

## Faculty members' ethical practices and students ethical behavioral practices: a case study of Al-Quds University

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### Abstract

The study aimed to identify some ethical practices of faculty members and its relationship with the students' ethical behavioral practices at Al-Quds University. A stratified random sample consisting of 366 male and female students was selected, and the descriptive approach was used as it suits best the nature and objectives of the study. Findings showed that the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students were moderate. However, their ethical behavioral practices were high. The results revealed a significant difference in the ethical practices of faculty members as perceived by the students due to college. However, there were differences in the students' ethical behavioral practices due to gender. Also, college and faculty member's ethical practices emerged as a significant predictor of students ethical behavioral practices. Implications of the findings and directions for future empirical research were discussed.

**Key words:** Ethics, ethical practices, faculty members, behavioral practices.

### Introduction

Ethics is closely related to the educational process. Ethics involves the most important principles and rules which guide and organize human conduct. Through ethics, the human aspect of an individual is realized. Education is probably one of the important factors through which an individual acquires the principles of morality. As educational institutions are primarily responsible for developing the individual and building the student's personality, they should be characterized by morality in the first place. There should be no separation between their responsibility for teaching students knowledge and science and their responsibility for establishing their morality. Indeed, the advancement of moral responsibility is the best way to facilitate the advancement of scientific responsibility (Afifi, 2005).

Many of our educational institutions are interested in the cognitive and achievement aspects of students without focusing on the ethical aspect and moral values, which inhibits students from developing an acceptable level of morality. It should be remembered that modern

educational studies focus on the ethical aspects as well as the academic content (Robbins & Scott, 1997).

Ethical, or moral, education is more important and crucial than materialistic and academic education. Moral education focuses on adjusting and guiding scientific knowledge and expertise. If this guidance did not happen, it means that the student would lead a nihilistic state of selfishness which is empty of all moral and human imports (Jallad, 2007).

Employees' commitment to work ethic is associated with their ethics as human beings and with the skills, knowledge, and the behavior they have acquired. It is necessary to have clear and specific regulations and instructions and to emphasize their application to fine-tune the work ethic. This procedure has a prominent and influential role in influencing employee's moral behavior. Eventually, the adopted positive behavior will gradually develop into an ongoing or permanent natural behavior of an employee in all cases (Tarkhan, 2003).

## **Background**

A review of the previous literature shows that there are many studies that addressed the topic of behavioral practices. In a recent study, Solum et al. (2015) indicated that showing respect was a central objective when the students were assessed in practice. Also, a less authoritarian learning climate may enhance critical reflection and discussion between students, teachers, and nurses. Thus, this can narrow the gap between the theory taught in college and what is demonstrated in clinical practice. Drumwright et al. (2015) argues that teaching behavioral ethics can have a positive impact, discusses materials that can be used to teach those concepts, and addresses action-research approaches to assessing the effectiveness of the instruction.

Moreover, Gosenpud and Werner (2015) indicated that to help future business leaders become more ethical, business school implicit values should reflect a more ethical direction. However, the study of House et al. (2015) concluded that the most common ethical themes were autonomy (41%), social justice (32.4%), nonmaleficence (31.8%), beneficence (26.6%), fidelity (12%), and respect (8.7%).

According to students and educators, Cannaerts et al. (2014) found that ethics education increases ethical perception of nursing students and the development of reflective and

analytical skills. However, its contribution to the development of ethical behavior was barely mentioned. The accounts of students and educators revealed essential features of effective ethics education: active involvement of students in case study discussions and use of ethical frameworks. Consequently, the use of activating educational strategies requires a safe learning environment where students can openly reflect on values at stake in their care practice. The results of Jahan and Islam (2014) study unveiled that almost all teachers have positive or favorable perceptions on the ethical issues in teaching, but the ethics in some of the teachers' behavior and practices still remains absent.

In a study conducted, Zoubi (2013) indicated that the faculty members believed that the ethics of teaching practices was moderate. The majority of faculty members and students believed that most practices were reasonable. Also, there were also statistically significant differences between the two groups: the students and the professors. In another study, Khawaldeh et al. (2013) concluded that the degree of commitment to the ethics of the profession was moderate. As a result, there were statistically significant differences in the degree of commitment due to the academic level in favor of senior students.

Additionally, the study of Graham (2012) show that students regard ethics teaching as being important to them and that a stand-alone ethics course is preferred to integrate teaching across the curriculum. Students describe the benefits of a compartmentalized approach to their learning with ethics 'all in one place'. Therefore, ethics should be treated as part of a wider employability agenda for students to help them in their future careers.

## **Purpose and Scope**

The ethical values of students are one of the imperative topics that have drawn the attention of educators and researchers in the field of social psychology. Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in undesirable behaviors. As a result, educators began to focus on the programs of moral education and integrate them into the curriculum.

In the light of the frequent interaction between the teacher and his superiors, the teacher and his colleagues, the teacher and members of the community, the teacher and his students, etc., there is a growing need for ethics in the field of educational work, especially in schooling and teaching. Such interaction between the teacher and his students is important as it involves, whether intentionally or not, the transference of the values and attitudes of the dominant

party, i.e. the teacher, to the dominated party, i.e. his students. According to Jaballah (2006), the lack of ethics may lead to a disaster, and if our schools do not pay attention to that, then they will be graduate learners who can practice everything except that which is ethical. Thus, the author's research also emphasizes the educational role whereby our institutions can contribute to supporting and instilling positive moral values to students via the educational process in general and the process of teaching in particular. In the light of the above presentation, the statement of the study can be summed up in the following question: what are the ethical practices of the faculty members and its relationship with the students' ethical behavioral practices as perceived by Al-Quds University students?

Paying educational attention to the ethical values is necessary. They are one of the most essential pillars of the society. They also control the behavior of its members, reflect on their way of life, and can protect society from corruption and violence. Instilling and strengthening ethical values and practices becomes one of the most fundamental duties which educational institutions should strive to achieve when they educate and build the personalities of their individuals. As a result, they translate their behaviors in life into deeds and actions.

There is no doubt that the teacher is one of the key components of the educational process, and is one of its determining sophisticated and effective factors. Teachers have the skills, the potential, and the capacity that enables them to play many roles which are essential in providing the generations with the knowledge and skills that are commensurate with the changes and developments. Also, they can strengthen their moral values which plays a key and effective role in changing one's life. The present study seeks to reveal students' practices of ethical behavior; professors' practices of ethical behavior; the differences in the ethical practices of students due to the variables of gender, major, and academic level; the relationship between some of the ethical practices of faculty members; and the behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Ethics:** A group of behaviors exhibited by the individual when dealing with life events or with other individuals (Saane, 2011).

**Ethics:** An individual's capacity to understand right from wrong and to have moral convictions which enable him/her to act in the right way (Borba, 2001).

## **Limitations**

The population of the study was limited to the undergraduate full-time students of Al-Quds University, main campus, Jerusalem, Abu Dies, during 2014/2015 academic year.

## **Hypotheses**

Based on the reviewed literature, the set objectives, questions and variables of the study, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. There are no statistical significant differences at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  in the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by Al-Quds University students according their gender, college, and academic level.
2. There are no statistical significant differences at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  in the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students according their gender, college, and academic level.
3. There are no statistical significant correlation at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  between the ethical practices of faculty members as perceived by Al-Quds University students and their ethical behavioral practices.

Delimiting variables to the scope of the study based on participants' demographic characteristic include academic achievement, gender, college, and academic level. Thus, this is in addition to the ethical practices of faculty members and the student's behavioral practices indexes.

## **Methodology and Design**

The study is a quantitative research study that uses a questionnaire that is appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research.

The overall sample composed of three hundred and sixty-six students (162 males and 204 females) full-time undergraduate students at Al-Quds University stratifiedly selected based on gender and academic year. The sample size was calculated using the sampling web. of <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, sample size calculator, with a margin error of 0.05. The target population consists of Al-Quds university full-time undergraduate students in the main campus-Abu Dies during the academic year 2014/2015, which includes nine thousand

four hundred and ninety-five students, 4345 males to 5150 females (Al-Quds University, 2014).

Ethical practices of the faculty members were evaluated using an index of a 23-item scale that was introduced by Hamadna (2013). On the other hand, ethical behavioral practices of the students were evaluated using an index of a 22-item scale that was introduced by Ansari (2007). A 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, and strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in Al-Quds University main campus-Abu Dies. The sampling survey instrument sought background information such as the participants' gender, college, and academic level.

Validation of the instrument proceeded in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators, who provided some comments on the tool. The second phase involved the implementation of a pilot study (N=30) to validate the survey using exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.65 (0.69 to 0.87), which means that those items are suitable in measuring every item of ethical practices of the faculty members and its relationship with the students' ethical behavioral practices as perceived of Al-Quds University students.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ascertain the reliability and consistency of the survey. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the survey instruments, in the ethical practices of the faculty members and the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students, was 0.81 and 0.80, respectively. Therefore, this indicates a very good reliability and consistency.

The demographic breakdown of the participants was as follows: gender, college, and academic level. In total, three hundred and sixty-six students were conducted. Females represented 55.7% of the participants, while the remaining 44.3% were males. They were drawn from fourteen faculties. Science represented 60.1% of the sample and the rest 39.9% represents arts. Students in their sophomore year were the largest group in terms of the university year 32.8%; 25.7% of the participants were in their junior year; senior year 24.3%; and finally freshman 17.2%.

### Data Analysis and Findings

Data were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The questionnaires items were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree). The highest score indicated a high level of ethical practices of the faculty members, and a high level of ethical behavioral practices among Al-Quds University students. Descriptive statistics gauged ethical practices of the faculty members, and ethical behavioral practices scores among the sampled population. The following statistical techniques were measured: Regression, T.test, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test, Pearson correlation, Cronbach's Alpha, and Factor Analysis.

The mean score of the ethical practices of the faculty members scale as perceived by the sample of three hundred and sixty-six students was moderate (M 3.25 SD 0.48). Furthermore, findings revealed the indicators of the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students were ranked in descending order as follows: professors adheres to the official working hours (M 3.70 SD 1.04); professors ignores cases of cheating in exams (M 3.66 SD 1.09). The students emphasize that professors gives easy exams to get popular among students (M 3.58 SD 1.16); reduces the time of the lecture by coming late and ending it earlier than scheduled (M 3.55 SD 1.10); and reveals private problems made by the student to others (M 3.51 SD 1.17).

However, the mean score of the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students scale by the sample of three hundred and sixty-six students was high (M 3.80 SD 0.57). Moreover, findings revealed that the indicators of the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students were ranked in a descending order as follows; I stay away from tampering with gardens and plantings within the university (M 4.17 SD 0.99); I adhere to exams times as scheduled (M 4.16 SD 0.85). The students indicated that they have good behavior when they deal with faculty members (M 4.15 SD 0.97); they keep the university environment clean (M 4.11 SD 0.94); and they avoid divulging the secrets of their colleagues in front of their professors (M 4.07 SD 1.20).

Moreover, the study investigated demographic breakdown of the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students with the aim of identifying the differences. Findings show that gender and academic level do not indicate any significant differences. However, it was found that college is a significant variable. The differences were in favor of



arts students (M 3.32 SD 0.47) compared to (M 3.13 SD 0.46) for science students: T.test value was (-3.712 P=0.000).

Additionally, the study investigated demographic breakdown of the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students with the aim of identifying differences. Findings show that academic level does not indicate any significant differences. However, it was found that gender and college are significant variables. In terms of gender, the differences were in favor of females (M 3.88 SD 0.53) compared to (M 3.70 SD 0.61) for males: T.test value was (-3.095 P=0.002). As for college, the differences were in favor of arts students (M 3.91 SD 0.55) compared to (M 3.63 SD 0.57) for science students: T.test value was (-4.673 P=0.000).

Finally, findings indicated that there are statistical significant positive correlation between the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by Al-Quds University students and their ethical behavioral practices. Thus, R-correlation was (0.432 P=0.000).

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

Findings showed that the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students were moderate. However, their ethical behavioral practices were high. Undoubtedly, university life is a significant stage in the formation and development of one's personality; it represents a critical turning point in the life of a student; and it takes into consideration the fact that university life differs greatly from school life. The university, as an independent educational institution, represents a rich environment which requires students to lead a different life style (Musleh & Banat, 2006; Banat & Rimawi, 2014).

The ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by arts students is better than science students. Such differences can be attributed to the nature of the literary disciplines as they include majors, like humanities, which concentrate on building the individual's character and behavior. In addition, students of arts spend more time with their lecturers, compared with science students who have more practical courses and spend much time in their labs. Consequently, this situation was reflected in the responses of arts students who had the opportunity to have more contact time with their instructors and to acquire more professional ethics from them.



The study results revealed that gender and academic level do not indicate any significant differences in the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by Al-Quds University students. This indicates that the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by the students are not very much influenced by these variables. As a result, they are more likely to be affected by other factors other than gender and academic level.

According to study findings, females scored a higher level of ethical behavioral practices than that of males. This can be attributed possibly to the fact that the majority of students belong to the Islamic community. However, this requires everyone in general to have Islamic ethics and the females, in particular, to adhere to the religious traditions and ethics. In fact, unlike males, females receive stricter family upbringing in our societies. As a result, girls are more committed to the principles of morality than boys.

Moreover, ethical behavioral practices increased among science students compared to arts students. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that students of the scientific disciplines are more serious and primarily interested in academic achievement. In addition, unlike arts students, students of the scientific disciplines have less free time which might have a positive effect on their behavior and conduct.

The study revealed that academic level does not indicate any significant differences in the ethical behavioral practices of Al-Quds University students. This indicates that the ethical behavioral practices of the students are not very much influenced by this variable and are more likely to be affected by other factors other than academic level. In addition, behavioral practice is something inherent in the student's family upbringing and environment, which in turn would lead to a lack of difference in these practices among students from different academic levels.

Finally, a positive relationship was found between the ethical practices of the faculty members as perceived by Al-Quds University students and their ethical behavioral practices. In other words, the more ethical are the faculty members' ethical practices, the more ethical are the students' behavioral practices, and vice versa. These results showed that the more faculty members are strongly adherent to professional ethics, and the more they are aware that their teaching mission is never perfect or complete without having the noble values and ethics of university education, the more these values and ethics are adopted by the students

and reflected in their ethics and behavior. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The need to encourage students to exercise moral principles and have etiquette as such principles and etiquette have a positive impact on the educational process.
2. The university needs to clarify the ethical practices which are considered crucial in the process of upgrading university education.
3. Conducting further studies on the topic under discussion as such an action will have a positive impact on the university environment and higher education in general.

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