



PERSONAL ETHICS AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE FACE OF THE RESOLUTION OF DILEMMAS AND PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS IN CHILEAN GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between personal ethics and deontological leadership in Chilean graduates, with the purpose of determining whether a high level of personal ethics in leaders influences the resolution of moral dilemmas and problematic situations in the institutional environment.

Theoretical Framework: The research is based on concepts and theories about professional ethics, deontological leadership, and university ethics training. Theories and models such as Applied Ethics, Business Ethics and the deontological theory of ethics stand out.

Method: A quantitative methodology with a survey design was adopted. 207 graduates of various careers from the Universidad Austral de Chile participated. Three instruments were used: the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire, the Ethical Dilemmas of Business Culture Questionnaire, and the Personal Ethics survey of collaborators. Data were analyzed with SPSS Statistics 23 and SPSS AMOS 23, performing exploratory and confirmatory factor analyzes.

Results and Discussion: The results revealed that a high level of personal ethics is crucial to exercise effective deontological leadership. Significant differences in ethical perception between genders and ages were identified, suggesting that women and older professionals better manage ethical dilemmas. A negative correlation was observed between tolerance to unethical behaviors and the ability to solve ethical dilemmas.

Implications of Research: Practical implications include the need to incorporate rigorous ethical training into university curricula to develop ethical leaders. Theoretically, the study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between personal ethics and deontological leadership, proposing that personal ethics is an essential precursor for ethical leadership in organizations.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the literature by empirically demonstrating the importance of personal ethics in deontological leadership. Their innovative approach and the discoveries made can influence training and professional practices in the educational and business field.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Ethical And Moral Training, Code Of Ethics, Professional Ethics..

ÉTICA PESSOAL E LIDERANÇA ÉTICA DIANTE DA SOLUÇÃO DE DILEMAS E SITUAÇÕES PROBLEMÁTICAS EM FORMANDOS CHILENOS

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é investigar a relação entre ética pessoal e liderança ética em graduados chilenos, a fim de determinar se um alto nível de ética pessoal em líderes influencia a resolução de dilemas morais e situações problemáticas no ambiente institucional.

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Estrutura Teórica: A pesquisa é baseada em conceitos e teorias sobre ética profissional, liderança ética e formação em ética universitária. Teorias e modelos como Ética Aplicada, Ética Empresarial e Ética Ética Destacam-se.

Método: Foi adotada uma metodologia quantitativa com um projeto de inquérito. Os participantes eram 207 graduados de vários graus da Universidad Austral de Chile. Foram utilizados três instrumentos: o Questionário de Liderança Ética, o Questionário de Dilemas Éticos da Cultura Empresarial e a pesquisa Ética Pessoal dos Funcionários. Os dados foram analisados com as estatísticas SPSS 23 e SPSS AMOS 23, realizando análises exploratórias e confirmatórias de fatores.

Resultados e Discussão: Os resultados revelaram que um alto nível de ética pessoal é crucial para exercer uma liderança deontológica eficaz. Diferenças significativas na percepção ética foram identificadas entre gêneros e idades, sugerindo que mulheres e profissionais mais velhos lidam melhor com dilemas éticos. Uma correlação negativa foi observada entre a tolerância ao comportamento antiético e a capacidade de resolver dilemas éticos.

Implicações da pesquisa: As implicações práticas incluem a necessidade de incorporar treinamento ético rigoroso nos currículos universitários para desenvolver líderes éticos. Teoricamente, o estudo contribui para a compreensão da relação entre ética pessoal e liderança ética, propondo que a ética pessoal é um precursor essencial para a liderança ética em organizações.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo contribui para a literatura ao demonstrar empiricamente a importância da ética pessoal na liderança deontológica. Sua abordagem inovadora e as descobertas feitas podem influenciar a formação e as práticas profissionais no campo educacional e empresarial.

Palavras-chave: Liderança Ética, Formação Ética E Moral, Código De Ética, Ética Profissional.

ÉTICA PERSONAL Y LIDERAZGO DEONTOLÓGICO ANTE LA RESOLUCIÓN DE DILEMAS Y SITUACIONES PROBLEMÁTICAS EN EGRESADOS CHILENOS

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este estudio es investigar la relación entre la ética personal y el liderazgo deontológico en egresados chilenos, con el propósito de determinar si un alto nivel de ética personal en los líderes influye en la resolución de dilemas morales y situaciones problemáticas en el ámbito institucional.

Marco Teórico: La investigación se basa en conceptos y teorías sobre ética profesional, liderazgo deontológico, y formación ética universitaria. Destacan teorías y modelos como los de Ética Aplicada, Ética Empresarial y la teoría deontológica de la ética.

Método: Se adoptó una metodología cuantitativa con un diseño de encuesta. Participaron 207 egresados de diversas carreras de la Universidad Austral de Chile. Se utilizaron tres instrumentos: el Cuestionario de Liderazgo Deontológico, el Cuestionario de Dilemas Éticos de la Cultura Empresarial, y la encuesta de Ética Personal de los colaboradores. Los datos se analizaron con SPSS Statistics 23 y SPSS AMOS 23, realizando análisis factoriales exploratorios y confirmatorios.

Resultados y Discusión: Los resultados revelaron que un alto nivel de ética personal es crucial para ejercer un liderazgo deontológico efectivo. Se identificaron diferencias significativas en la percepción ética entre géneros y edades, sugiriendo que las mujeres y los profesionales de mayor edad manejan mejor los dilemas éticos. Se observó una correlación negativa entre la tolerancia a comportamientos poco éticos y la capacidad para resolver dilemas éticos.

Implicaciones de la Investigación: Las implicaciones prácticas incluyen la necesidad de incorporar formación ética rigurosa en los currículos universitarios para desarrollar líderes éticos. Teóricamente, el estudio aporta al entendimiento de la relación entre ética personal y liderazgo deontológico, proponiendo que la ética personal es un precursor esencial para un liderazgo ético en las organizaciones.

Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio contribuye a la literatura al demostrar empíricamente la importancia de la ética personal en el liderazgo deontológico. Su enfoque innovador y los descubrimientos realizados pueden influir en la formación y prácticas profesionales en el ámbito educativo y empresarial.



Palabras clave: Liderazgo Ético, Formación Ética Y Moral, Código Deontológico, Ética Profesional.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between professional ethics and university education has attracted considerable research interest globally, highlighting the need to incorporate ethics teaching in academic curricula to form full and responsible professionals (Vielma and Navia 2020). A study by the Institute of Applied Ethics of the University of Deusto (2018) found that 75% of university seniors see ethical training as essential for their professional development, although only 50% indicated having received specific training in ethics. In the United States, a 2019 survey by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) found that 93% of employers value the ability to think critically and act ethically more than the candidate's specialization, though only 30% believe that recent graduates are prepared in these areas (Vielma and Navia 2020; Sobočan et al., 2020).

A study by the University of Buenos Aires (2019) indicated that 65% of students in health areas see insufficient ethical training received, highlighting the need for a greater emphasis on the ethical dilemmas of their field. These findings reflect a growing awareness of the importance of professional ethics in higher education and the need for a more systematic and in-depth approach to its teaching (Scalzo et al., 2019; Torquemada and Loredo 2021).

The variability in the implementation of ethics programs suggests the need for global standards for effective ethics training. In the labor market, the importance of professional ethics is widely recognized, and institutions of higher education in Chile have begun to explicitly integrate ethical content into their curricula. A 2021 study shows that 75% of Chilean universities include specific ethics courses in at least one career, but only 40% have a program covering all disciplines.

Employers value ethical training when hiring, but 50% have faced situations where employees lack work ethics. In terms of regulation and promotion of ethics, 90% of universities in Chile have codes of ethics, but only 25% have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Research in professional ethics has also gained academic relevance in Chile, with a 60% increase in scientific publications in the last five years (Torquemada and Loredo 2021)



In addition, 70% of higher education institutions report having projects that promote professional ethics, not only within the university but also in the wider community. Although there are advances and recognition of the importance of this training, gaps and challenges remain that must be overcome to ensure that future professionals can successfully address ethical dilemmas in their labor fields (Torquemada and Loredó 2021).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical leadership is understood as behavior oriented to comply with and enforce professional activities by applying the ethical standards established in the code of ethics (Villa et al., 2020). Ethical leadership puts into practice the development of ethics in the organization, caring and dealing with the rights both internal (of all the people who make up the staff) and external (clients and recipients of the activity carried out by the organization and whose results impact beyond its walls), (Sobočan et al., 2020).

Business ethics, as applied ethics, deals with what is right or wrong in business activity, thus becoming an orientation for action, a decisive practical aid for decision-making and for possible alternatives of action, for the resolution of conflicts through dialog and negotiation (Luban and 2020).

Regarding the training of university students around ethical aspects, Coloma (2017) carried out a study on the 19 accredited Chilean universities of the CRUCH analyzing the professional profiles of the careers of Public Accountant or Auditor to determine ethics as a transversal value in the student's training process (Sheveleva, 2020). Of these, 74% materialize it through the incorporation of a mandatory subject of ethics in the curricular mesh; while the other 26%, declares that it does so through the transversality of ethical training in the curriculum, given the transcendental importance of value formation (Suárez and Lezama, 2019), which is established as a vertebrate axis, with the particularity that can be developed in various subjects in the same semester and/or academic year (Zeledón and Aguilar 2020).

Continuing with the university plans and the importance of competence development, Guerrero and Gómez (2013) underline the idea of ethics as a competence, pointing out that there are several authors who without any epistemological reflection has reduced ethics to a competition, that is, to a know-how in context (Bolívar, 2005; García-García, 2010). That is why in this work we will understand ethical competence, such as “positively inclining towards the moral good of oneself or others (that is, towards everything that is or means good,



experience of meaning, realization of the person, sense of justice) and persevering in said moral good” (Villa y Poblete, 2007, p. 230).

The ethical and moral training developed or not in the university field is related to the sense and ethical behavior that university graduates subsequently demonstrate (Vielma and Navia 2020). In the empirical study it is to determine what is the perception that students in their graduate phase and already exercising a professional work value of the leadership exercised and check the degree to which they assume ethical and deontological behaviors in front of dilemmas or problematic situations in which they have to opt for a more or less ethical behavior (Zeledón and Aguilar 2020).

Educational organizations face ethical dilemmas, from management to teaching. Modern companies, in a global and digital world, also face ethical challenges ranging from sustainability to advertising and work ethics (Scalzo et al., 2019). This leads us to question: What is the perception of university graduates about ethical leadership in the current business environment and how does this influence their expectations and professional approaches?

Our findings suggest that ethical leadership transcends norms-following; it involves introspection, authenticity, and understanding of diverse ethical perspectives, resonating with Wood and Hilton (2012), and visionaries such as Greenleaf (1970) and Bass (1985). This leadership not only forges the organizational culture, but also influences its identity, according to Treviño et al. (2003).

Ethical leadership in education is a responsibility and an opportunity to forge a culture of integrity. Leaders have a duty to form academically capable and ethically conscious individuals. The prevalence of unethical behavior and corruption undermines trust, and as Simonetta (2017) points out, interest in leadership ethics has grown due to notorious corporate scandals (Scalzo et al., 2019).

Najera (2016) focuses deontological theory on the study of moral obligations, proposing that moral behavior is independent of the results. Ethical leadership, according to Brown et al. (2005), combines intrinsic qualities of leaders with ethical and moral demands of society, extending its influence beyond actions to a positive impact on the environment (Sheveleva, 2020).

López-Navarro et al. (2011) explored the perceptions of business administration students, concluding that business management should be evaluated through the perspective of stakeholders. Gallardo et al. (2010) revealed that many students pay attention to corporate social responsibility (CSR), preferring environmentally responsible companies. The ethics of leadership is not a new concept, and its complexity has increased with globalization. Unda et



al. (2016) argue that educational institutions should validate ethical management and not just presuppose it (Sheveleva, 2020). Do they suggest that the ethical behavior of university leaders is fundamental, given their ability to influence the entire Méle organization (2000).

Ethics transcends being a mere trend and becomes indispensable in the face of crises and social demands (Luban and 2020). However, studies such as that of Stachovicz-Stanudch (2011), referenced by Simonetta (2017), show that leadership is still perceived as morally neutral, highlighting problematic behaviors such as abusive supervision, ineffective or toxic leadership, and "small tyrannies", focused more on power than the common good. This is a fusion of leadership qualities with the ethical and moral demands of society. It is more than actions; it is a positive influence on the environment, as Brown et al. (2005) argue. The challenge is to navigate ethical complexity in organizational environments, where conflicting interests prevail (Ghoshal, 2005). From Greek philosophy to current debates, ethics has been central to leadership, but today it faces global and complex dilemmas (Luban and 2020).

Studying student attitudes and perceptions towards ethics is crucial to anticipating future professional behavior. López-Navarro et al. (2011) defined efficient management from the perspective of stakeholders. Gallardo et al. (2010) revealed that most students value CSR and prefer to work for environmentally friendly companies.

Ethics of justice, of a deontological nature, requires leaders to comply with professional norms, considering intentions over results (Beckner, 2004; Maxcy, 2002; Wood et al., 2012). Leaders must base decisions on pre-established principles, regardless of consequences (Caldwell, 2007; Stefkovich et al., 2007).

The integrity of managers is essential; once their importance is recognized, they must institutionalize ethics with clear procedures, including leadership based on values and ethical codes (Hamburger and Cortés-Barrera, 2017). A corporate ethical code is fundamental, not natural, but managerially created, and brings benefits such as image enhancement and guidance in uncertainty (Hamburger, 2006).

According to José Kadi Montiel et al. (2014), Ethical leadership, the basis of leadership, should influence the organization, staff, and structures. Empirical examples, such as the study of nurses in Surabaya, show an ethical application mostly integrated into their practice, with the nurse-patient area as the best performance (Unda et al., 2016).

The statistical findings reveal that individual characteristics such as age, education, gender and marital status, as well as the work environment, including the type of hospital and the work unit, significantly influence the knowledge and application of the code of ethics



(Scalzo et al., 2019). Work experience turns out to be the strongest predictor of its application (Cortina, 2000).

With statistically significant T and p values, the results have a solid empirical basis, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics that influence the ethical and professional behavior of nurses, essential for policies and programs that promote consistent ethical practices (Unda et al., 2018).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 PROBLEM APPROACH

In view of the numerous moral dilemmas and problematic situations faced daily by institutions and their leaders, in which complying strictly with the code of ethics of the profession is considered essential, it can be thought that those people who have a greater personal ethics will have a significant influence in making the best decisions in the institutional and professional field through ethical leadership.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Has academic training in ethics and deontology during your stay at the Universidad Austral de Chile had a significant impact on the ethical sensitivity of graduates to professional dilemmas?

3.3 GENERAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the impact of academic training in ethics and deontology during the stay at the Universidad Austral de Chile on the ethical sensitivity of graduates in the face of professional dilemmas.

3.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze the level of knowledge and understanding about ethics and professional ethics that students of the Universidad Austral de Chile have at the end of their



university studies, through the implementation of standardized tests that evaluate specific ethical competences.

2. Identify and characterize the most frequent professional dilemmas faced by graduates of the Universidad Austral de Chile and analyze the data with their level of personal ethics.

3. To evaluate the correlation between the academic training in ethics and deontology received by graduates of the Universidad Austral de Chile and their ability to face and solve professional dilemmas.

3.5 SAMPLE

Graduate students from the Business Administration and Consulting and Law majors of the Universidad Austral de Chile were invited. 234 professionals answered, but only 207 were definitively part of the sample, due to the rejection of those who had not completed all the questions raised, of which 88 were men and 119 were women. Regarding the studies carried out, 14 studied Business Administration, 56 Commercial Engineering, 101 Accountant, 1 person Economy, 27 Law and 8 people studied other university degrees. In the labor market, 180 of the participants were dependents and 27 were independent. Finally, the vast majority of them (131 - 63.3%) worked in an organization with more than 200 employees.

3.6 THIS SAMPLE RESPONDED TO THREE DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS

- First, the Deontological Leadership Questionnaire was used (Villa and Coloma, 2020). This instrument consists of a total of 18 items on a five-point Likert scale, which measures deontological leadership. Reliability for the total scale has been excellent ($\alpha = .958$), as well as the reliability of the two dimensions that make up the component, both for the general deontological behavior dimension ($\alpha = .949$), and for the behavior dimension that affects the staff themselves ($\alpha = .849$).

Secondly, the Ethical Dilemmas of Business Culture Questionnaire was used (ÉTNOR, 2006). This instrument is made up of 9 ethical dilemmas that raise various situations in the business field on which each participant is asked to choose the option that would make before that situation. The internal consistency of the dimension of acceptability or rejection of fraudulent situations is ($\alpha = .813$).



- Thirdly, the survey of the level of business ethics of employees was used (CERES, 2018). This instrument consists of 15 problematic situations, in which the participant is provided with three possible decisions, selecting the option that best suits his thought. It is formed by two dimensions: Ethical business action and Ethical action within the company. The reliability of the dimensions is excellent, both for the dimension of business ethics ($\alpha = .950$), and the dimension of ethical action within the company ($\alpha = .901$).

4 RESULTS

SPSS Statistics 23 and SPSS AMOS 23 were used to analyze the data. Initially, an exploratory factor analysis was performed to evaluate the KMO tests, the explained variance and factor loads. The model was then confirmed with a confirmatory factor analysis, examining the goodness of fit by X^2/df , CFI, RMSEA and AIC. After verifying the suitability of the model, descriptive and correlation analyzes were carried out, as well as reliability tests for the scales used. Significant differences were studied by gender with a t-test, and by age, experience and company size with ANOVA of a factor. The study ends with a comparison with previous ÉTNOR research on ethical dilemmas, which allows to obtain more robust conclusions about business ethics.

4.1 PRELIMINARY ADJUSTMENTS

An exploratory factor analysis was performed using the main components and rotation method Varimax, based on the relevance shown by an outstanding KMO value. This process revealed two main factors that together accounted for 65.6% of the total variance: the first contributed 59.7% and the second 5.9%. With these factors in place, progress was made towards a confirmatory analysis.

Initially, the model showed moderate goodness of fit, with an X^2/df of 4.07, CFI of .872 and RMSEA of .122, along with an AIC of 653.89. An adjustment was made by covariance between items 1 and 2, reflecting complementary concepts and solid factor loads. This modification resulted in a significant improvement of the adjustment indicators: X^2/df dropped to 3.08, the IFC increased to .918, the RMSEA was reduced to .101, and the AIC was optimized to 414.78.



The descriptors revealed high averages in the general deontological behavior and in the one that affects the personnel, standing out against the ethical dilemmas, where the scores indicated problematic. A relevant finding was the negative correlation between the acceptability dimension and ethical dilemmas ($r = -.157$; $p = .024$), suggesting that those less tolerant with ethically ambiguous behaviors tend to better handle ethical dilemmas.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability of the different dimensions studied.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability of the different dimensions studied. increase graphic size

		M	DT	1	2	3	4	5
	Behavior	4.15	.822	(.949)	.808***	-.134*	.346***	- 124%
	General ethics							
	Affects staff themselves							
2000	Acceptability	1.18	.260			(.813)	-1.19	-.157*
	Frequency or Extension	2.01	.540				(.0921)	.010
2018	Dilemmas	8.33	1.06					(.894)

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

4.2 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCALES

The possible differences between the different scales were studied according to a series of contextual variables. First, possible gender differences were examined, through a Student's T-test. The findings suggest that only statistically significant differences were found, in the degree of acceptability as shown in Table 2, it is appreciated that women show a more critical perspective, since they accept to a lesser degree those unethical situations within the business environment ($p = .020$; $d = .32$).

Table 2

Gender differences in different dimensions.

Dimension / Scale	Masc (DT)	MFEM (DT)	Test T	
			P	D
General ethical behavior	4.27 (.782)	4.06 (.843)	.075	.25
Behavior affecting staff themselves	4.28 (.800)	4.15 (.838)	.298	.15
Acceptability	1.23 (353)	1.14(.173)	.020	.32
Frequency or Extension	2.08 (.528)	1.96 (.545)	.115	.22
Dilemmas	8.31 (1.13)	8.34 (.321)	.821	-.03



Possible statistical differences were analyzed according to age, years of experience and size of the company, through an ANOVA of a factor. From all these analyzes we can see how only significant statistical differences were found according to age, for the resolution of ethical dilemmas that can arise in the business world ($p = .028$; $\eta^2 = .053$). Specifically, Table 3 shows how younger workers, under 24 years of age up to 30 years of age, showed more serious problems in providing an adequate response to the different ethical dilemmas that were presented to them, compared to older workers, who responded to the different ethical dilemmas more correctly. With this finding, it can be inferred that age can be a key factor in presenting a better ability to solve certain types of ethical business dilemmas and not so much because of work experience.

Table 3

Differences depending on the age, experience and size of the company in the different dimensions.

Dimension / Scale	Factor ANOVA (VI=Age)		Post Hoc	Factor ANOVA. (VI=Experience)		ANOVA factor (VI=Company size)	
	P	N ²		P	N ²	P	N ²
General ethical behavior	.475	.017	-	.591	.014	.215	.034
Behavior affecting staff themselves	.342	.022	-	.768	.009	.206	.035
Acceptability	.602	.013	-	.584	.014	.209	.035
Frequency or Extension	.935	.004	-	.632	.013	.777	.012
Dilemmas	0.28	0.53	1-5; 2-5	.272	.025	.489	.022

Note.

Post-Hoc performed through the Tukey test. (1) Age under 24, (2) Age between 25 and 30 (5) Age between 51 and 60.

4.3 ACCEPTABILITY VS FREQUENCY

In the end, a comparative study was carried out in search of possible differences in the different situations in which the degree of acceptability to a certain fact had to be indicated, and the degree of frequency or extension of that fact in the business environment. The data obtained were compared with the study of ÉTNOR (2000), who had a slightly lower sample than the present study ($n = 175$).

It should be noted that the analysis on ethical dilemmas was presented at the 8th International Congress of Educational and Technological Innovation of Monterrey (Villa, Galindo and Coloma, 2021).



Ethical leadership is understood as behavior oriented to comply with and enforce professional activities, applying the ethical standards established in the code of ethics (Villa et al., 2020), putting into practice the development of ethics in the organization, caring and dealing with the rights both internal (of all the people who make up the staff) and external (clients and recipients of the activity carried out by the organization and whose results impact beyond its walls).

The data analysis began by studying the statistics and the correlations of the different dimensions. It is striking the significant and inverse correlation between the dimensions of business ethics and the dimension of ethical action within the company ($r = -.168$; $p = .014$), which may point to how the personal ethics perceived within the company itself may not go in the same line with personal ethics in the business world in general. It may even reflect the disparity or inconsistency between displaying a very ethical image facing the gallery and then falling into contradiction when applied to the environment itself. At this point, we proceeded with the causal studies. More specifically, it is worked with the hypothesis that personal ethics is a previous step that must be taken for the deontological leadership to exist within companies. As already mentioned in previous lines, deontological leadership has been measured through the Villa y Coloma (2020) instrument, formed by two dimensions: General deontological behavior, and behavior that affects the staff themselves. This analysis was complemented by examining whether individuals with a higher personal ethics score were able to respond to a range of ethical dilemmas that could arise in a business institution in a more appropriate or relevant manner.

Table 5

Correlations and regressions with deontological leadership and ethical dilemmas.

VD	Correlations		Regressions						
	M	DT	PREPA	AREDE	R2	TRAVEL		TRAVEL	
						β	p	β	p
CDG	4.03	1.06	.108	.603***	.412	.308	.000	1.27	.000
CAPP	4.09	1.07	.101	.626***	.436	.300	.000	.662	.000
Dilemma 1	1.08	.398	.173*	.377***	.200	.073	.000	.311	.000
Dilemma 2	1.14	.488	.194***	.276***	.137	.159	.000	.318	.000
Dilemma 3	1.45	.710	.351***	.117	.157	.357	.000	.241	.000
Dilemma 4	1.16	.472	.277***	.241***	.163	.203	.000	.262	.000
Dilemma 5	1.35	.610	.382***	.145*	.193	.336	.000	.247	.001
Dilemma 6	1.01	.314	.107	.497***	.285	.081	.001	.312	.000
Dilemma 7	1.01	.306	.141*	.482***	.283	.092	.000	.298	.000



Dilemma 8	1.09	.401	.178***	.343***	.175	.128	.000	.288	.000
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CDG = General Ethical Behavior; Behavior Affecting One's Own Staff; AEE = Business Ethical Action; AEDE = Ethical Action Within the Company; VI = Independent Variable; VD = Dependent Variable; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Table 2 shows all the correlations and regressions made from these analyzes. The results show how the dimension of ethical business performance does not correlate significantly with any of the dimensions of deontological leadership, but it does correlate with all ethical dilemmas, except for dilemma 6. Regarding the dimension of ethical action within the company, it correlates significantly and highly with deontological leadership, and with all ethical dilemmas, except for dilemma 3.

Based on the regression analyzes performed, it can be seen how both the ethical business performance and the ethical performance within the company, allow us to significantly predict the two dimensions of deontological leadership, as well as all ethical dilemmas, allowing us to confirm the starting hypothesis.

5 DISCUSSION

The empirical study clearly shows that the ethical leadership required in companies to promote and carry out a deontology is based on a personal ethical level.

It reflects the complexity of ethical leadership in companies and its relationship with personal ethics. The application of an exploratory factor analysis followed by a confirmatory analysis has allowed establishing a significant relationship between personal ethical performance and the ability to address ethical dilemmas in the business environment, a finding that echoes the reflections of authors such as Luban and Wendel (2020) on the evolution of professional ethical thinking.

The discovery of significant differences by gender, with women showing a more critical perspective, agrees with the observations of Scalzo, Galbán-Lozano, and Ortega-Barba (2019), who highlighted the relevance of gender in ethical perception within the business sciences. This critical perspective could be crucial for the effective management of ethical dilemmas and points to the need for a more nuanced understanding of ethics in leadership, as suggested by Sharkey and Gash (2020).

In addition, the negative correlation between the acceptability dimension and ethical dilemmas highlights the importance of intolerance towards ethically ambiguous behaviors in



the management of ethical dilemmas, reinforcing Sheveleva's (2020) idea that students' perception of ethics has a significant impact on their professional behavior.

On the other hand, the influence of age on the resolution of ethical dilemmas underlines the importance of the development of ethical maturity throughout life, which supports the findings of Sobočan et al. (2020) on the relationship between professional identity and ethics in social work. This discovery suggests that ethical competencies are strengthened not only with education but also with life experience, and underlines the importance of teaching strategies that address this dimension, such as those recommended by Suárez and Lezama (2019).

Finally, the correlation and regression have evidenced the relevance of personal ethics for deontological leadership, consistent with the research of Torquemada and Loredó (2021) on the evaluation of professional teaching ethics. This approach underscores the need for leadership that not only promotes, but also exemplifies ethics, both internally and externally within organizations.

These results pave the way for future research that delves into educational methodologies that can strengthen ethical competencies in university classrooms and work environments, with the aim of developing business leaders capable of navigating and solving ethical dilemmas with integrity and effectiveness.

Oh, yeah.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The study offers a revealing perspective on the relationship between personal ethics and deontological behavior in the business context. The analysis methodology, which included the use of SPSS Statistics 23 and SPSS AMOS 23, allowed to identify significant patterns through an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, with notable improvements in the goodness of fit after adjustments based on covariances between specific items.

The statistical results highlight a negative correlation between the acceptability of unethical behaviors and the ability to manage ethical dilemmas, suggesting that greater intolerance towards the lack of business ethics leads to better resolution of dilemmas. It was also evident that age is a determining factor in the ability to address ethical dilemmas, with younger individuals presenting greater difficulties in this area.

Correlation and regression analyzes confirm that, although ethical performance within the company has a significant link with ethical leadership and the resolution of ethical dilemmas, business ethical performance in general does not show a direct correlation with



deontological leadership, but with the management of ethical dilemmas. This finding underscores the importance of cultivating a strong personal ethic that can translate into ethically robust professional practices.

The study provides empirical evidence that ethical and deontological training in higher education institutions has a direct impact on the preparation of graduates to face ethical challenges in the workplace. It highlights the need to emphasize personal ethics as a precursor of effective and ethical leadership in the business environment, which highlights the relevance of university training not only in technical skills, but also in ethical principles and values. This comprehensive approach is essential to foster a generation of professionals capable of leading with integrity and responsibility in an increasingly complex and globalized labor market. The main limitation of the study could be the lack of a diverse and broader sample that covers different geographical and cultural contexts, which limits the generalization of the results to a broader spectrum of the population.

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