerging from the war, Lebanon has been suffering from acute inefficiencies and corruption (Sidani and Gardner, 2000) and still suffers from the effects of corruption at the governmental and business levels. Corruption continues to be rampant despite continuous governmental efforts to push forward with administrative reform initiatives.

Several incidents of major corruption and misuse of investor funds were documented. One of the most significant cases involved Al-Madina Bank where a number of the bank’s managers were accused of misappropriation of funds and fraudulent financial reporting and deceptive practices. Saidi (2004) – in a report about corporate governance in Lebanon – indicated that the legal system in Lebanon is in a dire need of reform. In addition, Lebanon has been faring poorly in terms of corruption indicators. According to the 2008 Annual Corruption Report issued by Transparency International Lebanon scored 3.0 on a ten-point scale, where ten represents no corruption. Lebanon ranked 102 dropping three positions compared to 2007 and 36 positions compared to 2006 when it ranked 63 (Transparency International, 2008).

Findings of the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce stated that there is high tolerance in Lebanon to unethical acts. Companies are sometimes pushed to unethical behavior, to speed up some procedures. They engage in unethical competition behavior, in the form of illegal acts such as bribery or infringement as well and Political contacts are heavily used to influence decision-making.

In Lebanon, the sectarian element remains the strongest determining factor of party politics. Most parties and political movements, either in ideology or in practice, are associated with a single sector or an ethnic group. The secular parties have not been able yet to play a national role, and the trend in recent years, especially in the post-Civil War period (1990-present), has been the marginalization of these parties, as is the case with leftist parties. The trend has also been for other parties to become vehicles for rising militia forces and leaders. In addition, there are virtually no documented cases addressing the interplay of political affiliation variable with ethical orientation in research in the Arab world (Whiteoak et al., 2006). Research has shown that American Muslims are well informed about politics and pay

attention to what is happening both at home and abroad. The vast majority of them want to be politically involved, with 95 percent stating that American Muslims should participate in the political process.

Many of the significant political parties in Lebanon were founded as militias during the Lebanese civil war, including the Lebanese Forces, Amal, Hezbollah, and Marada. Others, such as the Kataeb, the Syrian National Social Party, and the Progressive Socialist Party, were clearly ideological from the outset and were strongly influenced by the European left or extreme right in the mid 20th century. Both the Future Movement and Free Patriotic Movement are products of a new generation of post-civil war, neo-liberal reform movements and bear the stamp of their respective founders, Rafik Hariri and General Michel Auon. The Armenian Tashnak Party, along with two smaller progressive Armenian parties, are products of liberal and social democratic nationalism in the second half of the 19th century and were imported to Lebanon following the Armenian genocide.

In the midst of worsening political polarization in Lebanon with the revolutions in Tunisia, Bahrain, Libya, Egypt and conflict in Syria, adolescents are not far from being affected by corruption. The current context of the Arab Spring, which combined with increasingly obvious endogenous institutional contradictions, has created a fertile ground for shaping change processes within adolescents' attitudes. This study aims to explore the influence of religiosity, gender and party affiliation on attitude of Lebanese adolescents towards business ethics after the Arab spring.

From the review of the literature it is therefore hypothesized that:

H1: Intrapersonal religiosity is a positive determinant of attitude towards business ethics.

H2: Interpersonal religiosity is not a significant determinant of attitude towards business ethics.

H3: There is a significant difference between male and female in terms of attitude towards business ethics.

H4: There is a significant difference among different political belongingness in terms of attitude towards business ethics.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and survey procedures

A representative sample of graduate students was chosen, from various universities in Lebanon: AUB, LAU, BAU, USJ, Lebanese University totaling to 264 participants. The 264 respondents were divided according to gender, degree, work experience and political belongingness. The demographics are shown in Table 1. The division of the respondents in a nearly half-to-half proportion regarding gender can be considered to be representative of the Lebanese population, officially divided into 57.9% females and 42.1% males. Moreover, the number of political belongingness in the sample were really close (between 42 and 46 respectively), which is convenient for the purpose of our hypotheses comparing the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents to business ethics as related to political belongingness.

Prior to performing the necessary statistical analysis, frequency distributions were tabulated for each item to ascertain possible response biases. In addition, a visual inspection was also performed to identify any possible anomalies. Questionnaires suspected of anomalies were discarded.

Demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants as presented by political belongingness, gender, degree, & work experience

Political affiliation							Gender		Degree		Work Experience	
	Tayyar Moustakbal	Tayyar Watani	Amal	Hizbollah	Ishtiraki	Others	Male	Female	B.A	M.A	< 3 years	> 5 years
#	44	43	42	46	43	45	112	152	129	135	146	118
%	16.6	16.2	15.9	71.4	16.2	17	42.1	57.9	48.7	51.2	55.3	44.7

3.2 Research instruments

One of the critical parts of doing research is an established and validated scale that helps obtain reliable information from the respondents. In the current study, the independent construct was religiosity. Religiosity is a multi-dimensional construct that is measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) developed by Worthington et al. (2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) is a brief 10-item screening assessment of the level of one's religious commitment using a 5-point Likert rating scale from 1 ('Not at all true of me') to 5 ('Totally true of me'). It is a measure of the extent to which an individual adheres to his or her religious beliefs, values, and practices and whether he/she utilizes them in everyday living. RCI-10 examines intrapersonal religious commitment (6 items) and interpersonal commitment (4 items). An example of scale items include typical items include, "I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization" and "I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation" from the Interpersonal subscale.

The dependent construct was attitude towards business ethics which was measured using Attitude Towards Business Ethics Questionnaire (ATBEQ). This scale which includes 30 statements developed by Preble and tests the student attitudes towards business ethics. Each respondent was requested to indicate his/her stance on each ethical statement as 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (not sure/undecided), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The ATBEQ instrument was cross validated and was tested in different contexts (Preble and Reichel 1988; Small, 1992)

Since the subject matter for this study is highly sensitive ethical considerations were strictly implemented. The researcher was completely transparent about the purpose of the research. All information was handled with the strictest confidentiality, and individual identification was known only to the researcher.

4. RESULTS

H1: Intrapersonal religiosity is a positive determinant of attitude towards business ethics.

H2: Interpersonal religiosity is not a significant determinant of attitude towards business ethics.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between intrapersonal religiosity (IntraReligion) and attitude towards business ethics (ATBE). As shown in Table 2, results revealed that intrapersonal religiosity is positively correlated with attitudes towards business ethics. While for H2 and as shown in Table 1, results revealed that interpersonal religiosity (InterReligion) is not correlated with attitudes towards business ethics (ATBE).

Table 2. Pearson correlation*

		Intra Religion	Inter Religion	ABTE
IntraReligion	Pearson Correlation	1	.571 (**)	.408 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	264	264	264
InterReligion	Pearson Correlation	.571 (**)	1	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.580
	N	264	264	264

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-Tailed)

H3: There is a significant difference between male and female in terms of attitude towards business ethics.

Independent-Samples *t*-Test was used to evaluate the difference between the means of female and male in terms of attitude towards business ethics. As shown in Table 3 results revealed no significant difference between male and female in terms of attitude towards business ethics. Hence, H3 was not supported.

Table 3. Attitude towards Business Ethics (ATBE) by Gender

	Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)	Sig. P-value
ABTE	3.044	2.936	0.053

However, upon doing an item-by-item analysis results showed that females were more ethical than males in several situations. Females perceived significantly four situations as unethical (average means below 3) while their counterparts did not (average means above 3). The 4 situations are “every business person acts according to moral principles, whether he/she is aware of it or not”, “business decisions involve a realistic economic attitude and not a moral philosophy”, “As an employee, I take office supplies home; it doesn’t hurt anyone” and “a business person cannot afford to get hung up on details”.

In the remaining situations where there are significant differences found between males and females, even though they are different in average means they are in the same directions. Both females and males scored an average mean of more than 3 on “I would rather have truth and personal responsibility than unconditional love and belongingness” with

females having a higher average mean of 3.3675 vs. 3.1221 for males. Both females and males also scored an average mean of more than 3 on “the business world has its own rules.” with females having a lower level of agreement (3.1002 vs. 3.3651). On the other hand, both females and males scored an average mean of less than 3 on “moral values are irrelevant to the business world”, and “Ethics in business is basically an adjustment between expectations and the way people behave” with female having lower average means than males. This means that females had higher notion of ethical concern than males even though both of them showed ethical concerns on the above situations.

H4: There is a significant difference among different political belongingness in terms of attitude towards business ethics.

One-way Analysis of Variance (one-way ANOVA) was used to evaluate the differences in belongingness among the different political parties in terms of attitude towards business ethics. As shown in Table 4, there are significant differences between “Tayyar Watani Al Horr”, “Hezbollah”, “Moustakbal”, Ishtiraki, “Amal” and “others”. Those who belong to Moustakbal”, Istiraki, “Amal” and others scored higher than Tayyar Watani Al Horr” and “Hezbollah” with Tayyar Watani Alhorr having lower average means. This means that Tayyar Watani Alhorr and Hizbollah have higher notion of ethical concern.

5. DISCUSSION

The role of religion in public life in the Arab World in some ways is expanding. But does this resurgence of religion have any implications for the workplace, where we would expect greater secularization as a result of expanding capitalism? We know little that is empirically reliable about how a resurgent religion relates to the work world. This paper tried to explain why and how religion shapes individual behavior in the workplace, especially through religious concerns about ethics in interpersonal relations. The study found a positive correlation between intrapersonal religiosity and business ethics. Intrapersonal religiosity positively influenced the ethical beliefs of the adolescents. Intrapersonal religious orientation focuses on the individual's belief or religious experience. It is worth noting that all the participants were Muslims and Christians. Hence a possible explanation for this finding could be related to the nature of Islam and Christianity as a monotheistic religion that stresses the existence of one God. It also places emphasis on one's spiritual being. The participants tended to attribute the intrapersonal aspect of their religion orientation in their attitude toward potentially unethical situations. Moreover, the current findings concur with other studies (Donahue, 1985; Kennedy & Lawton, 1998; Vitell, et al., 2005). According to Donahue (1985), individuals with high level of intrapersonal religiosity are more integrative and ethical in all aspects of their lives, which in turn make them less willing to engage in unethical behavior. Intrapersonal religiosity is a determinant of ethical beliefs. In other words the stronger a respondent's sense of intrinsic religiosity, the more likely he/she was to find various “questionable” business activities as wrong. (Vitell et al. 2005; Vitell and Muncy, 2005; Vitell et al. 2006; Vitell et al. 2007). Another possible explanation for the positive correlation between intrapersonal religiosity and business ethics is in the following sentence: “extrinsically motivated person uses his religion whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion.” (Allport and Ross, 1967: p. 434) The person with intrinsic religious orientation finds his main motive in religion (because he internalized his religious belief), so that his religious beliefs and commitments guide his behavior in areas of social and business life. (Allport, 1966: 451-454)

Many studies support the claim that females tend to be more ethical than males (McCabe et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2010; Perryer and Jordan, 2002; Gill, 2009; Beltrami et al., 1984; Miesing & Preble, 1985; Ruegger & King, 1992). However, the result of current

study reveals no significant difference between males and females. The result is coherent with Ergeneli & Arikan (2002) whereby there was no significant difference found on the ethical perceptions of Turkish male and female salespeople. A subsequent study by Tsalikis & Lassar (2009) also shows no significant difference between male and female from Turkey and Egypt. McNichols and Zimmerer (1985) also found that there was no significant difference in the ethical beliefs of male and female undergraduate students. Tsalikis and Ortiz- Buonafina (1990) obtained that males and females have similar ethical beliefs, and they process ethical information similarly and that gender had no impact on ethical beliefs (Ford and Richardson, 1994).

Even though the overall result is insignificant, an item-by-item analysis discovers that females are found to be more ethical than their male counterparts in four situations. Academicians and practitioners need to understand that females' ethical attitudes regarding business ethics differ from males. This difference should be taken into consideration in preparing corporate ethics policies, professional codes of conduct, and rewards/punishment systems for business related unethical conduct (Khazanchi, 1995). The more that is understood about the relationship between gender and ethics, the better chance of education and training programs will be designed to improve ethical awareness and sensitivity (Roxas and Stoneback, 2004). In addition, traditions, cultural practices, and early socialization may explain these slight differences in males and females (Jamali et al., 2005). Society values and intangible matters, i.e. personal feelings and behaviors, have been seriously altered in Lebanon due to the continuous events that happened in the last two years. Individuals seem to have a tendency toward traits that are more feminine, taking into consideration emotions and feelings previously not considered a priority. Our findings suggest that, for the Lebanese sample, one cannot claim a wide gender difference. In the Lebanese society, similar to a large extent to some other societies in the region, females are expected to behave more according to ethical considerations and they are held accountable to a higher standard. A case in point relates to the expected social behavior and ethics. Females, from early age, are raised to adhere to strict societal norms and values that males are not expected to adhere to, at least not to the same extent (Sidani et al., 2009). This double-standard in acceptable moral standards and behaviors is expected to make females more sensitive as to what is right and moral and what is not.

Unlike parties in Arab countries, Lebanon's parties have represented a wide spectrum of political, communal, and ideological platforms reflecting the diverse political landscape both in Lebanon and in its Arab regional order. Parties were able to express views and propagate ideologies in ways that were not possible in the largely one-party and/or one-man pattern of rule in the Arab world (Mhanna, 2011).

The affiliation to a party and the identity challenge of how each member of adolescents in the party defines himself is not clear. Although parties spend years debating whether they are secular or non-sectarian or cross-sectarian or civil, yet none has done the most basic focus group research to see what echo these different words have in adolescents' minds.

Non-sectarian parties have to address both made up and legitimate fears.

Sectarian entrepreneurs thrive on convincing their communities that they are under attack, and that fortresses are the only way to protect the group. The reaction to such fears often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies, as the same attitude prevails across confessions. On the whole findings provide support for these ideas. In a country where the public administration suffers from chronic inefficiency, it is much easier for people to go through sectarian channels to reach their basic rights and thus try to affiliate with the party that secure these needs.

Another interpretation for the differences can be related to intergenerational theory. Research on political and social attitude show that there are many forms of influence

transmitted from parents to their children, including political affiliation, religious values, orientation toward achievement, gender and racial attitudes (Sillars, 1995).

Unethical and deviant behaviors may be attributable to individual characteristics, to organizational climates that encourage unethical decisions, to other factors or to a combination of all of them (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Sims, 2010). Furthermore, deviance was shown to be a response to perceived frustrations resulting from organizational power (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007) or as a retaliatory response to organizational power (Sims, 2010). Commitment has a moral dimension (Ashman & Winstanley, 2006), and one of its forms consists of a wish to comply with moral obligations (normative commitment as a moral imperative) regardless of the unethical behavior that the organization has (Meyer et al., 2006). Organizational commitment and identification are different constructs but overlap in the sense that both are forms of attachment (Becker & Bennett, 2006).

6. Conclusion, limitation and future research

In conclusion, we are quite pleased that our paper has resulted in additional work on this important topic and hope that subsequent research and theory are offered for public debate. This examination of religiosity, gender and political affiliation is limited by a number of considerations. The study was conducted in Lebanon. Although the area demarcated for the study is university business students who have at least two years of working experience, there is still a good chance that adolescents from other universities are not included in the sample. The variables of degree and work experience are limited. The study is also limited in geographical terms. Due to the fact that Likert Scale was used, central tendency bias might occur, from the point of view that respondents might avoid extreme response categories. The social desirability aspect is very important to be considered as an implication, due to the fact that some respondents might have answered what they think it is moral, rather than what they actually think.

Future research could take into consideration replication of the study on a wide range in Lebanon, and across different countries from different MENA regions. This is an important implication that can contribute to the generality of the study. Additionally, comparative study studying attitudes of non-business students vs. business students. The results can have a strong contribution to the attitudes towards ethicality. Furthermore, it is worth to investigate other factors that influence business ethics such as cultural background, family discipline, intergenerational attitude, and intensity of competition.

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