

# Business Ethics within the Framework of Ethical Responsibility Implied by Environmental Protection Principles: Responsibility to Nature

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**Abstract:** Humans, as part of nature, have an ethical responsibility to protect and sustain it. Preserving natural resources and passing them on to future generations, halting environmental pollution and harm, conserving and enhancing environmental values, living in a healthy and clean environment, and combating climate change are among the responsibilities faced by contemporary humanity. In the implementation of this responsibility framework, the role of businesses is significant. Fulfilling this responsibility correctly requires conscientious use of natural resources and preservation of ecosystem balance. This study addresses the environmental responsibilities of businesses and ethical values related to the conservation of natural resources, emphasizing the relationship between environmental ethics and business ethics. Environmental ethics recognizes the value of nature and all life forms within it, guiding environmental policies and strategies based on principles such as justice, equality, and sustainability. Developing an environmentally sensitive business ethics requires companies to operate sustainably and in an environmentally friendly manner in accordance with international environmental protection principles. Preserving and sustaining nature is a reflection of ethical values and a responsibility for humans to balance their environmental impacts. The study focuses on developing a relationship between environmental ethics and business ethics. Utilizing the literature research methodology commonly used in social research methods, the study first focuses on environmental protection, environmental protection principles, environmental ethics and business ethics. It then analyzes the relationship between business ethics and environmental ethics. Within the framework of this theoretical review, the study discusses the importance of integrating business ethics with environmental values and argues that such integration is crucial for the protection of environmental values. The study emphasizes that in fulfilling their environmental responsibilities, businesses should make conscious use of natural resources and maintain the balance of ecosystems, thus contributing to the well-being of both nature and humanity.

**Keywords:** Business Ethics, Environmental Ethics, Environmental Protection Principles, Ethics, Responsibility

**Öz:** İnsanlar, doğanın bir parçası olarak, etik açıdan onu koruma ve sürdürme sorumluluğuna sahiptirler. Doğal kaynakların korunması ve gelecek nesillere aktarılması, çevresel kirlilik ve zararların durdurulması, çevresel değerlerin korunması ve geliştirilmesi, sağlıklı ve temiz bir çevrede yaşanılması, iklim değişikliğiyle mücadele edilmesi günümüz insanların karşı karşıya kaldığı sorumluluklar arasında yer almaktadır. Bu sorumluluk çerçevesinin uygulanması sürecinde işletmelerin rolü büyüktür. Bu sorumluluğun doğru bir şekilde yerine getirilmesi ise doğal kaynakların bilinçli bir şekilde kullanılması ve ekosistemlerin dengesinin korunmasını gerektirir. Bu çalışma işletmelerin çevresel sorumluluklarını ve doğal kaynakların korunmasıyla ilgili etik değerleri ele alarak, çevre etiği ile iş ahlakı arasındaki ilişkiyi vurgulamaktadır. Çevre etiği, doğanın ve içindeki tüm yaşam formlarının değerini

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tanırken, adalet, eşitlik ve sürdürülebilirlik gibi çevre koruma ilkelerini temel alarak çevresel politika ve stratejilere rehberlik eder. İşletmelerin çevreye duyarlı bir iş ahlakı geliştirmesi, uluslararası çevre koruma ilkelerine uygun olarak sürdürülebilir ve çevreye duyarlı bir şekilde faaliyet göstermelerini gerektirir. Doğanın korunması ve sürdürülmesi, etik değerlerin bir yansımasıdır ve insanların çevresel etkilerini dengelemeleri gereken bir sorumluluktur. Çalışma çevresel etik ile iş etiği arasında bir ilişkiyi geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sosyal araştırma yöntemlerinde kullanılan literatür taraması ile öncelikle çevresel koruma, çevre koruma ilkeleri, çevre etiği ve iş etiği üzerinde durulmuştur. Sonrasında iş etiği ile çevre etiği arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Teorik bir çerçeveye dayanan çalışmada işletmelerin etik değerlerinin çevresel değerleri de kapsayacak şekilde geliştirilmesinin çevresel değerlerin korunmasında önemli olacağı tartışılmıştır. Çalışma işletmelerin çevresel sorumluluklarını yerine getirirken doğal kaynakların bilinçli kullanımını ve ekosistemlerin dengesinin korunmasını, böylece hem doğa hem de insanlık için refahın sağlanmasına katkıda bulunulacağını vurgular.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İş Ahlakı, Çevre Etiği, Çevre Koruma İlkeleri, Etik, Sorumluluk

## Introduction

The integration of business ethics and environmental ethical principles is a new phenomenon in the management approach of businesses from the perspective of environmental responsibilities. Business ethics focuses on the behaviors that need to be followed in the workplace and in the process of business production. On the other hand, environmental ethics emphasizes the behaviors that need to be adhered to in strategies for the preservation, improvement or enhancement of the natural environment. Furthermore, the principles related to environmental protection impose responsibilities on the government, individuals, civil society, and private businesses regarding the preservation of environmental values, sustainability, and passing them on to future generations. The intersection of environmental ethics, business ethics, and environmental protection principles influences the strategies for the preservation of environmental values. Therefore, the development of environmental ethical principles in business ethics is considered important for the purpose of preserving environmental values.

The increase in environmental issues and their impact on human life has raised awareness for combating problems, preserving and enhancing environmental values. In this context, principles guiding environmental protection are being developed. Within the framework of environmental conservation efforts, the business ethics of companies are being reconsidered. Emphasis on sustainable practices by businesses is evolving as a part of business ethics. As a result of the relationship between environmental ethics and business ethics, balanced use of natural resources and combating environmental damages are encouraged in business operations and attitudes. Ethics indicate that businesses also have environmental responsibilities. Making efforts to reduce negative environmental impacts is a requirement of business ethics and is considered necessary for companies to fulfill their responsibilities towards future generations.

Every scientific study has a problem. The problem of this study aims to reveal the relationship between environmental ethics and business ethics developed within the framework of environmental rights and to answer what the ethical responsibilities of businesses can be in environmental protection. In parallel to this, the existing data in the literature are brought together and how the fields of environment and business ethics intersect and what kind of responsibilities they bring for businesses are discussed from an interdisciplinary perspective. The study assumes that there is a relationship between environment and business ethics. In this context, the study focuses on the interaction between business and environmental ethics and is expected to contribute to the field by creating a perspective for practitioners. In the study, not only a conceptual framework is presented, but also various suggestions are developed in terms of the practices of businesses. The study is a qualitative research and is based on document analysis. This analysis method, which is an important method of qualitative research, is defined as reviewing, questioning and analyzing various documents (Sak et al., 2021:228). Within the framework of this research method, certain steps were followed. First of all, documents were obtained through literature review. In this process, academic articles, books, reports and contracts in the fields of business and environmental ethics were analyzed. Sources were accessed through Google academy and dergipark databases. In the second process, the documents obtained were analyzed. By analyzing the documents, first of all, principles related to the right to environment were identified. These principles are sustainability, participation, application, access to information, obligation, polluter pays, prevention and precaution. Within the scope of these principles, the conceptual framework for environmental ethics was put forward. The intersections and responsibilities between business ethics and environmental ethics were then discussed. At this stage, various inferences were made about the relationship between business and environmental ethics and evaluations were made regarding the compliance of environmental ethics principles with business ethics. In conclusion, the study points to the relationship between environment and business ethics and makes various suggestions on the basis of moral responsibility towards nature. There are legal regulations regarding the environmental responsibility of workplaces. However, considering the scope and limitations of the study, legal regulations are not included in this study. However, the place and importance of legal regulations within the framework of fulfilling responsibilities towards nature cannot be denied. However, considering that law is based on external authority and morality is based on internal values, it can be argued that moral responsibilities of individuals and companies towards nature can be more effective than legal regulations for a sustainable future.

## Principles of Environmental Protection

Environmental issues adversely affect people's access to clean and sustainable food and water, thereby posing threats to human health. Individuals worldwide are confronted with environmental problems. Unregulated industrial waste discharge into nature, deforestation, water resource pollution, and the use of harmful substances are just a few examples of environmental problems that damage both the environment and human health. In seeking to combat environmental issues that threaten human life and the future, the concept of environmental rights has emerged on an international level. Especially with the Stockholm Conference in 1972, the right to environment developed under the leadership of the United Nations. The goal of solving the environmental problems faced by people in a manner compatible with human dignity has developed the right to environment (Semiz, 2014: 12). As a proposed solution to contemporary problems, the right to a healthy environment is evaluated within the framework of human rights (Kanlı and Küpeli, 2021: 419). With environmental problems reaching levels that threaten human life, it has been accepted that everyone has the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment, and the right to a healthy environment today has acquired its current identity (Yılmaz, 2021: 5). The right to the environment is a right developed within the framework of the protection of nature, which is the common denominator of all human beings, and the approach of equality (Kılıç, 2012:24). Environmental rights are recognized as third-generation rights. The category of third-generation rights is also known as solidarity rights. Within this framework, there are four key rights: (i) the right to live in a healthy environment, (ii) the right to peace, (iii) the right to development, and (iv) the right to respect for the common heritage of humanity. Environmental rights are based on the understanding that both states and individuals have various responsibilities to ensure that people live in clean and healthy conditions (Kaboğlu, 1992b: 131). The primary stakeholders in these responsibilities are states, individuals, and businesses.

The recognition of the environment as a human right is a relatively new concept in the human rights literature compared to other rights (Hayward, 2005: 54). Today, a relationship is being established between human rights and environmental rights (Kanlı and Küpeli, 2021: 421). International agreements and declarations adopted on platforms related to environmental protection recognize the environment as a human right (Sommer, 2019: 183). The first principle of the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at the Stockholm Conference, states that all individuals have the right to live in an

environment that allows them to live with dignity and well-being (Kravchenko, 2005: 522). The main reason for the prominence of the environment as a human right is the crises faced by nature. Increasing industrialization, population pressure, unplanned urbanization, unconscious use of natural resources, and the use of non-renewable fossil fuels contribute to environmental issues through air, water and soil pollution.

The right to a healthy environment, expressed in international documents and constitutions, serves as an indication of the attention drawn to environmental issues. It aims to find solutions to problems that traditional human rights instruments cannot prevent and constitutes the most effective and important legal means of protecting the environment (Dadak, 2015:310). The right to the environment is a right developed within the framework of the protection of nature, which is the common denominator of all human beings, and the approach of equality (Kılıç, 2012:24). Today's prevailing understanding on international platforms is that environmental rights and human rights are not independent of each other (Tekeli, 2005:5). The fundamental basis for defining the right to a healthy environment as a human right lies in anthropocentrism. According to Tekeli, human rights aim to protect the special and privileged place of humans in nature, which is different from other living beings (Tekeli, 2005:5). It is exceedingly difficult to accept the environment merely as a living space for humans. Therefore, if we recognize that other living beings in the environment also have the right to a healthy environment, if we define the right to a healthy environment from an eco-centric perspective, it can be defined as the right of all living beings to live in a healthy environment (Bilir and Hamdemir, 2011).

The fundamental concept in the conceptualization of the right to a healthy environment is a healthy life (Kanlı and Küpeli, 2021:421). In this context, the right to a healthy environment can be broadly defined as the right of people to live in a healthy environment (Bilir and Hamdemir, 2011). However, the right to a healthy environment is also connected to the most fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and the right to develop one's physical and moral well-being (Dadak, 2015:310). While the right to a healthy environment has distinct features compared to other rights, it also influences other human rights. From this perspective, the right to a healthy environment can be seen as an integral part of rights such as the right to life, the right to health, and the right to personal integrity (Çolakoğlu, 2010:154). Moreover, according to Bilgili, the benefits of recognizing the right to a healthy environment at the constitutional level are significant, as it ensures envi-

ronmental protection and maintains awareness of environmental protection despite changing governments (Bilgili, 2015: 575-576). Whether the right to a healthy environment is defined from an anthro-pocentric or eco-centric perspective, its unchanging element is the objective of protecting, improving, and developing the environment. Therefore, considering that other living beings also have the right to live, defining the right to a healthy environment from an eco-centric perspective would be a more appropriate approach from the standpoint of environmental ethics (Bilgili, 2015:568). The subject matter of the right to a healthy environment pertains to the clarification of the environmental values that need protection (Kaboglu, 1992a:53). In this context, the subject of the right to a healthy environment is the “environment,” which is where life occurs, and its purpose is the protection and improvement of the environment that sustains the lives of humans and all living beings (Dadak, 2015:315).

Environmental protection principles are among the concrete outcomes of discussions on environmental protection and environmental rights. Identifying the principles related to environmental protection is both important and necessary. This is because evaluating environmental policies, behaviors, and legal regulations requires a standard. Similarly, the role of these principles becomes significant in the process of developing or assessing the alignment of business ethics with environmental ethical values. In other words, the principles play an undeniable role in implementing various environmental objectives as policies (Stephens, 2009:6). The principles occupy a crucial place in the goal of environmental protection. They play an active role in areas such as identifying and combating environmental damage, increasing participation and transparency in environmental decision-making processes, defining responsibilities and obligations in the fight against environmental damage, and raising environmental awareness.

Turgut emphasizes the importance of environmental principles. According to Turgut, it is important to know these principles in processes such as ensuring consistency in environmental practices, strengthening the adaptation to emerging environmental changes or needs, developing universal norms in environmental law, and assisting in concrete regulations related to environmental protection (Turgut, 2017: 123). There are studies that express these principles as the principles of environmental rights. One such study is by N kh t Turgut. The eight principles she identifies are prevention, cooperation and coordination, integration, participation, polluter pays, precaution, source prevention, risk assessment, and proximity (Turgut, 2017: 123). Philippe Sands outlines the principles of environmental rights as

obligations (responsibility), prevention, the principle of cooperation, sustainable development, the precautionary principle, and the polluter pays principle (Sands, 2003: 231). Based on scientific studies, international agreements, and declarations, it is possible to compile the principles and values of environmental rights under ten headings: the principle of recourse, the information principle, the participation principle, the prevention principle, the polluter pays principle, the precautionary principle, the sustainable development principle, the cooperation and coordination principle, the integration principle, the responsibility principle (Özdemirkol, 2023:111), and additionally, the principle of the rights of future generations.

Exploring these principles in detail falls beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is essential to briefly explain these principles to facilitate a discussion on the environmental ethics underpinning them. The principle of legal recourse implies that individuals, groups, or companies can seek their rights legally, through court applications, thus supporting efforts to protect the environment. The legal recourse principle provides a mechanism for parties concerned about or harmed by environmental issues to seek legal protection.

The information principle pertains to the processes of accessing and disseminating information. This principle is crucial for ensuring oversight and transparency in environmental matters. Another significant principle of environmental rights is the principle of the right to participation and access. This principle encompasses the right to participate in environmental decision-making and to access environmental information. Ensuring active community involvement in environmental decision-making processes and managing environmental policies transparently are key aspects of the participation and access principle.

The prevention principle focuses on the necessity of preventing environmental damage before it occurs. In some cases, environmental damages may be irreversible, making it crucial to take preventive measures in advance. The polluter pays principle entails holding those responsible for environmental damage financially accountable. This principle aims to enforce environmental regulations, reduce pollution, and effectively identify and remedy environmental damages.

The precautionary principle evolves as an alternative in the absence of sufficient scientific and technological information about the environmental impacts of certain activities. This principle stipulates that if there is a risk of serious harm, despite the lack of scientific proof, action should be taken to avoid such harm or opt for less harmful alternatives.



The most fundamental principle of environmental rights is the principle of sustainability. Sustainability refers to the concept of meeting present needs while also considering the needs of future generations. This principle requires the prudent use of natural resources, the protection of ecosystems, and the preservation of biodiversity.

The principle of cooperation and coordination emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts and coordination among different stakeholders. Effective development, implementation, and monitoring of environmental policies and practices are facilitated by this principle, enabling the collaboration of governments, businesses, civil society organizations, and individuals on environmental issues.

The integration principle highlights the necessity of addressing environmental policies and practices in conjunction with other policy areas and decision-making processes. The responsibility principle points to the obligations of individuals, civil society, institutions, and governments in protecting the environment and remedying environmental damages. Such a shared responsibility is crucial for reducing pollution, preserving and enhancing natural resources, and ensuring their transfer to future generations.

The framework for environmental protection concerns not only the current population but also future generations. Therefore, one of the most debated elements within the context of environmental protection is the rights of future generations. According to this principle, protective policies should consider not only the rights of those living today but also those of future generations, ensuring the sustainable and healthy continuation of human life.

### Environmental Ethics

The emerging principles of environmental protection are founded on an environmental ethic that adopts an anthropocentric approach. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that addresses fundamental issues concerning values (Des Jardins, 2006:34). One of the principal characteristics of ethics is its applicability to humans across different contexts and situations (Karabayır et al., 2018:329). Dawson posits that ethical concepts are not confined to specific cultural ideas but bear universal significance. In his view, from a more prescriptive and normative perspective, there is a high degree of consensus among world religions and cultural traditions regarding the principles of respect for human life and property (Dawson, 2005:59). Kant asserts that ethical systems are either mental or empirical. According to him, the



concept of morality derives from either empirical or intellectual reasons. Empirical reasons are those derived from our senses, as long as they satisfy our sensory desires. Intellectual reasons form morality through the alignment of our actions with the laws of reason. Consequently, an ethical system is either empirical or mental (Kant, 2007:23). In addressing ethical dilemmas, Kant employs two methods. On one hand, he uses empirical data as a starting point and analyses them to derive general propositions; on the other hand, he takes rational concepts as principles and applies them to phenomena, empirical data, and experiential observations (Akarsu, 1999: 72).

Ethics is concerned with the evaluation of human behavior, specifically addressing why an action is right or wrong, or good or bad. Regarding values such as good, bad, right, and wrong, Aristotle asserts that anything contrary to nature is bad (Aristotle, 2003: 15). According to Bertrand, if we did not possess a natural ability to distinguish the moral value of an action, the science of ethics would never have been possible (Bertrand, 1999:17). Kant argues that morality necessarily requires good intentions (Kant, 2007:31). Any ethical framework that prompts us to consider whether an action is right or wrong is based on elements that give meaning to our lives, such as religion, family responsibilities, human rights, humanism, equal opportunity, and cultural traditions (Dawson, 2005:56). Fundamentally, ethics establishes a standard for humans, guiding how individuals should behave. It delineates what both individuals and societies ought to do and should not do, encapsulating generally accepted notions of right and wrong (Akıncı, 2013:86). Therefore, ethics plays a pivotal role in shaping the behavioral patterns of individuals and societies (Des Jardins, 2006:34). Bertrand states that without ethics, as demonstrated by Descartes, human life would be fraught with calamities; people would become indecisive, dishonorable, unhappy, and would metaphorically fall into a state akin to malaria (Bertrand, 1999:6). Ethics is acknowledged as a crucial factor in shaping both individual and societal life, underpinning the moral values and beliefs that drive human behavior. Ethics directs behaviors, playing a significant role in human interactions and in maintaining social order. All moral actions either impose obligations or are obligations in themselves (Kant, 2007:31). Thus, it can be inferred that morality imposes obligations on individuals. These obligations pertain to every aspect of social order. In this context, moral rules manifest themselves in all areas where social life unfolds, from the economy to culture, from business ethics to politics.

Among the significant domains of ethics are business ethics and environmental ethics. Just as ethics pertains to human behavior, environmental ethics is concerned with human behaviors related to the environment. The increase in environmental issues and the growing interest in the preservation of environmental values have brought the relationship between environment and ethics to the forefront. Consequently, environmental ethics is gaining increasing importance. Environmental ethics highlights the points at which human-environment interactions should be anchored. It concerns itself with the appropriate conduct towards nature. The primary focus of environmental ethics is the relationship between humans and the natural environment. It examines the ethical principles that underpin or should underpin this relationship. Environmental ethics addresses questions such as how the relationship between humans and nature should be, what obligations humans have towards the natural environment, how the natural environment can be protected, and what fundamental principles should guide environmental protection policies.

The development of environmental ethics dates back to the 1960s, a period when factors such as technology, industry, economic expansion, and population growth began to lead to environmental problems, affecting human lives and eliciting proposals for solutions (Cochrane, 2008:2). Two fundamental questions underpin environmental ethics: what duties humans have towards the environment, and why humans have these duties towards the natural environment (Cochrane, 2008:3-4). Environmental issues prompt inquiries into what we value as humans, what kind of beings we are, the nature of our existence, our place in the natural world, and the type of world in which we can thrive (Des Jardins, 2006:37). Broadly speaking, environmental ethics is the systematic study of the moral relationships between humans and their natural environments. It presupposes that moral principles do and should guide human behavior toward the natural world. Therefore, a theory of environmental ethics must elucidate these principles, explain to whom and what humans hold responsibilities, and justify why these responsibilities are warranted (Des Jardins, 2006: 46).

When examining the literature on environmental ethics, two predominant approaches can be identified: anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives. Anthropocentrism, by definition, refers to human-centered thinking. Within the context of environmental ethics, the human-centered approach emphasizes that moral considerations are afforded only to humans. Consequently, an anthropocentric ethic posits that humans alone are morally considerable beings, implying that all our direct

moral obligations, including those related to the environment, are fundamentally obligations to other humans (Cochrane, 2006:4). Thus, all ethical codes concerning nature are derived from human needs and requirements. The anthropocentric approach interprets the environment-nature relationship through a human-centered lens, with roots traceable to Aristotle. According to Aristotle, humans are the highest form of life on earth, which indicates that they are derived from and suited to nature (Aristotle, 2003:16). The foundation of policy recommendations and behavioral patterns related to nature within the human-centered approach is human benefit. Behavioral patterns towards nature are based on human interests and needs. Simply put, an anthropocentric ethic asserts that our obligations to respect the environment are grounded in human well-being (Cochrane, 2006:5).

On the other hand, an ethical approach that critically opposes human-centeredness in environmental ethics debates is ecocentrism. Contrary to the anthropocentric ethic, the ecocentric approach posits that nature possesses intrinsic value, humans are merely a part of the ecosystem, and environmental policies or behaviors should be developed with a nature-centered focus. Proponents of this approach argue that we have direct moral responsibilities toward natural entities beyond humans. Nature-centered ethics ascribe moral status to other natural entities, such as animals and plants. This approach generally requires the reevaluation and broadening of standard ethical rules (Des Jardins, 2006:47). However, it is worth noting that the inconsistency within the ecocentric approach lies in the inherently human nature of ethical considerations. The fact that only humans possess the capacity for thought, reasoning, and value creation suggests an unavoidable conclusion: that all moral evaluations must inherently be anthropocentric.

Based on the assessments made so far regarding environmental ethics, it can be posited that the aforementioned principles of environmental protection fall within the scope of environmental ethics and are fundamentally rooted in an anthropocentric perspective. The primary aim of these principles is to ensure that humans live in a healthy, sustainable, and clean environment. Environmental ethics is directly related to these principles of environmental protection. Principles such as sustainability, coordination, participation, prevention, the polluter pays, and precaution are essentially subjects of environmental ethics. At its core, environmental ethics focuses on ensuring that human behavior does not harm nature, fostering the development of natural resources, preventing environmental damages, eliminating environmental threats, and ultimately preserving a clean and healthy environment for both present and future generations.

Environmental ethics underscores the necessity of considering the environmental impacts of human behavior and the inherent responsibility towards nature. As a result, environmental ethics is a crucial ethical domain that advocates for the protection of natural values, development of resources, sustainability, justice, and equity. It emphasizes that attitudes, behaviors, and activities should conserve environmental values. This field urges individuals to comprehend their responsibilities towards nature and other living beings, encouraging actions that support these obligations.

The essence of environmental ethics is to promote human behavior that does not harm nature and to encourage the construction of a sustainable and equitable future.

### **Business Ethics and Environmental Ethics**

Today, environmental issues are becoming an increasingly important concern on a global scale. Climate change, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution are among the most critical challenges facing humanity. Ethical values and a sense of responsibility towards nature play an important role in addressing these issues. The relationship between the environment and ethical values is complex, as humans both inhabit and derive their needs from nature, while also needing to act within a framework of environmental ethics that expresses their responsibilities towards the environment. The relationship between environment and business ethics is especially shaped around the principles of sustainability and environmental responsibility. An important situation will develop in terms of business ethics if businesses act sensitively about their environmental impact during their activities. This necessitates establishing a balance between needs and ethical values. It is essential to balance the requirement to utilize natural resources with the responsibility to protect, develop, and use these resources sustainably. Achieving this balance requires adhering to various ethical principles and values.

In this context, it is necessary to establish a relationship between business ethics and environmental ethics. Expanding the framework and scope of business ethics towards environmental ethics and incorporating environmental responsibilities within the content of business ethics is essential for the protection of environmental values and stands as a responsibility for companies.

Business ethics is defined as a concept that evaluates the attitudes and behaviors of employees in organizations according to moral principles (Levent, 2018:92). It pertains to the behaviors within the business world, addressing which actions are

deemed good and bad, right or wrong. Business ethics focuses on the ethical challenges that businesses and employees may encounter in their professional lives and involves determining the appropriate course of action to address these challenges.

The literature on business ethics reveals that it is based on the adoption of values such as justice, transparency, responsibility, and respect within business processes, and it advocates for the implementation of these values in professional practice. Indicators of business ethics in a company include the alignment of business activities with ethical standards in their interactions with customers, employees, the environment, and society (Gül, 2016:526). Business ethics constitutes a subset of broader community ethical standards that have developed in our culture due to certain social trends, influential philosophical ideas, and religious beliefs (Dawson, 2005:56).

In conclusion, business ethics can be understood as a concept that addresses the foundation of correct, good, and responsible behavior within the business world. It emphasizes that ethical values should guide the actions and decisions of businesses and their employees.

Business ethics serves as a crucial mechanism for cultivating a fair and environmentally conscious work process alongside societal well-being. The traditional approach in the literature assumes that the recruitment of morally upright individuals leads to an ethically sound organization. In this perspective, business ethics are grounded in the personal morals of the employees. Traces of this approach can be found in Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management. However, today, this individual-based understanding of business ethics falls short. Many large enterprises are now striving to institutionalize ethical decision-making processes to foster a moral environment within the workplace. Methods of institutionalizing ethics include the development of corporate governance rules, ethics committees, grievance bureaus, legal boards, ethics training programs, and written codes of ethics (Demir and Songür, 1999:164).

Some argue that the primary focus of businesses is profit-making, and essentially, this is the core of business operations. However, an ethical approach aimed at decoupling business ethics from profit motives asserts a symbiotic relationship between ethics and business, suggesting that good ethics result in good business outcomes (Fard and Noruzi, 2011:5). Dominant since the post-1980 period, this viewpoint maintains that the primary goal of businesses is not solely profit generation but includes serving society, with profit seen as a reward for good service (Demir, 1999:151-152). This business ethics approach encourages companies to

consider various social and environmental responsibilities in addition to profit motives. Consequently, business ethics advocate not only for the fulfillment of legal responsibilities but also for the adherence to social and moral values. In this perspective, it would not be wrong to state that business ethics carries responsibilities towards the environment.

As such, businesses are expected to acknowledge and engage with their responsibilities towards customers, employees, society, and the environment. These responsibilities fall within the objectives of business ethics, contributing to increased corporate social responsibility and the advancement of principles critical to environmental values, such as sustainable futures. Ultimately, the concept of sustainability has become widely recognized among organizations, governments, and academic institutions and has become integral to discussions about the impact of business ethics and business activities on society and the environment (Krishna et al., 2011:284).

When a business has an ethical environmental responsibility extending beyond mere legal compliance, the criteria guiding and justifying such actions need to be identified. Many companies adopt eco-friendly decisions upon realizing that such practices can be profitable. This rationale is used by environmental advocates as a strategy to encourage more businesses to become environmentally conscious (Hoffman, 1991:174). In the study “The Relationship Between Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study of Businesses in the Marmara Region,” Çetin and colleagues concluded that corporate environmental responsibilities positively impact sustainability. The study highlights critical activities for businesses in promoting environmental sustainability, including resource conservation, efficient utilization, waste management, participation in social responsibility projects, compliance with legal obligations, and establishing ethical business relationships (Çetin et al., 2019:638).

Social responsibility is paramount within the context of business ethics. Businesses must take necessary measures to prevent societal harm from their activities and remain sensitive to these issues. Social responsibility often governs business behavior, encompassing values not always formally recognized but generally accepted by society (Demir and Songür, 1999:159). In essence, social responsibility holds businesses and their managers accountable for the societal and environmental impacts of their operations. In today’s landscape, businesses must adhere to social responsibility to sustain their operations and avoid negative societal reactions (Demir and Songür, 1999:153).

Environmental factors not only carry raw materials and energy resources to meet human needs, but also function as dumping grounds for anthropogenic wastes. Therefore, business activities and their interventions in ecosystems may pose various problems in terms of environmental sustainability. As a matter of fact, businesses produce hazardous products and can create pollution that can cause various hazards (Kamarul Zaman, 2018:14). For this reason, combating environmental problems emphasizes the necessity for the business world to pay attention to environmental impacts and social responsibility issues. The relationship between business ethics and environmental ethics can be established through environmental protection principles such as sustainability, coordination, participation, and the rights of future generations. These principles can guide the incorporation of environmental responsibilities into business ethics.

In this context, the sustainable use of natural resources, reducing the environmental impacts of activities, avoiding environmental degradation, and maintaining ecological balance represent the intersection of business ethics and environmental ethics. Developing a responsibility towards nature has become an integral component of business ethics, as the conservation, improvement, and sustainability of nature are critical for the long-term success of both businesses and individuals. Business ethics, in this sense, requires companies to assess their environmental impacts, mitigate harmful effects, and comply with environmental ethical standards. This necessitates the development of strategies such as the prudent use of natural resources, reduction of waste, and minimization of environmental risks.

## Conclusion

The relationship between business ethics and responsibility towards nature and the environment underscores the necessity for businesses to adopt and integrate environmental ethical values into their processes. In this endeavor, environmental protection principles provide crucial guidance. Responsibility towards nature should be viewed as a fundamental component of business ethics. This responsibility encourages the formulation of policies aimed at reducing the environmental impacts of businesses and developing sustainable solutions. Such an approach enables the business sector to act in accordance with environmental ethical standards, thereby ensuring a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment while upholding responsibilities to future generations.



Implementing a business ethics policy that prioritizes environmental responsibilities can bring numerous benefits to companies. Chief among these benefits is the sustainability of the business itself.

Environmental ethics is a discipline that examines the moral responsibilities arising from humans' interactions with their natural environment. Recognizing the intrinsic value of nature, it guides individuals in their environmental decisions based on principles of justice, equality, and sustainability. This discipline is closely related to business ethics because businesses must also consider their environmental impacts and societal responsibilities. Business ethics addresses the ethical issues that businesses and employees may face in their professional lives. It emphasizes the adoption and support of values such as justice, transparency, responsibility, and respect, which collectively help businesses develop a sustainable work environment. Furthermore, business ethics encourages companies to evaluate their societal and environmental impacts and to act in line with environmental ethical standards.

The relationship between environmental ethics and business ethics manifests in the necessity for businesses to assess their environmental impacts and develop strategies to mitigate or minimize these effects. Such strategies include improving energy efficiency, transitioning to renewable energy sources, reducing waste production, and conserving environmental resources. Additionally, it is crucial for businesses to understand the environmental expectations of their stakeholders and promote strategies that align with these expectations. This includes considering the environmental sensitivities of customers, adopting sustainability standards within the supply chain, and responding to the environmental demands of the community.

In conclusion, the relationship between the environment and ethical values defines individuals' responsibilities and respect towards nature. The preservation and maintenance of nature reflect ethical values and constitute a responsibility that requires balancing environmental impacts. Environmental ethics recognizes the value of nature and all its life forms, guiding human environmental decisions based on justice, equality, and sustainability principles. These values are vital for the future of humanity and can only ensure the well-being of both nature and humanity when adopted and implemented. Integrating business ethics with environmental ethics is essential for businesses to fulfill their social responsibilities and build a sustainable future. This integration can provide economic profitability for businesses while also fulfilling their environmental protection responsibilities.

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