CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN LOYALTY, MORALITY AND CODES OF ETHICS IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: A NIGERIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY

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Abstract

Negative behaviour within an organisation affects the reputation, and the operations of an organisation. The factors that have an influence on behaviour include morality, ethics and loyalty. With numerous influences on morality and loyalty alike, ethical codes are varying among countries, organisations and individuals. The fluctuating nature of codes of ethics means that organisations working together, which are based in different regions, have different expectations and perceptions of ethics based on the codes of ethics established within their organisations. The results indicated that small business owners in leading African countries (South Africa and Nigeria) have similar views on moral behaviour and concern for ethical misconduct in the workplace.

Keywords: Loyalty, Morality, Ethics, Varying Codes of Ethics, Nigeria, South Africa

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1. Introduction

The successful continuation of a society's existence depends on the reliance of the society's individuals on one another. To ensure a sustainable continued existence, binding elements are necessary within a society to create a trustworthy reliance. Binding any social interaction, are the elements of loyalty, morality and ethics. Without the assurance of a continued reliable social interaction, benefits derived from a reliable social interaction cannot even be partially guaranteed. The societal binding element of loyalty is defined by Uys and Senekal (2008, p. 38-39) as an individual's commitment to people or collectives, whereas morality is the commitment to principles and values or rules of conduct. Commitment is the dedication of an individual to another individual or to a cause, which holds the former individual accountable to the obligation of behaving in a certain manner in their defence of their commitment (Vocabulary.com, 2013).

Loyalties and moralities have shifted from long-term to short-term concepts. The transition from long-term to short-term loyalty is a result of the shift in a dynamic environment whereby loyalties change as individuals' needs change according to the environment (Keiningham, Aksoy and Williams, 2009, p. 3-5). Changing loyalties is evident when individuals turn away from that which is not beneficial to pursue more beneficial avenues. A society that turns away from the reliance on one another for continued existence is known as a disloyal society and becomes a selfish society. Thus, a disloyal society turns its back on the principles by which it has lived by and thereby rejects moral behaviour. Disloyalty and unethical behaviour can lead to a corrupt nature which ultimately negatively affects resources as individuals perform tasks which benefit themselves only (Rune, 2011, p. 1).As morality has numerous influences such as religion, social trends and personal experiences, it is a dynamic individualistic concept (Elçi, Şener and Alpkan, 2011, p. 1368). Morality governs individuals' behaviour and influences how individuals interact in a society and is stipulated according to society's conscience regarding what is perceived as right or wrong (All about Philosophy.org, 2013). As societies' conscience is dynamic, it can thus be considered as short term as it does not remain the same over time.

Social interactions which incorporate loyalty and morality can successfully achieve objects of specific endeavours to benefit individuals and groups alike. In an organisational setting, morality and loyalty make a contribution to the improvement of organisational performance. With the ease of changing employers, there is recognition by organisations to retain their employees and to discourage disloyal behaviour. Those employees that display loyalty improve productivity as they are committed to the organisation and its purpose. Morality in an organisational setting is known as ethics. Ethics strengthens employee satisfaction and organisational commitment thereby influencing and improving productivity (Yee, Teung and Cheng, 2010, p. 110; Brambilla, Sacchi, Pagliaro and Ellemers, 2013, p.812).

Individual differences in loyalty, morality and ethics have an impact on communities, organisations and societies as a whole; therefore a need to explore the influences of loyalty, morality and ethics, as well as the consequences thereof is necessary. This study focuses on the effect that loyalty, morality and ethics have on society and on organisations. The literature review will follow, and subsequent sections on research objectives, research methodology and a discussion of the research findings, recommendations and concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review

The binding elements that stabilises a society's continued existence could include loyalty, morality and ethics. These binding elements will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

Loyalty

A society is judged by the individuals that make up that society. By defining loyalty as "accepting the bonds that our relationships with others entail, and acting in a way that defends and reinforces the attachment inherent in these relationships" (Keiningham et al., 2009, p. 14), and adhering to this definition, society is judged as being ideal. As loyalty has varying levels, different causes will evoke varying levels of loyalty by individuals. Varying levels of loyalty exist as individuals attach importance to certain situations or relationships. In a personal sense, loyalty is the commitment to selected people, or groups within a specific context (Uys and Senekal, 2008, p. 38).

In an organisation, employees' loyalty is important as it influences the daily operations of an organisation and subsequently organisational performance (Linz, Good and Busch, 2013, p. 16). Employee loyalty contributes to improved efficiency, improved organisational results, organisational growth, and reduced employee turnover (Antoncic and Antoncic, 2011, p. 81). Employee loyalty can be improved by employers if they devote to building long-term relationships with employees and satisfying employee needs. Employers can engage in organisational communication, organisational commitment, organisational relationships, intrinsic rewards, desired rewards, employee empowerment, employee training, and demonstrating positive organisational citizenship (Antoncic and Antoncic, 2011, p. 83; Linz et al., 2013, p. 16, p. 33-34) to improve employee loyalty. Consequently, loyal employees demonstrate their satisfaction with the employing organisation by improved productivity through hard work and their commitment to delivering high service quality to customers (Yee, Teung and Cheng, 2010, p. 110). Loyalty plays an important role in binding society and organisational employees, as well as morality which will be discussed in the section below.

Morality

Moral decision making is posited to be influenced by an individual's perspective of a moral code (Kihl, 2007, p. 281; van Goethem, van Hoof, van Aken, Raaimakers, Boom and de Castro, 2012, p. 510). Morality takes on three principle meanings (Elçi et al., 2011, p. 1368; Gert, 2011):

• The first meaning of morality is the code of conduct that distinguishes between right and wrong, defined by an accumulation of an individual's experiences, religious beliefs and society influences.

Morality is a social endeavour that involves consideration of fellow individuals to avoid harm in a social situation (Kihl, 2007, p. 284). As many environments and social situations influence morality there are therefore many different types of morality such as personal morality, professional morality, legal morality or religious morality. Thus, there are many different moral considerations which are merely a reflection of human life intricacies which includes many different experiences (Kihl, 2007, p. 285). The amalgamation of similar daily experiences result in individuals basing their identification with a given group (Brambilla, Sacchi, Pagliaro and Ellemers, 2013, p. 812) and applying different morality types to the relevant social situation.

The second meaning of morality refers to judgements made based on an idealistic code of conduct that is absolute. Although a true moral dilemma, occurs when two equally feasible and demanding moral options are presented to an individual or group in a given situation, when one moral option appears to be more dominating in moral value, then it will cancel out the opposing moral option thereby eliminating the moral dilemma (Uys and Senekal, 2008, p. 39).

• The third meaning of morality is identical to that of ethics, which is considered as the philosophical study of morality (Elçi et al., 2011, p. 1368; Gert, 2011). Based on the third meaning of morality the

following section will discuss ethics in an organisational setting.

Code of Ethics in Organisations

Ethics is a collection of moral principles and values that establish an appropriate conduct for both individuals and organisations (Crumpton, 2012, p. 49). Where morality is a personal understanding of the rules of conduct, ethics include the rules of conduct recognised in a given situation by society (Palese, 2013, p. 75). An organisational code of ethics is defined by Langlois and Schlegelmilch (in Sharbatoghlie, Mosleh and Shokatian; 2012, p. 677) as "a statement setting down corporate principles, ethics, rules of conduct, codes of practice or company philosophy concerning responsibility to employees, shareholders, consumers, the environment, or any other aspects of society external to the company". Ethics also serves to manage the risks in order to prevent harm coming to the organisation despite individual employees' belief or standards (Crumpton, 2012, p. 49-50).

An organisation's commitment to ethical behaviour is evident when a code of ethics is in existence Sharbatoghlie, et al., 2012, p. 676). Owing to an organisation adopting a code of ethics, it can positively affect the ethical actions and behaviours within an organisation, especially if training is provided to employees to behave ethically (Svensson and Wood, 2011, p. 26, p. 31). The existence of a code of ethics may be to satisfy a number of reasons such as (McDonald, 2009, p. 344):

"Ensuring legal compliance and other statutory requirements;

Providing a guide for behaviour and formalised expectations;

Protecting and enhancing organisational reputation;

Ensuring employee, management and supplier compliance and minimising risk;

Ensuring consistency across global networks;

Creating and maintaining trust and confidence with stakeholders; and

Communicating principles and commitments to stakeholders."

As there are many various reasons to adopt codes of ethics which are not all altruistic, so are there many various codes of ethics as different governments, organisations and associations have influence on what is considered as ethical behaviour. Variations in codes of ethics will be discussed below.

Variations in codes of ethics

Ethical expectations and perceptions vary between organisations, the marketplace, society and ultimately across countries, since codes of ethics structures and development thereof are dependent on the environment in which the organisation operates (Svensson and Wood, 2011, p. 25; Sharbatoghlie et al., 2012, p. 676-677). The code of ethics' content represents principles and values specific to an organisation as well as to the environment in which the organisation operates (Potocan and Mulej, 2009, p. 596). Thus, the content of the codes of ethics depend on the cultural differences at different time sections for one organisation due to the changes in an environment. Not only do cultural changes influence ethics, but also the origins of ethics, type of industry, environmental changes, social events, economic and regulatory changes.

Organisations' main function is to create a profit, thus it is understandable that codes of ethics have been criticised for being conflicting between organisational profits and societal ethical demands (McDonald, 2009, p. 352). Going against the first priority of an organisation to make profit is the 'fairness bias' which states that people are 'instinctively motivated to do the right thing' (Kaden, Linda and Prince, 2012, p. 99). The question arises whether individuals can feel a sense of guilt when incidental inequalities occur if their loyalty is to themselves and beneficial avenues that may subsequently create the inequalities.

Additionally, problems arise in the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the international values underpinning codes (McDonald, 2009, p. 352). Variations of codes of ethics are evident in research conducted in Europe, Canada and America and Egypt. Variations include individualism and uncertainty, avoidance appears to be positively associated with organisation's code of ethics whereas masculinity and per distance is negatively related to the code of ethics (Sharbatoghlie et al., 2012, p. 678). For instance, in the Chinese business environment, a concept known as "guanxi" exists, which is the social relationship where individuals are morally bound by an unspoken agreement of reciprocal favours. Additionally, Chinese management fraud was prolific due to inexperience with modern business practices and a lack of agreement on business ethics as a result of the history of changing values (Cohen, Pant, and Sharp, 2002, p. 17). Similarly in Arab countries, "wasta" is the "intervention of a patron in favour of a client in attempt to obtain privileges or resources from a third party" (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011, p. 412). The differences in ethics create an environment whereby codes of ethics vary in business across country lines.

An additional concern is that organisations merely utilise codes of ethics as a canvas for ideal ethical behaviour which the organisation is not able to fully adopt as the practices within the organisation are not geared to fully adopt and perform ethical codes of conduct (McDonald, 2009, p. 352).

Environmental influences are evident in organisation's adoption of codes of ethics in an attempt to comply with legal requirements (McDonald, 2009, p. 345), the study will therefore investigate the ethical differences from one region to

the next and the resulting effect on the loyalty of employees.

3. Research Objectives

The main aim of the current study was to determine the existence of varying loyalty, morality and codes of ethics from one country to another and the extent of the differences. From the literature review it is evident that various factors influence the individual's loyalty towards an individual, as well as an individual's moral values. Based on a personal and professional situation, an individual's reaction to a dilemma can be determined on the commitment to people and principles.

4. Research Methodology

A questionnaire was designed and distributed to numerous business owners/employees to solicit their perception on several issues of business ethics in the workplace. A random sample of 72 respondents was drawn from various small business enterprises in South Africa and Nigeria.

The questionnaire attempts to address the following perceptions of respondents:

- The extent of moral behaviour in the workplace
- The concern of ethical dilemmas/misconduct in the workplace

The South African perception will be compared to that of Nigeria's perception, in order to determine the extent of uniformity and differences in African countries.

Moral behaviour in the workplace was measured with ten statements to which respondents could respond on a 7-point Likert scale which varied from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". An overall score was determined for the construct "Moral Behaviour" for each respondent and the variation in perceptions was established. The reliability analysis was to determine the internal consistency of the items that constitute the construct yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.760. This Alpha value represents acceptable consistency and relationship between the

items. An overall theme or construct could therefore be represented by the items.

The concern for ethical dilemmas/misconduct was also measured with ten statements on a 7-point Likert scale which varied from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". An overall mean score for the construct "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" was determined for each respondent and a variation in these perceptions was established. The reliability analysis was to determine the internal consistency of the items that constitute the construct yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.973 This Cronbach's alpha value represents acceptable consistency and relationship between the items. An overall theme or construct could therefore be represented by the items.

The internal consistency by which the statements measured the constructs "Moral behaviour" and "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" was adequate.

Research findings

Comparison of perceptions of Business Ethics between South African and Nigerian small business owners.

As the leading economies in African countries, South African and Nigerian small business owners were compared based on their perceptions of Business Ethics. These comparisons are based upon measurements of "Moral Behaviour" and the concern for "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" in the workplace.

Comparisons will include distributions of samples of each country to establish whether the means and variations in the distributions are statistically equal. Included will be correlations and a best linear fit between moral behaviour and ethical dilemmas/misconduct.

Moral Behaviour

A mean score for "Moral Behaviour" was calculated from eight Likert items for each of the respondents on this topic. These scores were measured for the whole sample which included South African and Nigerian respondents of the survey. The following table and figures present descriptive statistics and distributions for each country separately:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for South Africa and Nigeria on "Moral Behaviour"

South Africa	
Descriptive statistics	
Parameter	Value
Mean	4.724
Std Dev	0.9772
Std Err Mean	0.1701
Upper 95% Mean	5.07
Lower 95% Mean	4.377
N	33

Nigeria	
Descriptive statistics	
Parameter	Value
Mean	4.901
Std Dev	1.1338
Std Err Mean	0.1816
Upper 95% Mean	5.268
Lower 95% Mean	4.533
N	39

There seems to be no difference between the means and variations for the two countries for the construct "Moral Behaviour". The distribution of the mean scores is indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of moral behaviour scores

From the above table and figure, there seems to be no difference in the measurement of moral behaviour between the two countries.

A t-test was conducted between the mean scores for the independent samples of the measurement of "Moral Behaviour" between respondents of South Africa and Nigeria. A t-test compares the mean scores between two continuous variables. In this case the variables are the mean scores of moral behaviour for South Africa and Nigeria respectively. The test is conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. The following figure and table summarises these differences:

Figure 2. T-test comparison of moral behaviour between South Africa and Nigeria
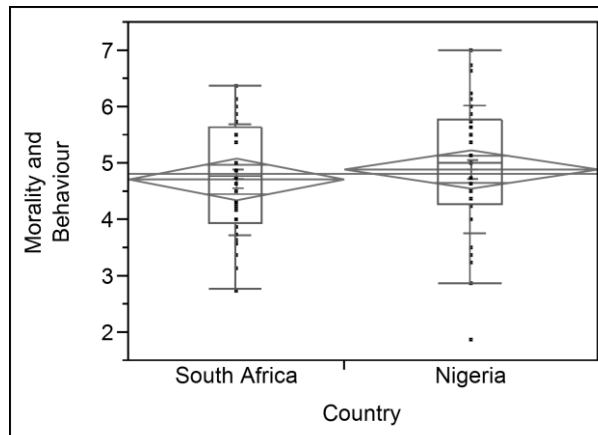
The box-plots and diamond plots above provide a visual comparison of the means medians, standard deviations and interquartile ranges of the scores for moral behaviour between South Africa and Nigeria. The result of the t-test is tabulated below:

Table 2. T-test comparison of moral behaviour between South Africa and Nigeria

Level	Number	Mean	StdDev	Std Err Mean	t-Ratio	p-value
South Africa	33	4.724	0.9772	0.1701	0.7025	0.7577
Nigeria	39	4.901	1.1338	0.1816		

The results indicate that there is no difference in mean scores for moral behaviour between South Africa and Nigeria. (t-Ratio=0.7025, DF=1, p-value=0.7577).***Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct in the workplace.***

A mean score for ethical dilemmas/misconduct in the workplace was calculated from nine Likert items for each of the respondents on this topic. These scores were measured for the whole sample which included South African and Nigerian respondents of the survey. The following table and figures present descriptive statistics and distributions for each country separately:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and distribution for South Africa and Nigeria

South Africa	
Descriptive statistics	
Parameter	Value
Mean	4.511
StdDev	1.5494
Std Err Mean	0.2697
Upper 95% Mean	5.060
Lower 95% Mean	3.961
N	33

Nigeria	
Descriptive statistics	
Parameter	Value
Mean	4.831
StdDev	1.8477
Std Err Mean	0.2997
Upper 95% Mean	5.438
Lower 95% Mean	4.223
N	38

There seems to be no difference between the means and variations about the means for the two countries for the construct "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct". The distribution of the mean scores is indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 3.** Distribution of ethical dilemmas/misconduct scores
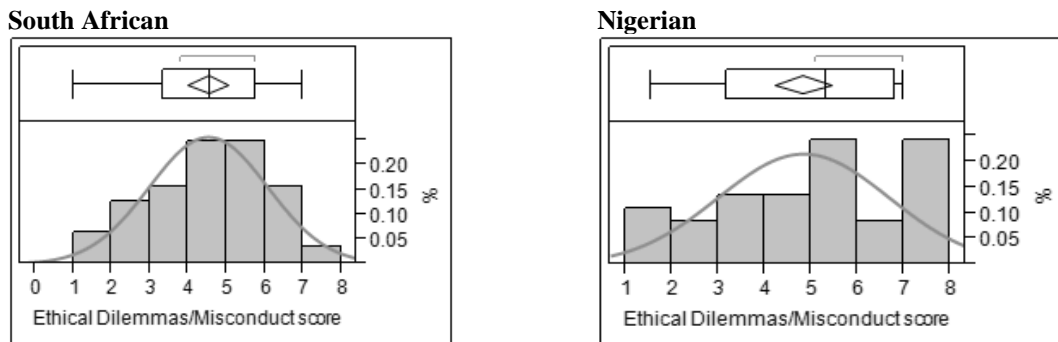
The mean scores for "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" for respondents in Nigeria appear non-normally distributed with a greater dispersion around the mean value.

A t-test (assuming normality of distributions) and a Mann-Whitney U-test (no assumptions regarding normality) was conducted between the mean scores for the independent samples of the measurement of "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" between respondents of South Africa and Nigeria.

A t-test compares the mean scores between two continuous variables and the Mann-Whitney U-test compares the ranked scores of these variables. In this case the variables are the mean scores of "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" for South Africa and Nigeria respectively. The test is conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. The following figure and table summarises these differences:

Figure 4. Comparison of ethical dilemmas/misconduct between South Africa and Nigeria
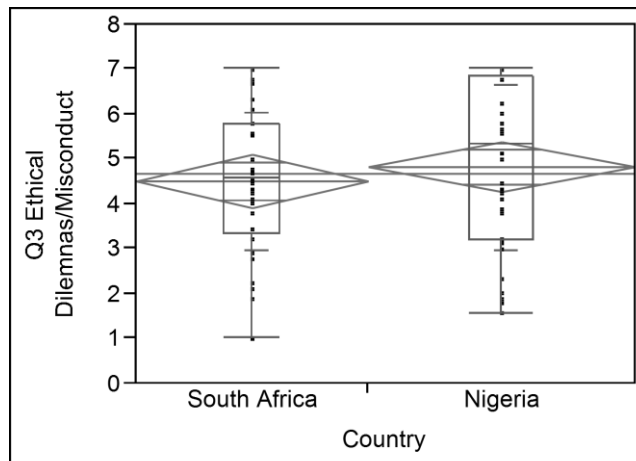
Table 4. T-test comparison of ethical dilemmas/misconduct between South Africa and Nigeria

Level	N	Mean	StdDev	Std Err Mean	t-Ratio	p-value	Chi-Sq value	p-value
South Africa	33	4.511	1.5493	0.2987	0.7936	0.4301	0.8119	0.3676
Nigeria	38	4.831	1.8477	0.2783				

The results indicate that there is no difference in mean scores for ethical dilemmas/misconduct between South Africa and Nigeria – parametric test: (t-Ratio=0.7025, DF=1, p-value=0.7577) and non-parametric test: (Chi-Square value=0.8119, DF=1, p-value=0.3676).***Correlations between the constructs***

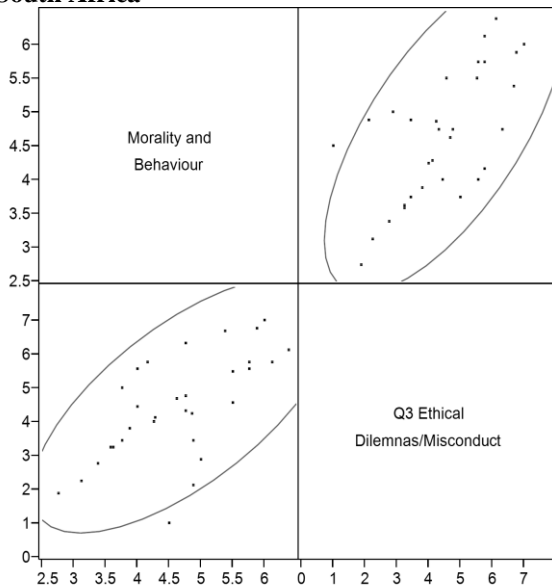***"Moral Behaviour" and "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct"***

The following table and scatterplots provide the correlations between the constructs for each of the participating countries.

Table 5. Multivariate correlations - "Moral Behaviour" and "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct for South Africa and Nigeria
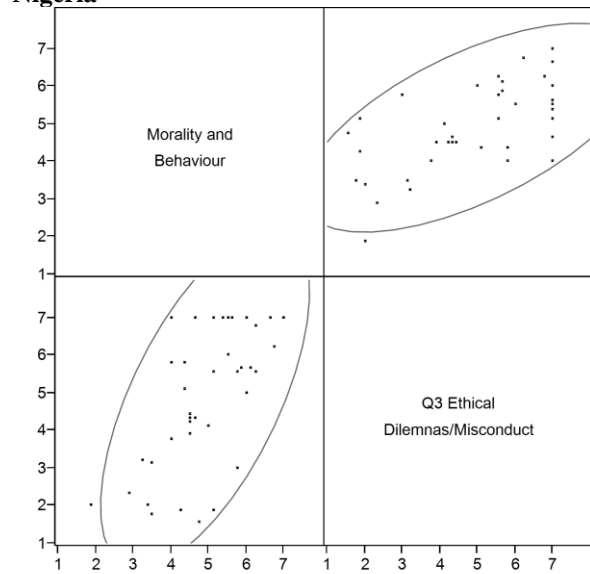
Multivariate Correlations				
Construct	Moral Behaviour (SA)	Ethical Dilemmas/ Misconduct (SA)	Moral Behaviour (Nigeria)	Ethical Dilemmas/ Misconduct (Nigeria)
Moral Behaviour	1	0.6765	1	0.6334
Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct	0.6765	1	0.6334	1

**Figure 5.** Scatter plot matrix: "Morality and Behaviour" and "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" for South Africa and Nigeria

From the results above it is apparent that South Africa and Nigeria have similar positive linear correlations between these constructs. The following plots display linear relationships between the constructs. The plots of the linear relationships of the two countries are overlaid to present the comparison.

Figure 6. Bivariate fit of "Moral Behaviour" by "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" for South Africa and Nigeria
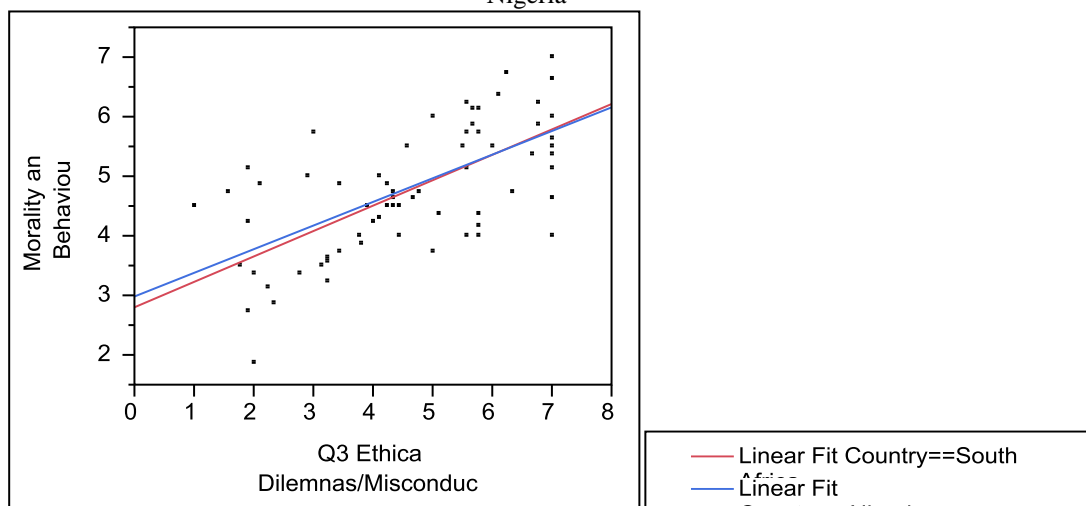
In regression, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) consists of calculations that provide information about levels of variability within a regression model and form a basis for tests of significance. The South African model has an F statistics (or ratio) of $F_{1,69} = 26.16$ with an accompanying significance level < 0.0001. The Nigerian model has an F statistics (or ratio) of $F_{1,69} = 24.76$ with an accompanying significance level < 0.0001. These indicate that the models are significant at the 99% level of significance. From the straight lines for each country above, there is no real difference between the model for South Africa and the model for Nigeria.

The prediction model derived is thus:

o South Africa: Moral Behaviour=2.7989 + 0.4267 * Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct and

o Nigeria: Moral Behaviour=2.9803 + 0.3969 * Ethical Dilemmas/MisconductThe goodness of fit measure for the best linear fits are R^2=46% for South Africa and R^2=41% for Nigeria.

The following table presents the parameter estimates and a measure of their significance.

Table 6. Model parameter estimates on "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" intercepts for South Africa and Nigeria

Term	Estimate	Std Error	t-Ratio	Prob>|t|
South Africa				
Intercept	2.7989	0.3972	7.05	<.0001
Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct	0.4266	0.0834	5.11	<.0001
Nigeria				
Intercept	2.9803	0.4119	7.24	<.0001
Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct	0.3969	0.0798	4.98	<.0001

All the parameters are significant at the 0.01 level of significance.

Conclusion

The focus of this research was to determine the existence of varying loyalty, morality and codes of ethics from one country to another and the extent of the differences. As loyalty is defined as "accepting the bonds that our relationships with others entail, and acting in a way that defends and reinforces the attachment inherent in these relationships" (Keiningham et al., 2009, p. 14), it relates to behaving acceptably. Morality is a practical knowledge base which is applied to situations in distinguishing between right and wrong and simultaneously being able to apply the relevant moral type to the specific situation (Kihl, 2007, p. 288). In an organisational setting, morality becomes ethics, as an organisation's adherence to a collection of moral principles and values (Crumpton, 2012, p. 49). As morality, and subsequently ethics, is influenced by the environment there is no international standard for a code of ethics. If there is no standard manner in which to behave without causing harm to another in a social setting, then there cannot be a guarantee that individuals and organisations will act in a way that reinforces the relationships with other individuals and organisations.

The study reveals that various behavioural aspects (moral issues) can be clustered as a single construct or theme "Moral Behaviour". The consistency and relationship between the items yield a Cronbach alpha of 0.76. It is also clear that ethical issues can be clustered into a single theme "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct". The consistency and relationship between the ethical dilemma items yield a Cronbach alpha of 0.95.

In comparing the constructs of South Africa and Nigeria the study reveals that:

- The distributions for South African and Nigerian mean scores are similar and reasonably normal for the construct "Moral Behaviour".
- The distributions for South African and Nigerian mean scores are dissimilar for the construct "Ethical Dilemmas/Misconduct" with the Nigerian scores non-normal and more widely spread. This indicates less agreement for this construct among Nigerians.
- A t-test between South African mean scores and Nigerian mean scores yielded no difference for the constructs "Moral Behaviour" and "Ethical Misconduct".
- The relationship between moral behaviour and concern for ethical misconduct in the workplace is very similar for South Africa and Nigeria. Their correlations are 0.6765 and 0.6334 respectively.

Small business owners in the South Africa and Nigeria have similar views on business ethics in the workplace. Although small business owners in African countries may share the same views moral behaviour and concern for ethical misconduct in the workplace, ethical business practices are dependent on the actions and behaviour of employees who require the relevant structures and processes to support ethical conduct (Svensson and Wood, 2011, p. 31).

Thus, it is advised that the organisations implement ethical codes of conduct, provide training for employees and continue to communicate and embrace ethical behaviour especially by the leaders within an organisation (Crumpton, 2012, p. 52).

In the words of Confucius (Analects of Confucius in Wu, 2012, p. 285) "Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law and punishment and they will avoid wrong doing but will have no sense of honour and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety and they will have a sense of shame and moreover, set themselves right".

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