



Review Article

**A CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH IN TERMS OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS, MOOD
AND OTHER VARIABLES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK THE ETHICAL DECISION-
MAKING PROCESS**

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Abstract

Ethical decision-making is one of the most important elements for organizations to continue their lives. Personality traits and moods of individuals play a very active role in ethical decision making. There are many variables that affect this process. This study consists of national and international literature review. Within the framework of the research, personality traits and mood were discussed as variables affecting the process. In addition, research results on the effects of demographic variables such as age, gender, education and experience on ethical decision making were also compiled. As a result of the literature review, it is possible to say that personality traits and mood variables affect each other. In particular, there is a positive relationship between the dimension of extroversion and positive emotional states. There is a significant and positive relationship between openness to experience, extraversion and agreeable personality dimensions and ethical decision making. While the impact of positive emotions on ethical decision-making is well supported, the effect of negative emotions and the direction of this effect consist of ambiguous and contradictory results. Although the effect of demographic characteristics in the ethical decision-making process varies, the personality traits and mood of individuals play a very clear and important role in this process.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Mood, Ethics-Morality, Ethical Decision Making.

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Introduction

The final stage, which shapes their actions for individuals and is considered an important function, is decision-making. Individuals make various decisions throughout their lives and as a result of these decisions, they try to continue their lives for better or worse. All decisions made can be of different levels and importance for individuals. Individuals have to think about the effects of the decisions made both for themselves and for their organizations. In this process, decision makers are expected to demonstrate ethical behavior in order to avoid a number of problems. Ethics can be considered as the science of morality, which studies what is good-bad or good-right, what kind of elements of a virtuous and moral life should include, and what the main purpose of individuals in life should be (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1995; Cevizci, 2002). The values belonging to individuals, such as how the concepts of right and wrong should be understood, what are the good and bad qualities are evaluated within the fields of ethics (Gündoğdu, 1990). Evaluating the decisions taken as wrong or right and creating satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the decision-maker requires looking at this decision not only from a managerial and rational point of view, but also from an ethical point of view. Traditional decision-making strategies stating that decisions should be made rationally, want decision-makers to ensure that their actions are according to the rules and reach the most appropriate solution. However, it is not always possible to reach the most appropriate solution according to the current conditions (Kıral, 2015). There are many reasons why individuals tend to take unethical actions.

One of the factors that play an important role among these reasons is personality traits. Features such as self-indulgence, selfishness, and psychological structure bring about changes in expectations and interests. Lying, hiding information, ignoring injustices, etc. situations may be considered as strategically meaningful, business tactic and ordinary behavior by some individuals (Gök, 2009). Another element is the mood experienced during the day. Individuals are a being whose emotional characteristics cannot be denied, and one of the most important characteristics of individuals is their emotion. Many of the behaviors, even if they are not realized, take place under the influence of emotions. The models describing moral reasoning based on the contributions of Kohlberg (1969) have stated that ethical decision-making is primarily a result of a conscious and deliberate process of reasoning. The increase in neuroscience research over time is the result of logical processes as well as immediate, intuitive, emotional as well as ethical decisions and behaviors. This situation reveals the ongoing dual-process theory of moral judgment (Haidt, 2001; Greene et al., 2001; 2004). It is not only possible to look at decisions from a managerial and rational perspective, but also from an ethical perspective, which makes it possible to evaluate the decisions made as right or wrong.

First of all, ethical decision-making is the desire to achieve the good decisions. Ethical decision-making is as important in terms of organizations as it is in terms of view (Yatich and Musebe, 2017). In business life, the importance of moral and ethical issues has become increasingly important and has come to be seen as an important premise of business success (Özbağ, 2016). In this context, the effects of personality traits and emotional states of individuals on ethical decision making were investigated by compiling national and international literature. In addition, research results on the effects of demographic variables such as age, gender, education and experience on ethical decision making are also discussed.

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Ethics and Ethical Decision Making

From the moment they are born, individuals live within the framework of the rules determined by the society and take some actions. The understanding of what is moral and what is immoral is shaped by the beliefs, philosophy and motives of individuals (Usta, 2012). Ethics focuses on what is the phenomenon that determines whether an action is right or wrong, good or bad (Lewis and Unerman, 1999). No moral principle, no value can be universalized. But some feelings and intuitions can be universalized in society that will allow us to have at least some problems with each other (Doğan, 2013). Ethics is the relationship between thought and action (Pieper, 2012). Almost every situation that individuals experience by taking action creates an ethical relationship (Kuçuradi, 2018). An ethical relationship requires not to use others for their own benefit, but to benefit the others (Akçetin, 2019). According to the ethical evaluation processes of individuals; many elements such as personality traits, desires, goals, lifestyle, beliefs, feelings, etc. influence it (Kuçuradi, 2006). Many theoretical and empirical studies explaining the factors affecting the ethical decision-making and behavior of individuals are included in the field paper. Individuals can make unethical decisions for many reasons, whether they are aware of it or not (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Rees, Tenbrunsel and Bazerman, 2019). Decision-making has become an important management component with the management functions defined by Fayol in the 1900s. It should be noted that not every decision will lead to ethical problems (Ergeneli and

Mert, 2003). Ethical decision-making is the process of making the most morally correct action by systematically thinking in situations that are contradictory to each other (Berggren et al., 2002). Ethical decision-making refers to the process of using the moral foundations of individuals to determine whether a particular issue is right or wrong (Carlson, Kacmar and Wadsworth, 2009). Although it has similarities with other decision-making processes, it requires a high level of reasoning and more thinking (Bektas and Köseoğlu, 2007). Honesty, accuracy, justice and rights approach are among the important ethical decision-making principles that come forward (Kiranli and Ilgan, 2007). It is quite difficult to decide what is right-wrong, because individuals have different standards and perceptions. While examining moral judgments, individual differences should not be ignored. Although there are many different approaches to moral thinking that handle individual differences (Hogan, 1970), Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) have argued that there are two main factors explaining individual differences: Relativism and Idealism.

In this context, Forsyth's (1980) Ethical Approach Theory takes over. Ethical position theory, using the concepts of relativism and idealism, bases ethical problems on individual factors (Barnett et al., 1996). The theory deals with the differences in the moral decision-making processes of individuals (Schlenker and Forsyth, 1977). At the heart of idealism is the idea of achieving results with the right actions (Özbek and Özer, 2012). Within the framework of this approach, the welfare of individuals is at the forefront. It is argued that all stakeholders involved in the process should be satisfied with the result. In addition, in the view of idealism, individuals should avoid harming others at all times and under all circumstances (Forsty, 1992; Zeylan, 2011). The principle of "treat others the way you want to be treated yourself" fully expresses the idealism view (Özyer and Azizoglu, 2010). Relativism is based on skepticism. Relativism argues that universal rules should be rejected (Özbek and Özer, 2012). It is impossible to mention an ethics rule that is accepted for all individuals (Reidenbach and Robin, 1990). In the theory of relativism, individuals evaluate according to their situation and people while they are making decisions. In this framework, they refuse to abide by the general rules (Forsyth, 1981). Even in ethically similar situations, individuals having different characteristics may have different reactions because the level of moral development of each individual may be at different stage (Bratton, 2004). For example, a business employee who encounters an ethical problem first of all thinks about acting in accordance with norms and values accepted by society. But it is not always easy to do this. The general principles may sometimes be insufficient to solve the particular situation that has been experienced. For example, the application of the principle "it is always necessary to tell the truth" in business life may not be possible in all cases (Gök, 2012). The rapid increase in technology, globalization and competition make the quality of the decisions taken by the businesses even more important. Furthermore, there are always situations of uncertainty such as ethical problems experienced in businesses, value conflicts, the presence of third parties, stakeholder problems and the laws are not very clear (Trevino, 1986). Individuals working in all types of businesses operating regardless of the national-international, small-large, public-private sectors sometimes encounter ethical dilemmas that need to be decided (Karabey, 2020). For many reasons, managers may feel the need to address the decision-making process with ethical dimensions (Aytemiz and Bolat, 2007).

Personality Traits

The roots of the science of psychology, which tries to find out the main reasons that underlie the behavior of individuals, go back to ancient age. Many discussions have led to different approaches on how behavior should be examined over time. That is why personality has become one of the broadest concepts used in psychological science (Morgan, 1976; Morris, 1991; Cüceloğlu, 2018). Personality is the distinctive emotion, thought and behavior patterns that deal with the social, physical and environmental interactions of individuals (Atkinson et al., 2019). It is possible to define personality as a way of life of individuals (Dubrin, 1994). There are many theories in the literature of personality. Psychodynamic theory, integrative theory, humanistic theory, the theory of personal characteristics are some of them (Nelson and Quick, 2003; Taşçı and Eroğlu, 2007). Within the framework of these theories, Costa and McCrae (1987) personality traits theory is among the most commonly used and known theories to explain the five factor model of personality (Taşçı and Eroğlu, 2007). Many psychologists recognize the five major personality traits as the best representation of employee behavior and personality structures in different cultures (Digman, 1990; Wiggins and Trapnell, 1996).

In this study, five major personality traits were selected as the premise of ethical values. In this context, the detailed characteristics of the five main distinctions are shown in Table 1. The five-factor theory is a frequently used approach to the evaluation of personality. This theory is based on the trait approach which uses adjectives while describing individuals (Dogan, 2013). According to the five factor theory, individuals have characteristics that affect their feelings, thoughts and behaviors (McCrae and Costa, 2006).

Table 1. Five Factor Personality Traits

| Personality | Content |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Extroversion | Active, optimistic, caring, talkative, risk-taking, able to clearly express his feelings, fun, adaptable to changes, friendly |
| Compatibility | Well-tempered, helpful, sincere, compassionate, understanding, honest, tolerant |
| Responsibility | Hardworking, meticulous, organized, reliable, determined |
| Emotional Balance | Satisfied, calm, confident, sensitive, relaxed, patient, open to criticism |
| Openness to Experience | Curious, creative, imaginative, high learning performance, original, likes diversity |

Source: Costa et al., 1986; McCrae, Costa, 1989; Zel, 2001, Yelboğa, 2006, Şahin, 2019.

The five factor theory consists of individuals rating themselves and others according to a wide variety of characteristics selected from the dictionary. Personality traits that individuals have are an important factor at the stage of perception and evaluation of ethical phenomena. Individuals having different personality traits will have different perceptions and evaluations of ethical situations. Personality traits guide them in moral judgments by influencing individuals in the perception and evaluation of ethical problems experienced (Ay, 2005).

Mood

The main feature of the self-qualities of individuals should be the presence of reason. In addition to the rational dimension of individuals, there is also an emotional dimension. The situation that makes individuals feel better spiritually is their emotional aspects (Cevizci, 2002). They have a sense of value that is not found in any other living thing through acquisitions such as love, hate, and preference (Cevizci, 2002). The concept of emotion is an area where various opinions were expressed and studied towards the end of the 1800s. Arnold (1960) noted that research on emotions is “one of the most difficult and complex areas in psychology”. For example, Plutchik stated in 1980 that there are 28 different definitions of emotions in the field of psychology (Plutchik, 1980). Emotions are the reflection of the inner world of the individual. It is not possible for individuals to express themselves without emotions (Frijda, 2008; Tarhan, 2009). Individuals' emotional reactions to events are different. Each individual shows his own affect and enthusiasm characteristics. This condition may vary according to the personality structure of individuals, day and time. These changes are considered as necessary and natural for life (Köknel, 1982: 76). Emotions are considered as the guiding factor of behavior and constitute the field we call human nature (Magnavita, 2016). Lazarus (1991) argues that emotions are vital in personality studies. On the other hand, the mood is evaluated as a feeling of lower intensity and longer duration than the emotion and is usually considered in two dimensions as good and bad (Ekman, 1984; Fiske and Taylor, 2017). The mood can also be experienced at a lower intensity for a long time, such as a few hours or a few days (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Both of these concepts are discussed in the dimension of positive/positive-negative/negative. Situations in which individuals feel happy, comfortable and positive express positive mood, while situations in which they feel unhappy, distressed or negative and bad express negative mood (Tosun, Sezgin and Uray, 2019). For example, if an individual has repeatedly experienced a failure or losses in an event, he will be sorry. If this situation continues for a long time, the mood of him will continue to be sad (Cirhinlioglu, 2018). In this context, it is possible to say that emotion and mood affect each other mutually.

Discussion

The study deals with the effects of personality traits, emotional states and demographic variables (age, gender, experience, etc.) of individuals on ethical decision-making. In this context, a compilation of national and international literature was made. The results of the research were discussed within the framework of the relevant subject. Since the study consists of a compilation method, it does not require an ethics committee report.

The knowledge and experiences we acquire in society shape our emotional life from an early age. Our emotional life, which is shaped, affects our behaviors, personality and perceptions. We show emotional reactions according to the level of making sense of the situations around us (Gaetan, Brejard and Bonnet, 2016). There are some sources of mood experienced by individuals. Among these sources, personality comes first. Considering the emotions and personality traits; it is accepted that personality is a systematic reflection

of emotions, cognitions, behaviors and goals. The continuity of certain emotional processes and experiences has made emotion an integral part of personality. The emotional response integrity that is consistent with the events occurring around us constitutes the personality (Revelle and Scherer, 2010). The personalities that individuals have are the premise of experiencing certain emotions and mood. Some individuals may feel more shame or anger at an event than other individuals. While some of them become more irritable in the face of events, others may remain calmer (Cirhinlioglu, 2018). According to studies (Lucas and Fujita, 2000; Meyer and Shack, 1989; Watson and Clark, 1997); there is a significant and positive relationship between the extroversion dimension which is the one of the five-factor personality characteristics and positive emotions. There is a significant relationship between the emotional balance dimension (neuroticism) and negative affect. In a similar study, a significant relationship was found between the extroversion dimension and emotions such as joy, satisfaction, love, pride, and respect (Shiota, Keltner and Dec, 2006). Emotion is a support system for reasoning processes (Damasio, 2006). Therefore, it is both necessary and sufficient for moral decisions (Prinz, 2006). The emotional component plays a very important role in resolving moral conflicts (Koenigs et al., 2007). Gaudine and Thorne (2001) state that emotions are at the core of rational ethical decision making. Emotional components directly affect the ethical sensitivity, judgments, intentions and behaviors of individuals in the entire ethical negotiation process. There are empirical studies that suggest that the ethical decision-making process is a result of intuitive, automatic and emotional evaluations at the same time along with rationality (Damasio, 1994; Haidt, 2001).

In this perspective, emotion is an important source of information (Ruedy, Moore, Gino and Schweitzer, 2013) and a key element of ethical decision-making (Salvador and Folger, 2009; Robertson, Voegtlin and Maak, 2017) that can influence individuals' tendencies to identify ethical dilemmas (Gaudine and Thorne, 2001; Robertson et al., 2007), facilitate ethical judgments (Haidt, 2007; Mudrack and Mason, 2013; Winterich, Morales and Mittal, 2015), support ethical choices and behaviors (Greene and Haidt, 2002; Connelly, Helton-Fauth and Mumford, 2004; Antonetti and Maklan, 2014). The cognitive theory of evaluation of emotions (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985) states that different emotions are defined by different cognitive assessments, which leads to various effects on decision-making. Studies show that emotions influence decision-making in at least three different ways. Firstly, emotions at the judgment stage of the Rest (1986) model can provide information that can help the decision maker make more (or less) correct judgments about the situation (Ambady and Gray, 2002; Forgas and Locke, 2005). While individuals in positive mood tend to remember positive things more easily, individuals in negative mood are able to remember more negative events and memories. These tendencies and the resulting emotional experiences can cause a general bias in future judgments. Emotional background can influence ethical decisions. In the second case, different emotions can trigger different intentions through the adoption of different cognitive processing styles (Forgas, 2002). The third case is related to how emotions affect the decision-making process of individuals. While individuals with positive emotions have a more relaxed and intuitive states of information processing, individuals with negative emotions have a more detailed process. Therefore, emotional arousals affect the ability to process information (Lang et al., 1998; Forgas, 2002). Each of the three types of influences can change the outcome of decisions in different ways. In 1996, a link between psychology and business ethics was found by Messick and Tenbrunsel. Bazerman and Banaji (2004) stated that efforts to improve ethical decision-making are actually aimed at understanding our psychological tendencies. There are many studies in the literature stating that there is a relationship between personality traits and ethical behavior (Trevino et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2005; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009; Kalshoven et al., 2011).

Table 2. Studies on Ethical Decision Making and Personality Traits

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Wright & Bower (1992) | They found that happy individuals perceive events more positively, while sad individuals think more negatively. |
| Cohen (2000) | As a result of the research carried out by it was stated that sense of guilt prevents the use of unethical strategies in marketing activities. Unethical behavior causes pain or a number of emotional disturbances in decision makers. Thus, individuals can give up the decision they would make (Jones, 1991; Treviño et al., 2006). For example, if a person understands that committing an unethical act can result in the loss of a friendship, he can abandon the action to avoid the cost of the unethical decision. Since reporting behavior will lead to higher levels of negative emotions, the individual will prefer to avoid emotional discomfort by choosing less ethical behavior in order not to make complaints. Therefore, it is likely that an individual will choose less ethical behavior in order to avoid negative emotions that may arise if he makes a more ethical choice (Mellers, 2000). In |

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| | this situation, decision makers can be expected to make less ethical decisions to ensure a higher level of emotional comfort. |
| Judge et al. (2002) | In their research concluded that high scores obtained from neuroticism, which is one of the personality traits, negatively affect businesses. |
| Brown & Trevino (2006) | They suggested that a neurotic individual is less likely to be perceived as an ethical individual. |
| Walumbwa & Schaubroeck (2009) Anwar & Shah (2018) | They observed a negative relationship between neuroticism and ethical behavior, and a positive relationship between conscientiousness and ethical behavior. Conscientious personality trait is necessary for an individual to be perceived as having ethical behavior (Bono and Judge, 2004). |
| Horberg et al. (2011) | They examined the role of different mood of individuals on moral judgments. As a result of the research, it was concluded that emotions affect moral judgments and a number of concerns. Research shows that emotions influence rational processes. For example, many philosophical and empirical studies warn decision makers against situations such as counting to ten before responding to emails/phones when they are angry or frustrated (Krishnakumar and Rymph, 2012). |
| While Kalshoven et al., (2011) | In their research, only conscientiousness and extraversion dimensions found a significant and positive relationship between ethical structure, they did not find a relationship between openness to experience and compatibility dimensions. |
| Anwar & Shah (2018) | As a result of the study in which they examined positive relationship between openness to experience, mindfulness and compliance and the ethical behavior of employees. |
| Jamaludin & Mehon, 2020) | The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Kuala Lumpur were related to the dimensions of openness to experience, compatibility and conscientiousness personality traits, respectively stated that most of the independent variables (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and compliance) significantly affect the ethical behavior of hotel employees. |

The literature suggests that positive emotions can encourage ethical decisions and behaviors in terms of business. Mencl and May (2009) state that empathy, which is a positive emotion, facilitates ethical decision-making in human resources managers. While the impact of positive emotions on ethical decision-making is quite well supported, the effect of negative emotions on ethical behavior and the direction of this effect consist of ambiguous and contradictory results. Lerner and Keltner (2000) found that negative emotions can produce pessimistic judgments about future events as well as optimistic ones; Singh et al., 2018 negative emotions affect ethical judgments; Cropanzano, Stein and Nadisic (2011) state that negative emotions caused by work lead to retaliatory behavioral intentions that turn into unethical behavior. Despite some contradictory findings, studies suggest that positive emotions will encourage social, cooperative decisions and behaviors, while negative emotions may facilitate unethical actions through retaliatory behavioral intentions (Cropanzano et al., 2011). Research shows that some areas of the brain are associated with emotional memories in decision-making (Maratos et al., 2001; Maddock, Garrett, and Buonocore, 2003). Therefore, individuals have access to emotional, cognitive and somatic experiences related to ethical situations they have experienced in the past (Robertson et al., 2007). This situation shows that the new decisions taken are related to the experiences taken from the past ethical decisions (Anderson et al., 1999). Emotions learned from past decisions are expected to influence future ethical behavioral intentions by providing key information that can affect ethical behavior (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014).

One of the most researched topics in the field of ethical decision-making is individual factors. Individual factors include all factors that are uniquely associated with the individual decision-maker. Studies investigating the ethical decision-making process usually deals with gender, age, education, work experience etc. variables. According to a study determining the relationship between gender and ethical decision-making concluded that showed unethical behavior at a lower rate trends in women than in men (Buckley, Weise and Harvey, 1998). Many studies have found that women tend to behave more ethically than men with a similar result (Beltramini et al., 1984; Chonko and Hunt, 1985; Bidwell et al. 1987; Ferrell and Skinner, 1988; Jones and Gautschi, 1988; Kelly, Ferrell and Skinner, 1990; Ruegger and King, 1992; Luthar, DiBattista and Gautschi, 1997; Lewicki and Robinson, 1998; Deshpande, Joseph and Masimow, 2000). Another study found that women have higher ethical values and standards than men (Karassavidou and Glaveli, 2006). Chonko and Hunt (1985) stated that female marketing managers are more sensitive to ethical problems than men. Similarly, Akaah (1989) stated that women have higher ethical judgments than their male counterparts. This can be explained by the fact that women attach more importance to their feelings and relationships, and their level of idealism is more likely to be than men (McCabe et al., 2006). In the study carried out on hospitality services students, it was asked whether the facts in the scenarios are ethical. As a result of the research, it was found that men are more prone

to exhibit unethical behaviors (Lynn et al., 2007). Many similar studies support the same view (Lynn, 1991; Ruegger, King, 1992; Libby, Agnello, 2000; Ross, Robertson, 2003). In this context, we can say that women's ethical intentions and perceptions are higher than men's in general, (Ekin, Tezölmez, 1999; Singhapakdi et al., 1999; Cole, Smith, 1996; Fleischman, Valentine, 2003) and that appropriate moral behaviors are exhibited more by women. Some research results have shown that there is no possible relationship between gender, ethical behavior and ethical decision making (Hegarty and Sims, 1978; Browning and Zabriskie, 1983; Dubinsky and Levy, 1985; McNichols and Zimmerer, 1985; Fritzsche 1988; Singhapakdi and Vitell 1990; Davis and Welton 1991; Callan, 1992; Serwinek, 1992; Nyaw and Ng 1994; Loe et al., 2000; Craft, 2013). As a result of scanning the experimental literature on ethical decision-making, some study showed that women exhibited more ethical behaviors (Beltramini et al. 1984; Ferrell and Skinner, 1988; Ruegger and King, 1992). On some studies (Browning and Zabriskie, 1983; Dubinsky and Levy, 1985; McNichols and Zimmerer, 1985; Callan, 1992), it was determined that a significant relationship between gender and ethical behavior is not. In this context, it is impossible to say that there is a consensus on the subject in both theoretical and experimental field. Therefore, it can be said that the relationship between gender and ethical decision-making is still a controversial issue (Becker and Ulstad, 2007; Acılar, Yörük, 2010; Dalton, Ortegren, 2011). However, as Collins (2000) notes, none of the studies have found that men have a greater sensitivity to ethical issues than women. On many studies carried out (Gilligan, 1982; Forsyth, 1998; Bass, Brawn and Barnett, 1998; Singhapakdi, Vitell and Franke, 1999) lower levels in women than in men of relativism, idealism levels were higher. In this context, it can be interpreted that women are more idealistic than men. Men are expected to be more relativistic than women (Forsyth, Nye and Kelley, 1988). McHoskey (1996) noted that men have lower levels of idealism than women. A similar research result is found in the research of Karande, Rao and Singhapakdi (2002). Women have higher levels of idealism than men. However, the hypothesis that women are less relativistic than men was not found statistically significant. The relationship between the gender of individuals and relativism was studied by Singhapakdi et al., (1999) also found it not to be significant. A number of social roles attributed to women by society make them sensitive, maternal, emotional and more amenable to the rules (Ekin, Tezölmez, 1999). While women are socialized more society-oriented away from selfishness, men develop with a focus on personal development, talents and ambition. This situation is similar to the gender socialization view (Eagley, 1987; Mason, Mudrack, 1996). The fact that women attach more importance to the concept of emotion than men may be a factor in the relatively high levels of idealism (McCabe et al., 2006). This case can also occur due to the fact that women have a higher perception of social appreciation than men (Becker, Ulstad, 2007; Dalton, Ortegren, 2011). When we look at the results of age and ethical decision-making studies, there are no clear results like the gender factor. While some studies suggest that there is no significant relationship between these two variables, others suggest that older people behave more ethically. Browning and Zabriskie (1983) found that young purchasing managers have a more ethical point of view than older managers. However, Serwinek (1992) explained that employees who are older have a stricter attitude about ethical standards. Ruegger and King (1992) state that older students are more ethical than younger students.

Deshpande (1997) found that older managers are more uncomfortable with unethical behavior than younger individuals. He also stated that managers aged 40 and over behaves more ethically. A similar research expressed that young managers have lower ethical standards than older managers and revealed that managers behave more ethically as they are becoming older (Peterson, Rhoads and Vaught, 2001). It has been determined that employees who are older behave more ethically than those who are younger (Pratt, 1991). Çobanoğlu et al., (2005) and Ural (2003) found that the age factor positively affects the behavior in accordance with ethical principles, and people who are older are more inclined to behave in accordance with ethics. Çobanoğlu et al., (2005) and Ural (2003) found that the age factor positively affects the behavior in accordance with ethical principles, and older people are more inclined to behave in accordance with ethics. The general opinion on the age factor is that individuals make more ethical decisions as they are becoming older. According to Kim and Choi (2003), individuals show a stricter, more conservative attitude as the roles and statuses they have in their lives increase, and therefore they are more inclined to apply ethical standards. Hall (1976) explains this situation as individuals become less interested in the phenomena of money and wealth as they get older, while they become more inclined to such phenomena as self-improvement and personal development. It is noted that older individuals have a higher level of idealism than other individuals, while their level of relativism is lower, and they attach more importance to the phenomenon of professional ethics (Singhapakdi et al., 1999; Kim, 2003). Bass, Brawn and Barnett (1998) in their study among sales managers, reported a negative relationship between age and relativism. In this context, older individuals care more about and accept the universal moral rules. In addition, older individuals have a higher level of idealism than younger managers. Therefore, a

positive relationship was found between age and idealism. While many studies found a significant positive relationship between ethical sensitivity and age (Harris, 1990; Rueger, and King, 1992; Mason and Mudrack, 1996), some studies found a negative relationship (Forsyth, 1980; Vitell, Lumkin and Rawwas, 1991; Ho et al., 1997). There are research results indicating that there is no positive (Valentine and Rittenburg, 2007), negative (Ede, Panigrahi, Stuart and Calcich, 2000) or no significant relationship between age and ethical decisions (Marques and Azevedo-Deceira, 2009). Since experience and age are in high correlation, it is expected that there is a significant relationship between ethical sensitivity and experience in a general sense (Barnett and Karson, 1989; Harris and Sutton, 1995). Experienced and older employees are expected that will have more knowledge about complex ethical issues specific to the sector (Ferrell, Fraedrich and Ferrell, 2017). As the experience increases, the options for finding moral solutions to ethical problems will also increase (Singhapakdi et al., 1999). In the literature reviews, it has been stated that education is one of the important elements affecting ethical decision-making (Randall, 1989; Wotruba, 1990). Browning and Zabriskie (1983) found a positive correlation between the increase in the level of education of sales people and the fact that they consider the products gifted to them as bribes. In a study carried out on marketing individuals, it was found a significant negative relationship between education and idealism (Hoo, Vitell, Barness and Desborde, 1997; Singhapakdi, Vitell and Franke, 1999). Considering that education is related to the cognitive moral development of individuals, it is expected that educated individuals should be in the upper class at the stages of moral development. Therefore, it can be said that decision-makers with a higher level of education will have different ideas and values, and they will have thoughts such as believing that many values and rules are relative (Kohlberg, 1969). Kohlberg (1979) suggested that there is a positive relationship between education and ethical judgment. However, empirical research has not found a relation (Cagle and Baucus, 2006; Marques and Azevedo-Pereira, 2009) or a negative relationship between education and ethical judgment (Fullerton, Kerch ve Dodge, 1996; Chiu, 2003). While empirical research on income has shown that lower income levels are related to greater ethical concerns (Muncy and Vitell, 1992), some studies have shown that there is opposite or no significant relationship (Ang, Cheng, Lim and Tambyah, 2001; Paolillo and Vitell, 2003).

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