



TO WHAT EXTENT DO PROFESSORS COMPLY WITH PROVISIONS OF CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT



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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to determine the degree to which the professors at Tafila Technical University (TTU) comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from the point of view of ethics students at the university. To achieve this goal, this study uses both primary and secondary sources of data. The data was collected using a questionnaire containing the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The data was collected, sorted, edited and analysed using a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 18.0). The results reveal that ethics students strongly agree or agree that the behaviour of TTU professors largely complies with the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. More specifically, the variables include: preserve public resources and the university's interests, property and assets, dealing with superiors, dealing with colleagues and commitment to performing job duties. Respondents' views of professors' compliance with the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct with regards to dealing with customers (students) were moderate. The study recommends that the university must issue its own academic conduct code to regulate the relationship between professors and students and raise awareness among academics of the need to adhere to academic ethical practices.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature where it is researched the degree to which the professors comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from the point of view of ethics students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The business environment is undergoing considerable changes as a result of the IT revolution, which has necessitated business organisations to reconsider many organisational concepts with emphasis on business ethics. Commitment to business ethics is an important factor affecting the quality of the service or products provided and contribute to increased productivity.

Therefore, some business organisations have issued a code of ethical conduct that regulates the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders. In Jordan, a code of ethics and professional conduct for employees of government institutions, including public universities, was issued in 2016. At TTU, the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was circulated to faculty and staff members, with a request for them to abide by its provisions. The university's study plans also include ethics courses, including focus on work ethics, civil service ethics, and computer ethics, as well as chapters dealing with ethical issues in various subjects. The university administration also ensures that faculty members act as good role models for their students in terms of fairness, integrity and adherence to ethical standards during teaching and when dealing with students.

Therefore, this study considers the extent to which the professors at TTU comply with provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from the viewpoint of ethics students (work ethics, civil service ethics, computer ethics). An additional aim is to find out if there are statistically significant differences ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) in the compliance of professors at TTU with provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct according to the gender (male, female) and academic level (grade 1, grade 2, grade 3 and grade 4 and above) of respondents.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Thompson (2005) defines ethics as the study of right and wrong; of the moral choices people make and the way in which they seek to justify them. Barry (1979) also defines ethics as the study of what constitutes good and bad conduct, including related actions and values.

Business ethics can be defined as the principles and standards that determine acceptable conduct in business organisations. It deals with what is right and wrong in organisational decisions, behaviour and policies. Nash (1990) states that business ethics deals with three basic areas of managerial decision making, including choices about what the laws should be and whether to follow them, choices about economic and social issues outside the domain of law and choices about the prioritisation of self-interest over a company's interests.

Code of conduct, code of ethics, principles of responsibility and statement of ethics are all terms that are often used interchangeably in ethics literature. Schwartz (2002) defines a code of ethics as a written, distinct, formal document which consists of moral standards used to guide employee or corporate actions. Hosmer (1987) argues that an ethical code is a declaration of an organisation's norms and faiths. These norms and faiths are generally proposed, discussed and defined by experienced executive managers within the organisation, before they are published and distributed to all the organisation's members. These definitions determine three elements of a code of ethics in that it is a written and formal document, it must provide ethical guidelines and it must guide employees' behaviour.

A code of ethics and professional conduct in public service in Jordan was issued in August 2006, based on the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, integrity, professionalism and impartiality. The code, composed of eleven articles, emphasises the behaviours that are expected from employees in public service. The code notes that employees shall read and comply with the provisions of this code of conduct and sign a statement to acknowledge that they have read the provisions of the code and undertake to abide by it. The provisions of the code clarify that an employee who violates the provisions of this code shall be held accountable and subject to disciplinary measures. This code was designed to enhance citizens' confidence and trust in the work and services of government departments through the following aims:

1. To reinforce ethical standards and the basic rules and principles of professional conduct in civil service; to reinforce professional values and cultures among employees; to enhance compliance with these standards, rules and values; and to promote good practices and good governance.
2. To raise employees' awareness of and encourage their following of the principles of good professional conduct and self-discipline which govern the civil service and to comply with applicable laws and regulations.
3. To participate in determining the professional duties and responsibilities of employees.
4. To stress that employees serve the public and customers, that they are in their jobs for that purpose and that they shall use their authority in the best interest of citizens and not against it.

Article (6) of the code illustrates the duties of civil servants; that they shall comply with all legislation governing their work, perform their official duties and missions to the best of their abilities with professionalism, integrity and impartiality and that they shall serve the goals and objectives of the department for the public good. It also includes provisions that they must use working hours to perform official duties and responsibilities and abstain from doing any activity that is not related to official duties. The article emphasises adopting the principles of

fairness and objectivity in performing work, improving performance and enhancing professional capabilities and avoiding misusing an official position to serve partisan, tribal or personal purposes, goals or interests.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2006 Jordan issued a code of ethics, which emphasises the behaviours that are expected from employees in public service. The code states that employees shall read and comply with the provisions of this code of conduct and sign a statement to acknowledge that they have read the provisions of the code and undertake to abide by it. Professors at TTU are subject to this code and they must endeavour to be a role model and comply and act in accordance with the provisions of this code.

This research is therefore designed to determine the extent to which the professors at TTU comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in the eyes of ethics students. More specifically, this study tries to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do the professors at TTU comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from the viewpoint of ethics students?
- Are there statistically significant differences at the level of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) in the compliance of professors at TTU with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct according to the gender and academic level of respondents?

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Horani and Tanash (2007) emphasise the importance of professors' academic ethics at a university. Their study recommends that there should be more studies of this subject. The importance of this study stems from the following:

- The importance of professional ethics in the universities in theoretical and practical fields: Universities play a significant role in imparting knowledge on ethics to the students. Also, professors are required to maintain high academic integrity while teaching and hold high ethical standards when conducting research or representing the university.
- It is a reflection of the viewpoint of students about the commitment of professors to the code of ethics' provisions.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutions of higher education play a major role in preparing the younger generation for a difficult and highly dynamic working environment. Aside from imparting quality education, they need to instil high ethical values and practices into the student fraternity. Carson, Mark, and Shelley (2008) state that studying the ethics of educational institutions is increasingly important for two particular reasons: the unique structure of educational institutions and the role of teachers in shaping the attitudes of future business leaders.

Hershey, Fogel, and Friedman (2005) found there was no statistically significant difference between students who took a course in ethics and those who did not in their perception of what makes a professor ethical or unethical. They found that only slightly more than 50% of students believed that professors were either extremely ethical or ethical. Students also perceived themselves as being more ethical than their professors. Kuther (2003) studied the ethical behaviours of professors from the viewpoint of college students. She notes that teaching whilst under the influence of cocaine or other illegal drugs, teaching whilst under the influence of alcohol, insulting or ridiculing a student in his or her absence, telling colleagues of the confidential disclosures made by students, insulting or ridiculing a student in the student's presence, ignoring strong evidence of cheating and ignoring strong evidence of plagiarism in a written assignment were viewed as the most unethical behaviours.

Horani and Tanash (2007) investigated professors' academic ethics as perceived by faculty members at the University of Jordan. The study reveals that an agreement between faculty members with respect to 14 behaviours viewed as the most immoral, such as disrespect of students, misunderstanding their ideas and viewpoints and invalid assessment of students. Horani and Tanash (2007) emphasise the importance of professors' academic ethics at the university. They recommend that more studies on this subject should be conducted.

Abweini (1997) studied ethics of education at Yarmouk University as perceived by students and faculty members. The study notes that there was variation between students' and faculty members' practices of ethics of education.

Ismael (2000) investigated the expected morals of the teaching profession and the commitment of education faculty members to these morals as perceived by students of some public Jordanian universities.

In a study of 292 public and private colleges and universities, Rezaee, Elmore, and Szendi (2001) found that over 70% of institutions have codes of ethics. The code of conduct can be considered to be a tool of corporate governance because it identifies corporate responsibilities towards stakeholders and obliges high-level managers to comply with certain guidelines when exercising their authority, both inside and outside of a company (Arrigo, 2006). Al-Saudi and Al-Thawabieh (2013) determine that Islamic teachers in the Ministry of Education of Jordan are highly committed to the ethics of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Aldmour and Reyad (2014) conclude that the degree of teachers' commitment to the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was moderate according to principals and supervisors. This study is consistent with previous studies in its research on the extent of commitment to ethics, but its questionnaire, which is derived from the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, is different. It also differs, as the study sample is students who studied a course in ethics.

6. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The researcher uses an analytical descriptive approach, which is based on describing and explaining the study's focus. The study population consisted entirely of students at TTU who studied courses in ethics (job ethics, civil service ethics and computer ethics) in the academic year 2017/2018. 320 students studied these courses according to registration records. However, a representative random sample was selected, meaning the sample size used for this study was 177 respondents. This study has two independent variables: gender of respondents (male, female) and academic levels of respondents (grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, grade 4 and above). The study has one dependent variable which has five major constructs: Professors' commitment to performing their job duties, professors' relationships with colleagues, professors' relationships with superiors, professors' relationships with customers (students), professors' preservation of university resources and the university's interests, property and assets.

The study relies on a questionnaire derived from the Ministry of Developing Public Sector (2016). The validity of the questionnaire was established by a panel of experts through an assessment of selected items in the instruments that ensured that the instruments are measuring in accordance with the expectations. After identifying the vague and ambiguous questions, corrections were made and final instruments were prepared. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficients. From Table 1 it is evident that all the coefficients are above 0.60, which means that the scales used to measure these variables were consistent and therefore reliable.

Table-1. Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficients.

Variables	Items number	Coefficient Alpha (α)
Commitment to performing job duties	1–12	0.853
Dealing with colleagues	13–19	0.871
Dealing with superiors	20–24	0.741
Dealing with customers (students)	25–32	0.824
Preserve public resources and the university's interests, property and assets	33–37	0.69
Total	137	0.789

7. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

7.1. Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the study were as presented in Table 2. Most of the respondents were female (58%) and only 42% were male. The majority of the respondents were from grade 3 (55 students representing 31%), followed by grade 2 (52 students representing 29%) and finally grade 1 (30 students representing 17%).

Table-2. Demographic Characteristics.

Items	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	75	42%
	Female	102	58%
	Total	177	100%
Academic levels	Grade 1	30	17%
	Grade 2	52	29%
	Grade 3	55	31%
	Grade 4 and more	40	23%
	Total	177	100%

7.2. Data Analysis

This section answers the study questions:

Question one: To what extent do the professors at TTU comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from the ethics students' point of view? To answer this question, Table 3 scale is used to measure the extent to which professors complied with the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Table-3. Compliance level and degree.

Compliance Degree	Compliance levels
High	3.68 and above
Moderate	2.34–3.67
Low	2.33 and below

Table-4. Study variables' means and professors' degree of compliance with code of ethics and professional conduct.

No	Variables	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
1	Commitment to performing job duties	3.84	0.42	4	High
2	Dealing with colleagues	4.199	0.41	1	High
3	Dealing with superiors	3.934	0.512	3	High
4	Dealing with customers (students)	3.565	0.566	5	Moderate
5	Preserve public resources and the university's interests, property and assets	4.109	0.336	2	High
	Total	3.929	0.412		High

Table 4 illustrates that the means of most variables are approximately more than 3.68, which is the score for agree and strongly agree, implying that the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is largely adhered to by the

professors of TTU. These variables are: dealing with colleagues, preserving public resources and the university's interests, property and assets, dealing with superiors and commitment to performing job duties. The means are 4.199, 4.109, 3.934 and 3.84 respectively. The variable of dealing with customers (students) is moderate (3.565). This indicates that the ethics students at TTU feel that the professors' interest in them is moderate.

Table 5 shows that the students' view of professors' commitment to performing their duties was high with a total of 3.84, which implies that the Code of Conduct and Ethics is largely adhered to by the TTU professors.

Table-5. Students' viewpoints on professors' commitment to performing their job duties.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
1	Comply with all legislation governing their work	4.122	0.42	6	High
2	Perform their official duties and missions with professionalism, and serve the university	3.115	0.35	10	Moderate
3	Dedicate official work hours to performing official duties and responsibilities	4.210	0.51	4	High
4	Adopt the principles of fairness and objectivity in performing work	3.401	0.32	9	Moderate
5	Always seek to improve performance and enhance professional capabilities	3.815	0.45	8	High
6	Refrain from any acts or practices that violate public decency and moralities	4.150	0.63	5	High
7	Avoid misusing their job to serve partisan, tribal or personal purposes, goals or interests	3.112	0.41	12	Moderate
8	Inform supervisors of any violation, omission, manipulation or act that would harm work interests, or any misapplication of the laws, regulations or instructions	4.382	0.32	3	High
9	Coordinate with managers to rectify any flaws related to work procedures once detected	3.141	0.41	11	Moderate
10	Maintain the confidentiality of official information, documents and files acquired or viewed in the course of performing job duties	4.001	0.32	7	High
11	Professors who are provided with computers shall handle such computers with care and refrain from using them for entertainment purposes or to otherwise open or download files not related to work	4.652	0.54	2	High
12	Maintain a professional appearance	4.821	0.38	1	High
	Total	3.84	0.42		High

Table 6 shows that the students' view of professors' dealing with colleagues was high with a total of 4.199, which implies that the Code of Conduct and Ethics, in terms of dealing with colleagues, is largely adhered to by the TTU professors. This attribute relates to how professors treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, civility, impartiality, neutrality and objectivity, achieving the highest result with a score of 4.542, while the marker for how professors treat their colleagues without discrimination was the lowest with a score of 3.99.

Table 7 shows that the students' view of professors' dealing with superiors was high, with a total of 3.934, which implies that the Code of Conduct and Ethics, in terms of dealing with superiors, is largely adhered to by TTU professors. The item which relates to avoiding misleading superiors or concealing any information related to work from them to influence their decisions was the highest scoring item with a score of 4.412, while the item relating to the treatment of superiors without discrimination was lowest with a score of 3.560.

The interesting result is that respondents agree that the item for professors treating superiors without discrimination and the item for professors treating colleagues without discrimination were the lowest scoring.

Table-6. Students' viewpoints of professors dealing with colleagues.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
13	Professors respect the rights and interests of colleagues	4.12	0.12	5	High
14	Professors respect the interests of colleagues	4.125	0.32	4	High
15	Professors respect colleagues privacy	4.365	0.33	2	High
16	Professors cooperate with his colleagues	4.184	0.41	3	High
17	Professors help colleagues in solving work problems	4.065	0.412	6	High
18	Professors treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, civility, impartiality, neutrality and objectivity	4.542	0.225	1	High
19	Professors treat colleagues without discrimination	3.99	0.632	7	High
	Total	4.199	0.41		High

Table-7. Students' Viewpoints of professors dealing with superiors.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
20	Professors respect the rights and interests of superiors	3.821	0.455	3	High
21	Professors treat superiors with respect, courtesy, civility, impartiality, neutrality and objectivity	3.660	0.621	4	Moderate
22	Professors treat superiors without discrimination	3.560	0.523	5	Moderate
23	Professors adhere to perform orders, directives and instructions of superiors	4.219	0.625	2	High
24	Professors avoid misleading superiors or concealing any information related to work from them to influence their decisions	4.412	0.336	1	High
	Total	3.934	0.512		High

Table-8. Students' viewpoints of professors dealing with customers (Students).

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
25	Professors respect the rights and interests of students	3.552	0.695	4	Moderate
26	Professors treat students with respect, courtesy, civility, impartiality, neutrality, objectivity and without discrimination	3.402	0.552	6	Moderate
27	Professors develop the capacity of students, assist and motivate them to improve their academic performance	4.012	0.487	2	High
28	Professors serve as a role model for their students of good performance and compliance with applicable laws, regulations and instructions	3.251	0.365	7	Moderate
29	Professors cooperate and share views with colleagues in a professional and objective manner	3.622	0.742	3	Moderate
30	Professors seek to gain the trust of students and process transactions with the required amount of speed	3.42	0.632	5	Moderate
31	Professors respond to students enquiries and complaints with accuracy, professionalism and impartiality	3.21	0.421	8	Moderate
32	Professors give priority to students with disabilities and provide support and assistance to them	4.02	0.631	1	High
	Total	3.565	0.566		Moderate

Table 8 shows that the students' view of professors' dealing with customer (students) was moderate with a total of 3.565, which implies that the Code of Conduct and Ethics, in terms of dealing with superiors, is abided by to a moderate extent by TTU professors. The item which relates to professors giving priority to students with disabilities and providing support and assistance to them was highest with a score of 4.02, while the item for

professors responding to students' enquiries and complaints with accuracy, professionalism and impartiality was lowest scoring with a score of 3.21.

Table 9 shows that the students' view of professors preserving university resources and the university's interests, property and assets was high with a total of 4.109, which implies that the Code of Conduct and Ethics in terms of professors preserving university resources and the university's interests, property and assets is largely abided with by TTU professors. The item which relates to professors protecting university rights, informing the presidency of any abuse of university property or interests achieved the highest score of 4.365, while the item relating to professors refraining completely from providing preferential treatment directly or indirectly to any person through nepotism or favouritism was lowest with a score of 3.868.

Table-9. Students' viewpoints of professors preserving university resources and the university's interests, property and assets.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Compliance Degree
33	Professors preserve university resources and the department's interests and assets, as well as any act or omission that harms public good	4.01	0.142	3	High
34	Professors protect university rights; inform the presidency of any abuse of university property or interests	4.365	0.045	1	High
35	Professors refrain from using university's property to obtain personal gains	3.991	0.365	4	High
36	Professors refrain completely from providing preferential treatment directly or indirectly to any person through nepotism or favoritism	3.868	0.415	5	High
37	Professors disclose monetary and non-monetary assets and liabilities as required by law	4.312	0.712	2	High
	Total	4.109	0.336		High

Question Two: Are there statistically significant differences at the level of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) in the compliance of professors at TTU with provisions of the code of ethics that can be attributed to the gender of respondents and the academic level of respondents?

The data in Table 10 indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) in the degree of compliance of professors at TTU with the provisions of the code of ethics that can be attributed to the variable of gender, while the results did not show significant differences at the level of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) that can be attributed to the academic level variable.

Table-10. ANOVA.

Source of variation	Sums of Squares (SS)	Degree of freedom (DF)	Mean squares (MS)	F value	Significance level
Academic levels	0.149	2	0.074	0.225	0.799
Gender	1.427	2	0.714	2.157	0.0000
Error	97.928	297	.331		
Total	3744.998	302			

Note: Statistically significant at level (0.05).

8. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issuing a code of ethics and professional conduct is not enough. It is necessary to know the extent to which these ethics are applied by employees and managers. When professors' behaviour complies with the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, it positively affects the behaviour of others. This study investigates the extent to which professors at TTU comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct from ethics students' points of view and whether there are statistically significant differences in the compliance of professors at TTU

with the provisions of the code of ethics that can be attributed to the gender of respondents and the academic level of respondents.

The results imply that the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is largely complied with by the professors at TTU in the following variables: dealing with colleagues, dealing with superiors, commitment to performing job duties and preserving public resources and the university's interests, property and assets. This is a logical result as university professors are supposed to enjoy good relations with their presidents and colleagues and to preserve the money and property of the university. There is also a considerable obligation for professors to perform their duties, which is consistent with the results of Al-Saudi and Al-Thawabieh (2013).

On the other hand, it is interesting to note how TTU professors deal with students. In this respect, the ethics students' opinions were generally moderate. These students also held moderate opinions about the following variables:

Professors respect the rights and interests of students, professors treat students with respect, courtesy, civility, impartiality, neutrality, objectivity and without discrimination, professors serve as a role model for their students through good performance and compliance with applicable laws, regulations and instructions, professors cooperate and share views with students in a professional and objective manner, professors seek to gain the trust of students and process transactions with the required amount of speed and professors respond to students' enquiries and complaints with accuracy, professionalism and impartiality. This result is in accordance with that of Ismael (2000) and partially accords with the results of Aldmour and Reyad (2014). This result may be unrealistic, but reflects the nature of the relationship between students and university professors, which is often characterised by tension and discomfort.

The results also highlight that there are statistically significant differences in the extent to which professors at TTU abide by the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct depending on their gender, while the results did not show significant differences based on professors' academic level.

In light of its findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

- A code of ethical conduct should be issued specifically for TTU, rather than the university relying on the government code of conduct as it currently does.
- A code of ethical conduct should be issued for students enrolling at TTU, which students must sign.
- A study should be conducted to gain understanding of the nature of the relationship between university professors and students and to encourage a friendly atmosphere.
- Awareness should be spread among students to inform them of their rights and duties.
- Workshops, seminars and courses to inform professors about ethical academic practices in prestigious universities should be held.
- Similar research should be carried out in other universities and government agencies and the findings should be compared.

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