

Full Length Research Paper

# An empirical study of the relationship between normlessness, business ethics and social responsibility

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This paper aimed to examine the differences of normlessness levels of university students according to their ages, genders, majors and classes. The study also investigated the relationship between normlessness, perceived business ethics and social responsibility. After a thorough review of the literatures of normlessness, anomie, business ethics and social responsibility, relevant measurement scales were selected; a survey was prepared and conducted among 200 university students from Izmir University of Economics. The findings represented that students' normlessness levels differed according to certain demographics such as age, and gender. Results also showed that students who have different ideas about normlessness also have different business ethics and social responsibility perceptions. According to the findings, normlessness, perceived business ethics and social responsibility levels of students from different majors were also significantly different from each other.

**Key words:** Normlessness, anomie, business ethics, social responsibility, university students.

## INTRODUCTION

As uncertainty and competition intensifies in the business circles and as more and more corporate scandals come into light, business ethics becomes a more challenging and vital issue for the corporate world. Facing the responsibility to be honest and transparent towards shareholders and stakeholders, business people carry the burden to behave ethically right in everyday business situations, and as Cohen (1993) suggested "...ethical problems in the professions attract growing public scrutiny, it is increasingly important to understand the factors leading to unethical and criminal practices in the workplace"

Business ethics mostly concerned with ethical principles and problems regarding the global business environment are getting more and more attention every passing day. Pressures directed to the industry by stakeholders, general public and governmental regulations to improve business ethics applications and perceptions are

intensifying. Thus, businesses –aware of the fact that they can only gain short term profits by unethical behaviors- tend to focus on workplace ethics increasingly. In this fashion, good business ethics is incrementally expanding in the market. But the sustainability of this focus and expansion is to be ensured for the future.

With these ideas in mind, a review of the literature presented various studies about business ethics to the researchers. But there were few that focus on the relationship between normlessness, business ethics and social responsibility at the same time. This dimension was mostly neglected. The motivation of the researchers in starting the study was the promising gap regarding this particular relationship:

*"Do people with different normlessness levels have different business ethics and social responsibility perceptions?"*

In investigating the above stated relationship, a student sample composed of university students is selected intentionally. As future's managers and leaders to shape

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the business world of tomorrow, students' ethics and social responsibility perceptions and normlessness levels were of great interest to researchers. Another concern in choosing this sample was the need to ensure the above mentioned sustainability of business ethics applications.

## BACKGROUND

### Anomie

Anomie- also named as "a relative state of normlessness"- is defined as "individual's lack of integration in social life" (Caruna et al., 2000). The word anomie comes from the Greek word "anomia" meaning *nonexistence of the law*. Tsahuridu (2006, pp.167), describes anomie as "a measure of relatedness to society", and Merton (1964, p. 226) defines it as a social state of disequilibrium and normlessness where "*the rules once governing conduct have lost their savor and force*". It represents a state in which the person experiences a lack of integration to the society and the social life (Srole, 1956). In this state of being, the individual is also outside the realm of morality (Caruna et al., 2000). Thus this concept, to some extent, explains deviant behavior.

According to Durkheim (1893/1964, 1897/1966) "*institutional and cultural changes associated with modernization encourage a decline of traditional social controls which are based on family and social relationships.*" He also states that the plurality of social settings which individuals are to live in, leads them to uncertainty and conflicts. The social institution that prepares the grounds for this plurality and uncertainty is the dominant liberal economic thought (Johnson and Smith, 1999). Individual is in a position which obliges him to search for his own economic self-interest with the existence of plurality of social and moral relations with others. This pursuit of self interest brings social and moral conflicts (Johnson and Smith, 1999). Durkheim suggests that morality stems from the social nature. It is external to the human being and it limits his behavior. He states that morality originates from the society and the person is obliged to conform the codes and rules of conduct of that very society.

Among other scholars, Merton (1957) studied the social and structural dimensions of anomie. According to Merton, anomie emerges as a result of the difference between the cultural goals and institutional goals. As the dominant culture accepts "success" as the principal criteria for the existence of individuals and groups; those individuals and groups venture to break the rules (and sometimes the law). Merton sees capitalistic competitiveness as the source of anomie and suggests that the dominant culture stresses success over legitimate behavior.

Institutional anomie theory, suggested by Rosenfeld and Messner (1997) argues that deviant behavior is

influenced by cultural values and social institutions. Those values and institutions increase and spread deviant behavior by supporting egoism, hindering benevolence and ethical reasoning. Thus, people who have no moral doubts and worries increase day by day (Rosenfeld and Messner, 1997: 214).

### Normlessness

Norm is defined as the "rule or standard of behavior shared by members of a social group" (<http://www.britannica.com>). Norms guide people on how they are expected to behave. Norms are social rules rather than written and formal rules. There are two different schools about people's conformation to norms: *Conflict school* argues that norms exist to solve the repeating social conflicts among people and *the functionalist school* suggests that norms emerge as a result of social consensus.

On the other hand, normlessness is a concept closely related to Durkheim's "Anomie". It can be defined as a *state in which norms are eroded*. Various definitions are given in the literature such as "*Norms weak or unclear*", "*Loss of direction*", "*Social breakdown*", "*Lack of rule or regulation*", "*...nothing rules, regulates, controls them*" (Puffer, 2009).

It is also defined by Ross and Mirowsky (1987) as *individual's subjective estrangement from social norms that guide behavior and his adaptation of unapproved ways to achieve means*.

Literature states that, there are two types of normlessness: First one is *purposelessness*: Maclver (1950) defines anomie from this view point as "The absence of values that might give purpose or direction to life, the loss of intrinsic and socialized values, the insecurity of the hopelessly disoriented". The second one is conflict of norms.

As norms lose their ability before the individual to bind him to social codes, normlessness emerges which results in isolation, alienation, de-socialization and even suicide.

### Business ethics

Ethics is defined as "*The discipline concerned with what is morally good and bad, right and wrong*" (<http://www.britannica.com>). It examines the moral standards of a society and/or individual. According to Taylor (1975), ethics is "*inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean moral judgments, standards, and rules of conduct.*" Ethical norms are largely shared by all cultures, whereas obedience to them changes across groups (Prasad and Rao, 1982).

Regarding the business or work place dimension of ethics, namely business ethics which is a hot topic of the

past few years, various complementary definitions exist. Basically, business ethics is a field that applies the ethical and moral codes to the work place. Steiner and Steiner (1980) suggest that business ethics is primarily about the effects of corporate decisions on people whether they be inside or outside that corporation. Sturdivant (1977) offers another definition to business ethics as "*The study of decisions made by individuals within organizational roles under conditions of conflicting objectives and values.*"

Velasquez (2001) suggests that business ethics work on three grounds, which are *systemic, corporate and individual issues*. *Systemic issues* that business ethics studies are ethical questions about the systems that business operates within: the political, legal and social systems... *Corporate issues* are ethical questions about a company itself. *Individual issues* are ethical questions about the individuals of that company.

The company itself should take some steps to ensure ethical behavior in the work place. Hitt (1990) defined a series of responsibilities of the management, one of which is to guarantee that ethical decisions are made in the work place and second is to create and sustain an ethical climate. Managers should establish the understanding that ethics is not the responsibility of a particular individual but of everyone's. Pastin (1986) describes an ethical organization via its characteristics. Those characteristics include, employees who take personal responsibility of organization's actions; focus on fairness before other individuals; comfort of communicating with external parties and tying all activities of the organization to a common purpose (Minkes et al., 1999).

Covering the issue from the individual's point of view, ethical behavior in the work place is affected from a number of demographic variables which are gender, education, age and tenure (Appelbaum et al., 2005). Thus, this study investigated the differences in normlessness levels of university students according to their ages, genders, majors and classes.

### **Corporate social responsibility**

Within many definitions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) Davis and Bowen's descriptions are among the earliest: "*It refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society*" (Bowen, 1953, p.6) and "*Businessmen's decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest*" (Davis, 1960, p. 70).

A later definition by Davis and Bloomstrom (1966) is "*...social responsibility, therefore, refers to a person's obligation to consider the effects of his decisions and actions on the whole social system. Businessmen apply social responsibility when they consider the needs and*

*interests of others who may be affected by business actions. In so doing, they look beyond their firm's narrow economic and technical interests.* (p. 12)"

On the other hand, Davis (1973) states that social responsibility is "*..the firm's consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements of the firm... (to) accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks*". He also suggested that businessman should carry social responsibilities that are proportionate with their power, which is called Davis's "*Iron Law of Responsibility*". He named two different faces of CSR as managers' duty: to attain economic development for public welfare and to sustain and advance common human values (Davis, 1960).

Additionally, social responsibility is closely related to corporate goals, corporate strategies and organizational structure but the most influential ones are size and profitability, according to Kraft and Hage (1989).

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study was to analyze and examine the normlessness levels of university students according to their different demographic characteristics with the idea that those characteristics such as gender may influence normlessness levels of the objects. Thus, the sample was composed of university students from different genders, age groups and majors.

The objectives that guided the study are as follows:

To test the sample in order to interpret normlessness levels of students using the preselected normlessness scales and to investigate possible differences in normlessness levels of students from different genders, ages and majors.

To test the sample in order to investigate a possible relationship between normlessness levels and business ethics and social responsibility perceptions of students.

As shown in the model Figure 1, it is proposed that demographic characteristics (such as age, gender and major) influence normlessness levels of students which in turn affect the perceived business ethics and social responsibility levels.

### **HYPOTHESES**

The four hypotheses presented below are developed to test the objectives of the study.

H<sub>1</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale items of the questionnaire change among students according to gender.

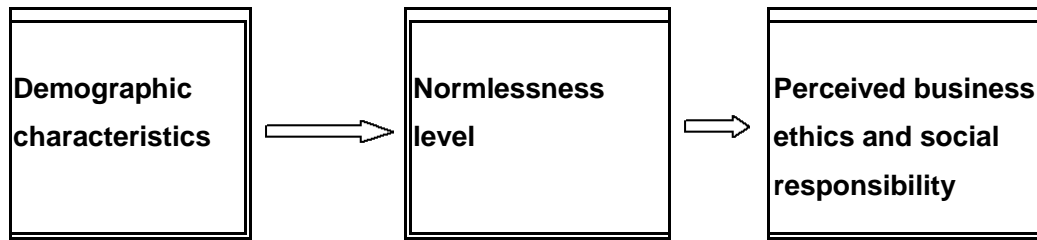


Figure 1. Model of the study.

H<sub>1a</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble” change among students of different genders.

H<sub>1b</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it” change among students of different genders.

H<sub>1c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong” change among students from different genders.

H<sub>1d</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?” change among students of different genders.

H<sub>2</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale items of the questionnaire change among students according to ages.

H<sub>2a</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble” change among students of different ages.

H<sub>2b</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it” change among students of different ages.

H<sub>2c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong” change among students from different ages.

H<sub>2d</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?” change among students of different ages.

H<sub>3</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale items of the questionnaire change among students according to majors.

H<sub>3a</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble” change among students of different majors.

H<sub>3b</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it” change among students of different majors.

H<sub>3c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong” change among students from different majors.

H<sub>3d</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?” Change among students of different majors.

H<sub>4</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale items of the questionnaire change among students according to classes.

H<sub>4a</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble” change among students of different classes.

H<sub>4b</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it” change among students of different classes.

H<sub>4c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong” change among students from different classes.

H<sub>4d</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?” change among students of different classes.

H<sub>5</sub>: Students’ business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change according to normlessness scale items of the questionnaire.

H<sub>5a</sub>: Students’ business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change according to normlessness scale item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble”

H<sub>5b</sub>: Students’ business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change according to normlessness scale item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it”

H<sub>5c</sub>: Students’ business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change according to normlessness scale item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong”

H<sub>5d</sub>: Students’ business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change according to normlessness scale item “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?”

## **NORMLESSNESS SCALE ITEMS / PART 2 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble

It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it

If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong  
Do you believe that it's all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal?

H<sub>6</sub>: Business ethics and social responsibility perceptions change among engineering and social sciences students.

H<sub>7</sub>: Normlessness levels change among engineering and social sciences students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Questionnaire development

A questionnaire has been developed in order to measure the normlessness levels and perceived business ethics and social responsibility levels of the university students. The questionnaire has four different parts. The first part covers demographic questions about the respondent. The second part covers four statements regarding normlessness on a 2-point scale (1 = agree, 2 = do not agree). The statements of this part are taken from Kohn and Schooler's Normlessness measure (1983) which is used recently in the literature (Iversen and Rundmo, 2001; Oltedal and Rundmo, 2005; Ulleberg, 2001). The third part covers twelve statements about normlessness on a 5-point scale (1=definitely not, 5=definitely). The statements of this part are taken from Dean's Normlessness measure (1961) that is again used by various researchers (Lee and Clyde, 1974; Man and Devisse, 1987; Neal and Groat's Normlessness measure, 1974).

The fourth part covers sixteen statements about perceived business ethics and social responsibility on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = definitely not, 5 = definitely). These statements are taken from Singhapakdi et al.'s Perceived Business and Social Responsibility scale (1996).

All scales are translated and back translated in order to ensure comprehensibility.

### Sample

For this study, the sample was chosen as university students from a private foundation university located in Izmir, Turkey. The university was the first private Foundation University of Izmir. It was founded by Izmir Chamber of Commerce in 2001. This university provides undergraduate education programmes under five faculties; graduate education programmes under two graduate schools. It also has two schools and one vocational school. There are no specific "Ethics courses" given to students in the university, but during other courses (Introduction to management, marketing etc.) ethics issues are covered.

As the aim of this study is to investigate normlessness levels and business ethics and social responsibility perceptions of students in regard to demographics, students from different majors, different classes, different ages and genders are selected.

The research was carried out between December 2009 to May 2010. A total of 245 questionnaires were distributed and 200 of them were received back (With an 82% response rate). Sample consisted of ninety eight male and a hundred and two female students. The ages of the students ranged from 17 to 22 and over.

Fifty seven questionnaires from department of business administration, forty seven questionnaires from department of logistics, thirty five questionnaires from department of public relations, three questionnaires from department of industrial design, two questionnaires from department of visual communication, fifty three questionnaires from department of industrial engineering and

five questionnaires from other departments were collected.

The demographic, class based and departmental distribution of the sample is summarized in Table 1.

### Data analysis procedures

Data is processed by the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Program, 11 the version. Firstly, the frequencies of demographic variables are calculated, and then Pearson correlation coefficients of age, gender, department, class and the four normlessness statements of part 2 are calculated. Later, independent t-test was applied to four statements of normlessness in part two to analyze the given responses of the sixteen statements of perceived business ethics and social responsibility in part four. The significant results were summarized in the tables presented in the next section.

The reliability of the overall scale has also been calculated. The scale has a rather high reliability: Standardized item alpha is 0.8101.

## RESULTS

After the analysis, the following results were achieved.

### H<sub>1</sub>

Among these sub hypotheses, only H<sub>1c</sub> is supported.

H<sub>1c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item "If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong" change among students from different genders.

Gender- Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.186. Thus there is a reverse relationship between gender and Item 3.

### H<sub>2</sub>

Among these sub hypotheses, only H<sub>2c</sub> is supported.

H<sub>2c</sub>: *The answers to the normlessness scale item "If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong" change among students from different ages.*

Age- Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.280. Thus there is a reverse relationship between age and Item 3.

### H<sub>3</sub>

This hypothesis and its sub-hypothesis are all rejected.

There is no significant relationship between student's major and normlessness items.

### H<sub>4</sub>

Among these sub hypotheses, only H<sub>4c</sub> is supported.

H<sub>4c</sub>: The answers to the normlessness scale item "If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong" change among students from different classes. Class- Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.298.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the sample.

Variable	Value
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	98
Female	102
<b>Age</b>	
17	2
18	18
19	19
20	57
21	33
22 and older	71
<b>Class</b>	
1	63
2	60
3	31
4	46
<b>Major</b>	
Business Administration	57
Logistics	47
Public Relations	35
Industrial Engineering	53
Visual Communication	2
Others	6
Total	200

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficients.

Variable	Age	Gender	Major	Class	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
Age	1	0.136	0.069	0.626	-0.073	-0.139	-0.28	-0.053
Gender	0.14	1	-0.008	0.1	0.048	-0.119	-0.186	-0.073
Major	0.069	-0.008	1	0.062	0.027	-0.067	-0.018	-0.035
class	0.626	0.1	0.062	1	0.073	0.014	-0.298	-0.045
Item1	-0.073	0.048	0.027	0.073	1	0.182	0.009	0.15
Item2	-0.139	-0.119	-0.067	0.014	0.182	1	0.366	0.315
Item3	-0.28	-0.186	-0.018	-0.298	0.009	0.366	1	0.152
Item4	-0.053	-0.073	-0.035	-0.045	0.15	0.315	0.152	1

N: 200.

Thus there is a reverse relationship between class and Item 3.

The resulting analyses are presented in Table 2. These results show that students reactions to the normlessness item *"If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong"* changes according to their ages, genders and classes, but no such changes are detected among

students according to their majors. This result can indicate that students' perceptions about right and wrong mentioned in the item are not influenced by their specialized education programmes. But the commonality of perceptions about the item according to departments may also be a result of the similarity of the contents of those majors (For ex. if engineering students are included

**Table 3.** Hypothesis 5<sub>a</sub> statistical analysis results.

		<b>Group statistics</b>						
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Std. error mean</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Std. error difference</b>
Part 4 Question1	Agree	2.269	1.0685	0.1482	0.027	-0.711	132	0.221
	Disagree	2.426	1.352	0.1493		-0.749	125.61	0.21
Part 4 Question2	Agree	3.615	1.0507	0.1457	0.034	0.4867	132	0.212
	Disagree	3.512	1.2789	0.1412		0.5085	123.31	0.202
Part 4 Question4	Agree	3.211	1.348	0.1869	0	-5.212	132	0.184
	Disagree	4.170	0.7826	0.0864		-4.658	73.03	0.205
Part 4 Question10	Agree	4.557	5.8391	0.8097	0.016	1.2898	132	0.659
	Disagree	3.707	1.0362	0.1144		1.0399	53.044	0.817
Part 4 Question11	Agree	3.592	1.2565	0.1742	0	-1.582	132	0.178
	Disagree	3.878	0.8072	0.0891		-1.44	77.832	0.195
Part 4 Question12	Agree	3.692	1.0579	0.1467	0.012	-1.1	132	0.168
	Disagree	3.878	0.8804	0.0972		-1.055	94.193	0.175
Part 4 Question15	Agree	3.384	1.2071	0.1674	0.007	-3.402	132	0.195
	Disagree	4.048	1.0292	0.1137		-3.283	96.017	0.202

**Table 4.** H<sub>5b</sub> statistical analysis results.

		<b>Group statistics</b>						
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Std. error mean</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Std. error difference</b>
Part 4 Question10	Agree	3.549	1.0463	0.1097	0.002	-2.238	129	0.704
	Disagree	5.125	6.5601	1.0372		-1.511	39.874	1.043
Part 4 Question13	Agree	3.351	1.2682	0.1329	0.004	3.4081	129	0.22
	Disagree	2.600	0.8712	0.1377		3.9264	105.74	0.191

in the survey, the results may have been different)

**H<sub>5</sub>**

H<sub>5a</sub>: Hypotheses is supported.

According to the answers given to item “It’s all right to do anything you want as long as you stay out of trouble” There are significant differences of perceptions about the business ethics and social responsibility statements of part 4. The resulting analysis is presented in Table 3.

H<sub>5b</sub>: Hypotheses is supported.

According to the answers given to item “It’s all right to get around the law as long as you don’t actually break it “ There are significant differences of perceptions about the

business ethics and social responsibility statements of part 4. The resulting analysis is presented in Table 4.

H<sub>5c</sub>: Hypotheses is supported.

According to the answers given to item “If something works, it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong” There are significant differences of student perceptions about the business ethics and social responsibility statements of part 4. The resulting analysis is presented in Table 5.

H<sub>5d</sub>: Hypotheses is supported.

According to the answers given to factor/statement “Do you believe that it’s all right to do whatever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal? “ There are significant differences of perceptions about the business ethics and social

**Table 5.** H<sub>5c</sub> statistical analysis results.

		<b>Tested item- "If something works, it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong"</b>						
		<b>Group statistics</b>						
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Std. error mean</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Std. error difference</b>
Part 4 Question1	Agree	3.8033	1.5686	0.2008	0.026	-1.325	132	0.22
	Disagree	4.0959	0.9598	0.1123		-1.272	95.615	0.23
Part 4 Question4	Agree	3.5574	1.3105	0.1678	0	-2.282	132	0.193
	Disagree	4	0.928	0.1086		-2.214	105.39	0.199
Part 4 Question9	Agree	3.459	1.2189	0.1561	0.001	-0.343	132	0.179
	Disagree	3.5205	0.8516	0.0997		-0.332	104.45	0.185
Part 4 Question10	Agree	4.3443	5.4372	0.6962	0.027	0.8704	132	0.647
	Disagree	3.7808	0.9464	0.1108		0.7993	63.043	0.704
Part 4 Question11	Agree	3.5738	1.2709	0.1627	0.006	-2.066	132	0.173
	Disagree	3.9315	0.6938	0.0812		-1.967	89.002	0.181
Part 4 Question12	Agree	3.7213	1.1274	0.1443	0	-0.939	132	0.165
	Disagree	3.8767	0.7808	0.0914		-0.91	103.83	0.17

**Table 6.** H<sub>5d</sub> statistical analysis results

		<b>Tested item-"Do you believe that it's all right to do what ever the law allows, or are there some things that are wrong even if they are legal"</b>						
		<b>Group statistics</b>						
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Std. error mean</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Std. error difference</b>
Part 4 Question1	Whatever law allows	3.888	1.5077	0.2513	0.002	-0.629	127	0.244
	Somethings are wrong even if legal	4.043	1.1317	0.1174		-0.555	51.009	0.277
Part 4 Question2	Whatever law allows	2.944	1.3721	0.2287	0.001	3.72	127	0.23
	Somethings are wrong even if legal	2.086	1.09	0.113		3.365	52.988	0.255
Part 4 Question10	Whatever law allows	5.166	6.9385	1.1564	0	2.142	127	0.735
	Somethings are wrong even if legal	3.591	1.024	0.1062		1.356	35.591	1.161
Part 4 Question15	Whatever law allows	4.138	0.9607	0.1601	0.032	2.183	127	0.221
	Somethings are wrong even if legal	3.655	1.1841	0.1228		2.393	78.001	0.201

responsibility statements of part 4. The resulting analysis is presented in Table 6.

**H<sub>6</sub>**

Hypotheses is supported, the resulting analysis is

presented in Table 7.

**H<sub>7</sub>**

Hypotheses is supported, the resulting analysis is presented in Table 8.



**Table 7.** H<sub>6</sub> statistical analysis results.

<b>Comparing means - ANOVA test (LSD)</b>				
<b>Tested item- Business ethics and social responsibility perception level</b>				
<b>Major (I)</b>	<b>Major (J)</b>	<b>Mean difference (I-J)</b>	<b>Std. error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Engineering	Business	-0.8	0.17	0.0001
	Logistics	-0.93	0.18	0.0001
	Public Relations	-1.2	0.2	0.0001

**Table 8.** H<sub>7</sub> statistical analysis results.

<b>Comparing means - ANOVA TEST (LSD)</b>				
<b>Tested item- Normlessness Level</b>				
<b>Major (I)</b>	<b>Major (J)</b>	<b>Mean difference (I-J)</b>	<b>Std. error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Engineering	Business	-0.44	0.098	0.0001
	Logistics	-0.5	0.103	0.0001
	Public Relations	-0.66	0.111	0.0001

## Conclusions

With the increasing concerns about ethics applications in the workplace, transparency of business operations and social responsibility projects run by businesses, it is getting more and more important to understand university students' perceptions and attitudes about normlessness and business ethics subjects. As education programmes increasingly include special ethics courses, student awareness increases and their attitudes towards ethics and social responsibility change. This change, in time, will have the power to affect and hopefully improve ethics applications, ethical understanding and social responsibility activities in businesses. This present study was conducted to interpret if the students from different majors, classes, ages and genders of a foundation university in Izmir have different levels of normlessness; and another aim was to investigate if a relationship existed between student normlessness levels and their business ethics and social responsibility perceptions.

Our study has proved that one of the initial sub hypotheses of hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4 and all of the sub hypotheses of hypotheses 5, besides hypothesis 6 and 7 are supported by the analysis run on the data collected from the sample. These results indicate that, there is a significant relation between student normlessness levels and business ethics and social responsibility perceptions: Students with high normlessness levels have different business ethics and social responsibility perceptions compared to students who have low normlessness levels.

Another finding partially shows that student normlessness levels may change regarding certain items of the normlessness scale according to student gender, age, major and class: Students with different genders, ages and from different majors and classes have different

normlessness levels indicating different understandings of normlessness between genders, age groups, majors and classes.

The last finding which is worth mentioning is that, students from engineering major have significantly different levels of perceived business ethics, social responsibility and normlessness levels compared to students from social sciences majors. This particular result presents that student perceived business ethics, social responsibility and normlessness levels are probably affected by the curriculum and the nature of the education. Student perceived business ethics, social responsibility and normlessness levels may change after taking particular courses that include ethics issues. This finding may encourage educational institutions to add ethics issues in their curriculums in an effort to increase student perceived business ethics, social responsibility and normlessness levels.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has some limitations: The questionnaire was conducted among business administration, logistics, public relations, industrial design, visual communication and industrial engineering students. The same study can be conducted comparatively among business administration, logistics, public relations, industrial design and visual communication students and engineering students from a wide area of expertise like computer engineering, civic engineering and a like in order to see if results offer new findings. Again, the same study can be comparatively conducted among a private university and a public university in order to see possible student perception differences. The small sample size can be enlarged and

the study can be conducted with a larger representative sample in future studies. Also, the study can be conducted in different geographical areas of Turkey in order to test the possible effects of cultural differences and different values on normlessness, business ethics and social responsibility perceptions of students.

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