

Study of Ethical Values & Decision Making of Young People (in Hong Kong, Guangzhou & Macao)

**Centre for Youth Research and Practice
Hong Kong Baptist University
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The Study

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青年研究實踐中心



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- **Research objectives**
 - To assess the ethical standards of young people in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Macao based on an identified set of ethical values and their views on *conflict of interest*, *corruption* and *law compliance*
 - To explore factors that may affect the development of these values
 - To understand the process of ethical decision making
- **Today's focus**
 - Decision making in handling conflict of interest



Methodology

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- **Target respondents**
 - Aged between 16 and 24, and
 - Full time students in post secondary institutes
- **Questionnaire survey**
- **Interviews**
 - Focus group discussions
 - Individual interviews
- **Field period: Jun - Dec 2013**



Questionnaire Survey

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- **Stratified sampling**
- **Responses received**
 - Hong Kong (HK): 1,009
 - Guangzhou (GZ): 707
 - Macao (MO): 500
- **Questions**
 - On a Likert scale
 - Scale of 1 – 6
 - For data analysis, recoded into two groups
 - Situation specified

strongly
disagree

1 2 3



disagree

strongly
agree

4 5 6



agree



Conflict of Interest:

A conflict of interest situation arises when one's 'private interests' compete or are in conflict with the interests of one's official duties.



Conflict of Interest Situation

- As a committee member of a Photography Society, David has to purchase a new set of photographic equipment for the Society
- Suggestion from uncle:
 - purchasing the set of equipment from him to avoid delay
 - not to declare their relationship so as to save time and avoid trouble
- School regulations: good quality, a supplier with the lowest price

Major Question 1

Should David accept his uncle's suggestion and ignore the school regulations on equipment purchase?

} Awareness of conflict of interest

Sub-questions

- David will not receive any personal gain. What he wants to do is to serve the Society.
- You have to comply with the regulations even though the procedure is complicated.
- David should consider whether the purchase is unfair to the other equipment suppliers. This is far more important than the convenience factor.
- David has only limited time, and following the procedure would only delay the purchase and payment, so this may do more harm than good.

Factors affecting decision

} Loyalty

} Regulation

} Fairness

} Practical consideration

Major Question 2

Should David declare his relationship with uncle?

} Awareness of conflict of interest

Sub-questions

- Because this is Society's money, he should not violate school's procedures and requirements for the sake of convenience.
- David has to make things clear as this affects other people too.
- David would not be deceiving the Society deliberately and he would receive no personal gain, so it is unnecessary to declare his relationship with his uncle.
- Declaration would only lead to misunderstanding from other people, and bring unnecessary trouble to David and his uncle.

Factors affecting decision

} Procedure

} Impact on others

} Honesty

} Practical consideration



Interviews

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- **Convenient sampling**
- **Focus group discussions**
 - 6 groups each city
 - 4 to 10 students each group
- **Individual interviews**
 - 20 interviews each city
- **Questions discussed**
 - Views towards conflict of interest
 - Question in the questionnaire survey



Awareness of Conflict of Interest

Findings of questionnaire survey

- About 52% of respondents are aware of conflict of interest
- Hong Kong respondents are more aware of conflict of interest

			Declare relationship with uncle	
			Disagree	Agree
Accept uncle's suggestion	All	Agree	321 (15.5%)	489 (23.6%)
		Disagree	183 (8.8%)	1077 (52.0%)
	HK	Agree	122 (13.4%)	224 (24.5%)
		Disagree	39 (4.3%)	528 (57.8%)
	GZ	Agree	109 (15.5%)	158 (22.5%)
		Disagree	92 (13.1%)	342 (48.8%)
	MO	Agree	90 (19.7%)	107 (23.5%)
		Disagree	52 (11.4%)	207 (45.4%)



Factors Shaping Decision Making

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Findings of questionnaire survey

Decision: Accept uncle's suggestion and ignore the school regulations

		All
	Nagelkerke R ²	0.328
David will not receive any personal gain. What he wants to do is to serve the Society.	Loyalty	0.693
You have to comply with the regulations even though the procedure is complicated.	Regulation	-1.435
David should consider whether the purchase is unfair to the other equipment suppliers. This is far more important than the convenience factor.	Fairness	-0.615
David has only limited time, and following the procedure would only delay the purchase and payment, so this may do more harm than good.	Practical consideration	1.132

Extent to which
decision was explained
by all four factors

Weighting of
individual factors
in explaining the
decision



Factors Shaping Decision Making

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Findings of questionnaire survey

Decision: Declare relationship

		All
	Nagelkerke R ²	0.617
Because this is Society's money, he should not violate school's procedures and requirements for the sake of convenience.	Procedures	1.490
David has to make things clear as this affects other people too.	Impact on others	1.440
David would not be deceiving the Society deliberately and he would receive no personal gain, so it is unnecessary to declare his relationship with his uncle.	Honesty	-1.289
Declaration would only lead to misunderstanding from other people, and bring unnecessary trouble to David and his uncle.	Practical considerations	-0.929

Extent to which
decision was explained
by all four factors

Weighting of
individual
factors in
explaining
the decision



Factors Shaping Decision Making

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Findings of interviews

- Students from 3 cities tended to follow regulations and procedures
- No delay in the task was a Responsible behaviour
- Caring about the Impact on Others might suggest that relational factor determined to a large extent young people's decision making
- Students provided solutions such as extending the deadline to purchase the equipment, bringing the issue to the Society for collective decisions



For Our Further Discussion

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- Awareness of Conflict of Interest situations?
- How different factors weighed?
 - regulations and procedures
 - practical issues considered
 - compromise of ethical values
- If David did not purchase the equipment from his uncle, he did not need to declare his relationship with uncle?
- Choices available



What's Next?

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- Raise our moral sensitivity / awareness
- Balance of regulations, ethical values and self values
- Internalising ethical values
- Bringing the issue up:
 - for further discussion
 - exploration of alternatives
 - collective decision



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Thank You!