

A Review of Empirical Studies on Ethical Perspectives of Marketing

Anupama Mahajan*

Abstract

Ethics, of late, has become an important buzzword in the corporate world. Increased awareness amongst consumers and highly publicized incidents of business misconduct has converted the subject of business ethics into an area of growing corporate and academic interest. Since marketing is at the forefront of the business activity, it is the only area which has a direct contact with the customers and the marketers are in fiduciary relationship with them. Hence, it becomes all the more obligatory for the marketers to become ethical. This review, therefore, provides an insight for understanding the concepts of ethics, business ethics and marketing ethics. The article also summarises the multitude of research studies in the area of business and more specifically marketing ethics. In India, not much literature was found in the field of marketing ethics; whatever was available was in the area of business ethics which points to the fact that still a lot has remains to be done in India.

Key Words: Ethics, Marketing ethics, Business ethics, Ethical dilemma, Deontological, Teleological, Utilitarianism, Praxis, Machiavellianism, Relativism

Nature of Ethics

The term 'ethics' has been defined in different ways by various ethicists. Webster's New World Dictionary (1965) has defined the word 'ethics' as 'standards of conduct and moral judgement' or 'the system or code of morals of a particular ... groups' (Gaski, 1999). According to Carroll and Gannon (1997), the word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' which means 'character' and 'sentiments of the community'; whereas, Aristotelian moral philosophy defines it as 'human actions from the point of view of their rightness or wrongness', (Lillie, 1994). Aristotle had defined 'ethics' in a very general way. The more specific definition of this word has been quoted by Shea (1988), "Ethics include the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession and standards of behaviour". In the similar vein, Carroll and Gannon (1997) define it as, "Being ethical means conforming to the standards of a given profession or a group. Any group can set its own ethical standards and then live by them or not."

Thus, it can be said that ethics are the standards that are established by an individual, a corporation, a profession or a nation; that help to guide a person's decisions and actions; whether he follows them or not is a different issue. It is discipline dealing with good or bad human conduct and with moral duties and obligations of human beings. Since it is related to duties and obligations, its study is not limited to

individuals in isolation but individuals living in a particular group or society because his particular conduct does not affect him only but all the other also who are connected to him in one way or the other. Aristotle was of the view, "He, who is unable to live in a society... must be either a beast or a God," and to live in society certain ethical norms of the society have to be complied with.

From times immemorial, ancient philosophers in Greece, China, India and Western world have raised questions about morality and human conduct (Carroll and Gannon, 1997). Various theories or traditions on ethics have been propounded which seem to be quite overlapping and intermingle with each other. The Absolute and Relative ethics; Objective and Subjective ethics; Naturalistic and Non-Subjective Naturalistic ethics; Deontological and Teleological theories and Egoism, Universalism and Altruism are the major traditions or theories that dominate the ethical practices (Lillie, 1994). Cannon and Garroll (1997) have classified the basic traditions of ethics classified into those related to Consequences (utilitarianism/teleological); those related to Rights and Duties (all human being have certain rights & certain duties towards others) and those with character and virtue (practicing of basic human virtues such as honesty, prudence).

Thus, from the various traditions and approaches given by various writers, two broad approaches tend to emerge. One

* Assistant Professor, Commerce Department, Bharati College, University of Delhi.

being Normative Approached, with their historical roots in philosophy and the second being Empirical Approached, which are based on the psychological researches done in the field of moral and are more practical and deal with, how actually an individual is influenced while making ethical decisions and not with, how he should behave.

With respect to normative theories of ethical behaviour, we often come across deontological and utilitarianism theories. Utilitarianism/teleology² as proposed by writers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill of 19th century focuses on consequences aspect of an action. According to them the morally correct actions are the ones that would do the most good and the least harm for everyone (the greatest good for greatest number). Deontological theories as proposed by Kant, the 18th century European Philosopher, stress the essential correctness of the action itself. i.e. according to this theory, the role of 'means' (action) is greater as compared to 'ends' (consequences). Hence, according to this theory, a person should tell the truth, be honest, just and avoid harm to others in order to be ethical.

But some ethicists argue that since 'ethics' is a relative term, one should follow the principle of relativism, which emphasizes the concept of right or wrong in terms of values and goals of a particular society. It is because of this fact that what is right for one society might not be acceptable by the other. Ethical ideology, hence, develops in association with other people and is being constantly criticized and modified by the opinions of others. Often ethical judgements have a direct social reference. There may be an exceptional case like that of a saint but for a normal man morality is a social business (requirement).

Ethical theory, thus, deals with the values relating to human conduct, the contemporary standards and set of values that govern the actions and behaviour of individuals. It contains principles of personal and professional conduct which are universally applicable and can be taught. It is also not coextensive with law, even though law enshrines many ethical judgements of the society. It criticizes law to

obtain more perfect rules for the conduct of life. Law may permit things which are unethical. Abiding by law in itself is an ethical issue.

The widespread interest in ethics and allied topics of morality and the passing of laws because of unethical conduct, reflect the fact that these are central to human existence (Carroll and Gannon, 1997). The notions that the humans hold about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, constitute the glue that holds societies together. The preaching of Plato, Aristotle, Confucious, Kant, Jesus, Mohammad, Gandhi and many others also focused on 'ethics'.

It has remained important in history as well but as has been seen, ethics does not lend itself an exact definition and whatever is available is open for individual perception and interpretation. But ethics is surely all pervading as it relates to human conduct and values and has its roots embedded in all professions such as medicine, law, technology and business too (Baum and Lawton, 1990).

Since the philosophical definition of ethics deals with exploring the right or wrong behaviour, it can be said that corporate ethics deal with establishing right and wrong conduct for situations within a corporate or business environment. Bartels (1967) opined, "Business ethics are standards by which business action may be judged 'right' or 'wrong'."

Business Ethics

Business is basically a human activity and like most human activities, it has been and is likely to continue to be evaluated from morality point of view. Moreover, business is also a subset of a greater social activity, which makes it all the more necessary for it to adopt social morality in order to exist. If stealing and lying are immoral in the society, business is no exception to it. Arguments that do not hold business responsible to these social requirements are unrealistic. Business cannot simply escape its moral role by appealing to its basic non-human nature, a frequently used rationalisation (Baum and Lawton, 1990). Though it is a legal entity, it has been created by the society and hence cannot go against societal norms. Society also has the capacity to change it in any way it deems suitable.

But the diversity of interests at stake in business makes it difficult to accept the notion of decision-making based solely on profit considerations. They not only have substantial obligations towards their employees but they also have duties as member of a wider moral community

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and need to follow ethical practices. Michalos, (1995) is of the view, "For business to be successful and earn profits, it has to operate in a community of buyers and sellers; because community is necessary for business and morality is necessary for community; hence, morality is necessary for business too."

Although, business should act morally, but is it acting in the desired manner? Bid-rigging in Japan, Embezzlement and bribery in China, fraud in Europe and massive lay-offs in United States are the prominent examples of unethical practices in the business-world (Carroll and Gannon, 1997). Throughout the world, various examples of unethical behaviours by managers are routinely highlighted by the media and concerned citizens. An attempt also has been made by various authors to highlight the recent ethical issues of the corporate world. Issues in internal corporate relations include issues such as bribery, hiring, firing and pay-practices, sexual harassment, quality of life for employees, discrimination, dangerous working conditions, employee privacy issues and also employees' obligations towards the corporation. Issues which relate to external corporate relations are, the concern towards consumers and the other stakeholders. Further, business also has certain environmental responsibilities, such as, curbing of environment pollution, noise pollution emitting of waste etc. and also international responsibilities which cover the issues like selling of unsafe goods to third world countries and dumping, (Luthans, 1998; Baum and Lawton, 1990 and Carroll and Gannon, 1997).

But recently, business world has started showing interest in ethical practices. Certainly, one reason for this has been the very large number of publicized cases in which unethical behaviours have cost business sometimes not only millions but even billions in currency, (Chonko, 1995). Business concerns have started realising that 'good ethics is good business'. Unethical practices if discovered are disastrous for a business concern (Jackson, 1996). In other words, being ethical is likely to enhance one's own pocket as well as Company's (Michalos, 1995). Therefore, a businessman needs to avoid unethical practices as a matter self-interest.

But acting in an ethical way is easier said than done. There are many problems and controversies in determining ethical conduct in organisations and behaving in a perfectly ethical manner is not that easy because often managers land up in ethical problems where he has to make crucial decisions. Organisations, now-a-days, are taking a number of steps to ensure that they do not engage in unethical practices because failure to do so can lead to serious consequences

and passing of various laws and legislations because the purpose of ethical management is to catch any new spirit and embody it in voluntary standards, without waiting for legal compulsion, (Dodd, 1932, quoted from Stark, 1993). Business ethics requires more than merely following law and signals of market. It is infact, a process of anticipating both the law and the market for sound business reasons because it is no longer business as usual!

As quoted earlier, business definitely faces ethical problems and for providing solutions to the ethical problems, business ethics requires both philosophy (to provide a basic structure of morality) and the judgement of people experienced in business to fill the details in the structure of business morality (Jackson, 1996). For example, philosophical rule of 'good' and 'bad' tells us that one should not accept bribes and hence there is no place for judgement. One has to abide by this basic principle. Whereas, in particular situations where it is difficult to take a decision and ambiguity sets in, judgement comes into picture. For example, in the codes of conduct, if it is written that "a member shall take care to avoid waste of natural resources"; here judgement or what is known as 'ethical dilemma'³ comes into picture because at one end it is the society and the other end extra cost to the company.

Talking of philosophical ethics in business ethics, two major traditions that dominate the current business thinking are Deontology and Teleology (Utilitarianism), (Robin and Reindenbech, 1987). Deontological moral philosophy, as indicated before, emphasizes such factors as duties, obligations responsibilities and 'natural' rights of others. It proscribes lying, cheating, deceiving or stealing (in business) and prescribes honesty, fairness, justice and truth while doing business (Hunt et. al., 1993). Price-fixing, bribery and marketing harmful products are the business/marketing practices that are morally questionable to deontologists (Robin and Reindenbach, 1987). The teleological evaluation process combines (a) the forecasting of each business activity's consequences for various stakeholder groups, and (b) estimating and evaluating consequences' desirability and non-desirability and with assessing the effect on each stakeholder group. This can very well be explained with the help of an example; throwing industrial waste in rivers (actions/behaviour), which results in pollution (consequence) and affecting

3. By an **ethical dilemma**, we understand a choice between alternatives, where whichever you do appears to be wrong (Jackson, 1996).

4. **Moral relativists** believe that what is good depends upon time, place and social context.

society at large (Stake holder group). Although, the above action was previously desirable from industries' point of view (since now they will have to resort to alternative ways for treating industrial waste) but is undesirable for society at large. Thus, deontology consists of ideals that are universal but not necessarily 'absolute' in character and has individual and action as its major concerns, whereas, teleology/Utilitarianism is decidedly social in character and consider society and its welfare as their prime concerns. According to Carroll and Gannon (1997), deontological views tend to flourish in individualistic countries such as U.S., Germany, England, Australia and Netherlands. More collectivistic or group-oriented countries such as Japan, African Nations, South American Nations emphasize utilitarianism (because of their group orientations. They want greatest good for greatest number within their group). In such group-oriented countries, relativism⁴ is also an important ethical perspective. Asia is more collectivistic than the west and India being a country of various sub-cultures, there is a utilitarian tendency in the behaviours of people.

But in business, no theory is applicable in its entirety. Hunt and Vitell (1986) propose that individuals are neither utilitarian nor ethical egoists, nor they are purely deontologists or teleologists. They are of the view that most people in most situations evaluate the ethicality of an act on the basis of a combination of teleological and deontological consideration. Thus, in actual human decision-making, it seems likely that some combination of 'ends' (consequences) and 'means' (action) is used, given the actual complexity of many of the ethical dilemmas which the individuals face in their business life. As is evident from above, the area of business ethics is very vast and involves various spheres of business world, marketing ethics being one of them.

Marketing Ethics

Very few of the sources in vast literature on marketing ethics offer a definition to the term. Lacznia (1983) defines marketing ethics as "how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviours and institutions". Gaski, 1999 defined it as "The study of the moral evaluation of marketing and the standards applied in the judgement of marketing decisions, behaviours and institutions as morally right or wrong". Whereas Lee (1981) opined 'Ethics in marketing practices is concerned with moral evaluation of management practices in the area of marketing.' Since 'ethics' means "Standards of conduct and moral judgement", therefore marketing ethics could be considered as "Standards of conduct and moral judgement applied to

marketing practice." It refers to the 'rules' governing the appropriateness of marketing conduct. It is the subset of business ethics which in turn is a subset of ethics or moral philosophy. More simply, marketing ethics is concerned about the moral problems facing marketing managers. It includes, for example, the ethical consideration associated with product safety, truth in advertising and fairness in pricing etc. and is an integral part of marketing decision-making. Vitell, Lumpkin and Rawwas (1991) state that "Since marketing is the functional area within the business that interfaces with the consumer, it tends to come under the greatest scrutiny, generates the most controversy and receives the most criticism with respect to potentially unethical business practices. Advertising, personal-selling, pricing, marketing research and international marketing are all subjects of frequent ethical controversy." Marketers generally represent sellers often in a fiduciary relationship with employers and clients, (Chonko, 1995). They wield a considerable measure of power in controlling information... and allocating resources. Buyers also trust and are dependent on marketers to secure and protect their interests.

Hence, the ethics which relate to distributor relations, advertising standards, customers services, pricing, product development and general ethical standards came under the purview of marketing ethics (Vitell, Lumpkin and Rawwas, 1991). The AMA code addresses a variety of issues including basic responsibilities of the marketer, honesty and fairness, rights and duties of the parties in the exchange process and organizational relationships as the ethical issues of marketing. Examples of basic responsibilities of the marketers include not knowingly doing harm and adhering to all applicable laws and regulations. Honesty and fairness issues include being honest in serving customers, clients, employees, distributor and the public; and avoiding conflict of interest. Right and duties are addressed in terms of product (such as goods offered should be safe and fit for their intended uses); promotion (such as avoiding false and misleading advertising); distribution (such as avoiding price fixing and predatory pricing); and marketing research (such as maintaining research integrity by avoiding misrepresentation and omission of research data). Ethical prescriptions concerning organizational relationships include ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in professional relationship with regard to privileged information and meeting obligations and responsibilities in contracts and mutual agreements in timely manner (Kotler and Armstrong, 1994).

Thus, we find that the issues which revolve around basic marketing tools such as product, price, promotion &

distribution besides general ethical issues come under the purview of marketing ethics. Baum & Lawton, (1990) are of the view that product safety, proper information as regards product and environmental impact of product production usage are the important and critical issues which the marketers are facing. Advertising is another element in marketing which involves many ethical issues. It is not surprising that advertising with its high visibility and overtly persuasive intent is the target of maximum criticism and charges of unethical conduct (Russell, 1996).

Puffery, taste, stereotyping in advertising, advertising to children advertising controversial products and subliminal advertising are some of the most controversial topics in advertising, (Wells et. al., 2000); while interference in the editorial process and the unethical use of advertorial sections are the two specific problems being faced by advertisers and media (Russell, 1996). The recent ethical issues in channel relations include exclusive dealing, exclusive territorial arrangements, tying arrangements and dealer's rights (Kotler, 2000). The ethical issues in direct marketing relate to irritation, unfairness, deception and fraud, and invasion of privacy. People in direct-marketing industry are also showing concern towards ethical issues. Since they are aware that if left unattended these problems will lead to increasingly negative attitudes, lower response rates and will call for greater state & federal regulations.

Review of the Empirical Studies

Over the past three decades, considerable research has been done on ethics in marketing because it is the business function most often charged with unethical practices (Baumhart, 1961; Brenner and Molander 1977 and Hunt et al., 1984). Murphy and Laczniak (1981) in their comprehensive review of literature concluded that "the function within business firms most often charged with ethical abuse is marketing" (quoted from Hunt et al., 1984). He identified several areas where research in marketing ethics was required. Much research was undertaken in response to Murphy and Laczniak's call. Again in 1989, Tsalikis and Fritzsche (1989) did a thorough and comprehensive literature review. After ten years in 1999 again, Gaski undertook an inspection of the marketing ethics literature of a quarter century. He categorised the marketing ethics literature into (a) introduction to ethical population (b) questioning the inherent ethics of marketing activity (c) empirical studies of ethical beliefs and (d) direction and advice for making marketing more ethical. But paradoxically his review concluded that in terms of behavioural guidance as well as conceptual content, marketing ethics has nothing new nor

distinctive to offer. The review takes into account only the theoretical prescriptions laid down by researchers and does not take into account the empirical studies done in the field of marketing ethics.

In fact, research in this area has added a lot to the literature. Many studies have been undertaken to help provide guidance and foster understanding of marketing ethics among managers (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Goolsby and Hunt, 1992; Bartels, 1967; Hunt and Vitell, 1986 and Patterson, 1966). For better inference and understanding review of the literature of the present study has been categorized into seven broad groups.

Among the sub-disciplines of marketing, much of the empirical research relates to selling and marketing research areas. (Mc Claren, 2000; Thomas, 1998 and Hunt and Parraga, 1998). Hunt and Parraga (1998) explored the organisational consequences and ethical issues in sales force supervision and Mc Claren (2000) reviewed thirty studies dealing specifically with ethics in sales area with the objective of providing insight into the extent and direction of these studies and to suggest areas of exploration in this area. He categorised his review into conceptual and exploratory studies and has suggested managerial implications for the same.

In the area of marketing research Crawford (1970) brought out the fact that there are marketing research practices which might be subjected to ethical criticism (Tybought and Zaltman, 1974). Akaah and Riordan (1989) replicated Crawford's (1970) study to find out whether significant changes in ethical judgement have occurred since then. Researches have also been conducted to examine the ethics of market researchers (Tybout and Zaltman, 1974; Mc Daniel et al., 1985; Hunt et al., 1984; Ferrell and Skinner, 1988).

Besides, some exploratory studies have also been undertaken in the field of advertising (Arruda and Arruda, 1999; Davis, 1994 and Green, 1993). The major issue in promotion is misleading and deceptive advertising and Atlas (1999) has in his conceptual analysis presented a moral account of the legal notion of deceptive advertising. Theoretically, many questions have been raised about the ethics of various marketing practices such as product, price, place including promotion (American Marketing Association, 1985, Code of Ethics, Baum and Lawton, 1990; Russell, 1996; Wells et. al., 1995; Kotler, 2000 and Jennings, 1993) but not much empirical work could be found during the literature review in these areas.

Secondly, attempts have been made to gauge the perceptions of various groups about marketing ethics (Singhapakdi et al. 1999; Ferrell and Weaver, 1978; Barnett et al., 1998). Singhapakdi et al. (1999) concluded that in many marketing situational contexts, consumers are likely to have high ethical expectations than marketers. In the study conducted by Ferrell and Weaver (1978), an attempt was made to examine the ethical beliefs of marketing managers and the relationships between individuals, peers and top management. Barnett et al. (1998) studied the individual's ethical ideology within the context of marketing ethics issues. The results indicated that marketers' ethical judgements about different situations differed based on their ethical ideology.

Other important stream of research relates to the research has the issue whether marketing ethics should be taught as a subject and to examine as to what attitudes students hold towards ethics in marketing (Shannon, 1997). Hawkins and Coanougher (1972) suggest that business education should play a role in building ethical standards of students since a significant relationship existed between an individual's educational pursuits and the standards of ethics. According to Murphy (1999), virtue and character ethics should be taught to students by marketing educators, whereas, Arruda and Arruda (1999) are of the view that a deeper ethical knowledge should be provided to students practitioners of advertising, marketing and research.

Cadbury (1987), Andrews (1989), Chonko and Hunt (1985), Chan and Armstrong (1999), Armstrong et al. (1990) and Hunt et al. (1984) identified and investigated into various ethical problems confronting managers and how they dealt with them. This constitutes the fourth group of studies undertaken in the field of marketing ethics. In their theoretical papers, Cadbury (1987) and Andrews (1989) have identified the practical difficulties managers faced while resolving ethical dilemmas. The major ethical problems which confronted U.S. marketing managers were identified and investigated by Chonko and hunt (1985) in their exploratory research. They ranked them in the following order- bribery, fairness, honesty, price, product, personnel, confidentiality, advertising, manipulation of data, purchasing and other issues. The study undertaken by Chan and Armstrong (1999) tries to identify and categorise international marketing ethical problems faced by business managers in Australia and Canada. However, Australian and Canadian managers differ in their attitudes towards the importance of the ethical problems as compared to the frequency of occurrence of ethical problems. Armstrong et al. (1990) also conducted a similar kind of survey

with an Australian sample, whereas, Hunt et al., (1984) tried to identify the ethical problems faced by marketing researchers.

It is now being realised that not only individuals and groups but a number of relevant factors from the cultural, organisational and external environment can determine ethical behaviour (Luthans, 1998) in business. The next category relates to this stream. Ford and Richardson (1994) investigated 62 articles to find out the variables which have been hypothesized to influence ethical beliefs and behaviours. They categorised these behaviours into individual and situational factors. Variables that are related to culture, religion, sex, age, education, employment and personality are individual variables; whereas, situational variables include rewards and sanctions, organisational effects, codes of conduct, industry and business competitiveness.

Culture plays an important role in defining ethical standards (Lu, et. al., 1999; Pires and Stauton, 2000; Armstrong, 1996; Vitell et al., 1991; lee, 1981 and Murphy, 1999). While studying the effect of culture, Pires and Stauton (2002) took up research in an entirely different perspective i.e. ethnicity and its relevance for marketing strategy and the ethical consequences of the same. Armstrong (1996) and Vitell et al. (1991) have supported that a close relationship exists between culture and ethical perception because international marketing relativism is becoming a dominant approach (Chan and Armstrong, 1999). Lee, (1981) hypothesised that managers from different cultures hold different ethical beliefs. However, he found that there were no difference in ethical standards in the marketing practices in ethical standards in the marketing practices between British and Chinese managers. He also concluded that management levels displayed no significant difference in the ethical standards of both the countries.

Managerial level, hence is another factor that has received attention as a variable that can affect ethical decision-making (Akaah, 1996; Hunt et al; 1984 and Akaah and Riordon, 1989). Barring a few findings, top management has generally been found to be reporting more ethical behaviour and values.

Andrews, (1989) identified family, religion and education influence the basic moral character of a person. Some researchers viewed moral intensity of the situation as a factor affecting marketers decision-making process (Singhapakdi, et al., 1996); whereas, Ferrell and Gresham (1985) and Hunt and Vitell (1986) have emphasized the role

of personal values. In their theories, strong moral values are proposed to instill more ethical functioning. Personal values, ethical principles and ethical norms are a part of an individual's philosophy (Ashkanasy et al. 2000). Individual's will also differ in their behavioural manifestations of ethical philosophers to the extent, they believe in the ideologies of idealism or relativism (Lee and Sirgy, 1999).

Some of the researchers found peer pressure influenced an individual's ethical decision-making (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Hunt and Vitell, 1986 and Kleyn et al. 1999). Effect of age and gender have also been explored by many scholars on ethical decision-making. Ferrell and Skinner (1988) and Badaracco (1995) found older people and those holding jobs for a longer period tend to be more ethical as compared to young, who are at the early stages of their careers. Besides age, gender also affects ethical decision-making. Overall, the findings show a mixed result and where differences have been found, typically females appeared to be more ethical.

Since business people increasingly find themselves confronting ethical dilemmas, concerns for codes of ethics has intensified and so has the research in this field. Infact, the most tangible way for an organisation to signify that it is concerned about ethics is to create a code of ethics (Wotruba 2001). Hence, effect of codes of conduct on ethical behaviour is another area of research of conduct have become increasingly common over the years at least among larger companies, (Brooks, 1989 and Schwartz, 2001). In addition to codes developed by individual concerns, there are also industry and professional codes designed for particular type of industry or profession (Kleyn et al., 1999). They offer the prospects of predictable and possibly improved corporate behaviour, (Molander, 1987; Carroll and Gannon, 1997). Hence, another important stream of research relates to codes of ethics. The globalisation of economics has led to the pervasiveness of unethical behaviour in the international marketing area also Asgary and Mitschow (2002) felt the need for developing an international code for multinational corporations and have also made a humble effort in this direction. Rallapalli (1999) has gone to the extent of suggesting the development of a global code of marketing ethics. He has also examined the feasibility and possible outcome of a global code of marketing ethics.

The efforts of codes of ethics on behaviour has been studied by many researchers (Adams et al. 2001; Schwartz, 2001; Chonko and Hunt, 1985; McDowell, 1999; Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1990; Stohs et al., 1999; Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1993). Adams et al. (2001) investigated and concluded that

respondents from companies with codes of ethics were more ethical as compared to respondents from companies without codes of ethics. According to them, mere presence of code of ethics appeared to have a positive impact on ethical behaviour in organisations even when respondents could not recall specific contents of codes of conduct not recall specific contents of codes of Schwartz (2001) has also found that codes of ethics have a positive influence on the behaviour of corporate people. He also identified a number of metaphors as to why codes are complied or not complied with. McDowell (1999) and Singhapakdi and Vitell (1990) generally found that marketers in an organisation with codes that are enforced, tend to be more sensitive to ethical problems. Chonko and Hunt (1985) also believed that codes had a positive impact on ethical attitudes and behaviour. Stohs et al. (1999) analysed Irish managers perceptions regarding codes and their conduct. The results coincided with the standard thinking that firms without a found code of ethics will make decisions that are arbitrary and inconsistent. Similarly, Singhapakdi and Vitell (1993) also found that marketers tend to value their company's interest highly when there is an established code of ethics. Brenner and Molander (1977) were of the view that the existence of code of ethics can raise the ethical level of business behaviour because it clarifies what is ethical conduct. Asksanasy et al. (2000) also supported the above researchers when they a survey of ethical attitudes, beliefs and practices in public sectors organisations in Australia.

But criticism exists regarding the likelihood of improving ethical behaviour in organisations through the use of codes of conduct, (Hunt et al., 1984 and Ferrell and Weaver 1978). From the seventeen studies assessing relationships between code of ethics and ethical behaviour as summarised by Loe, Ferrell and Mansfield (2000); a wide range of mixed conclusions emerged. Similarly, Schwartz (2001) conducted a review of nineteen studies and also found mixed results. 8 out of 19 found codes are effective, 2 found the relationship weak and 9 out of 19 found that there is significant relationship between the two variables.

Besides above, Kleyn et al. (1999) investigated into the regulation of ethical behaviour of professionals of South Africa. Results indicated that the professional believed that codes were necessary and were well aware of the contents of such codes. The relationships among there participants of marketing research area viz. corporate research departments, marketing research firms and data sub-contractors was explored with respect to codes by Ferrell et al. (1998). Some researchers have also identified the need

for developing a code of ethics for marketing educators at colleges and universities throughout the world (Sirgy, 1999 and Kurtz 1999).

Lastly, studies have also been conducted to investigate whether marketing ethics in particular and business ethics in general affect business performance. In a six year long research conducted by Collins and Porras (1997), it was concluded that the success of many companies lie in the fact that they go beyond the sole objective of making profits and strongly believe in their ethical ideology. The study further suggested that small companies too should think in terms of ethics to become successful in the long run.

Business and Marketing Ethics in Indian Context

Till date, not much research work has been undertaken in the field of marketing ethics; a few researches which could be found were related to business ethics in India. The study conducted by Kumar assessed that the black money in India amounted to rupees 10 lakh crores and the country's GDP at that time was rupees 24 lakh crores! (The Week, July 21, 2002). In another pioneer study conducted in 6 big cities of India, more than 60% of 4500 people interviewed said that they had experienced corruption (The Week, July 21, 2003). Again in a recent 'Times of India Mode' opinion poll, 'business' ranked fifth in a test of segments of society evaluated for corruption. 76% of the respondents ranked 'business' as a corrupting force (quoted from Chakraborty, 1997). Hence, with the increasing globalisation of business, empirical data are needed on ethics in countries other than the United States especially in the developing countries like India (Viswesvaran and Deshpande, 1996).

A survey conducted in mid-seventies in India found Indian managers ignoring ethics in their daily lives. Although they believed in good ethics but various factors like competition, rules and regulations and company policy prevent them from being practically ethical (Monappa, 1977). The studies conducted by Malhotra (1985) and Soares (1981), in contrast, claimed that Indian managers are opportunists and they easily compromise on their personal values.

Another study found that bribery, blackmail, corruption and social damage are major factors that will help the investigator to discriminate among deontological, teleological and Praxis's minded decision-makers (Sadri, et al., 1994). According to them nearly 78% of the corporate managers from the sample obtained exhibited a tendency of falling into the category of Praxis school. They give the impression that they are 'the moral men living in an immoral society.' Cyriac and Dharmaraj (1994) also explored the ethical values of managers in India and found that Machiavellianism⁶ does influence Indian managers to some extent. Viswesvaran and Deshpandey (1996) conducted a study of 150 middle level managers in India to assess the relationship between ethical behaviour and individual job satisfaction and the empirical

results confirmed the relationship between perceived ethical behaviour of successful managers and job satisfaction i.e., when respondents perceived that successful managers behaved unethical, their satisfaction level reduces. Chakraborty (1997) provides a theoretical and descriptive framework for understanding business ethics in India. According to him, unethical business in India became a recognized phenomenon during the Second World War but concern regarding ethics in business became visible during the nineties. He has also recognized the danger of attributing unethical practice to system failure.

Mello (2002), in his non-empirical study has looked upon ethics from a different perspective. He criticizes that in India deregulation of markets (with special reference to pharmaceutical concerns) and liberalization have taken place without a welfare state in place. According to him, globalisation and liberalisation are strongly associated with 'one dimension ethics' that privileges market over social protections. While Kracher et al. (2002) found no significant difference between respondents of India and the U. S. as regards cognitive moral development. Although a lot of research has been done in the field of marketing ethics in international arena; India seems to be lagging far behind.

Summary and Conclusions

Ethics is the discipline that deals with values relating to human conduct. Purpose of ethics is to rationalize morality and provide a set of values and rules to guide the choice

5. **Praxis** are the ones who do not worry about the ends and the means as much as they believe that their judgement should be upheld by the society. They look for peer support, peer approval and seek shelter in conformity.

6. **Machiavellianism** means that there is a contrast between "what is" and "what ought to be" or "be a good man at home but try to be practical and expedient on the job. Success determines what is right or wrong" (Cyriac and Dharmaraj 1994).

7. Kohlberg has given six levels of moral development and individuals who exemplify the highest stage of moral reasoning use autonomously accepted principles of rights and justice to justify their moral judgements (for details refer to Kracher et al., 2002, 'Factors relating to Cognitive Moral Development of Business Students and Business Professionals in India and the U. S.: Nationality, Education Sex and Gender,' Journal of Business Ethics, 35, 255-268).

and actions of individual human beings within a larger community. Ethics involve good judgement and sensitivity and not just obeying rules mechanically. While many people would feel that being ethical is just common sense, the complexity of our business and society requires a more educated approach to understanding ethics, especially at the workplace. The issues of ethical misconduct have made business ethics an area of concern and have led to the researches in this field. The enlightened companies have started considering this fact and are trying to inculcate and ingrain ethical values and norms in their corporate culture to gain an edge over their counterparts. But still a lot needs to be done. It has been observed that as regards business and especially marketing ethics, there is dearth of research studies in India; it can lead to two conclusions either

people think that they can do away with these unethical practices. Or another reason could be that since not complying with them does not put much serious impact on others (especially the marketing ethics), the people think there is no need to follow such ethical practices; rather one can gain by being unethical in this particular area.

Given the diversity across the regions of India in culture and languages spoken, The study recommends more empirical research is needed in India to make any generalisations. Factors such as origin, designation, size and presence and absence of codes, marital status, career type, number of children and attitudinal and personality factors, level of income, number of years of employment can be studied in future to form generalisations. There is also a need to fill the gap between ethics and marketing strategy (Loe et al., 2000). A humble attempt has been made in the present study. Further studies of this kind would be appropriate in narrowing down the gap.

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