Int J Ethics Soc 2025; 7(3): 77-81

10.22034/ijethics.7.3.77

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF Ethics & Society

Short Communication

Factors Influencing Information Technology Ethics

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Received 25 may 2025 **Accepted** 05 Jul 2025 **Online Published** 19 Oct 2025

Abstract

Introduction: Since ethics in information technology is important and essential, the purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing information technology ethics.
Material and Methods: The present study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The statistical population consisted of the employees of the Libyan National Oil Company, among whom 201 individuals were selected as the statistical sample. The data collection tool was a questionnaire. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses.
Results: The results of the study confirmed all the research hypotheses. Accordingly, it was found that cultural values have a direct effect on information technology ethics. Moreover, cultural values also have an indirect effect on information technology ethics through organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and turnover intention.
Conclusion: Undoubtedly, ethics in information technology is a function of the social and cultural values of a society, and these values influence the domain of information technology ethics in various ways.
Keywords: *Ethics, Information Technology, Cultural Values*

How to Cite: Shebani M, Belhaj T, Moftah N. Factors influencing information technology ethics. Int J Ethics Soc. 2025; 7(3): 77-81. doi: 10.22034/ijethics.7.3.77

INTRODUCTION

Today, in analyzing the behavior of organizations, attention to ethics and moral values is essential. The external symbol of organizations is constituted by their ethical behavior, which itself results from the accumulation of various moral values manifested within those organizations. At present, the neglect of certain ethical standards has caused considerable concern in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. The decline of behavioral standards in the public sector has compelled researchers to seek theoretical foundations in this regard, so as to provide appropriate practical pathways for improvement. Therefore, one of the main concerns of efficient managers at different levels is how to create suitable conditions for the human factors employed in all professions so that they may work with a sense of responsibility and complete commitment to societal and professional matters, while adhering to the ethical principles governing their occupations [1]. The first step toward achieving these goals is a proper understanding of the concept of ethics and the identification of factors influencing employees' ethical behavior within organizations, so that these factors can later be examined in greater depth. Ethics within organizations is defined as a system of values, norms, and imperatives through which good and

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bad behaviors are determined and right actions are distinguished from wrong ones. Generally, individuals possess particular moral characteristics on a personal and individual level that shape their thoughts, words, and actions [2]. Since information technology has brought about vast and profound political and social transformations, new and unique ethical challenges have emerged within this domain that require attention. Information technology not only influences the ways individuals act and perform daily activities, but also alters their perception of those actions. Some concepts traditionally discussed in moral and political philosophy—such as the notions of ownership, privacy, distribution of power, fundamental freedoms, and moral responsibility—have faced serious challenges due to the advancement of information technology [3]. Ethics in information technology is a branch of applied ethics that focuses on the relationship between the creation, organization, dissemination, and use of information, as well as the ethical standards and moral codes governing human communication within society [4]. This field, with respect to moral issues, provides a framework concerning informational privacy, ethical agents (for instance, whether artificial agents can be moral), new environmental issues (particularly regarding how agents should behave in the information sphere), and problems arising from the data life cycle (creation, collection, recording, distribution, processing, etc.), especially issues of ownership and copyright, digital divide, and digital rights. In fact, ethics in information technology can be considered related to the fields of computer ethics and the philosophy of information [5]. In Europe during the 1990s, the greatest concern was about the role of governments in creating and using databases containing citizens' information. Although governments had long maintained records, computerized documents dramatically increased the ability to track individuals. Databases replaced bulky paper files, and it became possible to reproduce copies anywhere without requiring physical space. Consequently, governments gained greater opportunities to use these data in ways that had previously been too costly or impractical. This led to a growing governmental eagerness to collect more information about citizens so that it could be retrieved when needed -from fingerprints to home addresses, family relations, occupations, social networks, and political activities- all becoming accessible [6]. Attention to ethics has also extended to virtual spaces. Some scholars argue that discussions on the ethics of information technology contain unique elements that necessitate specialized consideration when dealing with cyberspace, networked environments, or computer-based contexts in general. Since previous moral discourses and traditional ethical prescriptions are insufficient for addressing these new issues, there exists a conceptual gap in our understanding. The existing concepts and principles in traditional theories are inadequate for solving the ethical dilemmas arising from information technology. For example, what concept of ownership can account for an object that can be stolen countless times and yet remain in the possession of its owner? This notion of ownership challenges the traditional understanding of property and possession. Therefore, merely reflecting on values is not enough; rather, this conceptual gap must be addressed, and new insights must be incorporated into the definitions of ethical concepts. Moral principles and concepts must be expanded in such a way that they encompass newly emerging situations [7].

In light of the above, the main research question is: What are the factors influencing information technology ethics? Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Cultural values affect information technology ethics.
2. Cultural values affect information technology ethics through organizational citizenship behavior.
3. Cultural values affect information technology ethics through the mediating variables of job satisfaction and turnover intention.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research design is descriptive-correlational in nature. The statistical population included all employees of Libyan National Oil Company.

From the target population, 201 individuals were selected as the sample. In this study, a stratified random sampling method proportional to population size was used. To collect the required data, five questionnaires were employed as follows:

1. Ethical Values Questionnaire: To measure the variable of ethical values, a questionnaire consisting of 15 items was used. This instrument assesses the ethical values variable and is designed on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree).
2. Information Technology Ethics Questionnaire: To measure the variable of information technology ethics, a questionnaire consisting of 18 items was used.
3. Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire: To measure the variable of employees' organizational citizenship behavior, a questionnaire consisting of 20 items was used, assessing citizenship behavior in the workplace.
4. Job Satisfaction Questionnaire: To measure job satisfaction, a questionnaire adapted from a scale consisting of 19 items was employed.
5. Turnover Intention Questionnaire: To measure the variable of employees' turnover intention, a questionnaire consisting of 25 items was used, assessing the tendency to leave the job.

For data analysis and hypothesis testing, structural equation modeling (SEM) and the $SPSS_{18}$, were utilized.

RESULTS

To examine the normality of the variables, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the assumption of normality of research variables

Variable	Information technology ethics	Ethical values	Citizenship-organizational behavior	Intention to leave work	Job satisfaction
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	3.905	1.526	1.566	1.238	1.867
Sig.					
No	201	201	201	201	201

After confirming the normal distribution of the variables, the research hypotheses were tested using the structural equation modeling method, and the results are illustrated in Figure 1.

As shown in the figure: Cultural values have a direct and significant effect on information technology ethics; Cultural values have an indirect and significant effect on information technology ethics through organizational citizenship behavior; Cultural values also have an indirect and significant effect on information technology ethics through the mediating variables of job satisfaction and turnover intention.

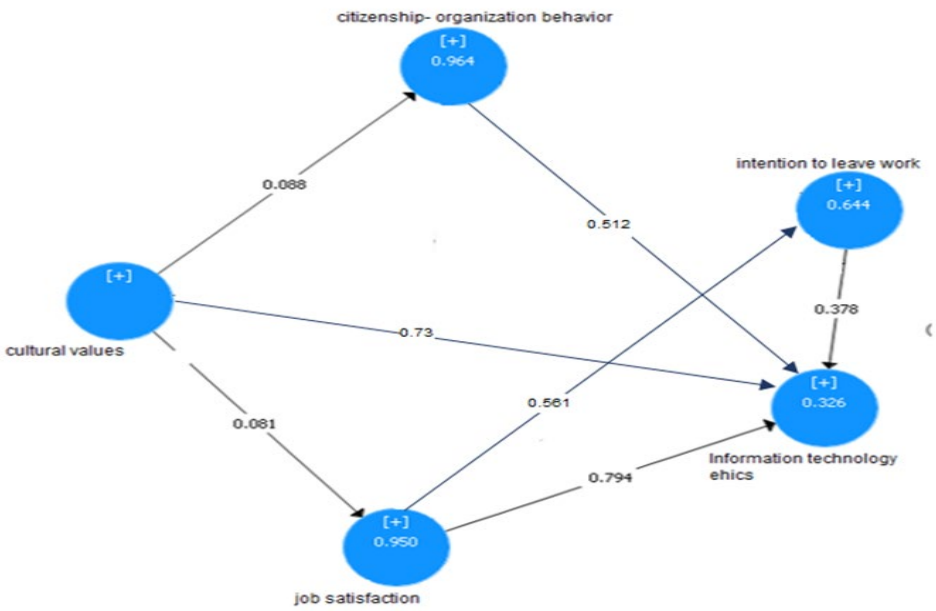

Figure 1: Final research model

DISCUSSION

The results showed that cultural values have a direct effect on information technology ethics. Furthermore, the findings indicated that cultural values indirectly affect information technology ethics through the mediating variable of organizational citizenship behavior. These results are consistent and aligned with many previous studies in this field [8–10].

Cultural values have a direct effect on organizational citizenship behavior, and through organizational citizenship behavior, they also influence information technology ethics. This finding is in agreement with the results of several other studies in this area [11].

The results revealed that cultural values indirectly affect information technology ethics through the mediating variable of turnover intention. Although this relationship has not been examined directly and comprehensively in previous studies, the existing research [9] supports these findings.

The results also demonstrated that cultural values indirectly influence information technology ethics through the mediating variable of job satisfaction. This finding has been confirmed by various studies [12].

Based on these results, it is recommended that social and cultural values be given due consideration in the field of information technology ethics, and that in order to achieve a secure environment in the IT domain, special attention should be paid to the local conditions of each region.

CONCLUSION

Ethics in information technology can create a pleasant and desirable work environment and can influence employee job satisfaction, effective management, and organizational development. High levels of IT ethics lead to improved performance, strategic understanding, and job satisfaction, while reducing employee turnover, thereby playing a positive role in the organization and decreasing employee-related problems.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious

satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

FUNDING DECLARATION

This research did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

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