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Influence of ethical ideology on job stress

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Abstract The relationship between ethical ideology and job stress appears to be complex. This study is based on a model presented by Forsyth (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39:175, 1980), showing two dimensions (idealism and relativism) that play an important role in ethical evaluation and behavior. Based on a survey of 561 employees of hotel industry in India, ethical ideologies were found to be negatively associated with job stress. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlations and multiple regressions. The result showed that relativism is negatively correlated with job stress. Further, it has been established that idealism and relativism interacted in such a way that there is a negative relationship between idealism and job stress when relativism is low and positive relationship when relativism is high. The findings imply that ethical ideology adversely influences the job stress in the organization.

Keywords Ethical ideology · Job stress · Idealism · Relativism · Hotel industry

Introduction

Ethical behavior is becoming the point of concern for today's corporate leaders and organizational managers. Empirical studies showed that an individual's ethical beliefs or ethical ideology influences their approach to ethical/moral judgments and decision-making (Forsyth 1980, 1981; Davis et al. 1998; Barnett et al. 1994, 1998; Glover et al. 1997; Jackson et al. 2000). Organizational ethical decisions are based on the moral values and ethical ideology. Individual's unethical behavior will cost the industry a huge monetary loss (Zemke 1986), destroy the trust of the employees, and has an adverse implication on employee's motivation and productivity. Unethical behavior is defined as misconduct where fundamental interests are at stake (Kaptein 2008). In other

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words, it is the behavior that is unacceptable to the large community (Jones 1991a). Ethical decision-making will have organizational consequences. It will be positive for the organization and, at the same time, negative for employees. So, ethical ideology is a complex phenomenon, which depends on the situation and individual's personal moral values. Ethical ideology is defined as the moral and ethical approach toward any situation, which leads to organizational outcomes.

Researchers conducted different studies related to an individual's morally prescribed behavior (e.g., Kohlberg 1983, 1984; Rest 1986). The outcomes of these studies have shown about what motivates an individual to behave ethically and what are the factors that influence the moral judgment. Although there are many factors influencing an individual related to socially disapproved behavior, it is found that an individual's ethical ideology has a significant impact on ethical decisions (Forsyth 1992). An ethical ideology is a system of moral values used to make ethical judgments, which offers certain guidelines for judging and resolving ethical behavior. In other words, individuals with an ethical ideology are characterized by a belief in preserving the personal and other's well-being, which would abstain from any decisions or behavior that could significantly hurt other's sentiments and emotions. Studies revealed that the organizational factors have the significant impact on ethical behavior (Armstrong et al. 2004; Longenecker et al. 2006; Premeaux 2004).

One type of organizational factor that harms personal well-being and ethical behavior is job stress. In an organizational context, job stress is also known as occupational stress, work stress, or role stress. These terms are often used interchangeably in organizations, but its meaning refers to the same thing (AbuAlRub 2004; Larson 2004). Occupational health problems and a significant cause of economic loss are increasing due to job stress. Job stress may produce both overt physiological and psychological disabilities. However, it may also cause the subtle manifestation of melancholy that can affect personal well-being and productivity (Quick et al. 1992). A job stress-affected individual has the higher probability of job dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism, increased frequency of drinking and smoking, increased negative psychological symptoms, and reduced aspirations and self-esteem (Jick and Payne 1980). Job stress affects customer orientation and has direct as well as indirect effects on job performance, mediated by customer orientation (Knight et al. 2007). If employees cannot control physiological and psychological stresses, this may negatively affect their work attitudes and behavior (satisfaction, commitment, productivity, quality, and health) in the workplace (Seaward 2005; Newell 2002; World Health Organization 2005). A previous study revealed that stress levels were found to vary with biographical variables such as gender, age, experience in teaching, school size, and location (Manthei and Gilmore 1996).

Job stress is a costly problem for researchers and organizations due to its prevalence and negative consequences. For example, it has been estimated that one third of employees reported a high level of stress (NIOSH 1999) and nearly 78% of corporate Indian employees sleep less than 6 h a day, leading to severe sleep disorders (ASSOCHAM 2012). The prevalence of job stress is disturbing when the costs of organizations and individuals are affected, which leads to workplace deviance (Henle 2005). Evidence reported that job stress is the major cause of turnover in organizations (NIOSH 1999). Further, employees who are responsible for workplace deviance are more likely to have increased turnover intentions (Giacalone and Greenberg 1999);

increased job stress-related issues; decreased productivity, low morale, and lost work time (O'Leary-Kelly et al. 1996); damaged self-esteem; and increased fear and insecurity at work and psychological and physical pain (Griffin et al. 1998). It was found that role expectation conflict, coworker support, and work-life balance are the factors responsible for the increased job stress in India (Shukla and Srivastava 2016). Eventually, workplace deviance affects the ethical climate of the organization (Peterson 2002), which influenced the job stress (Singhapakdi et al. 1999; Mulki et al. 2008) and ethical ideology (Karande et al. 2000; Ming and Chia 2005) of individuals. It was found from the organization's point of view that employees must achieve their goals and targets, and from the employee's perspective, there are the situations where ethical conflict arises in which employees feel pressure from the peers, supervisors, and other members of the organizations to compromise with their personal values in order to achieve organizational goals (Leicht and Fennell 1997). From the previous studies, it was also found that employees who believe in ethical behavior felt pressure to adhere on the universal rules (Peterson 2002), which may result into certain kind of stress. Therefore, from the above studies, it is believed that ethical ideology could have a significant relationship with job stress, which can be an important relation for creating an ethical climate without any deviance in the modern workplace.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the business ethics literature by empirically examining the relationship between employee's ethical ideology and job stress. This study is important because job stress at workplace affects the decision of employees, which definitely depends on individual's ethical ideology. Below, in the "Literature review" section, we discuss ethical ideology and its potential relationship to job stress in more detail.

Literature review

There are different factors which affect the ethical ideology, including situational factor (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986; Trevino 1986), moral intensity (Jones 1991a; Singhapakdi et al. 1999), and individual difference variable (Hunt and Vitell 1986; Jones 1991b; Trevino 1986), such as gender (Dawson 1997; Franke et al. 1997; Mason and Mudrack 1996; Nguyen et al. 2008; Sweeney et al. 2010), age (Deshpande 1997; Ruegger and King 1992; Valentine and Rittenberg 2007; Marques and Azevedo-Pereira 2009), personality traits (Hegarty and Sims 1978; Singhapakdi and Vitell 1990; Trevino 1986; Trevino and Youngblood 1990), stages of individual development (Kohlberg 1969), moral behavior (Forsyth and Berger 1982), moral development (Rest 1986, Rest. 1994) and the stage of ethical decision-making (Rest 1986). Ethical decision-making is conditional upon several factors, such as different individual ethical orientations (Forsyth 1980; Douglas et al. 2001; Forsyth 1992; Vitell and Paolillo 2004, Singhapakdi et al 1995) and environmental influences (Weber and Gillespie 1998; Kelley and Elm 2003a). Finally, the characteristics of the issue itself are likely to influence ethical decisions (Jones 1991a).

Previous studies found that ethical ideology was being used in moral judgments (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Forsyth 1992; Hunt and Vitell 1986; Stead et al. 1990). Forsyth (1980, 1992) argues for relativism and idealism as key concepts capable of parsimoniously describing individual differences in ethical philosophy. Individuals with high relativism apparently raise issues on the value of the moral principle, whereas those who are less in relativism emphasize more on the importance of moral values in

the workplace. Individuals high in idealism always thought of positive consequences always be accomplished by proper ethical action, whereas less idealistic individuals assume as good always mixed with bad. Based on this two-dimensional view of personal moral philosophy, Forsyth (1980) made an important contribution to the ethics literature by constructing the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ), a 20-item instrument designed to assess individual differences in ethical ideology dimensions, i.e., idealism and relativism. An individual difference plays an important role in models of ethical decision-making and organizational ethics (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986; Jones 1991a; Trevino 1986). In view of this key role, the personal attributes, such as religion, gender, and age, and personality variables, such as neuroticism, extroversion, locus of control, and ego strength (Forte 2013; Watson and Berkley 2009; Marquardt 2010; Singhapakdi and Vitell 1991a), were found to be associated with organizational ethics. It wa also found that personal ethical philosophies also influenced moral choices and post-transgression reactions, for more of the idealistic subjects chose to act immorally relative to the low idealists, and subjects who were low in both idealism and relativism were less likely to transgress a moral norm if they personally would benefit (Forsyth & Nye. 1990)

Surprisingly, the direct relationship between ethical ideology and job stress has not been found in previous studies. However, few studies reported that the employees who could not resolve ethical issues felt powerless (32.5%) and overwhelmed (34.7%) with ethical issues in the workplace, frustration (52.8%), and fatigue (40%) (Ulrich et al. 2007). Higher ethical climate results in lower role conflict and role ambiguity and higher satisfaction and organizational commitment, which, in turn, lead to lower turnover intention (Jaramillo et al. 2006). Studies contributed to the ethics literature that ethical climate is strongly associated with role stress (Singhapakdi et al. 1999; Mulki et al. 2008). Ethical climate helps to determine not only issues that are considered relevant to the organization but also the criteria to be used to evaluate and respond to these issues (Cullen et al. 1989). In addition, ethical climate demonstrates the organizational commitment with respect to ethics and provides employees unambiguous information about the organization ethical expectations (O'Dwyer and Madden 2006; Wood and Rimmer 2003). Since ethical climate provides cues related to acceptable behaviors, it includes an important factor in reducing role stress (Schwepker and Hartline 2005). In fact, studies have demonstrated that a strong ethical climate reduces role stress and, consequently, increases job satisfaction (Jaramillo et al. 2006; Schwepker and Hartline 2005). Role conflict is one of the dimensions of job stress (Parker and DeCotiis 1983) viewed as an incompatibility between organizational expectations and employee's expectations (Yetmar and Eastman 2000). Service employees are particularly prone to role conflict because they are intermediate spanners trying to meet company's expectations and customer's requirements that are often in conflict. A positive work climate where organizational values meet with employee's moral expectations has been found to lessen potential conflicts and thus reduce stress (Babin et al. 2000). Despite this, previous studies also reveal a strong relationship of ethical ideology with ethical climate (Karande et al. 2000; Ming and Chia 2005) as well as with organizational commitment (Shaub et al. 1993).

While a previous study postulated that these ethical climates affect role stress, we also believe that these job stress elements were also linked to ethical ideology. Ethical ideology is defined as "a system of moral values used to make ethical judgments, which often offers guidelines for judging and resolving ethical behavior" (Henle et al. 2005, p. 219). Therefore, the key for ethical behavior lies in the personal ethical ideology of an individual, found upon (1) relativism and (2) idealism (Schlenker and Forsyth 1977).

High-scored relativistic individuals are not reliant on universal moral rules (Forsyth 1980, 1992); those with low relativism believe they should act in line with such moral values (Davis et al. 2001; Dubinsky et al. 2004). Idealism, on the other hand, concerns the extent individuals believe moral actions result in desirable outcomes. Highly idealistic individuals always consider the inherent goodness of universal moral values and the importance of not to harm others (Tansey et al. 1994a). Less idealistic individuals maintain that actions that harm others are not necessarily bad (Redfern 2005)—contingent upon the circumstances. As individuals have different moral orientations according to their emphasis toward these two principles (Forsyth 1992), we postulate this to influence the job stress in an organization.

Indian hotel industry witnessed a tremendous boom in recent 5 to 10 years. Hotel industry is directly related to the tourism industry, and the growth of tourism industry has increased the growth of Indian hotel industry. The thriving economy and increased business opportunities in India have acted as a boon for Indian hotel industry. The "Incredible India" destination campaign and another launched "Atithi Devo Bhavah" campaign have also helped in the growth of domestic and international tourism. The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has materialized as one of the key drivers of growth among the service sectors in India. It contributes to 6.23% to the national GDP and 8.78% of the total employment in India (Verma 2015). The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report of 2013, published by the World Economic Forum, India, stated that the ranking of India is 11th in the Asia-Pacific region and 65th in the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2013.

There is a growing concern for business ethics in the hospitality industry as hospitality professionals are faced with ethical dilemmas in their daily operations, which leads to job stress (Babin et al. 2000). Job stress in hotel industry has been regarded as one of the most important issues being faced by mangers because it affects the performance of all levels of employees, which includes both managers and hourly employees (Ross 1995). Previous research has found that employee stress in the hotel industry is important because it can result in workers to become exhausted and skeptical (Kim 2008) which can result in negative outcomes in particularly delivering service to the customers. Stress within the hotel industry has been qualitatively and moderately correlated with employee physiological symptoms, including headaches, fatigue, indigestion, ulcers, blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes (Krone et al. 1989), and thus, may result in decreased productivity, employee commitment, and increased health care costs for the hotel organizations. Lee and Tsang (2013) emphasize that ethics is an important challenge in the hospitality industry, and claim that the understanding of ethical perception and moral position of all stakeholders should be prominent. Hospitality industry is open to unethical practices and frequently presents its employees with morally and ethically ambiguous situations such as overbooking, theft, whistle-blowing, mistreatment of others, racial prejudices, sabotage, benefit at the expense of guest supplementary service, and misleading information in the restaurant menus, hotel brochures, and websites (Stevens 2001; Yaman and Gurel 2006; Wong and Chan 2010; Harris 2012; Sorell and Hendry 1994).

Recently, it was found that there is an increase in interest related to hospitality ethics awareness and education from the last two decades (Lee and Tsang 2013; Yeung and Pine 2003). However, limited academic focus has been given to create ethical attitudes of hospitality employees with respect to the workplace (Lee and Tsang 2013). There is still a need to evaluate the effect of ethics education on employee's judgment, ethical behavior, and manner by which they make ethical

decisions. Also, future research is encouraged to study and contrast perceptions and attitudes toward ethical issues among employees with different industry work experience levels (full-time work experience, part-time work experience, and without work experience) with respect to Indian culture. This understanding will help employees to take ethical decision in the dilemmas they will encounter in their future career.

While several studies have been carried out in the last two decades to understand ethics in the hospitality industry (Table 1), these studies are limited to few countries like the USA (Freedman and Bartholomew 1990; Whitney 1990; Enghagen and Hott 1992; Weaver et al. 1997; Yeh 2012) and China (Wong 1998; Wong and Chan 2010; Huimin and Ryan 2011). Author has felt that more in-depth studies are needed to examine the ethics profile of the hospitality industry in Asian countries specifically in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc.

Purpose

Previous studies demonstrated that ethical ideology was related to different individual factors, moral intensity, and organizational factors. Ethical ideology in organizations plays a significant role in developing strong ethical organizational culture and climate (Bartels et al. 1998; Trevino et al. 1998; Karande et al. 2000; Ming and Chia 2005). There are other numerous organizational factors which have been studied with reference to business ethics, such as business competitiveness (Hunt and Jennings 1997; Robertson and Rymon 2001), code of ethics (McCabe et al. 1996; Cleek and Leonard 1998; Sims and Keon 1999; Hume et al. 1999; Weaver and Trevino 1999; Adams et al. 2001; Somers 2001; Trevino and Weaver 2001; McKendall et al. 2002), rewards (Tenbrunsel 1998), peer relationship (McMahon and Harvey 2007; Mencl and May 2009), and training (McKendall et al. 2002). On the other hand, very little research has investigated business ethics consequences, such as employee's job satisfaction, stress, motivation, commitment, and job performance, in comparison with many studies to explain organizational factors of ethical behaviors in business (Bullen and Flamholtz 1985; Saks et al. 1996; Koh

Table 1 Means, standard deviation, and reliability coefficient of ethical ideology and job stressors

Measure	Mean	SD	α
Ethical ideology measures			
Idealism	34.55	6.76	0.920
Relativism	26.85	6.80	0.877
Overall ethical ideology	61.46	8.27	0.770
Job stressors			
Time stress	10.62	3.43	0.876
Anxiety stress	13.39	3.25	0.856
Total job stress	24.02	5.31	0.830

and El'Fred 2001). Job stress is one of the organizational factors, which seek attention with reference to business ethics (Sweeney and Costello 2009; Ho 2010).

Empirical studies have confirmed the significant relationship between ethical climate and ethical ideology (Karande et al. 2000; Ming and Chia 2005; Forsyth 1985) as well as the significant association between ethical climate and role stress (Singhapakdi and Vitell 1999; Mulki 2008). A significant negative relationship between total work ethics and staff's job stress (Nader and Behrooz 2011) and a positive relation between work ethics and employee's productivity (Ahmadie et al. 2014) were explored. It was even found that organizational commitment was lower and intention to leave was higher for professionals who felt pressured by their employer to engage in unethical work activity (Peterson 2002). Based on these findings, it can be argued that ethical ideology is a potential construct to be associated with job stress, which is left unexamined. Thus, this research contributes to overcome from this deficiency. The present study is designed to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on the association between job stress and ethical ideology. It extends previous research by taking its point of departure in the arguments presented above and other researcher's suggestions for future investigations. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether there is any association between job stress and ethical ideology among hotel employees. Therefore, the present study is conducted to examine the relationship and effect of ethical ideologies on job stress.

Hypotheses

A potential elucidation for the complex relationship between ethical ideology and job stress is that an employee's reaction to ethical pressure is likely to depend on the individual characteristics of the employee (Moser 1988). An individual variable that would appear likely to influence employee's response to pressure which may engage them in unethical business activity is the ethical orientation or moral philosophy of the employees. One of the key aspects of an individual's moral philosophy is the degree to which the individual believes ethics is relative versus a belief in universal moral rules (Akaah 1997). From the previous studies, it has been proposed that differences in ethical orientation influence the formulation of an ethical intention (Thorne and Saunders 2002). Employees adhering to a belief in universal moral rules would prefer to formulate ethical intentions based on rules of proper conduct (Moon and Woolliams 2000), while relativists are more likely to formulate ethical intentions based on the outcomes of the potential acts. Thus, all employees (idealists and relativists) may identify an ethical dilemma, for example misleading a customer in order to achieve organization's goal of maximizing revenue. Relativists who believe in organizational objectives need to rationalize the management goals are ethically acceptable. Research suggests that individuals believing in universal moral rules are more likely to adhere to their ethical standards and to act in an ethical manner (Tansey et al. 1994a; Weber and Green 1991). Therefore, relativists may find it easier to change their ethical standard according to organization's objectives than idealists.

Thus, it might be reasonable to expect that individuals who believe in universal moral rules would have more difficulty in breaking rules of ethical conduct and thus experience more stress in coping with pressure to engage in unethical behavior at work than individuals who adhere to relativistic moral beliefs. That is, individuals who

believe in universal moral rules would seem likely to have more difficulty in rationalizing unethical work behavior since these individuals do not believe that ethics is relative. They are likely to expect the same ethical standards to apply to both personal and professional situations. As a result, individuals with a strong belief in universal moral rules may experience more stress or cognitive dissonance when confronted with pressure to engage in unethical work behavior and consequently have a stronger need to alleviate the stress by withdrawing from the organization.

Conversely, individuals who believe ethics is relative and dependent on the situation may be able to justify potential unethical acts as necessary for the successful accomplishment of organizational and work goals. These employees may view certain business activity as contrary to their personal morals but may rationalize that ethics in the business environment does not necessarily have to be consistent with ethics in their personal life. Thus, they may be more successful in coping with pressure to engage in unethical behavior at work than individuals who adhere to a belief in universal moral rules.

A review of the literature did not reveal any theories or empirical research directly related to ethical ideologies, i.e., idealism and relativism. Therefore, with respect to belief in ethical ideology, the following null hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1 There will no relationship between idealistic moral beliefs and job stress.

Hypothesis 2 There will no relationship between relativistic moral beliefs and job stress.

Finally, we hypothesize that the dimensions of ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) will interact to predict job stress. Employees lower in relativism are firmly followed the universal moral rules and less prone to job stress. Thus, there will only be a relationship between idealism and job stress when relativism is higher. Employees higher in relativism reject socially accepted codes of ethics, which predisposes them toward workplace deviant behavior (Henle et al. 2005). Previous studies revealed that deviant workplace behavior leads to an increase in job stress (Omar et al. 2011). Further, relativists will be even more likely to show deviant behavior in workplace when they are also lower in idealism because they not only reject moral rules but also favor the ideology that is "sometimes harming others is unavoidable." Conversely, relativists will be less likely to perform unethical behaviors, which will lead to increase in job stress when they are also higher in idealism. Research in marketing ethics provides some evidence for this interaction effect. First, in their examination of elderly consumers, Vitell et al. (1991) found that individuals higher in relativism and lower in idealism were more likely to demonstrate unethical or illegal consumer behaviors (e.g., changing price tags, stretching the truth on an income tax return) and were ethical. Similarly, Rawwas (1996) replicated this finding with a sample of Austrian consumers. Although these studies did not directly assess the relationship between ethical ideology and unethical behaviors, they do suggest that individuals who are higher in relativism and lower in idealism were more likely to engage in unethical behavior or workplace deviance which will increase the job stress and thus more likely to engage in the stressful behavior. Therefore, we offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 Idealism and relativism will interact to predict job stress.

Methodology

The licensed hotels were classified into four-star, three-star, two-star, and one-star (budget hotels). The stratified sampling technique was used to select the hotels for the study. Twenty-five hotels were put into strata, and the required number of hotels within each stratum was randomly selected (four-star = 75; three-star = 125; two-star = 190; one-star = 171). All 25 hotels were city-center, located in the NCR region, India. The study employed a random sampling totaling 561 employees. The questionnaires were distributed through the human resource departments of participating hotels and returned directly by mail. Of the 697 questionnaires originally sent, 561 were returned, constituting an 80.1% return rate. These questionnaires were divided as follows: 312 were returned by line employees, 233 by middle managers, and 152 by upper managers. The inclusion criterion was having experience as a hotel employee. The ethical committee of the hotel management approved the current study, and all employees signed an informed consent form. One third of the samples were line employees, the second third were middle managers (i.e., supervisors and assistant department heads), and the final third were the upper managers (i.e., department heads, executive committee members, and corporate-level managers with offices located in respective hotels, due to the nature of their job). Employee's age ranged from 21 to 50 years old, with an overall increase in organizational tenure and education with the rise in organizational level. A total of 52.66% of the employees were male with a mean age of 26 years (SD = 0.73). Most of the employees are single (57.45%), with 42.55% of married employees. About 59.57% of the employees are graduates. Data were collected between January 2015 and July 2015.

In addition to demographic variables, the one-page (front and back) instrument measured job stress using a nine-item scale developed by Jamal and Baba (2000). The psychometric properties of the questionnaire have been thoroughly examined, and it has been tested for its construct and criterion validities and reliability. The instrument has proved robust when data were factor analyzed and cross validated through hierarchical linear regression. In this study, the coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.83. Ethical ideology was measured using the EPQ developed by Forsyth (1980). The EPQ consists of two scales, each containing ten items: one scale is designed to measure idealism and the other to measure relativism. Different versions of these two scales have been widely used in business ethics research (e.g., Singhapakdi et al. 1999; Marta et al. 2008; Zhao 2008). Forsyth states that "the two scales that make up the EPQ were found to have adequate internal consistency, were reliable over time and were not correlated with social desirability" (1980, p. 175). Others have subjected these scales to considerable empirical verification and were found to be both valid and reliable (see, e.g., Rawwas 1996; Lee and Sirgy 1999; Vitell and Paolillo 2004). Participants were requested to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with the job stress and EPQ items. Examples of typical idealism items are "the dignity and welfare of people should be the most important concern in any society" and "one should never psychologically or physically harm another person." The EPQ depicts that a participant who scores high indicates that the participant adheres to high idealism and vice versa.

Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) is used to develop a profile of the respondents and to summarize the variables. In addition, an alpha

coefficient (Cronbach 1951) was computed to assess the reliability of job stress and EPQ. For the better understanding of the relationships among the variables, correlation analysis is performed to generate the correlation matrix. Finally, to test the research hypotheses, multiple regression analysis is used.

Results and findings

Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients, and correlation coefficients

The descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of job stress (time stress and anxiety stress) and the association between ethical ideology and job stress are summarized in Table 1. As shown, the alpha coefficients range from 0.77 to 0.92. The alpha coefficient of idealism, relativism, time stress, and anxiety stress is 0.92, 0.87, 0.87, and 0.85, respectively.

Factor-based validity of questionnaire

Following Reidenbach and Robin (1988) and Cohen et al. (1993), responses were tested with principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation. We retained factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0, and only items loading greater than 0.50 are considered to be included in a factor. The results of a natural factor solution are presented in Table 2. Four factors accounted for 71.4% of the total variance in the data. The first factor accounted for 26.4% of the total variation. The second factor accounted for 18.4% of the variance. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation reveals both the EPQ and job stress to possess reasonable construct validity.

Correlations among items

To further investigate these measures, the item intercorrelations were examined. The correlation matrix of the variables is shown in Table 3. As it can be seen, the measures of ethical ideology and job stress (Table 3) are significant and negatively correlated with each other except idealism. Idealism has been found to have insignificant correlations with time stress, anxiety stress, and total job stress. Hence, hypothesis 1 (H1) will be accepted. Idealism ideology of employees is not significantly related to job stress. This will be the point of further study to investigate the factors, which affect the idealistic employee's job stress. Idealism was found to be negatively correlated with relativism ($r = -0.256$, $p = 0.000$) and positively correlated with overall ethical ideology ($r = 0.607$, $p = 0.000$). Relativism is positively associated with overall ethical ideology, but on the other hand, relativism is negatively correlated with time stress ($r = -0.200$, $p = 0.000$), anxiety stress ($r = -0.278$, $p = 0.000$), and total job stress ($r = -0.300$, $p = 0.000$). In other words, relativism ideology is reducing the stress content of the job. Overall ethical ideology is negatively correlated with total job stress ($r = -0.216$, $p = 0.000$); thus, hypothesis 2 (H2) will be rejected. This is because employees high in relativism are flexible in their ethical values. They appraise values based on their personal values rather than universal values. There are no universally valid moral principles, and so there is no one true morality. All principles and values are relative to a particular culture and age. They believe that the truth

Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
TS1				0.924
TS2				0.899
TS3				0.911
TS4				0.574
AS1			0.851	
AS2			0.734	
AS3			0.766	
AS4			0.754	
AS5			0.787	
I1	0.867			
I2	0.697			
I3	0.708			
I4	0.732			
I5	0.895			
I6	0.643			
I7	0.846			
I8	0.726			
I9	0.804			
I10	0.780			
R1		0.753		
R2		0.800		
R3		0.750		
R4		0.761		
R5		0.721		
R6		0.708		
R7		0.661		
R8		0.745		
R9		0.853		
R10		0.723		

TS time stress-related questions (Jamal and Baba 2000), *AS* anxiety-related questions (Jamal and Baba 2000), *I* idealism-related questions (Forsyth 1980), *R* relativism-related questions (Forsyth 1980)

is relative. Relativistic employees change their ethical values to handle ethical pressure according to the situation, which directly or indirectly benefit them to cope from the stress. The employees who are high in relativism and low in idealism are named as subjectivism (Forsyth 1992). Subjectivist employees are opportunists, they believe in achieving the desired outcome by any means. Subjectivists will be most likely to engage in immoral behavior when the behavior will lead to positive consequences for themselves (Forsyth and Pope 1984). This kind of behavior resembles with Machiavellianism. "Machiavellianism" is a term used to describe individuals who will behave immorally to achieve their

Table 3 Correlations matrix among all variables

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6
Idealism	1 (0.920)					
Relativism	−0.256**	1 (0.877)				
Overall ethical ideology	0.607**	0.613**	1 (0.770)			
Time stress	0.006	−0.200**	−0.159**	1 (0.876)		
Anxiety stress	0.054	−0.278**	−0.184**	0.258**	1 (0.856)	
Total job stress	0.037	−0.300**	−0.216**	0.805**	0.780**	1 (0.830)

1–3, ethical ideology and its dimensions; 4–6, job stressors and its dimensions; reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) in parentheses along the main diagonal; analyses based on $n = 564$

$*p > 0.05$; $**p > 0.01$

own desired ends (McGuire and Hutchings 2006). Studies found that there is a positive relationship between Machiavellianism and relativism (Leary et al. 1986). In other words, the individual who is high in relativism is having the high probability to behave unethically for the desired outcome. It is also evident that Machiavellianism is positively linked with job performance (Gable and Dangello 1994), which reduces the job stress (Halkos and Bousinakis 2010; Adaramola 2011). This gives the opportunity to extend the study on the relationship between the ethical ideology and Machiavellianism.

Multiple regression analysis results

In this study, four regression runs were performed—for total job stress with individual stress dimensions, for example time stress and anxiety stress. The multiple regression analysis results are summarized in Table 4. As each regression model gives consistent findings, the results are discussed for the model with overall job stress as the dependent variable.

As shown in model C of Table 4, the regression model is significant (p value = 0.0001) and has a R^2 value of 0.092 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.88$). That is, 9.2% of the variation in employee's total job stress in an organization can be amicably explained by the variation in their ethical ideologies. Model D of Table 4 indicated that idealism and relativism interacted with each other and predict the job stress. As recommended by Aiken and West (1991), ethical ideology was centered before forming the interaction terms to reduce multicollinearity that is typically associated with regression equations containing interaction terms. Firstly, the regression equation was restructured to represent the regression of job stress on idealism at low and high levels of relativism. Low and high levels of relativism were computed as 1 standard deviation below the mean and 1 standard deviation above the mean, respectively. Then, the simple slopes of the equations were determined. As shown in Fig. 1 and Table 5, there was a negative relationship found between idealism and job stress when relativism was low, and on the other hand, a positive relationship was found at high relativism. In other words, employees with lower relativism had low job stress as compared to those with higher relativism. The interaction between idealism and relativism was significant for total job

Table 4 Results of multiple regression analysis

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Coefficient (β)	t value	p value
A. Time stress				
	Idealism	−0.049	−1.35	0.257
	Relativism	−0.212	−4.96	0.080
Model A		$R^2 = 0.042$; adjusted = 0.039	F value = 12.32	0.000
B. Anxiety stress				
	Idealism	−0.018	−.430	0.667
	Relativism	−0.283	−6.73	0.000
Model B		$R^2 = 0.078$; adjusted = 0.074	F value = 23.57	0.000
C. Total job stress				
	Idealism	−0.042	−1.02	0.308
	Relativism	−0.311	−7.46	0.000
Model C		$R^2 = 0.092$; adjusted = 0.088	F value = 28.26	0.000
D. Total job stress				
	Idealism × relativism	0.181	3.827	0.000
Model D		$R^2 = 0.115$; adjusted = 0.110	F value = 24.182	0.000

stress ($\beta = 0.181$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.110$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, hypothesis 3 (H3) will be accepted. The R^2 level is considered adequate, as the objective of the model is to assess the direction and strength of the association between organizational ethics and job stress. In particular, the negative coefficient indicates that the employees who follow stronger
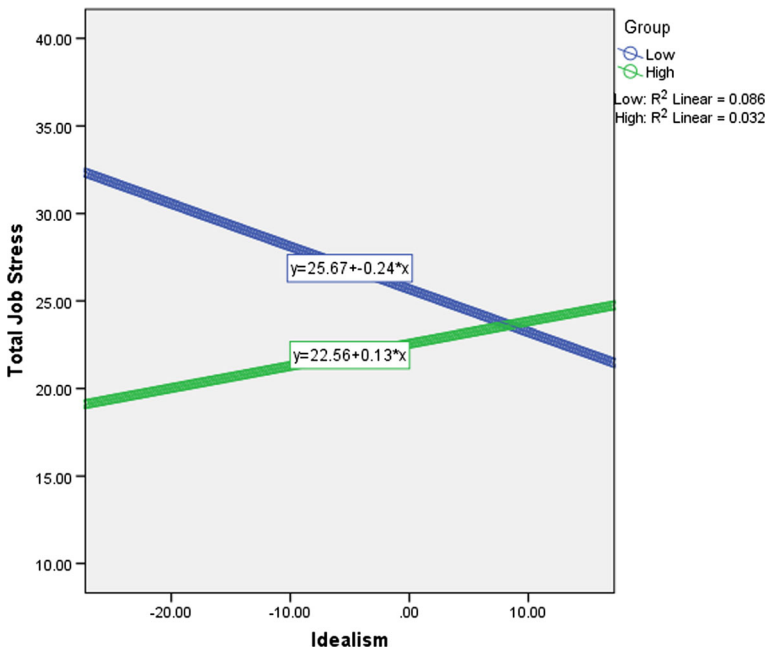

Fig. 1 Interaction between idealism and relativism in predicting total job stress

Table 5 Tests of simple slopes of regression for the interaction between idealism and relativism in the prediction of total job stress

Level of relativism	Simple slope	SE	t
Low	−0.244	0.048	−5.12**
High	0.127	0.042	3.024**

**p < 0.01

ethical ideology are associated with a lower level of job stress in the organization. As shown in models A, B, and C, the p values for *idealism* are 0.257, 0.667, and 0.308, respectively. Therefore, it will be concluded that models A, B, and C are not significant for idealism to predict the individual dimensions of the job stress and total job stress. However, the negative coefficient shows the negative direction of the prediction of a dependent variable. Relativism significantly influences the total job stress ($\beta = -0.311$, $p = 0.000$). In other words, the employees who are high in relativism will adversely influence the job stress in an organization. Therefore, we conclude that overall ethical ideology negatively influences the total job stress in an organization.

Implications of findings

The findings of the present study are interesting and unique in the ethics literature. As shown in this study, employees differ in their job stress level depending on their personal ethical ideology. Correlation analyses indicated that relativism was negatively related to job stress while, on the contrary to prediction, idealism was not significantly correlated to job stress. Regression analysis demonstrated that idealism and relativism interacted to predict total job stress. Employees higher in relativism were more likely to induce job stress when they were higher in idealism and less likely to induce job stress when they were lower in idealism. This is due to the conflict between the idealism and relativism ideologies, which leads to increased job stress. Next, employees who are lower in relativism were less likely to induce job stress when they were higher in idealism and more likely to induce job stress when they were lower in idealism. In other words, absolutists and subjectivists are the best combination of ethical ideologies, in which the least job stress was found. *Absolutists* are highly idealistic but non-relativistic. They believe in universal moral laws and also stress concern for the welfare of others. As highly idealistic individuals, absolutists are also likely to consider issues of justice, fairness, and humanitarianism in their evaluation of ethical issues (Tansey et al. 1994a). Those who score low on idealism but high on relativism are termed "subjectivists." As pragmatists, they are likely to accept that actions that harm others are not always unethical. They are likely to base their ethical judgments, in part, on what they personally stand to gain or lose. In this respect, this ethical ideology is similar to ethical egoism. As relativists, they do not accept universal moral rules as applicable to ethical dilemmas. The ethical ideology seems to be associated with job stress and has important implications. It is found from the present study that individual supports both the dimensions of ethical ideology. However, it depends on the dimension and its strength of the ethical ideology in individual personality, which decides its effectiveness in reducing the job stress. It is noted that

ethical ideology of individual can affect job stress in organizations. Therefore, it is important to favor the ethical ideology in an organization by the management, which influences other employees to behave ethically. Top managers in an organization (Koh and El'Fred 2001) can influence the employees by demonstrating the management support for ethical behavior, organizational ethical climate, and the association between ethical behavior and career success. Thus, by consciously working on these variables, management can reduce job stress among employees and in the workplace by implementing ethical ideologies. In summary, this study demonstrates that certain ethical ideology is associated with employee's job stress. While this does not argue for the superiority of one ideology over another, it indicates that some ideologies are linked to the different dimensions of job stress.

There was an unexpected finding that warrants further discussion. Idealism was not correlated with total job stress, but it interacts with relativism to predict job stress. Although this was contrary to the study hypothesis, this is not surprising. Relativists reject universal moral values according to the situation. On the other hand, idealists always follow the moral values and believe that good outcomes always depend upon good values. Therefore, idealists are not flexible enough according to situation, which might increase the job stress, whereas relativists are adaptive according to the situation, which reduces the job stress. Thus, we can include some situation moderators in the future study in which we might have found the relationship between idealism and job stress.

Previous studies showed that stress had little influence on the people recognition of moral issues; it showed a negative effect on the establishment of a moral intent (Selart and Johansen 2011). Ethical ideology leads to ethical behavior, which increases the organizational commitment (Zhuang et al. 2005; Cullinan et al. 2008); ethical values increase the job satisfaction (Koh and El'Fred 2001; Valentine et al. 2011) and decrease the employee turnover. Therefore, the current findings suggest that ethical ideology can help organizations to imbibe ethical culture in the organization among employees so that directly and indirectly, it will benefit the organization.

On organizational outcomes, the literature suggests that job stress is a psychological and physiological phenomenon that decreases the profitability and productivity of the organization. Increased stress leads to reduced productivity (Halkos and Bousinakis 2010). Due to the stressful job, most of the employees decrease their job performance (Shahid et al. 2012). Therefore, stress in job negatively affects performance and productivity. A significant negative relationship between total work ethics and staff's job stress (Nader and Behrooz 2011) and a positive relation between work ethics and employee's productivity (Ahmadie et al. 2014) were explored. Given the above, an implication of the findings is that ethical ideology is directly and indirectly associated with organizational performance and employee's job stress. Ethical ideology in the organization should be given an emphasis so that every employee in the organization should follow the organizational ethical ideology, which reduces their job stress and increases the productivity. This study finding showed a new path to think about the ethical ideology and its organizational benefits.

To increase the moral and ethical sense, it is suggested to include the ethics-related course in the graduation (Henle 2005; Sims and Keon 1999). Improvements in ethical sensitivity, moral reasoning, and ethical behavior can be achieved by studying such courses (Loe and Weeks 2000; Weber and Glyptis 2000). Interestingly, a study found that ethics education could influence ethical behavior (Mayhew and Murphy 2008, p.

297). The organization can include ethics training in their different professional trainings. The finding of this study will be breathtaking for organizations, which were not included in the ethics of their organization.

Conclusions, limitations, and future research

This study investigates the link between two measures of ethical ideology and job stress perceived by employees of the hotel industry in India. In particular, it investigates the association between job stresses with a higher level of ethical ideology. A questionnaire survey yielded 561 usable responses. The results obtained from multiple regression analysis indicate a significant and negative link between ethical ideology and job stress. This finding implies that individual ethics is one of the tools through which organization can create favorable job attitudes/behaviors and leads to positive organizational outcomes. It also indicates the importance of continued research in this area.

To enhance ethical ideology among the employees in the organization, this study is helpful, in which the effect of ethical ideology on job stress has been examined. The organizational ethics program should go beyond these dimensions. The literature suggests that the code of ethics is one of the most common ways to influence the ethical behavior of an employee in an organization. Based on the results of this study, Indian employees are relativistic as compared to idealistic. Forsyth (1980) proposes that there are two basic dimensions of personal moral philosophy: idealism and relativism. He defines relativism as "the extent to which the individual rejects universal moral rules," whereas idealistic individuals "assume that desirable consequences can, with the 'right' action, always be obtained" (1980, pp. 175–176). In other words, idealistic individuals tend to make use of moral values when making judgments and believe that a morally *right* behavior always leads to the positive and desirable outcome. On the other hand, relativistic individuals tend to reject universal moral rules and believe that undesirable consequences often be mixed according to the situation. This study revealed that Indian employees have not favored the idealistic approach of ethical ideology, but they are relativistic and, consequently, they experienced less stress, which increases the customer's satisfaction in the hotel industry.

In interpreting the findings of the study, the following limitations should be borne in mind. This study is *correlational*. Thus, it gives the opportunity for the researcher to examine the effect in a longitudinal study. A second limitation concerns the sample of employees. Additional research with larger national samples would be necessary to confirm these findings. An individual's ethical perspective could be influenced by geographical and cultural location (Shaub 1994). A third limitation concerns the generalizability of these results. This study was based largely on aggregate measures. However, it opens a line of inquiry on whether these results are valid when only those operating in particular industries are surveyed. A related issue concerns the possible presence of other individual characteristics, e.g., age, gender, and years of business experience that could affect the relationship between the two variables we investigated. For example, it would be important to examine differences between future managers and younger managers with more extensive work experience. Fourth, the variables investigated in the study are not meant to be complete or exhaustive. For example, the dependent variable (i.e., job stress) is only one of the several possible organizational

outcomes. Other variables that future research can focus on include staff motivation, employee's commitment, and organization's culture. Even some sociological dimensions can be studied with reference to ethical ideology and job stress.

Finally, in this concluding section, it is appropriate to suggest some possible directions for future research. The last limitation mentioned above suggests that future research can be extended to cover more organizational outcomes and other measures of business ethics/ethical ideology. Such extensions can add to the existing business ethics literature, especially on the outcomes of ethical ideology in organizations. Future research can also investigate the process mechanisms which answer how ethical ideology affects different organizational outcomes. It is also suggested that this line of research accounts for individual differences in personality and other sociodemographic factors. Further, it is useful to study business ethics in different countries to understand the factors and consequences of ethical behavior from an international and cultural perspective. This issue is likely to gain increased attention by educators and organizational practitioners in the coming years.

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