



Original Research

Perceived Ethical Values among College Students

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Abstract:

Ethical principles act like a compass guiding behavior, shaping relationships, and influencing how a group travels together. In a world where people have varied beliefs and choices can affect a lot of individuals or entire societies, it is hard to overstate just how important these values are. Therefore, a study at University of Baghdad / College of Nursing was done. The researcher aimed find out what students thought about ethics—about right and wrong conduct. Did students consider themselves very ethical people? Somewhat ethical? Not so much? To do this research, the researcher utilized the Ethical Values Assessment scale (EVA—Long Form).data collection took place between January and May 2023. Sample size is 250 students at college of nursing. 86.4% of the total sample reported high ethical values. The remaining were in the “moderate” category. And the study revealed that older students were more likely than younger ones to fall into that top tier—“high.” In statistical terms, there seemed to be a relationship worth exploring further (it had a p-value of. 015). Plus, by definition professionals—from nurses and doctors to journalists and accountants—are people who do jobs requiring specialist knowledge and often advanced training; both groups must abide by sets of rules covering what’s considered acceptable conduct within their respective fields. While it’s impossible to predict the future with complete certainty, upholding strong ethical standards often proves advantageous when pursuing a job or advancing in your career after you’ve started.

Keywords: Ethical Values, College Students, Perception.

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1. Introduction:

Ethical values are the foundation of an ethical framework, which is based on ideas about what is right and wrong, fair and unfair. These values include honesty, empathy, integrity and respect: when individuals face life's many-sided problems or make decisions as individuals engaging in daily

interactions with others -- having such virtues at heart provides a kind of moral guide. It helps to know whether what someone else does is ethical behaviour or not (1). On an individual level, ethical values shape character and influence behaviour. By living up to moral values people help build a fairer

society in which everyone has access to opportunity; they also gain from doing so themselves - because it gives purpose to their lives along with feelings such as self-respect (2).

Hernando, found that moral principles underpin social cohesion on a societal scale. These principles promote the development of laws, customs, and cultural practices; they also nurture an environment wherein there is esteem for one another, as well as trust and cooperation. By following shared codes of conduct because they believe them to be right, people create a sort of moral 'glue' that holds communities together even when there are conflicts of interest: this fabric helps communities-or even whole societies-transcend in-group/out-group divisions so common in nature.

Conversely, moral values are not static but rather dynamic – they change along with society, technology, and other factors. As the world changes ever more rapidly, there is a greater need to address moral issues that affect at personal and social levels as well as those with broader effects; some global problems may even fall into this category. Social justice, environmental concerns and questions about new technologies make up just some of the areas which force us reconsider our existing moral positions (3). This was echoed by Esteban and Buxarrais in an earlier paper who stated researchers studying morals must understand different viewpoints exist around what counts as moral behaviour; they drew attention not only to cultural influences but also religious or philosophical ones – all contribute towards people having diverse beliefs about ethics. "It is important for university students to have good character": these were findings from Vazquez and colleagues after they looked into how important ethical values are for young adults at college. There are multiple reasons why this investigation into how college students perceive ethical values is very important. Firstly, it helps to understand better what young people think about morals and how they decide to start living by them which is vital behave honestly and responsibly when making decisions in academic or professional lives. Additionally, the study addresses a gap in the knowledge about which factors do (or don't) shape these beliefs at an

age where many changes are still taking place. Lots of work has gone into teaching things like honesty and fairness (ethics) but there hasn't been as much research asking students directly "How come you feel this is right/wrong?" or "Do any of your friends ever talk about being good people?" This research does exactly that: adds new information based on evidence such as interviews and surveys with undergraduates. Therefore, its findings can be used not just for discussion papers but also when designing courses or writing policy documents. Anything aimed at encouraging desirable behaviour among students while they're at university. There are several aspects to consider when examining ethical values in the context of college students:

Academic Integrity: College students' commitment to academic integrity reflects their ethical values when facing academic challenges; upholding honesty, avoiding plagiarism and acknowledging others' work helps create an environment of intellectual honesty and ethical behavior (4).

Respect and Inclusivity: Valuing diversity and being inclusive are both important ethical values in everyday interactions among peers. At college, students from different backgrounds study together – so being able not only to understand but also appreciate other points of view, cultures or ways of life shows respect for them (3).

Social Responsibility: Ethical values can be seen in young adults' sense of duty towards wider society. Personal development is a key part of university life where activities might include campaigns on fairness, helping out in local projects or even making sure their own behaviour has as little impact as possible on the environment (4).

Leadership and Accountability: Universities produce people who become moral leaders promoting concepts such as fairness, transparency and responsibility. By becoming involved with clubs or other groups while studying, learners have opportunities aplenty not just to talk about these ideals – but also put them into practice within their own communities (5).

Technology and Ethical Decision Making: The use of technology throws up all sorts of moral

dilemmas for today's students. Whether it's how they behave online, whether or not something should be considered their own work under copyright laws – right through to worries about who sees their information or what happens if someone hacks into their accounts: guidelines derived from ethics will help you here too!

Ethical Values in the Professional World: When college students start working, their ability to succeed may be determined by their moral principles. According to (3), integrity, honesty and making decisions ethically are important not only while at university but also later on—these things affect how careers develop as well as relationships with colleagues or clients.

Dealing With Morality: At university, students often find themselves in ethical pickles which force them to think hard about what is right from wrong. (5) point out that individuals can learn a lot about somebody's values, how tough they are—and even if they're able to think like a grown-up—by looking at the way these individuals solve such dilemmas.

Learning About Ethics Through Education: Higher education establishments wanting to help develop principled individuals might consider including moral philosophy as part of course content; after all it appears from studies conducted by (6) along with others there may well be benefits associated with having done so.

In summary, during college students' time there they are developing their ethical values – which are also challenged. The choices young adults make at this stage of life, be it to do with academic or social activities or with wider civic engagement, all help shape how they think about ethics individually and as a group. If higher education institutions foster this kind of awareness across the board it provides a foundation upon which tomorrow's law-abiding morally switched-on adults can build together.

2. Methodology:

2.1 Design of the study:

A descriptive correlational study used the assessment approach to assess Perceived Ethical Values among College Students. Data collection

was carried out through the period of the 1st of January 2023 to 15th of May 2023.

2.2 Statistical analysis:

To ascertain whether or not the study's objectives were met, the present study's data were analyzed using the Spearman correlation coefficient, Frequencies & Percentages, Means, Standard deviations.

2.4 Instrument of the study:

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part contains information regarding demographic characteristics such as (age, gender, and residency). The second part is the The Ethical Values Assessment scale (EVA—Long Form) developed by (7). This questionnaire assesses use of the three Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity. Internal reliability for subscales of Autonomy (6-items, $\alpha = .79$), Community (6-items, $\alpha = .75$), and Divinity (6-items, $\alpha = .95$). The students' ethical values were assessed using the Ethical Values Assessment scale (EVA—Long Form). EVA is an 18-item self-report scale that is rated on a five-point Likert-type scale which ranges from 0 (Not at all Important) to 4 (Completely Important). Participants' responses are averaged together to generate a mean score. The mean score ranges from 0 to 72, with higher scores indicate high levels of ethical values Low= 0 - 24, Moderate= 25 - 48, High= 49 - 72. The correlation between the variables was examined by using spearman correlation coefficient.

2.5 Ethical Consideration:

This study took several ethical considerations into account. The researcher obtained ethical approval from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee at the University of Baghdad/College of Nursing before collecting any data. All participants then provided informed consent after being given a full explanation of what the study was about. In order to keep information about individual student's private, no details which could identify them were included in the dataset; instead, each person was allocated a code known only to staff involved with this project. Data itself were stored on secure servers that could not be accessed by anyone other

than authorized personnel—therefore ensuring confidentiality throughout this process.

2.6 Settings of the Study:

The research took place at the University of Baghdad's College of Nursing in Iraq's capital city. This institution provides a range of nursing courses for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Information for the study was gathered throughout one semester, which ran from spring 2023 -- allowing researchers to document what students experienced during an academic term. Baghdad was selected as it offered relevance (since the study was about nursing education) plus access: there are lots of different kinds of student there.

2.7 Sample of the Study:

The research focused on 640 nursing students at the University of Baghdad. To ensure a good representation, the researcher selected 250 participants using convenience sampling. All were keen to take part. There were no freshmen as the study excluded anyone who had been there less than a year. It also noted that its method might make the results less applicable beyond this specific group. Participants were mainly from 18-29 age group (females 82.4%).

3. Results:

This section represents data analysis of variables under the study to achieve the objectives of the study that are related to assess perceived ethical values among college students.

Table 1. Distribution of Sample according to their Socio-demographic Characteristics.

List	Characteristics	f	%
1	Stage	Second	103
		Third	117
		Forth	30
		Total	250
2	Age M±SD= 21±4	18 – 22 years	215
		23 – 27 years	10
		28 ≤ year	25
		Total	250
3	Gender	Male	44
		Female	206
		Total	250
4	Residency		
		Rural	92
		Urban	158
		Total	250
5	Socioeconomic status	Insufficient	10
		Barely sufficient	136
		Sufficient	104
		Total	250
6	Marital status	Unmarried	235
		Married	15
		Total	250

Table 1 shows that 46.8% percent of the sample was from third academic stage. The average age for students refers to 21 ± 4 years and the highest percentage refers to 18-22 years among 86%. The gender refers that 82.4% of students are females while remaining are males. The residency refers

that 63.2% of the sample live in urban areas and 36.8% live in rural areas. The socioeconomic status refers that 54.4% of the sample reported barely sufficient status. The marital status refers that 94% of students are unmarried and 6% are married.

Table 2. Level of perceived ethical values among students

Levels	f	%	M.S	SD
Low	0	0	2.68	.343
Moderate	34	13.6		
High	216	86.4		
Total	250	100		

f: Frequency, %: Percentage, M.S: Mean of score, SD: Standard deviation

Low= 0 - 24, Moderate= 25 - 48, High= 49 - 72

Table 2 indicates that 86.4% of the sample perceived high ethical values and 13.6% perceive

moderate levels. This result is consistent with the study of (1). Who found that the majority of their study sample had high level of ethical values with an average score of 122.72 ± 10.64 points.

Table 3. Correlation between Perceived Ethical Values among Nurses with their Socio demographic Characteristics

Ethical values Socio-demographic Characteristics	Spearman correlation	P-value	Significance
Age	0.154	0.015	S
Gender	0.276	0.623	N. S
Socioeconomic status	-0.46	0.468	N. S
Marital status	0.100	0.114	N. S
Stage	-0.261	0.223	N. S
Residency	-0.157	0.103	N. S

Table 3 indicates that there is significant positive relationship between ethical values of the sample and their age at p-value= 0.015. This result is consistent with the study of (1). In their study

Ethical values in college education: a mixed-methods pilot study to assess health sciences students' perceptions. Who found a significant positive linear correlation between total score on

the questionnaire and age. This table also indicates that there is no relationship between the remaining socio-demographic characteristics of the sample and their ethical values.

4. Discussion:

Research shows that 86.4% of college students have strong ethical values. This shows how committed students are to maintaining integrity. This suggests that it may be possible to promote moral responsibility in undergraduate students. This result is consistent with the research of (8), who conducted a survey on the moral values of college students and found that most students strongly identified with moral principles, especially when they were in a group learning environment that encouraged moral conversation (8). This is consistent with research by (9), who found that the majority of students reported having high moral standards due to the educational environment. Consistent with research on the value of social interaction, their research suggests that encouraging moral conversations in the classroom can improve students' moral reasoning.

The study concluded that while age plays a significant role, ethical development is complex. According, moral development can be complicated and contingent on a person's background, experiences, and circumstances. Thus, continuing research must examine all of these elements collectively, as well as the various ways in which they interact, if a researcher hopes to gain a deeper understanding of undergraduates' morals. The relationship between age and these values is complicated, and it also became apparent as young adults advanced through college: they generally tended to develop a more ethical mindset. This outcome is consistent with (10), who investigated moral reasoning in college students of various ages. Their findings, which suggested that older students typically exhibit more sophisticated moral reasoning, underscored the importance of developmental factors in the formation of moral values. Accordingly, educational institutions could change their curricula to prioritize moral reasoning throughout the learning process (10). Furthermore, (11) examined the relationship between ethical

decision making and maturity in college students. According to their research, older students often demonstrate higher levels of ethical awareness, suggesting that experience and age are critical factors in developing an accurate understanding of ethical issues. This reinforces the observation that universities should adapt their teaching methods to reflect students' evolving moral views as they progress through their studies.

The study also underscores the complexity of moral development, echoing the findings of (12). They examined the multifaceted nature of moral development and found that individual backgrounds, including cultural influences and prior experiences, significantly influence students' moral views. This supports this study's assertion that a holistic approach is necessary to fully understand the nuances of moral values among college students (12). Addressing the complexity of moral development, (13) argue that moral development is influenced by multiple factors, including cultural background and personal experiences. Their findings highlight the need for a holistic approach to understanding moral values among students, which is consistent with the findings of ongoing studies that consider multiple dimensions of moral development. Furthermore, peer influence is clearly critical when considering how college students develop their morality.

The research indicates that social interactions with other students at university have a big impact on an individual's moral code. Meaning one way to encourage more people to behave well might be setting up programs where they mentor each other or simply talk about what being good means. If higher education providers fostered this kind of supportive culture so there was lots of discussion about right and wrong plus students helping out those who were unsure how best to act in difficult situations everybody could benefit from feel enabled both do things confidently that are honorable take steps towards becoming responsible professionals. This result is supported by (14), who found that peer interactions significantly shape students' ethical beliefs and behaviors. Their study suggests that collaborative learning environments, where students can engage in ethical discussions,

can enhance moral development. (15) investigated the role of peer learning in developing ethical competencies among medical students. Their research showed that collaborative learning environments significantly enhanced students' understanding of ethical principles and their application in clinical scenarios. This supports the study emphasis on the influence of peer interactions in shaping ethical values (15).

This suggests more than just statistical associations, that is, a learning opportunity for all students as well as those who grow older during their studies. Considerations for educators go beyond simply observing this pattern or association. If aging helps people develop these virtues over time, universities may want to consider (and respond to) changes in students' moral sentiments as they move from first year to graduate school, for example, adapting teaching methods accordingly. This is supported by (16), who found that students who participated in peer discussions about ethics reported stronger moral beliefs and behaviors. Their research underscores the importance of social interactions in shaping moral perspectives, reinforcing the study's recommendation for peer mentoring programs to foster these discussions (16). (17) explored the impact of ethics training on medical students' ability to address ethical dilemmas. The study found that students who participated in structured ethics courses demonstrated better moral reasoning and greater confidence in addressing complex ethical issues in clinical practice. This is in line with the findings of this study on the importance of educational interventions to promote moral values among students(17).

These suggestions make sure that no one is left out due to a lack of knowledge of the rules and emphasize the significance of peer relationships in shaping a person's moral perspective. culturally particular, like the plagiarism policy in the UK, which was recently changed to promote equality in academia. The latter's needs are met by the call for a supportive ethical culture in higher education, which is consistent with (18) assertion that educational institutions should work to foster an atmosphere that promotes the sharing of ethical

ideas. They found that fostering an integrity-based culture improved the overall ethical climate on campus, made students feel involved in these discussions, and improved their ability to reason ethically (18). Finally, (19) emphasize the importance of an ethical culture in higher education, as creating an environment that promotes ethical conversations fosters a sense of community and inclusion. Their results suggest that students who feel good about themselves are more likely to act responsibly and engage in moral discourse.

5. Conclusion:

The research findings underscore how prevalent strong ethics are among college students, but with a subtle difference. It shows that older students tend to hold these values even more than younger ones do. These findings are important as they are based on simple observations about the world. Having this kind of information could help teachers design courses that teach ethics in a way which suits each student's current moral outlook (their 'landscape'), especially when lots of things may be changing all at once during their time in higher education.

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