

## Abstract

The role of gender as an influential factor promises new insights to combat increasing level of unethical behaviour in the public sector. Hence, this study examines the influence of gender on the ethical intention of Sri Lankan public sector employees. It adapted multi-factorial approach to the complex construct gender. This study utilizes primary data collected from 400 public sector officials who are authoritatively making decisions in the national level public sector organizations. The data collection is based on a self-administrated questionnaire which covers the areas of assessment of psychological gender (instrumental and expressive traits), scenario-based evaluation of ethical judgment and ethical intention, measurement of locus of control and demographic information of the respondents. Having discussed sample characteristics, descriptive statistics, and reliability and validity of measures, a structural equation model was estimated to test the hypotheses. Accordingly, the study uncovers that influence of biological gender on ethical judgment is contextual. Further, expressive traits are significant, which determines one's ability to form the ethical judgment. Egoistic ideology played an imperative role in perceiving ethicality of an action by expressive individuals. However, the statistically significant influence of locus of control on ethical decision-making process was not adequately reported. These findings will be useful to understand why employees behave unethically and how socio-psychological aspects related to gender differences make them persuade ethicality in the work environment. It provides direction to employ suitable person through assessing the psychological traits to mitigate unethical actions in the public sector. This study is different from previous empirical works in the same area because, through the application of the gender identity theory, it explores the casual relationships of constructs in the ethical decision-making process. Also, it uses newly-crafted scenarios represent common ethical dilemmas prevail in the Sri Lankan public sector in order to assess ethical judgment and intention. Finally, the study discusses limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

**Keywords:** Gender, Ethical intention, Ethical judgment, Gender identity theory, Public sector ethics