

GENDER VARIATIONS IN ETHICAL AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS AMONG SME ENTREPRENEURS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The rise in ethics and social responsibility scrutiny has attracted a lot of debate pertaining to the prevalence of such practices in SMEs. Concomitantly, the emergence of women participation in new ventures has raised interest among the researchers to examine the gender variations in regards to ethical and social responsibility considerations in business given that there is evidence suggesting women are generally more ethical than men. The present study attempts to explore the prevalence of such practices among Malaysian SME entrepreneurs and subsequently examine the gender differences in terms of the importance placed by female and male entrepreneurs in regards to these practices. A sequential mixed-method design was employed. The first phase involved a series of interviews conducted with ten SME entrepreneurs. Subsequently, in the second phase, survey was employed whereby 212 SME entrepreneurs operating in both manufacturing and service sectors participated in the study. Descriptive statistics analysis and an independent sample t-test were conducted to generate answers to the research questions. The findings indicate that ethical and socially responsible practices were perceived important by the entrepreneurs; however, there are gender variations in regards to the magnitude of such practices in their business activities. It appears that women perceived ethics and social responsibility conducts as more important than their male counterparts in managing their business. Given such findings, future research is therefore warranted to delve into the grounds for such variations.

Keywords: Ethics, Social Responsibility, SME Entrepreneurs, Gender, Malaysia.