

Analysis of Postgraduate Theses on Business Morality and Business Ethics in Turkey: A Qualitative Research Based on a Systematic Review

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Introduction

When examining the literature on business morality and business ethics in Turkey, the relevant field studies are seen to have increased after the 2000s but to have yet to have reached the saturation point (Köseoğlu et al., 2013; Eğri & Sunar, 2010; Gölbaşı, 2009; Özdemir, 2009). In addition, few studies are found to have evaluated business morality and business ethics in our country (Akdeve & Köseoğlu, 2013; Köseoğlu, et al., 2013; Eğri & Sunar, 2010; Özdemir, 2009). When evaluating these studies, these studies are determined to have been carried out between 2009 and 2013 using bibliometric analyses and literature reviews; only one of the studies was associated with a different field. This situation indicates a need exists for detailed studies that can be addressed over different samples in the field of business morality and business ethics. At this point, a large area is clearly waiting to be explored for researchers.

This study has been prepared to present the general view of postgraduate theses and dissertations on business morality and business ethics in Turkey. The study has preferred using the systematic review method within its scope, and has accessed a total of 98 graduate theses and dissertations (38 on business morality and 60 on business ethics) as a result of a search in the Thesis Archive of the Turkish

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Higher Education Institution using the keywords “business morality” and “business ethics” on January 30, 2021. The 98 postgraduate theses and dissertations constituting the sample of the study have been evaluated in terms of type, year, university, institute, department, scientific branch, original language, advisor title, purpose, main focus, and methodology parameters using the systematic review method. The data obtained were subjected to content and descriptive analyses and interpreted in line with the problematics of the research. The criteria of credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability were used to ensure the relevance of the study.

Discussion and Results

When evaluating these theses in terms of business morality and business ethics, many more postgraduate studies were identified as having been conducted in the field of business ethics compared to business morality. While morality is the set of norms, rules, and values that shape behavior (Cevizci, 2014), ethics is the art of thinking about morality and takes an abstract form in its place as a sub-discipline of philosophy (Erdoğan et al., 2018). The validity of this result appears to be due to how ethics has gained a place as a discipline that scientifically examines the morality of the behaviors of the individuals who form a society (Tınar, 1999), how it contributes to the formation of universal norms (Tansal, 2002), and how it regulates moral behaviors within the legal structure (Hartog, 2004).

When evaluating postgraduate theses and dissertations prepared in the field of business morality and business ethics in terms of type, mostly master’s theses were determined to have been prepared in both fields. This finding suggests that both areas have yet to achieve the desired depth.

When examining the years spent preparing postgraduate theses and dissertations labeled as being on business morality or business ethics within the sample, an increased fluctuation is seen to have occurred over the years, with a sharp decline from 2019 to 2020. In addition, the interest in the subject was determined to have increased between 2007-2019, with the greatest number of theses and dissertations having been carried out in 2016. This finding indicates that the whole world has turned to moral and ethical issues more and more over the years.

Marmara University is seen to have contributed the most in terms of thesis preparations. When examining the institutes where these theses were prepared, the majority of prepared theses were seen to have occurred in the Social Sciences Institute. However,

although different institutes are found in terms of working relations, graduate thesis were determined to have been made within the relevant fields of the Institutes of Educational Sciences, Sciences, Atatürk Principles, History of Revolution History, Banking, and Insurance. This indicates business morality and business ethics to have been adopted by different institutes and to be interdisciplinary research areas with academicians from various disciplines being interested in the subject (De George, 1987; McNamara, 2003). The presence of such a finding paves the way for the field to be handled from different and diverse perspectives. When examining these theses in terms of department and discipline distributions, most theses were determined to have been prepared by the Department of Business Administration Management and Organization. Another issue uncovered regarding the theses evaluated within the scope of the study is that their parallels vary with respect to the department and discipline. These findings indicate the issues of business morality and business ethics to have spread to different academic disciplines and an increase in studies conducted on these issues can be expected in the future.

The vast majority of the theses evaluated within the scope of the research are seen to have been written in Turkish. The reasons for this finding are considered to result from education being given in Turkish in our country in addition to the low number of international students.

Although diversity is found in the titles of the advisors who guided the preparation of these theses, faculty members with the title of Professor were identified as having contributed the most. This finding indicates a scientific community to be present in the field of morality and ethics. The fact that the group to have advised postgraduate theses the most is made up of professors indicates the quality of these studies to be high.

Interesting findings have been obtained as a result of elaborating upon the examined postgraduate theses in terms of their purpose and main focus. Graduate theses with business morality, personality differences, internal marketing, organizational commitment, religious culture and ethics courses, corporate reputation, paternalistic leadership, employee performance, moral values, ethical climate, education, transformational leadership, human resource practices, perception of corporate values, and business ethics in Japanese as keywords or in their title are seen to have focused on national culture, cultural differences, Akhism, mobbing, attitudes on business ethics, gendered business ethics, Protestant business ethics, trust, obedience, social network, organizational culture, corporate image, Islamic economics, and in particular the concept of corporate social responsibility.

The theses involving the concepts of attitudes toward business ethics, perception of corporate social responsibility, job satisfaction, organizational culture, organizational ethics, personal characteristics, ethical principles and rules, American business ethics, views on business ethics, business values, workplace deviation behaviors, emotional intelligence in postgraduate theses labeled business ethics organizational citizenship behaviors, national culture, supplier selection, brand attitude, purchase intention, stress management, compliance, ethical leadership, business thinking, stakeholder relations, corporate reputation, human resources, institutionalization, business ethics standards, unethical behaviors, and Akhism were observed to have focused on managerial processes, recreational leadership attitudes, ethical dilemmas, organizational performance, sustainability of relationships, and ethical explanations.

When holistically evaluating the purpose and main focus of the examined postgraduate theses, the subjects are strikingly seen to belong to the field of business administration. These established relationships point to the effects business schools have had on institutionalizing moral behaviors (Gölbaşı, 2009).

The findings obtained within the scope of this study indicate academicians from different disciplines to be interested in the subject. This situation paves the way for the field to be handled from different angles and for diversity to form. However, when holistically evaluating the purpose and focus of the theses, the perception of business morality and business ethics in general were seen to have attracted the attention of researchers, with business morality and business ethics also being mainly associated with organizational behavior issues and studies associated with other management departments to remain practically unstudied. This finding indicates the deepening of business morality and business ethics will be delayed and repetition will be triggered. This result is consistent with the results from Akdeve and Köseoğlu's (2013) study.

When detailing the graduate theses within the scope of the sample in terms of methodology, the quantitative research method was determined to have been mainly preferred in both business morality and business ethics theses and the qualitative method to have been used in a small number of theses. The reason for this may be that the education given in our country has a predominantly positivist tradition, which may result in quantitative research having gained intensity. This is because the post-positivist tradition in Turkey is still trying to acquire its position. As a result, a limited number of studies are found using qualitative research methods. This finding has been evaluated as the fields of business morality and bu-

business ethics will be prevented from benefiting from the power of methodological diversity. However, qualitative studies should be encouraged in order to add depth to the field.

This study presents a generally detailed view of postgraduate theses and dissertations on business morality and business ethics that were conducted in Turkey between 1996-2021. While carrying out the study through a systematic review and evaluation shows significant initiative, the intention to contribute within the scope of the national context increases the importance of this study.

The related field contains gaps that can be the subject of much research and reveals the potential for future research. For example, in order to reveal the differences between the national and international literature, comparative national and international literature mapping can be done. Meanwhile, the relationship between business ethics and organizational ethics can be elaborated upon by deepening the ways in which business morality and business ethics are handled.

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