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# A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Ethical Behavior in Business Related Dilemmas: A Comparison among Turkish, Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak Marketing Employees

Azize Ergeneli<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Research comparing the ethical behavior of people from different nations other than the Western world is limited. This study tries to partially fill this gap in the literature on ethical behavior by investigating the ethical responses of Turkish, Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees to four different types of ethical dilemmas submitted in the vignette form. Responses were examined to understand whether the ethical behavior of marketing employees from different cultures and economic ideologies varied according to the type of ethical problem faced, and if demographic factors affected their responses. The results indicate that respondents vary in their ethical decisions depending on which type of ethical problem they face. Kirghiz and Kazak respondents' ethical behavior choices are similar to each other but different from Turkish and Egyptian ones, while Turkish and Egyptian responses to three vignettes out of four resemble each other. It is worth noting that all of the respondents taking part in this study were found to be ethically sensitive toward the whistle blowing problem, but their ethically least-sensitive issue was the bribery dilemma. Among the demographic variables included in this study, only the years of experience and the education level had significant effects on the respondents' ethical-decision choices across the different types of ethical problems.

**Key words:** Ethical behavior, cross-cultural study, economic ideology, Turkish, Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak employees.

## Introduction

The number of companies dealing with international business is increasing around the world. However, cultural norms for doing business in one country sometimes conflict with the ethical codes and other business standards established in another (Smeltzer and Jennings, 1998). According to our literature review, very few studies exist that have compared the ethical behavior of marketing employees from different cultures, especially the ones from the former socialist countries under the power of the USSR. A good understanding of the individuals' perceptions and beliefs about ethical issues in different cultures is essential not only to comprehend the ethical traditions when doing business in different countries but also to regulate the ethical codes and other business standards which force businessmen and marketers, in particular, to act ethically around the world. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of whether ethical behavior of employees from different cultures and different economic ideologies varies by the type of ethical problems they face.

## Literature Review

In the literature, some studies revealed that business ethics vary by country depending on the cultural differences. In one of those studies, Clarke and Aram (1997) investigated if there were cultural differences between the individuals' attitudes toward business. Comparing Spanish and American graduate students' responses, they found differences in the ethical problems. In another study designed in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore, it was found that there were significant differences between the perceived ethical scores across the three cultures (Sarwono and Armstrong, 2001). Some researchers emphasized that not only the cultural background of each country influences the

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individuals' ethical problem perceptions but even subcultural differences within a country can affect the variations in the perceptual differences (e.g., Sarwono and Armstrong, 2001; Tat, 1981).

In other studies, some similarities in the ethical behavior were found in different countries. For example, Izraeli (1998) found similarities between the ethical beliefs and behavior of Israeli and U.S. managers. Again Abratt et al. (1992) revealed that Australian and South African managers' ethical beliefs were almost the same. Hoffman (1998, p. 1893) tried to explain this similarity by the Hofstede's cultural typology which indicates that the cultures of those two countries' rest on the upper dimension of the individualism index. According to Hofstede (1980, p. 235), in individualist cultures, it is assumed that a person looks after himself/herself and his/her immediate family, there is "I" consciousness, self orientation is high, identity is based in the individual, the individual is emotionally independent of organizations, the emphasis is on individual initiative and achievement, confidence in individual's decisions is high. Moreover, value standards should apply to all, which is considered as universalism. Similar to Abratt et al.'s results Tsalikis and Nwachuku (1989) found that the ethical beliefs of Greek and American business students were similar. This result also supports Lyonski and Gaidis' supposition, cited by Clarke and Aram (1997), in which business students in the United States, Denmark and New Zealand were found to have similar reactions to ethical dilemmas. However, since management textbooks even the international ones serve as agents for the diffusion of American style business practices, it should not be surprising to find similarities between the ethical beliefs of business students from different cultures. Another similar result was obtained by Lee (1981), who tried to understand the effect of culture on ethics in the marketing practices in Hong Kong. Lee explained the similarity in the ethical beliefs of Chinese and British managers by referring to the possible acculturation of British managers.

When one considers culture as the way in which attitudes are expressed not only in a particular country but also in a regional society (Trompenaars, 1993), there seem to be some common ethical reactions to certain ethically questionable concepts within the same region. One of these concepts is "favoring" someone, which is a system of "using an interceder to obtain a benefit or to speed up process usually in relation to authorities" (Izraeli, 1997, p. 1556). Izraeli asserts that favoring is commonly used in the Middle East. It is very likely that the extent of this concept depends on the degree of collectivist culture. In contrast to individualist cultures, collectivist cultures assume that individuals are members of an extended family to which they feel closely attached. Such family relations provide individuals with emotional and material support that enables them to reach certain outcomes like positions, jobs, goods and services that they cannot obtain all by themselves.

According to some studies, another common ethical problem is bribery. A bribe is a "speed" or "grease" payment that causes corruption on the part of the recipient government officials (Smeltzer and Jennings, 1998, p. 60). In another sense, bribes open the way for personal advantage. They argue that although bribery is more common in developing countries 'the actual money involved in these acts may not be significant in the relationship to the nation's economy or culture'. Nevertheless in his 1961 study, conducted in the United States, Baumhart identified bribery as one of the major ethical problems. Since then, some rules and regulations and anti-bribery provisions have been established in order to regulate the ethical codes and other business standards, which forced businessmen to act ethically in the United States as well as in some other countries.

More than two decades after Baumhart's study, Chonko and Hunt (1985) conducted a survey of AMA membership. They revealed that the "two ethical issues most often cited by marketing managers were bribery and fairness" (p. 344). Later in a similar study Mayo et al. (1991) reported that the top ranking ethical problem identified in their study was bribery. Mayo et al. (1991, p. 68) argue that when multinational companies trade with protected economies like developing countries, specific ethical issues are likely to occur to "overcome bureaucratic barriers".

Based on the research that has been conducted regarding the cultural differences, conflicting results have been documented. Moreover, it seems that in the literature there is a lack of cross cultural study on the ethical behavior differences of individuals of different economic ideologies.

Saeed et al. (2001) argued that individuals' culture and experiences help them to develop their own criteria for being ethical. In other words, the actual experiences that individuals may have in the environment in which they were raised may lead them to have certain attitudes towards ethically questionable situations. One may consider economic ideology as one of the factors that

shapes the business environment. In other words, it is through their personal experiences that individuals acquire certain attitudes towards questionable business practices. Ralston et al. (1993) defined economic ideology as the “workplace philosophy” that pervades the business environment of a country. They argue that while economic ideology most likely evolves from the legal and political systems of a society, economic ideology does not equate with the political ideology of a country. They compare the two major economic ideologies in the world today: capitalism and socialism, which have certain constants that differentiate one from the other. Capitalism has been described as a self-serving economic system where everyone looks out primarily for his/her own self-interests, while the socialistic philosophy teaches that the good of all is everyone’s concern. The collectivistic views of socialism purport that all should contribute for the good of the society as well as the group and share equally in the rewards. A primary underlying difference between the socialistic and capitalist ideologies concerns the attitude towards the role of the individual. In capitalism, the goal of business is gaining profit and profit-making is not a morally neutral activity (Hoffman and Frederick, 1995). Luijk (1997) explains that free market economic prospects directly affect the shape of social welfare, but necessary attention must be paid to the distribution of the responsibilities among the government, private companies and individuals.

In the former socialist countries, individuals or private businesses have only recently been allowed to supplement a public ownership economy. In the meantime, a steep acceleration in economic expansion is being experienced. Smeltzer and Jennings (1998, p. 61) indicate that in those nations bribery is “de rigeur”. They also warn about the cost of this economic growth, which is not clear yet.

### Purposes of the study

This study is designed to examine whether the behavior of marketing employees in different cultures that used to have different economic ideologies was invariant for different types of ethical problems. Their responses to four vignettes are expected to point to likely behavioral differences between Turkish, Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees in the food industry.

Those four countries present an attractive comparison based on differences and similarities in their economic ideologies and cultures since religion, proximity, history and education are identified as important factors when determining culture (Ralston et al., 1997).

In spite of dissimilarities in economic ideology between Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, these nations have a deep rooted historical background as they have a common ancestry, and they had the same language until the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The cultures of Turkey and Egypt are somewhat similar to each other. Both cultures rest on the middle dimension of Hofstede’s collectivism and the femininity<sup>1</sup> index and the upper dimension of power distance<sup>2</sup> index. This similarity is not surprising when one considers that Egypt was under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire until 1914, a period of almost 400 years. Obviously, these two cultures have affected each other. Moreover, the two countries can be considered as having similar economic ideologies. They have been placed on the middle-income-level countries list by the World Bank, although Turkey’s gross national product per capita is more than twice that of Egypt. In terms of economic policy, Egypt’s economy has been relatively less open than Turkey’s. Nevertheless, the two countries have been familiar with the market economy for quite a long time, in contrast to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which only began to participate in international economy in the 1990s, following the collapse of the USSR. For those former socialist countries that had been used to a centrally planned economy and a Marxist class morality, it was not easy to develop business ethics immediately after the economic reforms were introduced. Therefore the specific aims of this study are:

1. To understand if there are differences between the ethical behavior choices of marketing employees from different cultures and economic ideologies as regards different types of ethical problems.

<sup>1</sup> Femininity addresses the fundamental issue of the way a society allocates social roles to the sexes.

<sup>2</sup> Power distance is a cultural measure of the extent to which society accepts the unequal distribution of power in institutions and organizations.

2. To identify whether demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience and education level affect the ethical behavior choice of employees of different countries.

## Methodology

### *The Questionnaire*

This study is based on the idea that there is a need to examine to what extent employees' behavior toward ethically questionable situations in the various cultures and economic ideologies are similar to or different from each other. In this study, it was decided to use the vignettes developed by Fritzsche (Lund, 2000) to examine the ethical behavior of marketing employees.

In some ethics research, scenarios or vignettes have been used in order to make respondents feel that they are in the given situations, which are explained in detail, and qualify their choice of action more realistically (e.g. Dawson, 1997; Lund, 2000). The vignettes used in the first part of this study presented various types of ethical dilemmas. These vignettes were presented to the respondents in order to measure their attitude towards ethical dilemmas dealing with the issues of bribery (Vignette 1), false advertising (Vignette 2), approving a higher purchase price (Vignette 3) and whistle blowing (Vignette 4). The four vignettes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

### Vignettes

<p><b>Vignette 1 (Offering a bribe)</b></p> <p>Company X has been barred from entering the market in a large Asian country by the collusive efforts of the local bicycle manufacturers. The company could expect to net \$5 million per year from sales if it could penetrate the market. Last week, a businessman from the country contacted the management of Company X and stated that he could smooth the way for the company to sell in his country for a price of \$500,000. If you were responsible, what are the chances that you would pay the price?</p>
<p><b>Vignette 2 (Involving false advertising)</b></p> <p>Mr. Y is developing an advertisement for a new housing development his firm is about to start. The development is located in a low area which was flooded in the past. The company has recently done some work to reduce the danger of flooding in the future. In the preliminary advertisement, Mr. Y has included a statement indicating that the firm has solved the flooding problem. The fact is that if a flood occurs, the homes are still likely to be flooded with up to five feet of water. If you were Mr. Y, what are the chances that you would include the statement in the advertisement?</p>
<p><b>Vignette 3 (Approving a higher purchase price)</b></p> <p>Mr. X is vice president of marketing for Company Y, a large spice manufacturer. Mr. X recently joined with Company Y's director of purchase in a private business venture to import black pepper from India. Mr. X's private venture is about to sign a five-year contract with Company Y to supply its black pepper needs, but the contract is set at a price 3 cents per pound above contracts available from other spice importers that provide comparable service and quality. If you were Mr. X, what are the chances that you would sign the contract?</p>
<p><b>Vignette 4 (Whistle blowing)</b></p> <p>Mr. Z is working in product development for an auto parts contractor. Mr. Z's firm received a large contract last summer to manufacture transaxles for use in a new line of front wheel drive cars. The contract is very important to Mr. Z's firm because prior to obtaining it, half of the firm's employees, including Mr. Z, had been scheduled for indefinite layoff. Final testing of the assemblies ended last Friday, and the first shipments are scheduled for three weeks from today. As Mr. Z was examining the test reports, he discovered that the transaxle tended to fail when loaded at more than 120% of rated capacity and subjected to strong torsion forces. Such a condition could occur with a heavily loaded car braking hard for a curve down a mountain road. While the driver would not lose the control of the car, the resulting damage to the car would cost several thousand dollars to repair. The manufacturer's specifications call for the transaxle to carry 130% of its rated capacity without failing. Mr. Z showed the results to his supervisor and the company president both of whom indicated that they were aware of the report. If they did not deliver the assemblies on time, they would lose the contract. If you were Mr. Z what are the chances that you would notify the auto manufacturer of the defect?</p>

The vignettes were translated into Turkish, Arabic, Kirghiz and Kazak languages changing the names and places in the original vignettes to match the situations in those countries. In this part, the respondents were asked to indicate the actions they would take on a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1, meaning 'definitely would not', to 5, meaning 'definitely would'. The

statements presented in each vignette were basically business statements containing ethical dilemmas that one could easily encounter within real life. It was hoped that statements would measure the level of action respondents would take when faced with the ethical problem in each vignette. Low response scores were accepted to indicate the respondent's disapproval of the ethical situation within each vignette. In each country the translation, back translation and validation of the vignettes were discussed with marketing professionals and their suggestions were taken into consideration for the clarity of the statements used in the vignettes.

Gender, age, years of experience and education level were included as demographic variables in the second part of the questionnaire.

### *The Sample*

As a part of a larger study, the data were obtained from marketing employees working in the food industries of the countries taken as the scope of this study. The sampling frame was obtained from the Ankara Chamber of Commerce mailing list of food factories in Ankara, Turkey, the Chamber of Food Industries' list in Cairo; Egypt, the Kazak and the Kirghiz State Standards Committee's data for food industry in Bishkek and Almaati respectively.

The reason why the food industry was chosen for the sampling frame in this study is that a report published in Turkey announced that most of the trials bringing suit due to the unethical actions were against companies in the food industry (Rekabet Kurulu, 2001). In order to provide better ground for comparison, it was decided to obtain data from this industry. The reason why marketing employees were chosen as respondents for this study is that under conditions of real business life, a marketing employee may feel trapped in the clashing moral dilemma of defending his/her company against customer needs while still pleasing the customers (Ergeneli, 2002).

Table 2

Profile of study sample

Demographic Variables	Percentages			
	Turkey	Egypt	Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan
Gender				
Female	24.4	16.9	55.2	35.7
Male	75.6	83.1	44.8	64.3
Age				
20 and below	5.4	9.9	3.4	7.1
21-29	35.6	40.2	32.8	35.7
30-39	36.7	42.2	25.9	28.6
40-49	14.3	7.7	22.4	21.4
50 and over	8.0	-	15.5	7.2
Experience				
0-2 years	28.9	33.8	55.2	76.2
3-9 years	41.1	46.2	32.8	23.8
10-24 years	24.4	20.0	10.3	-
25 years and over	5.6	-	1.7	-
Education Level				
Less than high school	1.1	1.5	12.2	11.9
High school graduate	44.4	53.8	10.3	16.7
Bachelor's degree	45.6	44.7	74.1	69.0
Master's/doctorate degree	8.9	-	3.4	2.4

In Ankara, Turkey, it was possible to reach 88 marketing employees working for seven big food producing companies and all agreed to fill out the questionnaire. 65 of the respondents

participated from the largest food companies in Cairo, Egypt. There were 56 marketing employees working in two of the eight largest food producing companies in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In Almaati, Kazakhstan, there are nine big food producing companies, of which three were willing to participate in this study with 41 participants. All of the employees working in the marketing departments of these companies filled out the questionnaire. In this way, a total of 250 assessable questionnaires were collected in sealed envelopes a week after giving the questionnaires to the marketing managers to pass out to the employees working in their departments. A detailed profile of the 250 respondents by their country is provided in Table 2.

The demographic variables listed were gender, age, years of experience and education level. As the table indicates, the majority of the respondents were males in the 21-29 or 30-39 years of age groups. The respondents in Turkey were more experienced than the ones in Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, most of the respondents had less than two years of experience, while respondents in Turkey had more than three years. The majority of Kirghiz and Kazak respondents had bachelor's degrees, while almost half of the respondents in Turkey and Egypt were high school graduates and the other half had bachelor's degrees.

### *The Findings*

The SPSS program was used to analyze the data. The findings of the hypothesis considered are given below.

H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant differences between the ethical behavior choice of marketing employees in different cultures and economic ideologies.

This hypothesis examined the differences in the ethical behavior of marketing employees from different countries with different cultures and economic ideology background (namely Turkey, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) as indicated by their responses to the vignettes. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used and the results indicate that there are significant differences between the four different countries as regards all four of the vignettes ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that the first hypothesis cannot be rejected (Table 3).

Table 3

Analysis of variance: ethical behavior differences of four cultures

Vignettes		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Between groups	44.988	3	14.996	8.788	.000
	Within groups	421.490	247	1.706		
	Total	466.478	250			
2	Between groups	115.907	3	38.636	27.809	.000
	Within groups	341.777	246	1.389		
	Total	457.684	249			
3	Between groups	61.400	3	20.467	14.814	.000
	Within groups	337.113	244	1.382		
	Total	398.512	247			
4	Between groups	121.919	3	40.640	30.771	.000
	Within groups	324.897	246	1.321		
	Total	446.816	249			

The Scheffe test indicates that the differences in the overall means resulted from significantly different responses of Turkish, Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees. Table 4 provides the multiple comparisons of the mean difference between the responses obtained from four different cultures dependent on the type of ethical problem provided in the vignettes.

Table 4

## Multiple comparisons

Scheffe Dependent Variable	(I) Country	(J Country)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Vignette I	Turkey	Egypt	.5474	.2136	.090
Offering a bribe		Kyrgyz.	-.3640	.2209	.439
		Kazak.	-.6795	.2491	.062
	Egypt	Turkey	-.5474	.2136	.090
		Kyrgyz.	-.9114*	.2360	.002
		Kazak.	-1.2269*	.2625	.000
	Kyrgyz.	Turkey	.3640	.2209	.439
		Egypt	.9114*	.2360	.002
		Kazak.	-.3155	.2685	.710
	Kazak.	Turkey	.6795	.2491	.062
		Egypt	1.2269*	.2625	.000
		Kyrgyz.	.3155	.2685	.710
Vignette II	Turkey	Egypt	.6421*	.1932	.013
Involving false		Kyrgyz.	-1.0460*	.1998	.000
advertising		Kazak.	-.9925*	.2252	.000
	Egypt	Turkey	-.6421*	.1932	.013
		Kyrgyz.	-1.6881*	.2129	.000
		Kazak.	-1.6346*	.2369	.000
	Kyrgyz.	Turkey	1.0460*	.1998	.000
		Egypt	1.6881*	.2129	.000
		Kazak.	5.345E-02	.2423	.997
	Kazak.	Turkey	.9925*	.2252	.000
		Egypt	1.6346*	.2369	.000
		Kyrgyz.	-5.3448E-02	.2423	.997
Scheffe Dependent Variable	(I) Country	(J Country)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Vignette III	Turkey	Egypt	-6.7084E-02	.1932	.989
Approving higher		Kyrgyz.	-1.0104*	.2008	.000
purchase price		Kazak.	-1.0959*	.2250	.000
	Egypt	Turkey	6.708E-02	.1932	.989
		Kyrgyz.	-.9433*	.2133	.000
		Kazak.	-1.0288*	.2362	.000
	Kyrgyz.	Turkey	1.0104*	.2008	.000
		Egypt	.9433*	.2133	.000
		Kazak.	-8.5526E-02	.2424	.989
	Kazak.	Turkey	1.0959*	.2250	.000
		Egypt	1.0288*	.2362	.000
		Kyrgyz.	8.553E-02	.2424	.989
Vignette IV	Turkey	Egypt	.4930	.1884	.080
Involving whistle		Kyrgyz.	-1.1149*	.1948	.000
blowing		Kazak.	-1.2339*	.2195	.000
	Egypt	Turkey	-.4930	.1884	.080
		Kyrgyz.	-1.6080*	.2076	.000

Table 4 (continuous)

1	2	3	4	5	6
		Kazak.	-1.7269*	.2309	.000
	Kyrgyz.	Turkey	1.1149*	.1948	.000
		Egypt	1.6080*	.2076	.000
Scheffe Dependent Variable	(I) Country	(J Country)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
		Kazak.	-.1190	.2362	.968
	Kazak.	Turkey	1.2339*	.2195	.000
		Egypt	1.7269*	.2309	.000
		Kyrgyz.	.1190	.2362	.968

\* Significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

The results of multiple comparisons indicate that there are no significant differences between the responses of marketing employees' from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan for any of the four vignettes. The Turkish and Egyptian respondents' ethical behavior choices are not significantly different from each other on three of the four vignettes. In the second vignette, involving false advertising, the Egyptian marketing employees' mean scores are lower than the Turkish ones. Since lower mean scores are considered to indicate a higher disapproval of the behavior that is described in each vignette, it is understood that the second vignette was perceived as involving unethical behavior by the Egyptian marketing employees. It seems that there are significant differences between the Egyptian, Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees' ethical decision choices for all of the vignettes. According to the results presented in Table 4, Turkish marketing employees' responses are significantly different from those of Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees' on three of the four vignettes, the only vignette where the ethical decision choices of Turkish, Kirghiz and Kazak respondents are not significantly different from each other is the first vignette, which is about offering a bribe. Although no significant difference is found, Table 5 indicates that 51% of Turkish respondents made an ethical decision when confronted with the bribe dilemma, while only 32.8% of Kirghiz and 20% of Kazak made the same choices.

Table 5

Summary of results: Comparison of marketing employees' ethical behavior across the vignettes

Judgement	Response scale	Vignette 1 (%) Offering a bribe				Vignette 2 (%) False advertising				Vignette 3 (%) Approving a higher purchase price				Vignette 4 (%) Whistle blowing			
		Turkey	Egypt	Kyrgyz.	Kazak.	Turkey	Egypt	Kyrgyz.	Kazak.	Turkey	Egypt	Kyrgyz.	Kazak.	Turkey	Egypt	Kyrgyz.	Kazak.
Definitely would (very unethical)	5																
And		39.9	20.0	37.9	52.5	24.4	4.6	43.1	35.0	19.9	13.9	24.6	27.5	17.8	3.1	36.2	35.0
Probably would (unethical)	4																
Neither would nor would not (neither unethical nor ethical)	3	9.1	16.9	29.3	27.5	11.1	9.2	20.7	35.0	6.7	13.8	31.6	42.5	7.8	7.7	17.2	30.0
Probably would not (ethical)	2																
Definitely would not (very ethical)	1	51.0	63.1	32.8	20.0	64.5	86.2	36.2	30.0	73.4	72.3	43.8	30.0	74.4	89.2	46.6	35.0

The percentages in Table 5 clearly reveal that Egyptian respondents made more ethical choices than the Turkish, Kirghiz and Kazak respondents when faced with any of the ethical dilemmas described in the four vignettes.

The highest percentage of the respondents from each country made an ethical decision when faced with the dilemma that involves whistle blowing. When the unethical choices of each country's participants are compared across the vignettes, it is understood that most of the unethical choices are made for the first vignette, which is about offering a bribe. The only exception to this is the responses of the Kirghiz marketing employees. The total percentage of unethical and very unethical responses given to vignette 2, which is about false advertising, is higher (43.1%) than the unethical responses given to the other vignettes by Kirghiz marketing employees. When the total percentages of the ethical and very ethical responses of each country's marketing employees are considered in Table 5, it is seen that although a majority of Turkish marketing employees exhibited ethical behavior for all four dilemmas, 73.4% of the Turkish respondents made ethical decisions when faced with the approving a higher purchase price dilemma (vignette 3), while 74.4% of them made ethical choices when faced with the dilemma involving whistle blowing (vignette 4). A similar result is valid for Egyptian marketing employees, who made ethical decisions when confronted with the whistle blowing (vignette 4) and false advertising (vignette 2) dilemmas, (89.2% and 86.2%) respectively. The majority of Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees did not exhibit ethical behavior for any of the vignettes. They chose the 'neither an unethical nor ethical' alternative more often than Turkish and Egyptian marketing employees for all four ethical dilemmas.

H<sub>2</sub>: Demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience and education level affect the marketing employees' ethical behavior choices for the study vignettes.

To examine this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used and the results indicated that there were no significant differences between the gender, age and ethical behavior choices of the marketing employees taking part in this study. The years of experience and education level of respondents, on the other hand, were found to be significantly related to the ethical behavior choices of respondents. ANOVA results revealed a significant relationship between the marketing employees' ethical behavior choices and their level of education for the first ( $p=.001$ ), second ( $p=.002$ ) and fourth ( $p=.039$ ) vignettes at the 0.01 significance level. The relationship between the respondents' ethical behavior choices and duration of experience were found to be significant for the second ( $p=.000$ ), third ( $p=.000$ ) and fourth ( $p=.001$ ) vignettes.

Table 6

Relationships between demographic factors and ethical behavior choices of marketing employees

Vignettes	Years of experience		Education level	
	Turkey	Egypt	Turkey	Egypt
1.vignette Spearman's rho	-.034	.086	.354**	.080
Sig.(2-tailed)	.751	.494	.001	.527
N	88	65	88	65
2.vignette Spearman's rho	-.156	-.247*	.255*	-.328**
Sig.(2-tailed)	.149	.047	.017	.008
N	87	65	87	65
3.vignette Spearman's rho	-.229*	-.224	-.077	-.310*
Sig.(2-tailed)	.034	.073	.480	.012
N	86	65	86	65
4.vignette Spearman's rho	-.163	-.224*	.102	-.364**
Sig.(2-tailed)	.132	.050	.346	.003
N	87	65	87	65

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

When the data were analyzed for the years of experience and the education level of the respondents, the only significant difference revealed between the ethical responses of different countries was in relation to Turkey and Egypt (Table 6). The coefficient of correlation ( $\rho$ ) indicated that the ethical behavior choices of respondents in Turkey were negatively related to the years of experience only for the third vignette, which was about approving a higher purchase price. Inverse relationships were found between the ethical responses and years of experience in Egypt for the second (false advertising) and fourth (whistle blowing) vignettes.

Positive relationships between the ethical behavior choices and education level of respondents from Turkey were found for the first (offering a bribe) and second (false advertising) vignettes. In Egypt, the ethical responses and education level of respondents were found to be inversely related to each other for the second (false advertising), third (approving higher purchase price) and fourth (whistle blowing) vignettes.

## Results and Discussion

This study was mainly designed to examine the differences between the ethical behavior choices of marketing employees of different cultures and different economic ideologies regarding different ethical problems in the food industry. As there are few cross-cultural studies concerning eastern cultures in the literature, Turkey, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were chosen for this study due to similarities and differences in their socio-economic backgrounds.

As regards this primary focus of the current study, it was found that the respondents from four different countries differ significantly in terms of the ethical behavior choices made for the different types of ethical problems. This result supports the studies that determined the cultural background as a reason for the variation in the results of the ethical decisions of different countries (Fritzsche and Becker, 1984; Rawwas et al., 1994). However, further analysis indicates that Turkish and Egyptian respondents' ethical behavior choices are similar to each other for three of the four vignettes, while there are no significant differences between the Kirghiz and Kazak marketing employees' responses to any of the vignettes. Furthermore, the responses of the Kirghiz and Kazak employees were found to be less ethical than those of the Turkish and Egyptian respondents. This result reveals that there are some ethical behavior similarities within countries where individuals lived under similar economic ideologies for quite a long time. Although this study was not designed to investigate the reasons for differences or similarities between the responses of the different cultures to these ethical problems, the pattern of responses elicited suggests that one of the reasons for the ethical behavior choices of different countries may be their socio-economic and historical backgrounds. As a matter of fact, the Turkish society has been historically more open to other cultures than Egypt and has adopted many beliefs from those cultures. Moreover, her current economic situation is better than Egypt's, and she is trying to be admitted to the European Union by adopting the values of Western capitalistic economies. Both Turkey and Egypt have been fighting against high inflation, high unemployment and low wages. Even though there is economic hardship in both countries, they have learned ethics through experience. Turkey has especially been influenced by western economic ideologies and the national culture has emphasized a different orientation for over 80 years (since the beginning of the Republic). The response difference between the two nationality groups, Turkish- Egyptian and Kirghiz-Kazak, is quite understandable when one considers the recent changes in economic policy in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Before the 1990's, economic activities were not the focal point of the government or the primary concern of the people in those countries. Therefore, they were unfamiliar with the ideological values of Western capitalistic economies. Business ethics as a discipline was unheard of, so it could not emerge (Xiaoche, 1997). As socialism has the collectivistic view that all should contribute for the good of the society, the seventy years of socialistic philosophy might have fostered an ethical egoism so that individuals now try to satisfy their own self-interests.

Another result obtained from this study is that although the respondents are citizens of different countries, they all made the more ethical decision for the fourth vignette compared to the percentages of responses given to the other vignettes. In other words, a greater proportion of marketing employees from each country made decisions that leaned more toward the ethical side when

faced with a whistle blowing dilemma; that is, a product defect which, if not reported, could potentially result in the death of innocent people.

This result might be interpreted through Hofstede's (1984) individualism-collectivism dimension, which indicates the extent to which a society focuses on self-reliance as opposed to group support. Among the countries included in this study, Turkey and Egypt are known as relatively collectivist since caring values are stronger. Neither Kyrgyzstan nor Kazakhstan was included in Hofstede's study, yet it would not be wrong to hypothesize that Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan would score relatively high on the collectivism side due to both their high level of attachment to families and the socialistic effect of communism, which teaches that the good of all is everyone's concern (Ralston et al., 1997).

The other result of the study indicates that the respondents from each country included in this study were inclined to make ethically-questionable decisions when faced with an attempt at extortion of a bribe for market entry (vignette 1). The proportion was relatively higher when compared with the percentages of ethical responses given to the other vignettes. This result reveals that bribe is a widespread practice.

This study found that the Egyptian respondents made decisions that tended to be more ethical than the respondents from the other cultures for all vignettes. This finding is consistent with the study result of Rawwas et al. (1994) who found that Egyptians were more idealistic rather than relativistic. They argued that 'Egyptians believed more in the moral absolute of specific actions or behavior in determining what course of action one should follow' (p. 228).

The analysis of the relationship between demographic variables and the ethical behavior choices of the respondents from different countries revealed some interesting results. First of all, the ethical behavior choices that Kirghiz and Kazak respondents made for the vignettes were not significantly related to any of the demographic variables included in this study. Secondly, years of experience and level of education were found to be significantly related to the ethical behavior choices of Turkish and Egyptian respondents. Further analysis revealed that as the years of experience increases, unethical behavior choices are more likely to occur for the vignette related to approving higher purchase price in Turkey and the vignettes related to false advertising and bribery in Egypt. However, when the results of the analysis are examined it is understood that, although some of them were not found to be statistically significant, the ethical responses given to almost all vignettes seem to be negatively related to the years of experience of the respondents from all the different cultures. In other words, responding marketing employees seemed to be more sensitive toward ethical dilemmas at the beginning of their careers and as they got experienced, it appears that they become adapted to business rules. This result brings out a question whether unethical behavior is an entirely 'learned' matter.

According to the results of this study, the ethical behavior choices of Turkish respondents increase as their level of education increases when faced with the bribery and false advertising dilemmas. This result seems to indicate that there is a strong relationship between the ethical response to the bribery dilemma and the education level. Thus an education system that allows people to discover and refine their own values while teaching them ethical theories from an intellectual point of view would probably help to solve at least the bribery problem in Turkey.

The study results indicate that Egyptian respondents tend to give more unethical responses as their education level increases when confronted with the false advertising (vignette 2), approving a higher purchase price (vignette 3), and whistle blowing (vignette 4) dilemmas. Although the Egyptian respondents made more ethical behavior choices on all of the vignettes than the Turkish, Kirghiz and Kazak respondents did, it seems that as Egyptian respondents' level of education increases, they become less idealistic. Could this result be interpreted to mean that when marketing employees in Egypt get closer contact with the other cultures and ethical traditions through education, they learn that the aim of business is to pursue profits and profit-seeking does not violate any rights? If so, the ethical dimensions of business should be taken into serious consideration, and the business ethics developed in one country or the codes of ethics adopted from other countries should be in greater congruence with the country's own traditional culture.

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