

Abstract. *A business culture supported by positive practices and strong ethical values will produce productive employee work response. Positive work environment encourages ethical decision making and employees feel comfortable in an environment where they have freedom to make ethical decisions. It becomes difficult for employees to make ethical decisions in an unethical work environment. This research studied the relationship between group creativity, corporate ethical values, job commitment and performance. Using a self-reporting questionnaire, information was collected from employees of three largest telecommunication companies of Pakistan. The data is collected from sales and marketing employees of telecom industry by using convenience sampling technique. The research model was tested using AMOS Version 16. Results show the normative elements of work context (ethical value, group creativity) positively influence employee's level of commitment and ethical decision making, thus resulting in better organizational performance. This study is among the few empirical studies that investigate consequences of positive work context (ethical value, group creativity) on ethical decision making and commitment level of employees.*

Keywords: corporate ethical values, group creativity, job commitment, work context, work response, performance.

CORPORATE ETHICAL VALUES, GROUP CREATIVITY, JOB COMMITMENT AND PERFORMANCE: THE EFFECT OF WORK RESPONSE ON WORK CONTEXT

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1. Introduction

The smooth working in organizations where unethical behaviors take place relies on the level of harmonization between individual and organizational values. A healthy fit between employees and the organization may produce positive results like job satisfaction and commitment (Hoffman and Woehr, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003). The increasing unethical incidents in organizations make it important for researchers to study and develop a better understanding of the influence of ethics on organizational results (Andrews et al., 2011). In order to establish an ethical culture in the organization, ethical customs can be a particularly effective tool. The usage of clear code of conduct, proper ethics training, open communication and colleague's influence can definitely strengthen employee commitment to ethical customs (Minkes et al., 1999; Valentine and Barnett, 2002; Kaptein, 2009; Valentine and Fleischman, 2004, 2008; Schwegker and Good, 2007; Adams et al., 2001; LeClair and Ferrell, 2000).

When this commitment becomes visible, an atmosphere which encourages ethical behavior through social processes and work norms is created (Minkes et al., 1999; Ferrell et al., 2007; O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2005; Valentine and Barnett, 2007; Ingram et al., 2007). Moreover, an increase in employee ethics is among the main aims for building an ethical framework because employees' positive dealings will lead to added benefits to organizations. Group creativity and ethical values are contextual variables which may give organizations two harmonizing activators for improving organizational work through employee responses (Valentine et al., 2011).

West and Richter (2008) emphasized that research on the relationship between climate, organizational culture and creativity has been inadequate, and that it is still a mature area for study. Commitment and ethical decision making are other significant response factors which are to be evaluated in relation to work context's operationalization (Valentine et al., 2011). This study is undertaken to determine the roles of job commitment and performance in the bracket of ethical context-group creativity relationship.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Relationship between work context and job commitment

This research studies the effects of the work context (environment) which is positive and benefits employees gain from it and eventually affects performance. The positive work environment (context) can bring many required results through work response, e.g. employee attitude, commitment and effective performance. There is evidence that employees' personal belief in work ethics has a direct effect on organizational commitment, it is argued that organizational ethics affects organizational commitment (Chusmir and Koberg, 1988; Saks et al., 1996). Many previous researchers found that the ethical culture and the ethical climate influence organizational commitment (Trevino et al., 1998). More recently, Schiebel and

Pochtrager (2003) have also reported that organizational ethics increases employees' commitment. Amongst the primary goals for ethical context development is increasing employee ethics, positive interactions with employees will lead to additional benefits. "When an environment or culture is provided by the organizations encourage such exchanges (for example when organizations are broadminded, dependable or ethical), desirable responses increase in anticipation (for example loyalty and high productivity) is hypothesized to increase" (Hunt et al., 1989, p. 38).

Consequently, it can be considered reasonable to infer that corporate culture strengthened by ethics and creativity should work in concert to influence favorable job responses. In particular, the encouragement of employee's creativity at work is likely to enhance job attitudes. Evidence suggests that creativity is related to ethics because employees develop a strong sense of organizational identity when they are encouraged to think creatively, and part of this identity is tied to ethical business practices (Oliver et al., 2009). Koh and Boo (2001) found that three measures of organizational ethics (namely, the organization's ethical climate, top management support for ethical behavior and the association between ethical behavior and career success) are associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between corporate ethical values and job commitment.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between group creativity and job commitment.

2.2. Relationship between commitment and performance

Porter et al. (1974) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization and characterized it by three factors. These three factors are a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Investigating organizational commitment is important and useful to organizational leaders as it has been found to affect other organizational outcomes, e.g. company sales and profitability (Benkhoff, 1997; Brett et al., 1995). Its importance and usefulness underlie the proliferation of studies that investigate the determinants of organizational commitment (e.g. personal attributes, job characteristics and work experience – the three broad categories of determinants of organizational commitment proposed in Steers' (1977) model). Other determinants found to have an effect on organizational commitment include job satisfaction (MacKenzie et al., 1998; Mannheim et al., 1997) and socialization tactics or practices (Allen and Meyer, 1990a; Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Buchanan, 1974).

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between job commitment and organizational performance.

2.3. Ethical decision making and performance

Decision making involves gathering information from all available possibilities and analyzing the potential implications before arriving at a decision. For routine management activities decision-making takes place quickly, and with experience, becomes second nature and intuitive. However complex problems require consultation with others, evaluation of various kinds of information, consideration for time and resources for desired outcome (Maddalena et al., 2007).

In dynamic and complex organization life uncertainty is inevitable. Ethical issues are always present in the uncertain conditions because of conflict of interest among various stakeholders, interest groups and unclear laws. These factors make decision making a challenging job for managers and they face ethical dilemmas because of conflicts of interests among various stakeholders. Managers involved in ethical decision making affect lives and wellbeing of others particularly for consumers, communities and employees. Their decisions and actions can generate tremendous social consequences (Trevino, 1986).

Creating an organizational culture that promotes ethical decision-making is the responsibility of the executive management team. Those in positions of authority are responsible to create an environment of trust and confidence among their employees. They conduct themselves in a manner that considers not only the immediate outcome of their decision, but also whether the decision is congruent with organizational and social values. Moreover, there is an emerging imperative for accountability and transparency in decision-making (Ganster, 2005; Stanley, 2004). As a result of unethical or illegal decisions of one or more managers an organization can face lawsuits that possibly hold severe financial consequences and could badly affect its public image (Trevino, 1986).

Pimentel et al. (2010) emphasize the presence of novel situations that require the delineation of unique courses of action. In addition, changes in the workforce composition, organizational culture, and emphasis on social responsibility enlarge the scope of decision options and create dilemma situations. Hence, the decision-makers' ability to recognize that a particular situation may represent an ethical dilemma is critical to the success of organizations. Organizational characteristics and the alignment between organizational systems, the legal environment, and other extra-organizational factors (i.e. ethical capability) determine the extent to which decision-makers are able to recognize a situation as an ethical dilemma.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant positive relationship between corporate ethical values and ethical decision making.

Previous research proved that psychological contracts are solved by the ethical values which will be influenced by improving social exchanges occurring within organization (O' Donohue and Nelson, 2009; Valentine et al., 2002). Employees not only enjoy working in organizations that have strong ethical values and encourage ethical practices but this also reduces conflict between them (Jaramillo et al., 2006;

Schwepker and Hartline, 2005). Such an environment not only encourages employees to work positively but also improves their attitudes and work outcomes.

In a changing era of knowledge, where methods of management are rapidly changing (Drucker, 1993) we need to adapt quickly. Knowledge plays crucial role not only in achieving competitive advantage, but in running any business. In a developing country like Pakistan the service industry is accounting for 53% of national economy and main source of new employment. It is imperative to learn and share knowledge. There is a need to establish a culture which encourages employee participation, in sharing, learning and transforming that knowledge. The encouragement from management will help foster this culture (Bhatti et al., 2011). This encouragement will create organizational learning, which would help devise better and ethical management ways. The employees will willingly give input and share freely and be more creatively and innovatively. This will be in line with the ethical values of organization. West and Richter (2008) claimed that research into the relationship between creativity, climate and organizational culture has been limited, and it should be explored.

Valentine et al. (2011) suggested that encouraging employee creativity will positively affect their attitude towards job. Research on organizations showed that employees develop a sense of belonging with organization and its ethical values when they are encouraged to be creative (Oliver et al., 2009). Another recently conducted study (Valentine et al., 2010) found that supposed ethical value was critical in developing organizational mindset, an attribute that is related to creativity. Such a culture which is based on ethics and creative should be able to produce favorable results.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant positive relationship between ethical decision making and group creativity.

The philosophy behind ethics has a unique action-oriented feature and is mainly concerned with moral obligation and questions regarding right and wrong of conduct (Pojman, 1998). Most decisions do have a dimension of ethics, but not all decisions require help of an expert to achieve reasonable result. Usually, good decisions are the output of carefully thought out management processes and are based on sound values. Every day business involves difficult choices which can be conflicting and competitive for the stakeholders' interests. In order to justify complicated situations and ethical decision making process actions three meta-ethical categories are discussed in this research, namely moral absolutism, moral relativism and an ethic of care. Moral absolutism is explained as the judgments which are either right or wrong regardless of situations or intentions behind them (Honderich, 1995). According to this viewpoint moral rules cannot be over ruled irrespective of scenario. As a theory it includes morally accepted societal values which are duty based and have far reaching effects.

Moral relativism gives the rational view that right and wrong are not conclusive values, but are personalized according to the individual's circumstances, place or culture (Freakley and Burgh, 2001). There are no black and white criteria

based on which to evaluate moral actions. A relativist approach may provide historical, geographical, social or cultural evidence to support it. Moral relativism accepts that everything humans do is right in their appropriate circumstances. The question ‘What is morality?’ is answered by moral absolutism and moral relativism in the light of what makes up a moral judgment. Nodding (1984) suggested an alternative approach to this question after her research followed up on work of Carol Gilligan on women’s ethical decision making. This approach focuses on importance of moral attitude instead of moral judgment. It’s called an ethic of care and focuses on ethics of ‘being’ instead of “doing” like a quality ethics position. An ethic of care focuses on love, care, compassion and sympathy.

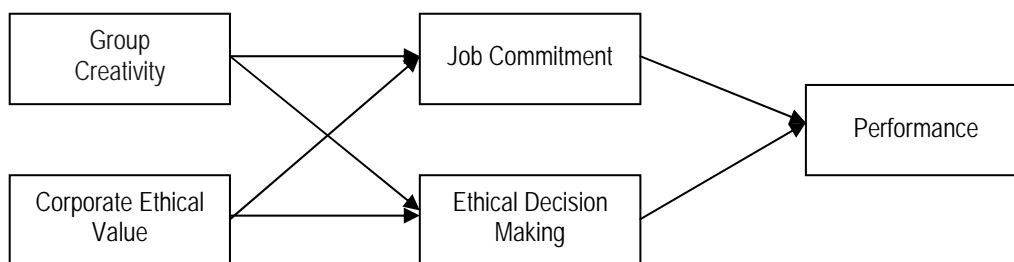


Figure 1. Research model

Noddings (1984, p. 65) explains that relational ethic is one in which “caring involves, for the one-caring, ‘feeling-with’ the other. I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other”. This approach discards behavior governed by rule and absolute moral principles. Instead, it endorses sensitivity to situations and respect for experience as its base (Freakley and Burgh, 2001). There are discrepancies in the opinions of researchers that whether high ethical standards boost or reduce firm’s profitability and competitive positions (Ross, 1988). Being ethical has several possible outcomes because it can increase company’s profitability (i.e. reduce cost by reducing employees theft) or it may decrease company’s outcome (i.e. increasing cost by insuring a safe workplace). Further, ethical actions may have a less direct effect on short term performance of the company but in long run it has real positive impact on the performance of company for example withdrawal of a product from market because of moral reasons may immediately increase cost of the firm but in long-term it will enhance profitability and companies good will (Stead et al., 1990).

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant positive relationship between ethical decision making and organizational performance.

3. Research methodology

Data for this study was collected from the service sector of Pakistan because it is 53% of Pakistan economy. The service sector telecommunication sector has been growing rapidly the last few years. Employees of telecom sector face ethical

challenges every day specially marketing and sales employees. The sample for this study consisted of marketing and sales employees from the telecom sector.

The three largest telecommunication companies of Pakistan were selected and 700 questionnaires were distributed in their branches all across the country. There were received 315 questionnaires out of which we were able to use 300 (15 questioners were discarded because of missing data). A total of 69% were male and 31% of respondent's gender was female. Furthermore, 60% of the participants were married and 40% were single. Respondents have different educational levels: elementary school 5.9%, high school, 20.3%, high school graduates, 65.8%, and university graduates, 7%. The average life of work unit was 3 years, mainly consisting of respondents between the age of 24 and 34 year of age (mean= 29.9).

3.1. Measures

Hunt et al. (1989) developed a five-item "corporate ethical values" scale which was used to assess individuals' beliefs regarding the telecommunication companies generalized ethical practices. The scale enabled individuals to rate several dimensions of ethical culture of telecom industry. In business organizations it was used as evidence in the past research and this was its original use (Valentine et al., 2010; Singhapakdi et al., 1999; Baker et al., 2006; Valentine and Barnett, 2007). "In no uncertain terms unethical behavior will not be tolerated, let the top management in my company be known to it" and "A manager in my company will be reprimanded if he is discovered to engage in unethical behavior that results primarily in personal gain (rather than corporate gain)" are the sample items. A seven point Likert scale was utilized as 7 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree), after reverse scoring two items and averaging item scores, individual beliefs in the organization were ethical which was shown by the higher composite values. 0.78 was the coefficient alpha at the scale.

Three item group creativity scale was also utilized which was based on Gilson's et al. (2005) work, for the sake of evaluating beliefs of respondents' about innovations' level in case of their work groups which were considered immediate. Items were "New things were encouraged by my work group and me, even though they might not work"; "As a whole, I and my work group welcome change"; and "Difficult problems are to be solved by creative solutions which was suggested by my work group and me". The scale was determined at seven point Likert scale which included 7 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree), item scores were taken as average, the workgroup was creative, that was shown by the higher composite values. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.82.

Job commitment was measured with four items scale (Hunt et al., 1985), which also has a 7-point Likert format: "I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered a 25% pay increase"; "I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered more creative freedom"; "I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered more status"; "I would be willing to change companies if the new

job was with people who were more friendly”. The coefficient alpha of the scale was 0.63.

Performance was measured based on scale used by Shih, Chen and Morrison (2010) “Our market share is the highest in the industry”, “Our organization has the lowest costs per transaction of any in the industry”, “We have continually been improving our costs per revenue dollar”, “The time it takes to complete one whole transaction is the best in the industry”, “If certain individuals in the firm unexpectedly left, we would be in big trouble”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.72.

The ethical decision making scale was adapted from the study of Dempster et al. (2004). Three meta-ethical categories measured ethical decision making; moral absolutism, moral relativism and ethics of care. Moral absolutism was measured by four items “A person should always tell the truth”, “I am prepared at times to ignore what the rules say in order to do what I think it is ethically correct”, “Breaking a promise is always an unethical act” and “Ethical decision making boils down to rewarding the rule-followers and punishing the rule-breakers”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.73.

Moral relativism was measured by three items “I believe that views about what is right or wrong are simply the result of cultural conditioning and “ethical action should issue from reasoning about the rights and duties of those involved” and “Ethics is properly understood as a matter of taste not reason”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.69.

Ethic of care is measured by four items “I am sometimes required to compromise my personal views in order to build better working relationships”, “I actively try to explore with my coworkers those conditions necessary to initiate and maintain trust, honesty and open communication”, “ distance between myself and my coworkers better allows me to work out the most ethical course of action” and “In my view, a fundamental starting point for making ethical decisions is that one becomes a whole person by entering into a network of relationships with others”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.70.

3.2. Model testing using structural equation modeling (AMOS)

For the assessment of model fit we applied a structural equation model with the help of AMOS. First we examined the reliability and validity of measures used to represent the constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis was applied on the data and cut-off value was 0.50 as suggested in most of studies (Hair et al., 1998; Prajogo and McDermott, 2005).

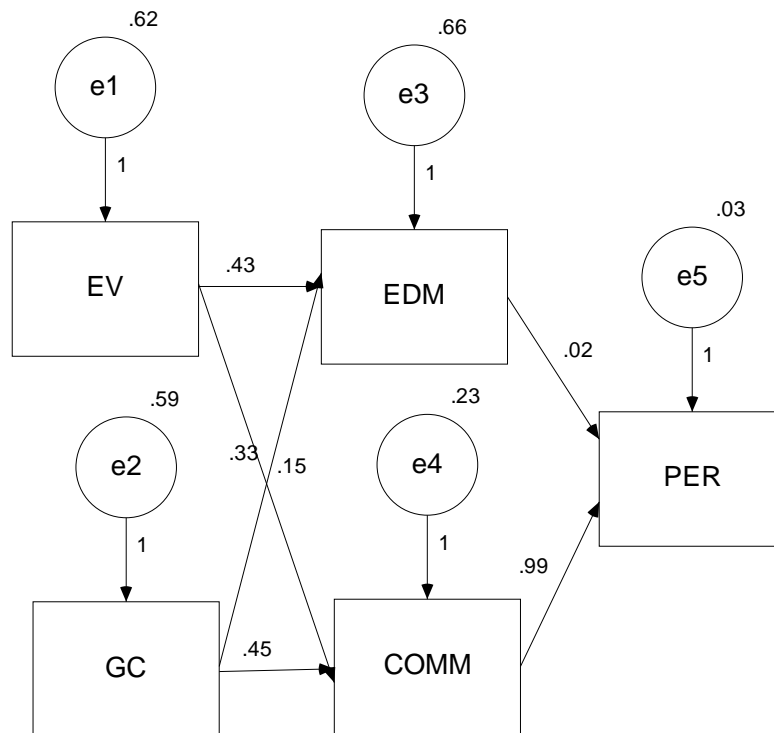
Table 1 show all factor loadings are above the cut- off point of 0.50 and indicators loading values are significance ($p < 0.01$). Table 1 also reveals that all measures which have the Cronbach’s alpha above the cut-off point of 0.60.

Table 1

Confirmatory factor analysis/estimates and Cronbach's Alpha

VARIABLES	FACTOR LOADINGS					ALPHA
	1	2	3	4	5	
Corporate ethical values	0.817	0.895	0.601	0.792	0.928	0.815
Group creativity	0.673	0.548	0.720			0.680
Commitment	0.523	0.673	0.901	0.698		0.785
Ethical decision making	0.553	0.432	0.905	0.822		0.884
Moral absolutism	0.634	0.602	0.704	0.655		0.735
Moral relativism	0.593	0.712	0.966			0.694
Ethic of care	0.823	0.562	0.710	0.822		0.702
Performance	0.74	0.667	0.911	0.942		0.652

*All factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.01$)



Note: EV – Ethical Values, EDM –Ethical Decision Making, GC – Group Creativity, PER –Performance, COMM-Commitment.

Figure 2. Path analysis

Table 2

Model Fit Indices

Chi	Df	Sig	Chi/Df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR
24.934	4	0.000	4	0.968	0.878	0.980	0.976	0.052

Note: GFI = Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted goodness of Fit Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, NFI = Norms Fit Index, RMR = Root mean Square residual.

The results in Table 2 show the model fitness index, as significant regression paths do not necessarily mean the model is fit, the researchers have to go through the model fit index provided by AMOS output. Seven model fitness indices are shown in Table 1. The model chi-Square (Chi) and associated significant value indicates that this criterion does not fulfill the minimum requirement of model fitness as the significant value is less than the level of significance ($p < .05$) indicating discrepancy factors in the model. One of the possible reasons indicated by Bentler and Bonnet (1980) and Joreskog and Sorbom (1993) are that Chi Square is sensitive to sample size and nearly always rejects model when sample size is large. Other fitness measures are Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), GFI and AGFI should be equal to or greater than .90 to accept the model (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004).

This model fulfills the minimum acceptance level of Model Fit (GFI > .90) and AGFI > .90). Further criterion includes CFI (Comparative Fit index) which is revised form of NFI (Norm Fit Index). The suggested value for NFI and CFI is equal to or greater than .90. This model fulfills the minimum acceptance level because the values of NFI and CFI in Table 3 are greater than .90. RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) is the square root of the average squared amount by which the sample variances and covariance differ from their estimates. Value below .08 shows good fit of the model Matrix (Byrne, 1998; MacCallum et al., 1996). The model fulfills the criterion because (RMR < 0.08). Based upon the aforementioned criteria five model fit indices fulfill the conditions.

Table 3

Hypotheses testing based on Regression weights

Constructs		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EDM	<--- EV	.427	.061	7.056	***	Accepted
COMM	<--- GC	.450	.037	12.185	***	Accepted
EDM	<--- GC	.326	.062	5.242	***	Accepted
COMM	<--- EV	.147	.036	4.097	***	Accepted
PER	<--- EDM	.024	.011	2.102	.036	Accepted
PER	<--- COMM	.987	.017	57.039	***	Accepted

Note: EV – Ethical Values, EDM – Ethical Decision Making, GC – Group Creativity, PER – Performance, COMM – Commitment.

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Results of the above hypotheses testing based on regression weights show the relationship between constructs; Ethical Values (EV), Ethical Decision Making (EDM), Group Creativity (GC), Performance (PER). Performance includes both financial and nonfinancial performance which is shown in Figure 1 and Table 3.

Table 3 shows hypotheses testing based on regression weights. Beta value is 0.427 between ethical values (EV) and ethical decision making (EDM). The hypothesis is accepted because the relationship is significant ($p < 0.05$). The beta value between group creativity (GC) and commitment (COMM) is 0.450. The relationship between group creativity and commitment is significant ($p < 0.50$) and the hypothesis is accepted. The relationship between group creativity (GC) and ethical decision making (EDM) is significant because ($p < 0.05$) and beta value is 0.326. Whereas the relationship between ethical values (EV) and commitment (COMM) is accepted because ($p < 0.05$) and beta value is 0.147. Beta value is 0.024 between ethical decision making (EDM) and performance (PER). The hypothesis is accepted because the relationship is significant ($p < 0.05$). Whereas beta value between commitment (COMM) and performance (PER) and the relationship is significant ($p < 0.05$).

This study empirically assessed the influence of two work context constructs, corporate ethical values and group creativity, on commitment and decision making of employees. It also studied how commitment and ethical decision making affect performance of the organization. Our results support the entire hypothesis, as shown in Table 3. These results demonstrated full support for five hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H6) and partial support for one hypothesis (H5). While it is not surprising that corporate ethical values positively affect employee's commitment. Specially marketing and sales employees feel highly satisfied and committed to organization when their individual ethical values go with organization's ethical orientation. This study found that employees were more satisfied and committed to organization when they saw top management performing ethically, keeping employees informed and fulfilling promises. Where strong fit between organization's and employees' ethical value amplify commitment level, it is also responsible for enhancing creativity at work. This research found that employees were more associated with organizations that encourage creativity and give them freedom of expression. Furthermore creativity strengthens employee's ethical values and sense of belongingness towards organization.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this research study conclude that there is a dynamic fluidity between ethical decision making and performance of organization. The performance of employees diminishes progressively when top management was seen to perform unethical actions or if there is sharp contrast between their words and actions. While organizational performance increases dramatically if management is successful in creating trust and confidence among their employees. This trust and confidence

strengthens employees association and commitment towards organization. They show acceptance for the organizational values and make considerable effort to nurture their relationship with the organization. This high level of commitment reduces cost of hiring, retention and training. The development and promotion of a more benevolent ethical climate among employees enhances organizational commitment that leads to high productivity and morale. Positive work context also encourage ethical decision making and employees feel comfortable in an environment where they have freedom to make ethical decisions. It becomes difficult for employees to make ethical decisions in an unethical work environment.

This study helps top management in making ethical decisions especially in service industry sector where it becomes more important to have ethical interaction with customers. This study also gives emphasis on the development of positive work context because it encourages creativity among employees and increases their level of commitment. One of the limitations embedded in most of the studies related to ethical analysis is ability of human being to deceive others of their true intention and sometimes to bluff themselves of their true motivation. For example an employee might think a particular action is ethical and in compliance with organizational ethical context but in fact following pre-conventional level of moral development to maximize selfish gain.

Another constraint of this study is it only focuses on service industry and more specifically to telecom sector while same study can be conducted to explore other sectors of economy as well. Researcher recommends studying proposed model under different socio-economic situations and confirming the results of present study. New research can be conducted by adding additional endogenous variables with performance. Apart from this weakness, the model provides useful tools for analyzing corporate ethical values and proposed inductively driven model to investigate the relationship between group creativity, corporate ethical values and ethical decision making. The model highlights the factors that intervene in the analysis of ethical decision making and group creativity. Moreover it explains how transparency in decision making and strong concern about right and wrong increase employee retention and commitment with organization.

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