An analysis of the key determinants of hotel employees' ethical behavior

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ABSTRACT

One of the main challenges plaguing the hotel industry today is the unethical behavior of its employees which spreads like a bad, contagious disease across all departments of a hotel company, has a strong negative impact on hotel operations, results in huge financial losses and other detrimental consequences and has become a major headache for many hotel companies. The purpose of this study is to identify what the main factors are that impact the ethical behavior of hotel employees to help hotels understand the source of this problem. More specifically, this study attempts to replicate Deshpande, Joseph, and Prasad's (2006) study -which was conducted in hospitals-in three, four, and five star hotels in Greece to examine whether it will yield similar results. This study is based on a previous work that the first author presented at the EuroCHRIE 2013 conference in Freiburg, Germany and is among the first ones to be conducted in hotels as most research studies on this topic were conducted in non-hospitality settings. The examined factors include the following: the ethical behavior of peers and managers, the hotel employees' business ethics education, as well as the role of gender, nationality, age, level of education and length of time that participants have worked in the position they were in as well as in the hotel industry overall. Results revealed that some of these factors are key determinants that rule the ethical behavior of employees regardless of the setting they are in.

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1. Introduction

An increasing number of ethical scandals have kept the hotel industry in the spotlight in recent years. "Hotel ethical scandals include, but are not limited to, cases of sexual harassment, different types of discrimination, lack of workplace diversity, violations of international business and cross-cultural norms, environmental injustice and sustainability, marketing and pricing, theft, and blame shifting, all over the world" (Dimitriou, 2013). Cases like Starwood Hotels accusing Hilton of trade secret theft (Orey, 2009), or individual hotel employees suing the company they worked for on the grounds of being treated unethically such as Charlotte Thomas who sued Marriott for age and sex discrimination (Cadwallader, 2009) are some of the characteristic examples which reflect the unethical conditions and behaviors that currently exist and prevail in the

hotel industry. This study aims to highlight these issues and find some answers to these challenges in an effort to help the hotel industry address them. The only way to achieve this goal is by going to the root of the problem of unethical behavior and closely examining the factors which promote and encourage ethical behavior. In other words, to find answers to the following questions: What factors could influence hotel employees to switch to a more ethical decision-making? What factors could cause them to conduct their business in a more responsible manner?

Directors' and researchers' studies on non-hospitality environments blamed the companies' organizational culture, the intense competition, or the people's personal characteristics for the reasons why employees steal or behave in an irresponsible and inappropriate manner in a working environment (Weber, Kurke, & Pentico, 2003). Other studies found that peers can significantly influence the ethical behavior of salespeople (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Lantos, 1999; Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1990). Some researchers (Cagle & Baucus, 2006; Hollier, Blankenship, & Jones, 2013) contended that business ethics education has a positive effect on the

way business and finance students think and behave whereas others supported that managers play a key role when it comes to the ethical behavior of their subordinates (Jaffe & Tsimerman, 2005). However, all these studies focused on non-hospitality employees and students and there has been a lack of research on the factors influencing the ethical behavior of employees in hospitality settings. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to close this gap in the hospitality literature and identify the factors influencing the ethical behavior of employees in the hotel industry. The significance of this study is immense as it also aims to assist the hotel industry gain a deeper understanding of what determines employees' ethical behavior and leads to a more responsible and sound decision-making. The most important stimulus that inspired both the research framework and survey instrument for this study was Deshpande, Joseph, & Prasad's (2006) study, which was an in-depth analysis of factors influencing the ethical behavior of hospital personnel. Research findings revealed that ethical behavior of peers, ethical behavior of successful managers, and professional education impacted the ethical behavior of the respondents. In addition, female nurses behaved more ethically than their male counterparts. The current study attempts to replicate Deshpande, Joseph, and Prasad (2006) study in hotel settings and examine whether it will yield similar results. It must be noted that the current study is also based on a previous work that the first author presented at the EuroCHRIE 2013 conference in Freiburg, Germany (Dimitriou, 2013). The research model used for this study is based on Deshpande et al. (2006) research model and focuses on the factors influencing the ethical behavior of hotel employees as seen in Fig. 1.

2. Literature review

2.1. The power of the ethical behavior of peers

Ethical behavior is defined as the kind of behavior that is "consistent with organizationally prescribed policies, values and norms" (Baker, Hunt, & Andrews, 2006, p. 853). When it comes to examining the factors influencing a person's ethical behavior, the most prominent one seems to be the ethical behavior of peers. It is important to point out that "early research on ethical behavior has shown that perception of peer behavior had the most impact on ethical behavior" (Deshpande et al., 2006, p. 208). Studies conducted on different kinds of employees such as nurses (Deshpande et al., 2006) and salespeople (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Lantos, 1999; Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1990) also proved that this is true. Therefore, a key question that arises at this point is whether peer ethical behavior will determine hotel employees' ethical behavior, as well.

A closer look at what the literature offers regarding this matter brought up several other notable aspects. Keith, Pettijohn, and Burnett (2003) study not only revealed how strong the influence of peer's ethical behavior is on someone's ethical behavior but it also brought up another key characteristic. More specifically, they noted that "it appears that one's peers have a significant impact on employees' ethical behaviors toward their firm, customers, and competitors" (Keith et al., 2003, p. 261). An additional very interesting point that must be made is that the power of peer behavior to impact the ethical behavior of an individual is consistent across cultures. For example, studies conducted in the U. S. (Deshpande et al., 2006) yielded the exact same results as studies conducted in China (Fu & Deshpande, 2012). Therefore, it is important to know that the current study is among the first ones to be carried in Europe and more specifically in Greece.

On a theoretical level, O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) discussed the power and influence of peer behavior by basing it on two things: a) social learning theory which states that people adapt and exhibit behavior similar to those around them deriving from careful observation (Bandura, 1977) and b) differential association theory. "Sutherland stated differential association theory as a set of nine propositions, which introduced three concepts-normative conflict, differential association, and differential group organization-that
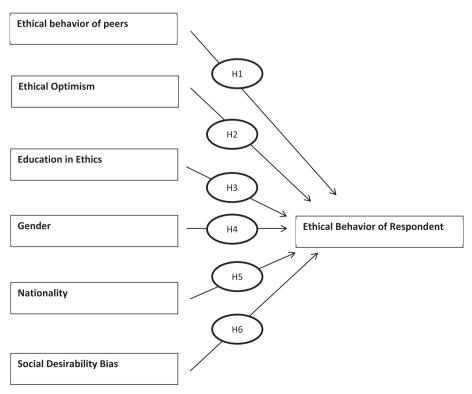

Fig. 1. Research framework.

explain crime at the levels of the society, the individual, and the group" (Matsueda, 2001, p. 125).

Based on the two theories that explain how ethical behavior is shaped and a number of different studies that have been conducted in non-hospitality settings and in non-European countries, the following hypothesis serves as the basis for the current research:

H1. Ethical behavior of peers will impact ethical behavior of hotel employees.

2.2. The impact of managers' ethical behavior on the ethical behavior of employees

Many researchers (Deshpande et al., 2006; Jaffe & Tsimerman, 2005; Thomas, Shermerhorn, & Dienharrt, 2004; Velthouse & Kandogan, 2007) from various fields have stressed the powerful role managers play in influencing the ethical behavior of employees (positively or negatively) in an organization. As Velthouse and Kandogan (2007) clearly stated: "managers are the most significant element of an organization's ethical culture and consequent member behavior" (p. 151), which is a statement that very few people could deny. The key, though, is to figure out how managers can become a positive influence on their subordinates and promote ethical behavior and responsible decision-making that will foster an ethical climate in organizations. Achieving that is of great importance, if we take into careful consideration Greenberg and Baron (2008) proclamation that "although very few managers openly promote unethical behavior, may do so unwittingly with respect to the examples they set for their subordinates" (p. 68). In other words, Greenberg and Baron (2008) tried to address the issue of how critical it is for managers to practice what they preach and ensure that they themselves also follow ethical rules and policies.

If an organization wants to be prosperous and accomplish its goals and objectives, it is necessary to not just have any kind of managers, but a set of successful managers to rely on. Deshpande et al. (2006) explained very nicely the reason why this is so true by highlighting that: "successful managers often serve as role models for others and their action often create norms for the workplace" (p. 208). Furthermore, Thomas et al., (2004) supported that managers "must serve as public and vocal ethics role models; this is the basic building block of any positive leadership impact on ethical behavior by others" (p. 64). Hunt, Chonko, and Wilcox (1984) found that when it was clear that management would not allow any unethical situations within the organizations, a very small number of ethical problems arose. This illustrates the power that managers have to promote ethical behavior and minimize any unfair or unethical attitudes and situations. Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara and Suárez-Acosta (2014) study revealed that it is very important for managers to treat employees fairly because not only are they perceived as ethical leaders by their subordinates, but they can also control organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

The authors support that examining the ethical behavior of hotel managers and placing emphasis on how it influences the ethical behavior of hotel employees will consist of valuable information that will significantly help the industry. The issue of what is considered as a successful hotel manager and how he/she operates is also addressed. Therefore, it is critical to point out that success can be determined "by an individual's income, position in the organization, job performance, or various kinds of satisfaction (e.g. job, career, life)" (Hunt et al., 1984, p. 320). Taking into consideration that almost all research studies regarding this topic are based on and conducted in non-hospitality settings combined with the major impact it has on the ethical behavior of employees, the following research hypothesis is generated:

H2. Ethical behavior of successful managers will impact ethical behavior of hotel employees.

2.3. Business ethics education and ethical behavior

When it comes to the relationship between education and ethical behavior, several critical questions arise: Can ethics be taught or not? If yes, then does it have the power to change ethical behaviors from unethical and rude to ethical and considerate, or just be limited to increasing awareness? A good starting point in order to get some answers to these questions is by highlighting that "research indicates that business ethics can be taught" (Dimitriou, 2013). However, the extent to which the outcomes of teaching business ethics can have a positive influence on people's ethical behavior is quite controversial and debatable. While several studies supported the effectiveness of business ethics education, others seriously doubted it. Mayhew and Murphy (2009) argued that "an ethics education program along with social reinforcement can impact ethical behavior" (p. 398). Weber and Glyptis (2000) recognized the power of business ethics education to make students more aware and knowledgeable of moral matters and concerns. Luthar, Bibattista, and Gautschi (1997) contended that "being exposed to integrative ethical education predicted more positive attitudes towards how the current ethical climate is as well as how it should be" (p.215). Their study also revealed that "students who had been exposed to ethical issues in a course were more likely, than those who had not, to believe that good business ethics is positively related to successful business outcomes (Luthar et al., 1997, p. 214). When Wu (2003) conducted a study on Taiwanese students, he found that after taking an ethics course they developed better ethical values, their decision-making skills became more ethical and responsible, and their awareness of moral issues increased significantly. Although Weber (1990) noted that by taking a business ethics course "students' ethical awareness or reasoning skills improve" (p. 183), he expressed concerns that these effects are just short-term. Al-Kahtani (2008) found that the education level does matter. His results showed that graduate business students had higher levels of ethical values compared to undergraduate business students. Steele, Branson, and Martin's (2011) study on accounting and business students showed that the level of education influenced moral reasoning development. Parsa and Lankford (1999) also reported that the MBA students' moral reasoning was much higher compared to undergraduate students.

Conversely, Premeaux (2004) study on the relationship between management behavior and ethical philosophy revealed that education as a demographic variable played no significant role on the results. Other studies (Curren & Harich, 1996; Laczniak & Inderrieden, 1987; McNichols & Zimmerer, 1985) conducted on college students found no relationship between their types of majors and their ethical beliefs or ethical judgment. Similarly, even though research suggests that people who are more educated tend to make more ethical decisions, a further examination of the different education levels revealed a minimal to non-existent relation to ethical decision-making (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Adkins and Radtke (2004) argued that "if students feel that they are already ethical individuals and don't need any more guidance, or that 'business ethics' is an oxymoron, they may not be open to learning about ethics and thus feel that ethics is unimportant" (p. 282). However, their results revealed that "having an ethics course in college would help students in solving moral and ethics issues facing the accounting profession and the business community" (Adkins & Radtke, 2004, p. 287) which are consistent with previous research identifying the positive effects of students' exposure to business ethics education. In fact, Deshpande et al. (2006) study

presented the strong impact that ethics education has on hospital employees' ethical behavior. Based on these findings, and taking into consideration that hardly any studies have addressed this issue in the field of hospitality, the current study proposes the following research hypothesis:

H3. Those hotel employees who believe that their professional education prepared them to address ethical issues at the workplace are more likely to exhibit ethical behavior.

2.4. The relationship between gender and ethical behavior

Examining whether gender matters when it comes to ethical behavior may not be something new, but it is still a very controversial issue. Studies that dealt with this topic failed to reach a common ground as their results varied and were contradictory. On one hand, there are some researchers (Derry, 1989; Fritzsche, 1988; Singhapadki & Vittel, 1991) who supported that there is no relationship between gender and ethical behavior. Their studies did not yield any significant differences on the way women deal with ethical dilemmas, the decisions they make and their approach to ethical issues compared to their male counterparts. In addition, Gupta, Walker II, and Swanson's (2011) study on graduate business students revealed that gender is not a predictor of ethical behavior. On the other hand, several researchers (Albaum & Peterson, 2006; Deshpande et al., 2006; Kelley, Ferrell, & Skinner, 1990; Miesing & Preble, 1985) found that females behave more ethically than males. Furthermore, Peterson, Rhoades, and Vaught's (2001) study on business professionals not only supported that females behave more ethically than males, but also found that a combination of age and gender also matters. More specifically, their results revealed that "for respondents over the age of 30, the responses from the males indicated a slightly higher level of ethics" (Peterson, Rhoades, & Vaught, 2001, p. 229). A number of other studies (Arlow, 1991; Chonko & Hunt, 1985; Luthar et al., 1997; Mujtaba, Pattaratalwanich, & Chawavisit, 2009; Ruegger & King, 1992) revealed that females are much more concerned and sensitive regarding ethical issues than males. Others identified and reported gender differences in terms of the way they perceive certain issues. For example, Luthar et al. (1997) noted in their findings that "females were significantly more likely than males to believe that good business ethics should be positively related to business outcomes" (p. 212). D'Aquila, Bean, and Procario-Foley (2004) reported differences between males and females regarding their perception of the role of ethical standards on a company's position. They found that females felt that ethical standards do strengthen a company's competitive position whereas males contended the exact opposite. Akatan, Burnaz, and Topku (2008) found that for male Turkish students the economic responsibilities of organizations are more important than legal and economic ones. However, the female Turkish students rated much higher the need to act ethically and respect laws, rules and policies than mainly concentrating on the economic considerations of an organization (Akatan et al., 2008). Borkowski and Ugras (1992) study on the ethical attitudes of different levels of undergraduate MBA students found that "surprisingly, males were consistently more neutral in their responses to the specific ethical items than females" (p. 967).

Since there are so many conflicting studies regarding the role of gender on shaping ethical behavior and especially taking into consideration that they were conducted in non-hospitality settings, it becomes extremely important to examine which approach is more accurate for hotel employees. Furthermore, as the current study replicates the study conducted by Deshpande et al. (2006), the critical question of whether it will yield similar results on this aspect arises. Will female hotel employees like female nurses tend to behave in a more ethical and responsible manner than their male counterparts? Therefore, the current study offers the following hypothesis:

H4. Female hotel employees are more likely to behave ethically than male hotel employees.

2.5. The relationship between nationality and ethical behavior

Examining the factors that prompt individuals to ethical behavior without taking into consideration their race or country of origin would be a very narrow-minded approach. It is important to bear in mind that each nation has its own unique culture, values, and beliefs which directly affect the citizens' ethical standards and attitude towards what is considered fair, acceptable, and just. On a general level, Simga-Mugan, Daly, Onkal, and Kavut (2005) noted that "researchers who emphasize the importance of one's culture suggest that when facing moral dilemmas, people from Western and masculine cultures utilize ethics of justice (p. 140). On a more specific level, when Deshpande et al. (2006) divided their sample of hospital employees into two categories -White and Non-whites- in order to check whether race can influence their ethical behavior, results showed that race did not play any role.

Taking it a step further and investigating what the situation is on the level of nationality controversial ideas come up. O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) agreed that nationality has the power to influence an individual's ethical decision-making, but added that "to what extent is still unclear. This is in part due to the fact that researchers have studied many different nations and it is difficult to make comparisons across studies" (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005, p. 391). Several attempts that were made to compare the ethical beliefs, ethical decision-making skills, and ethical judgment of Americans with people from other nationalities reported some interesting findings. For example, Cherry, Lee, and Chien's (2003) study which compared Americans to Taiwanese practitioners found that Americans are more ethical decision-makers and tend to exhibit a more ethical judgment. Rawwas, Swaidan and Oyman's (2005) cross-cultural study between Turkish and American consumers' ethical beliefs, found that not only Turkish consumers' idealism scores were significantly higher, but they were also following the ethical practices, rules and policies much more faithfully than their Americans counterparts. When McCuddy and Peery (1996) compared students from two universities, one with primarily White and the other with primarily African-American students, they reported significant differences in the ethical beliefs and standards of the two groups. Finally, Pallab, Abhijit, and Kausiki (1999) examined the relationship between culture and marketing ethical norms in two countries - India and the United States - and reported significant differences in the way the two samples interpreted marketing ethical norms. In fact, Americans were much stricter interpreters of these norms compared to their Indian counterparts (Pallab et al., 1999).

The hotel industry is one of the most diverse industries in the world. Woods and King (2010) described the hotel industry as "a leader in employing people from diverse backgrounds at all levels of lodging accommodations, from large, full-service resorts to roadside limited-service hotels" (p. 275). In terms of diversity in the hotel industry, Woods and King (2010) also clarified that it is not limited to hotel employees but also encompasses other groups such as managers, owners, and suppliers. However, it should be mentioned that the meaning of diversity does not only refer to nationality, but also includes gender, educational and income level, age, sexual orientation, and religion. People involved in this industry move around and travel a lot as this is a part of the nature of their profession. On top of that, hotel chains expand and operate

beyond their original geographical location, which complicates things even more when it comes to hiring, training and retaining people of various diverse backgrounds with different cultures, values, laws, and ethical standards.

Greece attracts a significant number of hotel employees from various countries each year as it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Mediterranean. More specifically, the total number of hotel employees in Greece in 2010 was 66,980 (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Out of these hotel employees 56,477 were born in Greece whereas the remaining 10,503 were coming from other countries. Based on all these facts and the fact that hardly any studies have focused on examining the role that nationality plays in impacting hotel employees' ethical behavior, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H5. The nationality of the hotel employee will impact ethical behavior.

2.6. Social desirability bias and overclaimers

In studies involving ethical issues which are considered "sensitive" information, one of the main risks that could potentially contribute to getting inaccurate results is the social desirability response bias (Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Social desirability refers to the fact that individuals will be willing to present themselves in a more positive light by giving answers that are socially acceptable and not answers that are true and describe what they truly feel or believe (Deshpande et al., 2006; Holden & Fekken, 1989; Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Therefore, it is obvious why there are so many concerns and doubts regarding studies that do not take social desirability into consideration and also why a number of studies (Deshpande et al., 2006; Holden & Fekken, 1989; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Randall & Fernandes, 1991) have stressed the importance to control for social desirability in order to be able to measure how sincere the participants'responses are. Therefore, a decision was made to include the exact overclaiming scale that Deshpande et al. (2006) used in their study in hopes that similar to their results overclaimers will report higher levels of ethical behavior. Thus, the final hypothesis is as follows:

H6. Overclaimers report a higher level of ethical behavior.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection procedures

The sample consisted of hotel employees working in three, four and five star hotels in Greece. Convenience sampling was used for the purposes of this study. More specifically, the first author conducted the data collection in person by targeting hotel contacts she is familiar with throughout Greece. Only hard copy surveys were distributed to hotel employees as this would help reach a wide range of hotel employees regardless of their access to the internet. Surveys were also back translated into Greek since many hotel employees are more fluent in Greek than English. It must be noted that back translation is a technique which is mostly used in survey research in order to check the accuracy of translation (Douglas & Craig, 2007). Back translation was developed as a way to help researchers who do not speak the language of a certain target group ensure that their translated version of the questionnaire would include the exact same questions (Harkness, 2003, pp. 35—56). Then, a letter was sent to the human resources managers of selected hotels asking them for permission to distribute the surveys. Once permission was granted, the researcher visited the

hotels and distributed the survey to employees during a meeting that was scheduled by the manager. Those employees who chose to participate in this study turned in their completed surveys to the researcher by placing them in the researcher's lock box on their way out. Surveys were totally anonymous and confidential as no personal identification numbers or information was requested. Out of the 995 surveys that were distributed to hotel employees, a total of 475 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of 47.73%.

3.2. Measures

For the purposes of this study, the instrument that Deshpande et al. (2006) used in their study in hospitals was adapted and consisted of the six following sections: The ethical behavior of self, the ethical behavior of coworkers, the manager's ethical behavior scale, the education in ethics, the overclaiming scale, and demographic information. Minor changes in wording were made in order to match the needs of hospitality settings. For example, words like "office supplies" were replaced by "department supplies". To measure the ethical behavior of self and the ethical behavior of coworkers, four mirror items were included in each scale. For instance, on the first section the hotel employee was given the following statement: "I believe that it is okay to by-pass established protocols in order to be more efficient or effective at work". On the second section, the statement was referring to the belief of the co-worker. In this case, the statement was as follows: "My co-workers believe that it is okay to by-pass established protocols in order to be more efficient or effective at work". In order to measure how managerial success is linked to ethical behavior the current study used the ethical optimism scale which was created and introduced by Hunt et al. (1984) and was also adapted by Deshpande et al. (2006). For measuring the education in ethics, only one item was used in the third section which stated: "My professional education prepared me to address ethical issues at work". The fourth section was devoted to the overclaiming scale which was initially introduced by Randall and Fernandes (1991) and was adapted by Deshpande et al. (2006). This scale included four categories related to movies, products, television shows, and designer labels (Deshpande et al., 2006). Each category consisted of two items: one which actually exists and one that is fabricated. The main goal of this scale was to evaluate the degree of familiarity that respondents have between the fake and the real items (Randall & Fernandes, 1991). The survey concluded by gathering demographic information from the respondents. They were asked to provide their gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, level of education, years of experience with the current employers, in the current position and in the hotel industry. A four-point Likert scale was used ranging from (1) strongly agree to (4) strongly disagree. According to Deshpande, it is preferred over a five-point Likert scale as the respondent is obliged to take a stance and provide a concrete answer (Dimitriou, 2013).

4. Results

In this study, the following demographics were tested: age, level of education as well as length of time that participants have worked in the position they were in as well as in the hotel industry overall. Descriptive data on the sample are contained in Tables 1 and 2.

The internal consistency of the scales used was assessed by Cronbach's alpha. These results are presented in Table 3.

Since the acceptable range for alpha is 0.7 or higher, all of the scales meet this criterion with the exception of Ethical Behavior of Co-workers. This value, however, is close enough so that the scales can be assumed to have adequate internal consistency. As an initial analysis, Pearson correlations of all the relevant variables in the

Table 1
Means, standard deviations and ranges for the scales.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Ethical Behavior of Self	7.33	1.96	4–16
Ethical Behavior of Co-Workers	7.83	2.20	4–16
Ethical Behavior of Managers	13.91	3.43	6–24
Overclaiming	5.64	2.37	4–16
Adequacy of Ethical Education	2.66	0.94	1–4

Table 2
Demographic variables with ethical education.

	Frequency	% of Sample
Gender:		
Male	202	42.5%
Female	273	57.5%
Current Age:		
18–21	13	2.7%
22–25	64	13.5%
26–30	122	25.7%
31–40	148	31.2%
41–50	86	18.1%
50 and Over	42	8.8%
Marital Status:		
Single	202	42.5%
Married	225	47.4%
Divorced	27	5.7%
Other	21	4.4%
Nationality:		
Greece	318	66.9%
Other	157	33.1%
Education:		
Less than high school	32	6.7%
High School/GED	93	19.6%
Vocational school	170	35.8%
College degree	148	31.2%
Master's degree	32	6.7%
Length of Time at Hotel:		
0–1 years	93	19.6%
2–3 years	166	34.9%
4–5 years	34	7.2%
6–7 years	37	7.8%
Over 7 years	145	30.5%
Length of time in current position:		
0–1 years	89	18.7%
2–3 years	175	36.8%
4–5 years	48	10.1%
6–7 years	38	8.0%
Over 7 years	125	26.3%
Length of time in hotel industry:		
0–1 years	59	12.4%
2–3 years	80	16.8%
4–5 years	58	12.2%
6–7 years	60	12.6%
Over 7 years	218	45.9%

Table 3
Alpha coefficients.

Scale	Alpha
Ethical Behavior of Self	0.764
Ethnical Behavior of Co-workers	0.684
Ethical Behavior of Managers	0.795
Overclaiming	0.844

Table 4
Pearson correlations with ethical behavior of self.

	Pearson Correlation	2-Tailed Probability
Ethical Behavior of Coworkers	0.729	.000
Manager's Ethical Behavior	0.241	.000
Over-claiming	0.070	NS
Education in Ethics	0.080	NS
Gender	−0.120	.009
Age	−0.135	.003
Education	0.036	NS
Worked in Hotel	−0.194	.000
Worked in current position	−0.181	.000
Work in hotel industry	−0.233	.000
Country	0.085	NS

Note:
Gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.
Education: 1 = Less than high school; 2 = High school/Ged; 3 = Vocational School; 4 = College Degree; 5 = Master's Degree.
Country: 1 = Greece; 0 = Other.
Work variables: 1 = less than one year to 5 = More than 7 years.

that their coworkers are ethical, perceive that their managers are more ethical, are male, are younger and have worked for shorted periods of time at the hotel and in the hotel industry in general.

As a follow-up analysis, a full-scale multiple regression was computed on the data presented in Table 3. The data were initially checked for multicollinearity and, as would be expected, the three variables assessing length of time working in the hotel industry all had VIF values over 3. To eliminate this problem the variables assessing length of time in current position and length of time at the hotel were removed. The results using the remaining variables are presented in Table 5.

The overall multiple R equaled 0.747 (p < .001) with an adjusted R^2 of 0.549. As shown in Table 5, only Ethical Behavior of Coworkers and length of time in the industry significantly entered the multiple regression equation.

In reference to the specific hypotheses for this study, the results indicate the following:

H1: Ethical behavior of peers will impact the ethical behavior of hotel employees.

Hypothesis # 1 is strongly supported by the results. This is true at both the univariate and multivariate level as the ethical behavior of co-workers produced the highest correlation with self-ethical behavior.

H2: Ethical behavior of successful managers will impact the ethical behavior of hotel employees.

This is supported at the univariate but not the multivariate level.

H3: The hotel workers who believe that their professional education prepared them to address ethical issues at the workplace are more likely to exhibit ethical behavior.

This hypothesis is not supported as the correlation is not significant.

H4: Female hotel employees are more likely to behave ethically

Table 5
Multiple regression results.

Predictor Variable	Beta	t	Significance
Ethical Behavior of Coworkers	0.721	20.695	0.000
Manager's Ethical Behavior	0.040	1.144	0.269
Education in Ethics	0.020	0.594	0.552
Gender	−0.049	−1.469	0.143
Age	−0.069	−1.765	0.078
Education	−0.028	−0.828	0.408
Worked in Industry	−0.029	−0.093	0.028
Country	0.055	1.616	0.107
Over-Claim	−0.003	−0.103	0.918

data set were correlated with the Ethical Behavior of Self Scale described above. These correlations, are presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, Ethical Behavior of Coworkers, Managers' Ethical Behavior, Gender, Age and Length of Employment correlated significantly with Ethical Behavior of Self. Specifically, hotel workers who reported higher levels of ethical behavior: perceive

as compared to male hotel employees.

The results show that this hypothesis is not supported and, in fact, that male employees report a higher level of ethical behavior compared to female employees.

H5: The nationality of the hotel employee will impact ethical behavior.

Although the sample is somewhat limited to answer this question, the results show that there is no difference in ethical behavior between Greek hotel employees and employees from all other countries combined.

H6: Overclaimers report a higher level of ethical behavior.

This hypothesis is not supported.

5. Discussion and implications

The results of this study reveal that by far the biggest determinant of the ethical behavior of hotel employees is the ethical behavior of their co-workers. This finding is not only consistent with Deshpande et al. (2006) study, but also with other non-hospitality related studies (Jones & Kavanagh, 1996; Lantos, 1999; Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1990). From a research standpoint, this finding confirms that the ethical behavior of peers is the most powerful and influential factor of ethical behavior across different industries, disciplines, and settings. This is not surprising as the power of peer influence is strong, in general. People tend to imitate others and this is positive when the behavior they are trying to copy is exceptional and commendable. On the flip side, it can become very problematic and create a chaotic atmosphere within the organization when its workforce mainly consists of "bad apples" that would encourage and promote unethical and irresponsible behavior. That would spread like wildfire across all levels of the company and pretty soon contaminate all operational aspects tremendously. The impact would be much stronger in hotel settings where those "bad apples" would come in direct contact with hotel guests and create much more severe and potentially irreparable damage to the hotel's image and reputation. As a result, this finding puts greater pressure on hotels to ensure they select and hire good quality employees, especially at a time when good talent and people with integrity are so hard to find. It also stresses the importance for the hotel industry to weed out unethical employees. Moreover, it alerts hotels to intensify supervision and find effective ways to monitor behaviors, and attitudes of their employees, such as the development and enforcement of a code of ethics. Failing to do so, would simply convey the message that the hotel company does not strive to solve the problem, but instead, is embracing and fostering this unethical climate.

Another key determinant that is not as strong as the ethical behavior of co-workers, but is still quite prominent in the hotel industry, is the ethical behavior of managers. Once again, this finding is consistent with previous non-hospitality related studies (Jaffe & Tsimerman, 2005; Thomas et al., 2004; Velthouse & Kandogan, 2007), including Deshpande et al. (2006) study. It is critical to note that this finding also applies to the hotel industry. The influence of managers on the ethical behavior of hotel employees is another predictable and expected finding as managers are considered to be role models in the eyes of their subordinates, especially the newcomers. The authors also strongly agree with Deshpande et al. (2006) that "not only are successful managers role models, but they also give out signals on what behavior is tolerated or acceptable within the organization. Successful managers, through their daily actions and behavior can indicate that ethics are important to them" (p. 213). Managers set the tone as to what is expected of the employees and how the company operates. Therefore, having a manager who is moral and ethical can encourage hotel employees to act accordingly and help foster an ethical climate in the workplace. Conversely, a hotel manager who cuts corners, takes credit for the work of others, blames subordinates for his/her own mistakes and weaknesses and uses devious and unethical ways to climb the ladder of success, conveys the message to employees that in order to be successful in that hotel property this is the ideal path to follow. Of course, this could work perfectly for hotel companies that conduct their business in an unprofessional and irresponsible manner, since this is what their organizational culture is made of, and business ethics is at the very bottom of their list. However, hotels that value the true meaning of conducting their business in an ethical manner and recognize the benefits deriving from that approach, understand the importance of screening carefully any management position applicants and hiring ethical professionals. They recognize that those managers will honor the hotel in every way through their integrity and honesty. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that this should be senior managements' critical part of the recruiting process.

An additional finding in this study is that gender does matter when it comes to ethical behavior. In fact, the male employees who participated in this study proved to behave more ethically than their female counterparts. This finding not only contradicts those studies (Derry, 1989; Fritzsche, 1988; Singhapadki & Vittel, 1991) that yielded that there is no relationship between gender and behavior, but also a number of studies (Albaum & Peterson, 2006; Deshpande et al., 2006; Kelley et al., 1990; Miesing & Preble, 1985) that supported that females behave more ethically than men. It is quite hard, though, to determine what could trigger male hotel employees to be more ethical, but this is, indeed, an important finding for the hotel industry that cannot be ignored. Some could even argue that it could be used to alert hotels to put male employees in key positions in order to influence others and set a good example for them to follow.

The next determinant of ethical behavior in this study is age. More specifically, the results revealed that younger hotel employees have stronger ethical behavior than their older counterparts. This is another finding which differs from non-hospitality related studies that support otherwise, e.g. Ruegger and King (1992) claim that older students, and more specifically those included in the 40+ age group are the most ethical compared to the younger student groups or Weeks, Moore, McKinney and Longenecker's (1999) finding that "individuals in latter career stages display higher ethical judgment compared to people in lower stages" (p. 309). There are a couple of reasons that could justify why younger hotel employees behave more ethically than older ones. One explanation could be that younger generations are much more conscious and sensitive to ethical issues. Another reason could be that younger employees who join the hotel company tend to follow the hotel's policies and procedures to the letter. When faced with an ethical dilemma, their first reaction is to look for a rule that covers that aspect and dictates a desirable, expected course of action. That is only natural since they are newly hired by the hotel and most likely have very limited work experience in that field. However, older people with many years of experience in the hotel industry, when faced with critical ethical dilemmas, tend to use guest satisfaction as their guide. Their top priority is making guests happy, which sometimes could highly contradict a hotel policy, but would ensure a repeat business and ultimately guest loyalty. For example, an older front desk employee would be more willing to violate the strict no pet policy and allow a guest to spend the night at the hotel with his/her pet as compared to a newly hired, young front desk agent. In this case, it is not that one of them is more ethical than the others; it is just that their priority and focus lie on different things. This is an extremely valuable piece of information for hotels as it offers them some insight on which areas to concentrate on when building their service and organizational

culture and what to include in their training sessions, especially for new hires.

Furthermore, the level of an employee's education was not a significant determinant of ethical behavior of hotel employees. One explanation that could be provided is the fact that someone's personality and character are more important than how far they went in school or pursued further educational and/or professional studies. Similarly, business education was equally insignificant. This finding significantly contradicts Deshpande et al. (2006) results. One explanation that yielded this result is the kind of business ethics education that the participant took at some point in their studies. In the field of medicine, ethics education is treated quite differently compared to hospitality programs. According to Deshpande et al. (2006) many nursing courses place strong emphasis on ethics. In addition, "ethics education is firmly integrated into medical school curricula. Every U.S. allopathic medical school offers at least one ethics course, and many schools require at least one for graduation" (Gordon & Parsi, 2002, p. 65). However, hardly any hospitality programs place any emphasis on hospitality ethics education. In fact, Dimitriou (2014) argued that the increasing number of ethical scandals that have taken place in the hotel industry "point to a lack of industry professionals well-trained and prepared to meet the kinds of ethical challenges and dilemmas that come with the hospitality field" (p. 1) and underscored the need to include business ethics in hospitality programs. She also stressed the fact that how hospitality ethics is taught not only truly matters, but "shapes the industry by preparing the ethical leaders of tomorrow" (Dimitriou, 2014, p. 5). So, in the case of the respondents' professional education, if it was mostly theoretical, for example, mainly consisting of articles or book readings, then it is not a surprise that it failed to have an impact on moral and ethical decision-making and actions. It is the authors' belief that it takes a hands-on kind of teaching business ethics education with a strong focus on the hotel industry to ensure that it will yield positive and effective results. Indeed, this would be a valuable finding for the hospitality academia to consider as it prepares potential employees for a smooth entrance into the hotel industry.

Another interesting finding is that there is no significant relationship between ethical behavior and nationality. In fact, this is consistent with Deshpande et al. (2006) results where none of the additional correlations of Whites, Blacks, and Asians that they conducted (beyond the initial two categories: Whites and Non-whites) was significant. This finding makes a lot of sense as someone's place of origin does not dictate his/her level of ethical behavior. It is well known as well as documented that the hotel industry is an extremely diverse industry (Woods & King, 2010) that attracts people from all over the world. Given the fact that there is no difference in ethical behavior between Greek hotel employees and employees from all the other countries combined, in the current study, reassures the hotel industry that all applicants are and should be warmly welcomed. It also alleviates any concerns or doubts that may exist in the industry that an employee's country of birth could interfere, control, or determine his/her ethical behavior.

The most important concern for the hotel industry is to recruit, hire, train, retain, and promote ethical people who with or without any supervision will always do the right thing, effectively tackle ethical dilemmas, demonstrate ethical decision-making and exhibit ethical behavior consistent with the hotel company's policies, beliefs and values, regardless of where the employee comes from or where the hotel operates.

Unlike Deshpande et al. (2006) results which revealed that overclaimers reported a higher level of ethical behavior, this is not the case for hotel employees as the related hypothesis was not supported. This is a significant difference between the two studies

that must be highlighted. Regardless of the outcome, the authors strongly agree with previous researchers (Deshpande et al., 2006; Schoderbek & Deshpande, 1996) that, especially when it comes to studies that are focused on sensitive topics such as business ethics and ethical behavior, researchers should control for social desirability and take overclaiming into serious consideration, as failure to do so can invalidate their findings.

6. Limitations

A major limitation of the research is that the study was conducted in Greece, which limits the generalizability of the sample to non-Mediterranean countries. Another limitation relates to the kind of hotels that were used in this study which were three, four and five-star hotels around Greece. Even though, including almost all different segments was a good strategy that offers a general sense of the condition that exists in the hotel industry in Greece, it certainly limits the ability to answer questions on the factors impacting ethical behavior of hotel employees on the level of a specific hotel segment. An additional limitation relates to measuring the impact of business ethics education on the ethical behavior of hotel employees. There was only one item included in the questionnaire which stated: "My professional education prepared me to address ethical issues at work". The major problem with this item is that it does not address the kind of business ethics education that was included in the participants' professional education, if any. For example, there are several hospitality institutions that include at least one business ethics course in their curriculum, others that totally exclude it, and some others that just address the issue of ethics during their hospitality courses, e.g. a food and beverage management course devotes a lecture or two to addressing the ethical issues of that field. Based on the fact that this study is replicating a previous study conducted in hospitals by Deshpande et al. (2006), it is limited to testing the specific factors suggested by those authors. Thus, it does not take into consideration any other additional key determinants of ethical behavior such as the role of ethical leadership or the existence and enforcement of codes of ethics within the hotel properties.

7. Future research direction

A replication of this study should be conducted in hotels of other countries to examine whether the same factors found in this study also determine the ethical behavior of their employees to help the hotel industry better understand what initiates and encourages this kind of behavior. Additional studies concentrating only on one specific hotel segment such as the luxury segment would offer more specific findings that are strictly devoted and related to the chosen hotel segment. Further studies on the critical issue of ethical behavior should also be conducted to shed some light on what determines the ethical behavior of hotel managers. This would be a valuable research work for the hotel industry as it would point to the steps that hotels should take or the policies and procedures they should create to foster an ethical working environment where operations can be run smoothly and employees can grow and prosper free of bad influences. Other fruitful studies that would help the industry could be associated to the measures, methods and techniques that discourage the unethical behavior of hotel employees in hopes that they would offer some solutions in terms of how unethical behavior can be controlled and avoided in hotel settings.

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