

BUSINESS DECISIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS BUSINESS ETHICS OF TRADERS IN NEPAL

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Abstract *The paper intends to examine the effects of attitudes towards business ethics of traders in their business decisions. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire, with 108 sole-trading retail businesses from Biratnagar city, Nepal, purposively. The results show that attitudes towards business ethics significantly affect traders' business decisions. As the attitudes towards business ethics incline to positivity, the ethicality of business decisions hikes up. Similarly, traders' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, academic qualifications, and their years in business) have a monumental impact on their business decisions. Women traders are comparatively more ethical than their counterparts. Higher education of traders is associated with progressive ethical practices in business. As the traders grow older in their venture, their ethicality in business operations is likely to expand. The study concludes that traders believe in running their business ethically, because ethical dealings in business activities lead to long-term benefits in terms of subsistence and success.*

Keywords *Business Decisions, Attitudes towards Business Ethics, Business Ethics, Traders*

INTRODUCTION

The front pages and headlines in the newspapers are generally covered with stories of business scandals, and various kinds of misconduct and frauds that shed light on the indispensability of business ethics (Keller-krawczyk & Douro, 2010). Hence, in this current era, ethics in business is one of the widely talked about issues in the business world. Businesses are coerced to behave and conduct their business activities ethically, whether they are small or large. The ability to understand and deal with complex business issues ethically has become a significant priority in the 21st century (Keller-krawczyk & Douro, 2010). Every change in society challenges the consensus on ethics and ethical behaviour (Svensson & Wood, 2008). Ethics is not a new issue; it has a very long and ancient history.

Conventionally, ethics represented principles and rules for judging and justifying right and wrong or good and bad. The internalised ethical rules, regulations, and principles reflect in behaviour, either consciously or unconsciously, in humankind (Volkman & Tokarski, 2009). Business ethics is a very difficult term to define and operationalise, as entrepreneurs have their own opinions and cultural rearing. Entrepreneurial thoughts and judgments are built on the foundation of entrepreneurial ethical interaction and training (Hoskinson & Kuratko, 2015; p. 3). It means ethics plays a major role in entrepreneurial decisions that are not independent (Vallaster, Kraus, Merigó Lindahl & Nielsen, 2019).

The growing importance of ethics has driven higher education to impart sundry cases, vignettes, and documentaries to enhance the ethical sensitivity of students (Oluoch, Odundo, Mwangi, & Oyier, 2018). There are ample studies on measuring students' attitudes towards business ethics (Bageac, Furrer, & Reynaud, 2011; Decker, 1994; Moore & Radloff, 1996; Oluoch et al., 2018; Peppas, 2002; 2003; Raguz & Matic, 2015; Rizvi, Tanveer, Saleem & Latif, 2012; Sims & Gegez, 2004; Trang, 2015). Although there is a dearth of work concentrating on ethics in entrepreneurship (Bhal & Sharma, 2001; Bucar, Glas & Hisrich, 2003; Dickel & Graeff, 2018; Koch, 2010; Pimentel, Kuntz & Elenkov, 2010; Riddle & Ayyagari, 2011; Shionoyo, 1995), the ongoing social and ecological problems challenge businesses to focus more on the moral aspects of the business than ever before in history (Raguz & Matic, 2015). Although there are very nominal quests and findings on entrepreneurs' attitudes towards business ethics (Gloss, Pollack & Ward, 2017; Longenecker, Moore, Petty, Palich & Mckinney, 2006), their ethical attitudes reflect on their decision making (Kantor, 2002). Thus, this study intends to analyse the attitude of traders towards business ethics, and how their ethical attitudes, together with socio-demographic variables, influence business decision making.

Spence and Rutherford (2003) have complained about the meagre attention given to small businesses in ethics literature. More interestingly, a sociologist has posited 'trading' as a 'dirty' profession, likening it to robbery. Ossowska further added that both the parties involved in business transactions are trying to cheat or trick another rivalry party. Thus, this

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study attempts to involve trading businesses that follow ethical practices in their day-to-day operations. Hence, the objective of this research is not to point out ethical and unethical practices of business, but rather to focus on understanding the differences in business decision making depending upon the ethical attitude of traders and other socio-demographic variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unsettled Debate on Business Ethics

Ethics is the science of judging the implied means and the resulted ends (Garret, 1970 as cited in Saroka & Lorinczy, 2015). Ethics is moral values, principles, and code of conduct. It is individuals' feelings regarding what is right and wrong which guides their behaviour (Hellriegel et al., 2008; Smit et al., 2007). However, business ethics is a system of moral principles applied in the commercial world (Velentzas & Broni, 2010). Ethics is supposed to describe and analyse the role of morality in the economy and it judges and directs the economic behaviour of firms (Siebold, Dohrmann & Raith, 2014). It mixes theories of law and politics with philosophical and historical documents; thus, it is a noble scientific area. Business ethics is the moral and ethical principles, rules and regulations, and benchmarks set for smooth business operations (Thi & Yen, 2016). Ethics becomes a term pretty flexible and has myriad facets. It seems more vital in the case of entrepreneurs as they confront ethical issues in their daily business transactions (Jamnik, 2011). Business ethics are guidelines for acceptable behaviour, like a code of conduct by organisations either in their strategy formulation or day-to-day operations (Velentzas & Broni, 2010).

Business ethics is likely to be beneficial for the whole system, hence, the widespread attention and debate are drawn towards business ethics (Friedman, 1970). Businesses are part of society and for the society, hence, the economic interest of the organisation is a staple objective of businesses, but discernibly not the only objective. They must be responsible for human relationships and social betterment. Therefore, they need to be ethical for the entire economic system (Hart, 2009).

Ethical Attitude in Business

An attitude is a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of behaviour. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person about the place, thing, or event, task, and environment. A positive attitude brings optimistic and constructive changes to life and enables us to deal with

daily life affairs in a cool and calm manner (Sims & Gegez, 2004). Attitude towards business ethics is a subjective assessment of the business ethics of an individual based on their propositions of ethical and moral philosophies (Preble & Reichel, 1988; Trang, 2015). The attitude of a person is intertwined closely with their philosophies of ethics (Pham, Nguyen & Favia, 2015). Elias (2004) stated that individual attitude influences their behaviour and dealings in the organisation; therefore, the attitude of entrepreneurs must have a great impact on them and their organisation. Amakobe (2017) states that businessmen are expected to be virtuous people to understand ethical principles and apply them firstly in setting the missions and goals, then in their execution of the tasks (Alzola, 2015).

Ethical Attitude: Impact of Individual Characteristics

It has been always widely debated that socio-demographic variables influence the relationship between ethical attitudes and decisions made in the business. However, the earlier studies had no consensus findings regarding gender, education, and years in business.

In the context of ethics, the widely investigated socio-demographic variable is gender (Rizvi et al., 2012). In the case of respondents' gender, their link to attitudes towards ethics does not follow the same pattern. Some resulted in no relationship between gender and their attitudes towards ethics (Jonson, McGuire & Cooper, 2016), while some observed that association between gender and ethical attitudes is situation-specific (Borkowski & Ugras, 1998). Pham et al. (2015) found that there was no difference in ethical attitudes based on gender. Many studies observed that women showed more ethical attitudes in comparison to their counterparts (Rizvi et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 2010). Similarly, some claimed that men were more willing to be involved in unethical activities (Wahn, 2003). Subsequently, male employees had significantly positive attitudes for damage of unethical tone at the top (Lašáková & Remišová, 2019).

Some earlier studies had implied that academic qualification of respondents was a variable that influenced their attitudes towards ethics. Thoburn, Bentley, Ahmad and Jones (2012) depicted that learning opportunity had affected their ethical attitudes. There were plenty of studies claiming that education and ethicality were dependent. Importantly, several research works negated the relationship between these two variables (Cagle & Baucus, 2006). According to Oluoch et al. (2018), longer school attendance had an impact on ethical decision-making; however, better educated traders were prone to be not ethical. Meantime, Rizvi et al. (2012) showed that lower the education, higher the influence of moral judgment. Pierce and Sweeney (2010) claimed that type of degree and ethical culture had no association. Accordingly, Choi

and Perry (2010) found no differences regarding ethical sensitivity among the groups who attended ethics as a course and others who did not. Espinosa-Pike et al. (2012) probed that training of ethics was effective for ethical sensitivity. The perception of unethical tone at the top had no significant difference with the level of attained education (Lašáková & Remišová, 2019).

Plenty of literature has discussed the issue of the influence of experience years on ethicality; however, there is no consensus yet. Forte (2004) found no association between tenure, ethical reasoning ability, and management level. Nevertheless, Valentine and Godkin (2019), and Rittenburg (2007), Eweje and Brunton (2010), and Taylor (2013) found that longer the years of experience, increased the ethical judgment. On the other hand, Pennino (2002) showed that the long tenure of managers was likely to depend on principled reasoning.

Business Decisions and Influence of Ethical Attitudes

Some examples of common dilemmas in business situations are not informing customers that the price of a product is supposed to reduce soon, advertising only the advantages, and not discussing shortcomings (Keller-krawczyk & Douro, 2010). Such realities lead to contradiction and question in the context of the ethicality of business. However, in the eyes of a business, if the firm considers the interest of one party, the other party's interest cannot be supported. Following ethics can negatively affect either of the groups (Vickers, 2005). Different business situations affect businessmen to behave in a particular way. Therefore, illustrations, vignettes, case studies, documentaries, and narratives relating to businesses are the source of knowledge regarding the ethical attitude and its impact on business decisions (Oluoch et al., 2018). Several studies have used these aforementioned instruments to understand business problems and how these people are going to act and react in real-world situations (Oluoch et al., 2018). On the contrary, Dickel and Graeff (2018) raised issues relating to artificialism regarding the description of the business vignette. However, Pan and Sparks (2012) contended that business situations as vignettes are more generalised for entrepreneurs' samples than other groups of respondents like students. This study provides some vignettes based on real-life ethical situations confronted by businesses. Further, it has analysed how traders are going to tackle these situations if they were to deal with these prescribed vignettes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theory of reasoned action, propounded by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1967, intends to explain the

association of human attitude and behaviour. The attitude of individuals results in a particular type of decision behaviour in their doings. Likewise, ethical decision-making of people is compatible with their ethical attitude towards business activities (Annas, 2003). It further describes that entrepreneurial decisions, whether ethical or unethical, are based on their attitude towards their sensitivity for business ethics. Sensitivity for business ethics is supposed to lead to ethical decisions in the business environment.

Identically, the theory of virtues assumes that there are some fundamental human ideals, called virtues, i.e., courage, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, prudence, and honesty (Chen, Velasquez, Tulio, Cullen & Chang, 2016) for the development of humanity. These incorporated virtues sway to judge and decide upon any situation confronted by anyone. Amakobe (2017) proclaims that ethical behaviour is the reflection of their character and virtues they embody. The theory of virtues reminds us to focus on the integrity of morality instead of the morality of judgment, while discussing business ethics. This is because a virtuous person is more likely to deal with circumstances virtuously. Therefore, how business situations are dealt with reciprocated the attitudes of a businessman towards business ethicality. Individuals are inclined to the behaviour, guided by their virtues (Annas, 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the effect of the ethical attitude of traders on business decisions.
- To examine the effect of gender, qualification, and years in the business of traders on their business decision.

METHODS

The study aimed to examine whether the ethical attitude of traders affects their business decision-making. The research design was descriptive, explanatory, and casual comparative. The scope of this study was small single-ownership retail outlets of Biratnagar, Metropolitan, Nepal. The population of trading organisations (retailers, wholesalers, and sole and partnership organizations) was 5,200 in the city, according to Nepal Commerce Office, Biratnagar. The study included only retail traders (excluded partnership organisations, sole proprietorship wholesalers, and service-based organisations) because of the nature of the study and the required information. A purposive sampling method was used to select samples of traders. Since ethics is a sensitive issue, especially in the case of entrepreneurs, some familiar friends were asked to seek such retailers who do not hesitate and can provide reliable and authentic information for the study. Around 108 retailers had shared their information.

Respondents were informed about the objectives of the study, confidentiality of their information, and withdrawal from the survey at any time in case they wish.

The research was based on primary data and was piled up through a structured questionnaire with three sections. The first portion included demographic and business information of the traders. The second section covered attitudes towards business ethics; these questions were adopted from the Attitudes towards Business Ethics Questionnaire (ATBEQ) which was originally developed by Neumann and Reichel (1979), but published in the study of Preble and Reichel (1988). This measurement scale had 16 questions; after minutely going through all questions, two experts selected seven appropriate questions for the Nepalese context. These questions were answered on a three-point scale where 1 stood for 'Disagree', 2 for 'Neutral', and 3 for 'Agree'.

In the third part of the questionnaire, four business vignettes (1. "Do you claim deductions on your income taxes that are not valid?", 2. "If you receive a duplicate payment from a customer who does not realise he made a double payment, do you accept that amount?", 3. "A customer makes a complaint about a service provided by you. This customer is a tiny account.", and 4. "Though you do not need her money anyway, do you ignore or neglect?", and "You have an idea about the defect in your product. Do you sell that product?"), were provided. The business situations had four probable response (never, sometimes, always, and no idea) to analyse their reaction. Later on, the traders who replied 'Never' in business vignettes were considered as 'ethical' and the rest as 'not ethical' in further analysis. A summated scale for business situations was prepared by adding all four situations. In this sum, the result value '0' was considered as 'not ethical', and the remaining values '1, 2, 3, and 4' as 'ethical'. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher between October 2018 and March 2019.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) was run to check the normality of the distribution for the further use of parametric or non-parametric test (Field, 2005; p.93). The test statistic for K-S test denoted 0.304 ($df = 108$), $p > 0.001$ for 'ethical attitude of traders' and 0.369 ($df = 108$), $p > 0.001$ for 'business decision'. It stated that both variables were not normally distributed. Hence, the method of data analysis was descriptive (percentage, frequency) and non-parametric tests; Pearson's Chi-Square test, Phi and Cramer's V Coefficient, and Logistic Regression were used. Pearson's Chi-Square test was applied to know the association between 'business decision' and 'attitudes towards business ethics', while Phi and Cramer's V Coefficient were used to assess the direction of the association, and dependence of the two variables (Miller, 2014). Logistic Regression showed the effect of ethical attitudes on business decisions. SPSS 20 was used for data tabulation and analysis.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

As the study is intended to measure the effect of attitudes towards business ethics on traders' business decisions, the following analysis is accomplished to conclude the same.

Table 1: Trader's Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (%)
Traders	Male	76 (70)
	Female	32 (30)
Academic Qualification	Below 10	24 (22)
	10 completed	20 (18)
	Up to 12	20 (18)
	Bachelor's	44 (42)
Nature of Business	All items	19 (18)
	Glasses	4 (4)
	Cosmetics	8 (7)
	Machinery	4 (4)
	Grocery	31 (29)
	Cloth	21 (19)
	Medical	4 (4)
	Tailoring materials	17 (16)
Tenure of Business	Up to 5	44 (41)
	6 and below 15	28 (26)
	15 and above	36 (33)

Table 1 depicts that out of all sampled 108 retail traders of Biratnagar, more than two-thirds were male and one-third were female traders. Around 80 per cent of traders had completed their 10th and above academic qualification. This shows that educated people are attracted to trade and business. Different nature of business was sampled to get the diversity of attitudes and decision-making in different business situations. Half of the respondents represented grocery and clothes outlets. One-third had more than 15 years' experience in their business.

[Note: Tenure was a continuous variable according to the questionnaire. For the understanding of the readers, tenure is classified into three categories in this table.]

ATTITUDE TOWARDS BUSINESS ETHICS AND DECISION-MAKING IN DIFFERENT BUSINESS SITUATIONS

The seven statements for 'attitudes towards business ethics' were classified into three attributes (namely, negative, neutral, and positive) and 'decision-making in different business situations' was categorised into two groups (ethical and not ethical).

Table 2: Decision-Making and Attitudes towards Business Ethics of Traders' Cross Tabulation

S. No.	Business Situations→ Attitudes towards Business Ethics ↓	Attributes of Attitude	Decision-Making		Total
			Not Ethical	Ethical	
1.	Money making is not the only focus of business.	Negative	16 (44)	36 (50)	52 (48)
		Neutral	8 (22)	4 (6)	12 (11)
		Positive	12 (33)	32 (44)	44 (41)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 6.881, p < 0.032$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.252					
2.	Every business person acts according to moral principles, whether he/she is aware of it or not.	Negative	28 (78)	20 (28)	48 (44)
		Neutral	4 (11)	20 (28)	24 (22)
		Positive	4 (11)	32 (44)	36 (33)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 24.500, p < 0.001$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.476					
3.	For every decision in business, it is not the only question that I ask: "will it be profitable?"	Negative	8 (22)	20 (28)	28 (26)
		Neutral	24 (67)	12 (17)	36 (33)
		Positive	4 (11)	40 (56)	44 (41)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 29.922, p < 0.001$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.526					
4.	An ethical business person is a successful business person.	Negative	24 (67)	8 (11)	32 (30)
		Neutral	4 (11)	36 (50)	40 (37)
		Positive	8 (22)	28 (39)	36 (33)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 36.800, p < 0.001$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.584					
5.	Act according to the law, and you cannot go wrong morally.	Negative	28 (78)	40 (56)	68 (63)
		Neutral	4 (11)	20 (28)	24 (22)
		Positive	4 (11)	12 (17)	16 (15)
$\chi^2(1, 108) = 5.382, p < 0.068$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.223					
6.	Moral values are relevant to the business world.	Negative	16 (44)	16 (22)	32 (30)
		Neutral	12 (33)	24 (33)	36 (33)
		Positive	8 (22)	32 (44)	40 (37)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 7.200, p < 0.027$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.258					
7.	You challenge yourself to 'do the right thing'.	Negative	12 (33)	8 (11)	20 (19)
		Neutral	4 (11)	12 (17)	16 (15)
		Positive	20 (56)	52 (72)	72 (67)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 7.900, p < 0.019$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.270					
8.	Overall attitudes	Negative	20 (56)	4 (6)	24 (22)
		Neutral	8 (22)	24 (33)	32 (30)
		Positive	8 (22)	44 (61)	52 (48)
$\chi^2(2, 108) = 35.538, p < 0.001$. Phi and Cramer's V = 0.574					

Table 2 shows that almost all cases of business decision-making are significantly associated with attitudes towards the business of traders at the level of 5% significance. Traders' positive, neutral, and negative attitudes towards business ethics affected their ethicality of a decision during myriad business situations. Phi and Cramer's V coefficient for the statement 'Every business person acts according to moral principles, whether he/she is aware

of it or not.', 'For every decision in business, it is not the only question that I ask: "will it be profitable?"', and 'An ethical business person is a successful business person.' had demonstrated fairly strong association (as the coefficient is between 0.30 to 0.70) to decision-making (Miller, 2014, p. 70). Similarly, the overall scale of attitudes towards business ethics is positively associated with business decision-making.

Table 3: Logistic Regression on Business Decision-Making to Attitudes towards Business Ethics

Dependent Var. Independent Var.	Category	Decision-Making in Business Situations	
		Model 1	Model 2
Attitudes towards business ethics	Neutral	15.000** (2.708)	59.217** (4.081)
	Positive	27.500** (3.314)	86.685** (4.462)
Gender	Female		10.876* (2.387)
Qualification	SLC		1.739 (0.553)
	+2		8.078* (2.089)
	Bachelor's		6.525* (1.876)
Tenure (in years)			1.191* (0.174)
Constant		0.200** (-1.609)	0.004** (-5.611)
Nagelkerke		0.386	0.616
-2 log Likelihood (-2LL)		102.266	74.179

Note: Beta values are in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 delineates that regression outcomes confirmed a significant gross effect of traders' background characteristics (attitude towards business ethics, gender, qualification, and tenure) to explain the treatment of business situations in Biratnagar. Model 1 depicts that attitude towards business ethics affects the dealings of traders in business situations. A unit change in negative attitude towards business ethics leads to 15 times statistically significant change in the neutral attitude of traders in their business decisions, whereas that change is more than 27 times in the case of a positive attitude of the traders in their business decisions. It states that when other things remain the same, attitude towards business ethics of traders is positive, the probability of fair and ethical dealing in business situations increases.

Model 2 has included gender, qualification, and tenure of traders as explanatory variables in the model. These added variables improves the explanatory power of the model as the log-likelihood decrease with the baseline value (137.487). All independent variables are statistically significant in their treatment of business situations. It depicts that the possibility of the ethicality of business situation treatment increases with the positive attitude towards business ethics, women, higher-level qualification, and long duration spent in the business. Attitudes towards business ethics influence the ethicality of business situation treatment. The odds ratio of neutral and positive ethics is higher and statistically significant. Other things remaining the same, the probability of an increase in ethical attitude is 59 times for neutral attitude, and 86 times for a positive attitude, compared to negative ethicality. The result shows that women treat business situations more ethically by ten times according to the odds ratio. Higher education is statistically significant in dealing with business situations ethically. Concerning the odds ratio, if other things are a constant, the probability of ethical treatment in business situations is eight times higher for traders who

have completed their plus-2, and more than six times for the traders who have completed their bachelor's degree. It shows that the more educated, the more the influence of ethical treatment in business situations of traders. Another explanatory variable, tenure, also positively influences the ethicality of traders while dealing with business situations. If all else remains unchanged, a year's increase in the tenure of traders leads to their ethicality in business decisions. In other words, as the traders grow older in their venture, the probability of behaving ethically increases.

DISCUSSIONS, FURTHER RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this article is to examine the effect of traders' attitudes on their business decisions. The results of the study show that traders' decision-making is associated with their attitude towards ethics, independent of different business situations. This is similar to the theory of reasoned action, which states that the attitudes of individuals guide their behaviour. However, Kantor (2002) claimed that the perceived ethical attitude is consistently overestimated than that of perceived ethical behaviour, while Oliveira (2007) suggested that future expectations and consequences, together with some availed alternates, influence decision-making in the business. The traders, therefore, express this in one vignette, i.e. for every decision in business, "will it be profitable?" is not the only question that I ask, which is evidence that the focus of business is not just profit. Besides, Valentine and Godkin (2019) observed that decisions have ramifications beyond the organisation that have a direct and indirect association in business decisions; this is the same as explained by virtue's theory. 'An ethical business person is a successful business person'. In a business situation, most of the traders are inclined to positive behaviour. Similarly,

Bhal and Sharma (2001) highlighted that the ethical behaviour of individuals is rooted in an organisational culture to deal with their business situation. Therefore, the background, upbringing, and socialisation of traders have a strong dependence on the handling of their sundry business situations. The results of this study confirm the claim of the theory of virtue, that is, the decisions of individuals have an immense influence on their embodied virtue. Valentine and Godkin (2019) also stated that ethical decision-making of the individual is associated with their ethical intention; the intention mostly depends on social consent and the result of that particular activity. Antoniuk et al. (2018) have also admitted that owners are aware and accepted that they are equally responsible to society for their business development.

Another goal of the study is to examine the effect of gender, qualification, and years in the business of traders on their dealings in business situations. Raguz and Matic (2015) confirmed that personal and demographic factors have a considerable impact on the attitudes towards business ethics. Likewise, this study also showed a result that gender, qualification, and experience have a significant impact on the business decision-making of the traders. Myriad studies have evidenced that women are comparatively inclined towards ethical business decisions, the same as this current study. Some papers contradict this perspective of ethicality based on gender. One of the probable reasons for women traders' ethical inclination can be socio-cultural teachings and learnings. USAID (2009) stated that art, craft, and creative works are found to be plausible for women from developing countries. Traditionally, Nepalese women were mainly involved in artisan works, hence they do not have much familiarity and knowledge about trading. The women's first challenge is, therefore, to gain a foothold in such businesses (Altinay, Bunyan & Pawlik, 2017).

Other studies (Eweje & Brunton, 2009; Raguz & Matic, 2015; Rizvi et al., 2012; Valentine & Rittenburg, 2007) had discussed that the teachings of business ethics affects the ethical attitudes of the students. In this study, the higher level of academic qualification (regardless of business ethics study) of traders has a significant influence on the business decision-making of the small business houses. In the duration of the teaching and learning process, individuals learn to love, fraternise, and handle social responsibilities in day-to-day classroom interactions (Asif et al., 2020). Thus, the researcher anticipates that as the students gain knowledge, it may lead to a source of concern for society.

Another finding of the study is that experience results in an increased level of ethicality. Traders assume that ethicality is supposed to lead to success of the business, and traders are determined to work morally and ethically. Business

success and challenging oneself take a long time to measure; therefore, ethicality of traders hikes up with time spent in their venture. Victoria (2018) also noted that long-term ethical practices in day-to-day activities of the business are interrelated to business success. Consistently, businesses are to work honestly and ethically with their stakeholders for the accomplishment of the ever-lasting goal of subsistence. In connection, the growing interest and challenges created by society and ecology made ethical behaviour of businesses more prevalent in the 21st century (Raguz & Matic, 2015).

Although the study is not without limitations, at first, the outcomes of the study replicate the participants' responses. Since the study obtains measures of business decision-making on hypothetical situations rather than actual behaviour of the traders, it may hamper the authentication of the responses. The increase in sample size and personal and socio-demographic variables would have provided a wider business perspective. Lastly, as the work was restricted to a small number of traders from Biratnagar, generalising outside the territory and the nature of the business may not be possible.

The current study was an endeavour to identify the influence of traders' attitudes on their business decision-making, together with socio-demographic variables like gender, academic qualification, and experience in business. There is a dearth of studies in the Nepalese context and even more in the case of business ethics for entrepreneurs. There are many avenues for future research in the context of business ethics and entrepreneurs. One such avenue would be the inclusion of traders' culture, religion, and specific nature of business as variables. The study would be conducted with real-life business situations with interaction with traders for more concrete results.

CONCLUSION

The study was intended to examine the effect of traders' attitudes towards business ethics and socio-demographic factors, on business decisions. Although profit-making is the staple purpose of businesses, traders have not forgotten that profit is not the only goal of their venture. Overall, attitudes towards business ethics of traders are positive, because they believe in serving people, following morality, and pursuing ethicality for business success. Irrespective of the business situation, traders long to remain ethical in their business operations. This is because they feel that the success story of their venture is embedded in the principles of ethics. They believe that ethicality in business operations propels their dream of perpetual existence and success. In a nutshell, attitudes of business people have penetrated their learnings,

culture, and social interactions. Hence, business decisions have a massive influence of traders' other determinants which constructs their attitudes.

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