

# A Review of Research on the Professional Ethics of Managers

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Today, ethics is recognized as one of the most important variables in the success of organizations and the rule of professional ethics is able to significantly help the organization to reduce tensions and achieve goals, and therefore having professional ethics in organizations as a There is a competitive advantage. On the other hand, the role of ethics in actions and behaviors, in decisions and choices, and in attitudes and communications is important and decisive. If moral values are not internalized in a society and its organizations, neither the law nor the efforts and measures of the government nor any other tools and mechanisms will function. The purpose of this study was to review international scientific productions in the field of professional ethics of managers.

**Material and Methods:** This study follows the interpretive paradigm and was conducted by systematic review method. Using the search terms defined in the web of science database in the title of the articles and in the period from 1955 to 2022, the published researches in the field of professional ethics of the managers were examined and the articles that meet the entry and exit criteria were selected and the case information The need to achieve the objectives of the research was extracted and scientifically researched using VOSviewer software version 1.6.11, which is software in the field of scientometrics.

**Conclusions:** The most research on professional ethics of managers is related to 2019, and the United States, United Kingdom and Australia have the highest number of researches, respectively, and Iranian writers have the least contact with other countries.

**Keywords:** Professional Ethics, Mental Health, Systematic Review, Scientometrics

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## INTRODUCTION

Managers and employees of organizations to perform their organizational affairs, in addition to organizational and legal criteria need a set of ethical and value guidelines, which help them in organizational behaviors and practices and a kind of coordination and unity of procedure in moving towards the collective desirable way and make public accessible to them. The ethical level of the organization to place core values such as; Trustworthiness refers to non-discrimination, honesty, mutual trust, justice, respect for the rights of the organization's stakeholders and taking into account the interests of the stakeholders within the policies, programs, actions and decisions [1]. To make a favorable decision, one must be able to predict the value of each of the possible outcomes that will be achieved after the decision is made, and implicitly compare these values with a quantitative scale and the probability of success,

which is always the case. Decision making is an integral part of management and is evident in every management task; in determining the policies of the organization, in formulating the goals, the design of the organization, selection, evaluation and in all management practices, decision making is the main component and essential element [2]. Happiness or misery of a society depends on management techniques. If managers are selected based on merits, skills, commitments and responsibilities and the management structure is based on moral virtues, it will bring good luck to the society in contrast to such a management style. It is in the interest of the individual and the group that managements, which see the position of management as a prey for the satisfaction of profit-oriented desires, bring misery and failure to society and cannot meet the demands and expectations of the people. The right of human beings to reach the stage of

objectivity and action. In this case, the field of management loses its health and efficiency and as a destructive pest in society, it breaks the structures of growth and development, destroys human relations and manifests in the pillars of government and society [3].

Professional ethics is a logical thinking process that aims to understand what values should be maintained and disseminated in an organization. Professional ethics also includes a set of accepted ethical actions and responses that provide desirable social relationships for their members in professional duties [4, 5]. In other words, it is a kind of moral commitment and conscientiousness towards any kind of work, duty and responsibility. Although professional ethics is essential in all jobs, it is very important in management [4].

Today, the observance of professional ethics by managers is considered as one of the most important variables in the success of organizations. In recent decades, managers of organizations have realized the importance of injecting professional ethics into the vital arteries of organizations and now they are well aware that the element of ethics is one of the factors of organizational stability and achieving its ultimate goals. Also, one of the most basic principles of creating healthy and effective communication among the employees of organizations is the observance of the principles of professional ethics by the managers of organizations. But in today's world due to the increasing development of technology and extensive communication in the virtual environment and lack of attention to the spiritual and spiritual dimensions of man and lack of familiarity with the principles and techniques of management and professional behavior, many ethical principles have been neglected among managers and their lack of attention to ethical standards has caused many problems in organizations. However, if the principles or values of professional ethics are widely used among the employees of the organization and the behavior of managers is based on the correct professional principles, organizational success will increase and also will be effective on the mental health of employees and their behavior [5].

On the other hand, it is possible that due to the difficulty and problems of the activity, managers face moral conflicts, so it is feared that this will lead to job stress in employees and ultimately their ability to make the right decisions and mental health will be disrupted. When managers' ability to make ethical, correct, and human-based decisions is disrupted, employees are faced with ethical riddles in the workplace and are forced to move in the opposite direction to their ethical beliefs or the

ethical beliefs that govern their workplace. This is very challenging for the organization and for them. Because following the failure to perform a proper moral act, contrary to its correct diagnosis, a feeling of mental imbalance and mental health disorder is created in employees. In such a situation, the mental health disorder of employees manifests itself in the form of anxiety, failure, feelings of worthlessness, anger and depression [6, 7]. In all occupations, work stress must be prevented from affecting the psyche of its employees; Of course, mental health depends on how people think, feel and act. People with mental health have a positive attitude towards life and are ready to deal with life problems and feel good about themselves and others [8]. If moral values are observed in an organization, the human resources of that organization will be loyal to the organizational values and want to maintain membership in the organization, and with all their efforts, they will work beyond the status specified in the job description. Increasing productivity and efficiency, improving quality, organizational health and preventing corruption are among the most important effects of professional ethics [9]. Most attitudes and behaviors of managers and employees are influenced by ethical values and are rooted in ethics. Ignorance of work ethic at the management level causes great problems for the organization. Lack of attention of managers to work ethic and non-observance of ethical principles in dealing with the organization's human resources, endangers the legitimacy of the organization and calls into question its activities [10].

Professional ethics is a branch of ethics that causes balance and agreement between two material and immaterial dimensions in human beings. Each set has ethical codes appropriate to its professional structure, which is called professional ethics. Professional ethics addresses the ethical issues, principles, and values that govern a professional system of etiquette and practice when conducting professional work. Characteristics of professional ethics include interpersonal skills, definite acceptance of the task, initiative and reliability [11].

Recognizing the characteristics of professional ethics to solve specific problems and issues faced by the managers of the organization provides professionals in determining appropriate action. Implementation of professional ethics issues by managers is essential because they make wise, informed and rational decisions in areas of work such as training and development, performance appraisal and reward, recruitment, payroll system, service compensation, career development and promotion planning, labor relations management, leaving the service, retirement, etc. can guarantee the

long-term benefits of the organization [12]. Today, the observance of professional ethics by managers is considered as one of the most important variables in the success of organizations. In recent decades, managers of organizations have increasingly realized the importance of injecting professional ethics into the vital arteries of organizations and now are well aware that the element of ethics as one of the factors of organizational stability and achieving its ultimate goals. Also, one of the most basic principles of creating healthy and effective communication among the employees of organizations is the observance of the principles of professional ethics by the managers of organizations. But in today's world, due to the increasing development of technology and extensive communication in the virtual environment and lack of attention to the spiritual and spiritual dimensions of human beings and lack of familiarity with the principles and techniques of management and professional behavior, many ethical principles have been neglected among managers. And their lack of attention to ethical standards has caused many problems in organizations. However, if the principles or values of professional ethics are widely used among the employees of the organization and the behavior of managers is based on sound professional principles, organizational success will increase. Because the discussion of identifying the factors of professional ethics of managers to improve the mental health of employees can be helpful. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the professional ethics of managers with a systematic approach.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method of the present study is based on the interpretive paradigm and is fundamental in terms of orientation, because it seeks to find the intellectual paradigm of international researchers in the field of factors of professional ethics of managers. The approach of the present study is inductive because it reaches from the component to the whole. In this study, the researchers systematically reviewed all the research articles published in the web of science database on the professional ethics of managers, which ranged from 1955 to 2022 and analyzed the information using VOSviewer software version 1.6.11. This software is used for clustering and illustration of topics as well as co-occurrence analysis of words and drawing the structure of scientific fields; This software can also be used to examine the relationship between authors, organizations and countries in the field. To search for and obtain research articles published in the web of science database

on the terms of professional ethics of managers and related factors to obtain maximum sensitivity (a criterion for obtaining maximum relevant evidence) and minimum irrelevance (a criterion for achieving to minimize irrelevant evidence) and improve the validity of the research, the operators AND, OR, NOT and search strategy in the subject were used as follows: Professional ethics and managers

“Article & Review” was also selected in the article type section. Thus, considering the above, 311 articles were obtained in the web of science database. These articles were screened based on the scientific judgment of the researchers in three stages, which shows the number one diagram of the screening process and the transfer of preliminary studies to the final analysis.

## DISCUSSION

After searching, screening and qualitative evaluation of articles during the scientific screening process to achieve the highest number of articles related to the research objectives, at the end of the final review was performed on 311 articles. The following is a comprehensive analysis of the most important authors and countries along with repetitive keywords in the form of scientific mapping using VOSviewer software.

H-index is a measure for ranking a scientist or researcher that shows two variables of his productivity and scientific effectiveness; This index is calculated according to the articles of a scientist or researcher and the number of times references to those articles by other scientists; This index can be used to measure the productivity and effectiveness of a scientific journal as well as a group of scientists such as scientists of a group, university or country. This index was created in 2005 by a physicist named George E. Hirsch was introduced, and the Hirsch index is sometimes called the Hirsch number. The method of calculating the H-index is that when a researcher has a H-index of 10, it means that he has published 10 articles, which have been cited at least 10 times in other articles; Thus, the H-index shows both the number of articles and the number of citations for each article. This index has a good performance for comparing scientists active in a common field and is a criterion for comparing the scientific strength of researchers in that field. In the present study, out of all 311 articles published by different authors, according to the report of the web of science H-index index 48, which shows the scientific validity of the research conducted on the subject of professional ethics of managers.

The citation index (Jorge E. Hirsch) or citation means that other researchers use the contents of an article in

such a way that the more citations and references to the sources and contents of the articles, the more the citation index of the article increases. The citation or use of an author's scientific material by another author who has referred to it in some form in his or her article or book indicates the high credibility of that article. Increasing referencing and referring to a researcher is also directly related to increasing that researcher's index. The average citation per item in the present study, according to the web of science database, is 28.32, which means that on average, each of these articles has been cited more than 28 times by other researchers. The contents of each of them have been used in more than 28 other articles; Considering that 8806 articles have cited these 311 articles a total of 7695 times, it can be said that the researches conducted in the field of professional ethics of managers have a high credibility.

Analysis of research conducted by subject area:

According to the report of web of science database about the articles studied in this research, which were published in the years 1955 to 2022, out of 311 articles, the top ten subject areas are presented in the table below by number of articles. Statistics show that about 51% of articles are published in the field of ethics and the variety of articles in the field of business, management and social sciences highlights the importance of discussing ethics in the field of management and business and shows that researchers The field of ethics has also paid attention to the discussion of professional ethics of managers, and fortunately, scientific attention in this regard is promising. It can be argued that the growing importance of the professional ethics of managers has led researchers in this field to come to the aid of managers in this industry and have conducted experimental research in this field.

**Table 1.** Top Ten Subject Areas of Professional Ethics Research for Managers

| Row | Subject Area         | Published Articles | Percentage of Articles Published in each Field Compared to a Total |
|-----|----------------------|--------------------|--|
| 1   | Ethics               | 159                | 51.12%   |
| 2   | Business             | 129                | 41.47%   |
| 3   | Management           | 48                 | 15.43%   |
| 4   | Social sciences      | 22                 | 7.07%  |
| 5   | Environmental health | 17                 | 5.46%  |
| 6   | Psychology           | 9                  | 2.89%  |
| 7   | Public management    | 9                  | 2.89%  |
| 8   | Economic             | 8                  | 2.57%  |
| 9   | Social issues        | 7                  | 2.51%  |
| 10  | Social activities    | 7                  | 2.51%  |



**Figure 1.** The Process of Publishing Articles by Year in the Field of Professional Ethics of Managers

Analysis of research based on the year of publication of articles

As shown in the chart below, the results of the analysis of articles in the web of science database show that during the years 1955 to 2022, the trend of research and growth

of scientific products on the professional ethics of managers has been increasing and the number of articles in this field in 2014 The slowdown was accompanied by significant growth again since 2015. In other words, the analysis of the published research shows that 2019 is the



most important year of research in the field of professional ethics of managers and researchers in this year more than any other year (24 articles) have published their research. After 2015, in the following years, the growing trend in publishing articles in this field continues and shows the research interests of scientists in this field. The growth of scientific research in a field often occurs due to the emphasis of governments and societies or the scientific need to apply

the knowledge of researchers in practice. Focusing on the professional ethics of managers will create a bright future for the industry.

Analysis of research based on the most important authors

Figure 2 shows a list of ten top authors on the professional ethics of managers; Table 1 is sorted by the number of articles by these authors.

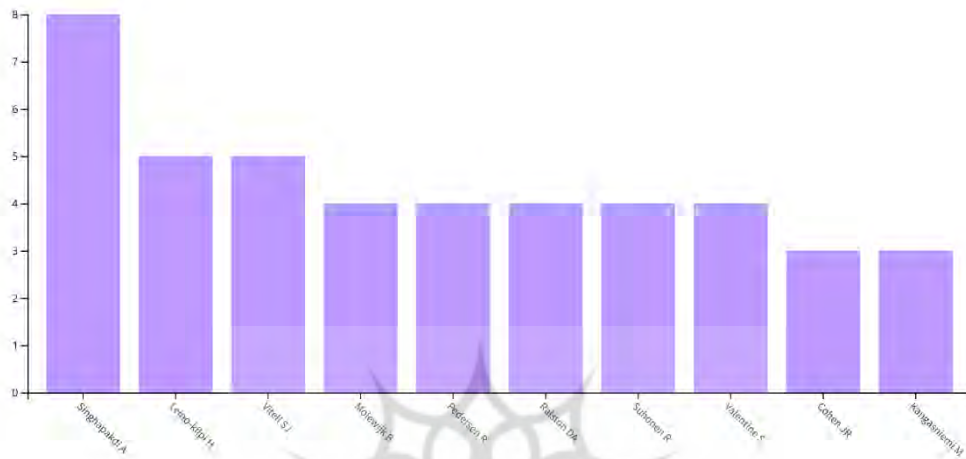


Figure 2. Top Authors in the Field of Professional Ethics of Managers

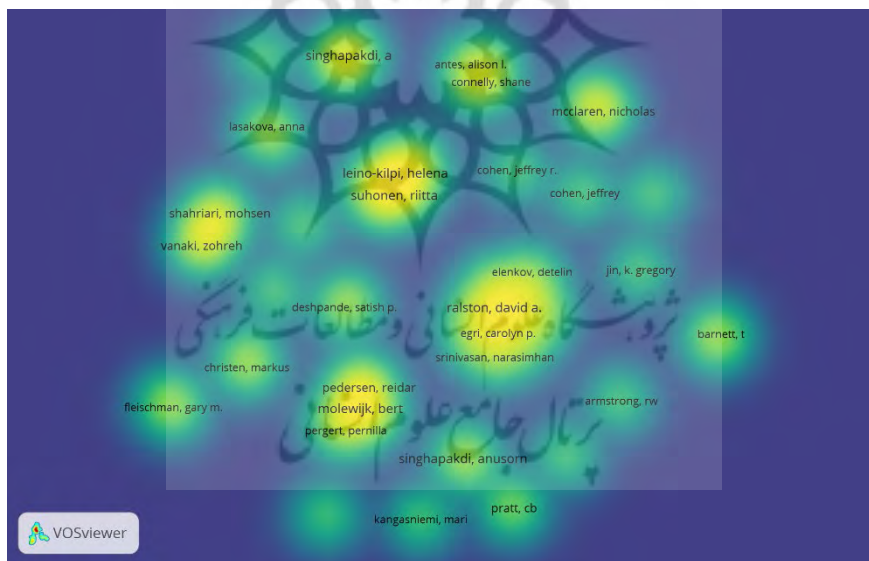


Figure 3. Collaboration Density Map in Writing between Authors

In addition, the scatter among the authors in the graphic map indicates an almost inappropriate and insufficient coordination between the authors in the field of research in the field of study. This can be clearly seen in the density map of Figure 3. Although there are no hotspots in this map, there is a relatively similar density between the authors. Therefore, if more and more extensive studies are done with more communication with authors and provide the ground for communication, coordination and more research activities between

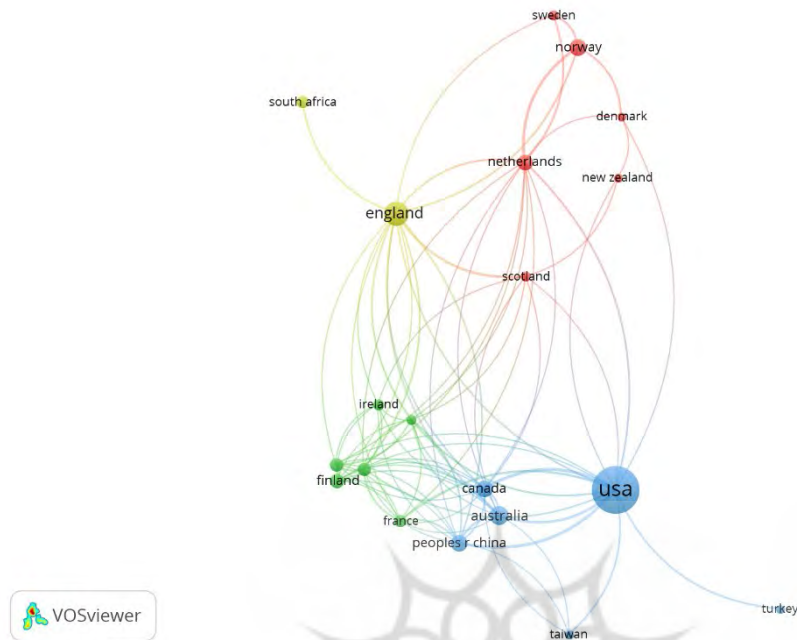
universities and research centers between different authors, as well as researchers consider citing and citing each other's works, we can finally, achieved more dense plans and strengthened the communication power in the network.

Analysis of research conducted by country

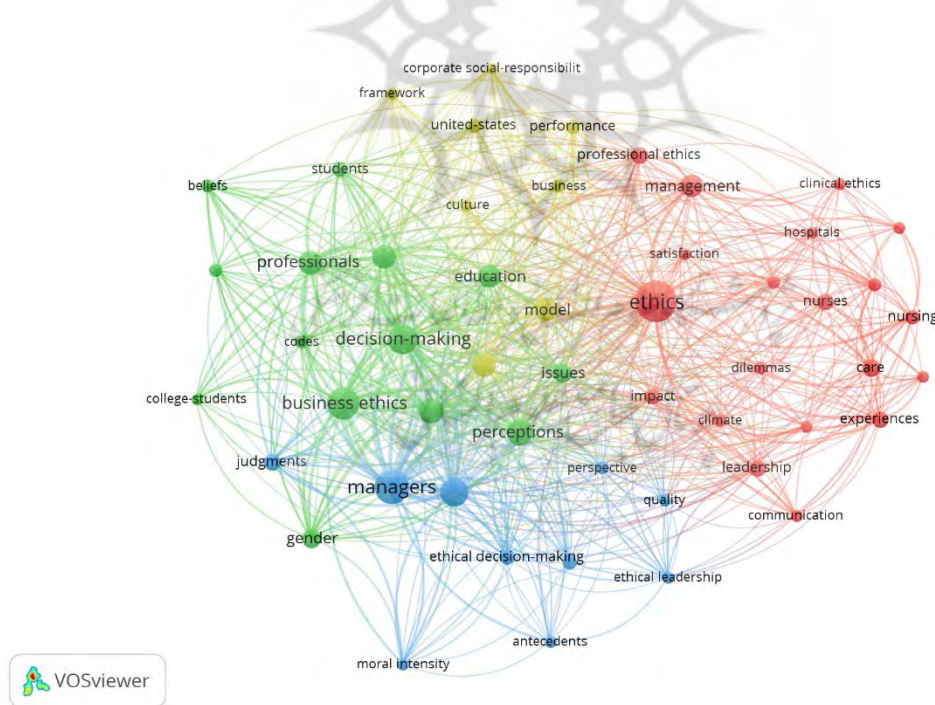
The chart below, which is the output of Vosviewer software, shows that the United States is the cradle of research in the field of professional ethics of managers, followed by the United Kingdom and Australia in second

and third place; As it is clear, these countries have larger circles in the picture, and this shows the greater influence of these countries, as well as their wider participation in the production and publication of scientific articles in

this field. The results show the separation of articles published in Iran in single clusters, which indicates a lack of local communication with other countries.



**Figure 4.** Referral Clustering among Publishing Countries in the Field of Managers' Professional Ethics



**Figure 5.** Clustering of Keywords Used in Articles on Managers' Professional Ethics

Figure 4 shows the focus on referral cooperation by countries that are most closely related, based on at least 5 articles from each country. In this diagram, each color represents a cluster and based on the analysis performed on 311 articles in this study, considering having at least 5

articles, they are placed in four clusters that are separated by different colors. As can be seen, some lines of communication between some countries are thicker (stronger) and in some cases the lines are less thick. In explaining this issue in graphic maps resulting from the



without a comprehensive review of the results of scientific researches, and it is unacceptable to rework and waste time and money on the activities of scientists in scientific fields. In fact, it can be said that many researches in the form of dissertations and student dissertations have a superficial view of the results of researchers' scientific researches in the past, and this weakness in critical review of the background has led to weaknesses in conducting new researches.

The present study takes a new look at a series of researches conducted in the field of managers' professional ethics during sixty-seven years and has opened a new horizon for researchers who are interested in research in this field.

In the present study, by searching the web of science database, between 1955 and 2022, 438 articles in the field of professional ethics of managers were obtained, and 311 articles in the study area were extracted during three screening stages. VOSviewer software version 1.6.11 was used for data analysis. Statistics show that the number of published articles on the professional ethics of managers in Iran is not in a good position in terms of relations with other countries, which indicates that researchers in the field of professional ethics in Iran should pay more attention to it and research have a broader scope in this area.

A comprehensive review of published articles in the web of science database reveals the most important authors, countries, fields of study, articles and keywords in this field. This opens the way for researchers who need this information to conduct new research. Gaining knowledge about the cradle of research in the field of professional ethics of managers and also the most

diligent writers in this field can help researchers find the most important authors and the most important research organizations in different countries and future research with stronger support will be done; Of course, if a researcher wants to do research in this field, the least used keywords will give him the opportunity to do something new, and if a researcher wants to improve the citation index of his articles, choosing the most used keywords can give him this opportunity; Thus, this research has played a significant role in promoting knowledge in this field by introducing the emerging trend of scientific research in the field of professional ethics of managers. The use of concepts and factors of managers' professional ethics can be topics that attract the attention of researchers due to their neglect and undeniable importance, and in addition to promoting scientific knowledge in this field, can be considered a step towards promoting managers' professional ethics in various dimensions. [13, 14]

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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