

Exploring the impact of empathy, compassion, and Machiavellianism on consumer ethics in an emerging market

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Abstract The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of positive personality traits (i.e., empathy and compassion) and negative personality traits (i.e., Machiavellianism) on consumer ethics in Indonesia. This is one of the first studies to explore this topic in relation to Indonesia, which is the fourth most populous country in the world. The paper-based survey was distributed to a large private university in Indonesia. Based on this convenience sample of 540 respondents, the results showed that cognitive empathy and compassion negatively impacted consumers' perception toward various unethical behaviors, while desire for control and distrust of others positively influenced such behaviors. Based on earlier studies showing that the younger generation has less empathy than previous generations, the findings of the present study have important implications for creating a more empathetic and compassionate society.

Keywords Consumer ethics · Empathy · Compassion · Machiavellianism · Indonesia

Introduction

Many newspapers' article indicated that something is missing from society; more and more individuals have less empathy and compassion toward others (LaBler 2011; Fallon 2016). People do not want to understand the perspective and experiences of others. Therefore, there has been increased attention focused on understanding the

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impact of positive and negative personality traits among younger generations (Batson et al. 2002; Dovidio and Penner 2001). The evidences are clear. For example, one study reported that college students today show 40% less empathy than students in the 1980s and 1990s (Anderson and Konrath 2011). Another study found that affluent individuals are less likely to report feeling empathy and compassion toward others on a regular basis (Piff et al. 2012). Other studies have shown that those who act in an antisocial manner have less empathy and compassion than those who are not socially offensive (Burke 2001; Bush et al. 2000; Jolliffe and Farrington 2004; Marcus and Gray 1997). The acquisition of empathy and compassion and the exclusion of Machiavellianism are considered to be essential factors for adequate moral development (Jolliffe and Farrington 2006).

Previous studies have found empirical evidence for a positive correlation between empathy and compassion and various pro-social behaviors (Batson et al. 1987; Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). Pro-social behavior can be defined as behavior that is intended to help other people, usually based on concern for the feelings and welfare of others and often without involving any monetary gain (George and Bettenhausen 1990). Other studies have investigated the impact of empathy (Eisenberg and Miller 1987; Toi and Batson 1982), compassion (Sprecher and Fehr 2005), and Machiavellianism (Hawley 2003) on pro-social behaviors. Despite the relationship between these personality traits and pro-social behavior, the impact of personality traits on consumer ethical behaviors is distinct from the effects of personality of on pro-social behavior (Vitell 2003). However, few studies have focused on the relationship between personality traits and consumer ethical behaviors. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of positive personality traits (i.e., empathy and compassion) and negative personality traits (i.e., Machiavellianism) on consumer ethics in Indonesia. The study will examine the impact of these traits on their perception toward various ethical situations in the context of consumer ethics. This is one of the first studies to explore this issue in Indonesia, which is the fourth most populous country in the world.

Literature review and hypothesis development

To acquire further insights into the impact of empathy, compassion, and Machiavellianism on consumer ethics, the literature review section offers definitions and previous research findings on these issues. This section will begin by outlining the extant literature on consumer ethics, as the dependent variables followed by empathy, compassion, and Machiavellianism as independent variables.

Consumer ethics

Ethical issues have received considerable attention from researchers over the last few decades (Al-Khatib et al. 1997; Vitell 2003; Arli and Tjiptono 2014; Pekerti and Arli 2016). Muncy and Vitell (1992) defined consumer ethics as “the moral principles and standards that guide behavior of individuals or groups as they obtain, use, and dispose of goods and services” (p. 298) and designed the most widely used construct for consumer ethics, the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES). The scale examines consumers’ perception toward various consumers’ situations having potentially ethical implications

(Muncy and Vitell 1992; Rawwas 1996). CES has four dimensions: (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities (ACTIVE), which deals with illegal actions initiated by consumers; (b) passively benefiting at the expense of others (PASSIVE), where the consumer benefits from the seller's mistake; (c) benefiting from questionable, but legal, behavior (QUEST), where the consumer initiates activities that are unlikely to be perceived as illegal; and (d) no-harm/no-foul activities (NO HARM), where the consumer perceives little or no harm to others. Most consumers report that it is more ethical to benefit from a PASSIVE activity than from an ACTIVE activity. In addition, consumers report that benefiting from a PASSIVE activity is more unethical than benefiting from QUEST activities and that NO-HARM activities are generally acceptable and more ethical than the other three activities (Vitell and Paolillo 2003).

Recently, Vitell and Muncy (2005) updated the scale by adding three new dimensions. The scale includes (a) downloading or buying counterfeit goods (DOWNLOAD), where it measures consumers' perception toward buying non-genuine or pirated products; (b) recycling and environmental awareness (RECYCLE), where it measures consumers' perception toward involvement in pro-environment activities; and (c) doing the right thing (DOING GOOD), where it measures consumers' perception toward showing kindness and honesty toward others. The first of these, DOWNLOAD, and the previous four categories described above (ACTIVE, PASSIVE, QUEST, and NO HARM) are measuring the level of agreement toward situations having potentially negative implications, while the last two categories (RECYCLE and DOING GOOD) are measuring the level of agreement toward situations having potentially positive implications. The present study employed the updated CES containing all seven dimensions of consumers' perception of consumer situations having potentially ethical implications.

Despite suggestions from marketing ethics theory that ethical decision making varies based on the personal characteristics of the decision maker (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986; Muncy and Vitell 1992), only a few studies have investigated the impact of personality traits on consumer ethics. For example, Rallapalli et al. (1994) found that individuals with high needs for autonomy, innovation, aggression, and risk taking were more likely to have fewer ethical beliefs. In addition, most of these studies were conducted mainly in developed countries, such as the USA (Muncy and Eastman 1998; Muncy and Vitell 1992; Rallapalli et al. 1994; Rawwas and Singhapakdi 1998; Strutton et al. 1994; Vitell et al. 2001; Muncy and Vitell 1992), Australia (Rawwas et al. 1996), northern Ireland (Rawwas et al. 1998), and Belgium (Van Kenhove et al. 2001). Thus, there is a need to further investigate the relationship between personality traits and consumer ethical beliefs across different cultures (Al-Khatib et al. 1997; Rallapalli et al. 1994).

Empathy

Empathy can be considered as the propensity to indirectly experience the emotional states of others or an emotional response that is focused more on others than on self (Davis 1994). To empathize means to feel the emotions of others, or at least similar emotions (Eisenberg and Miller 1987); the emotional response can be either identical or congruent with what others are experiencing (Albiero et al. 2009; Eisenberg et al. 1994). Studies have found correlations between empathy and various pro-social

behaviors, such as volunteering time to help others (Barnett et al. 1983; Barnett and Thompson 1985; Fultz et al. 1986) or donating money to others in need (Batson et al. 1979; Brehm et al. 1984; Coke 1980; Eisenberg and Lennon 1983). In addition, lack of empathy is correlated with psychopathy or behavioral traits linked to criminal behavior (Harpur et al. 1988). Finally, empathy is positively correlated with social intelligence and may reduce all forms of aggression among youth (Albiero et al. 2009; Bandura 1999; Jolliffe and Farrington 2004; Miller and Eisenberg 1988).

An individual's ability to understand the emotional states of others can be categorized as (1) affective or emotional empathy, which is the ability to experience the emotions of another, and (2) cognitive empathy, which is the ability to comprehend the emotions of another (Eisenberg and Miller 1987; Farrington and Jolliffe 2005; Underwood and Moore 1982). Lack of empathy may be associated with antisocial behavior and aggressiveness. An individual who is able to comprehend the emotional consequences of their behavior toward others may be less inclined to act in an antisocial manner in the future (Feshbach 1975; Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). In addition, an individual who is able to empathize will act more ethically than an individual who is lacking in empathy. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁ Affective empathy is a *negative* determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding ACTIVE behavior (H_{1A}), PASSIVE behavior (H_{1B}), QUEST behavior (H_{1C}), NO-HARM behavior (H_{1D}), and DOWNLOAD behavior (H_{1E}) and a *positive* determinant of RECYCLE behavior (H_{1F}) and DOING GOOD behavior (H_{1G}).

H₂ Cognitive empathy is a *negative* determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding ACTIVE behavior (H_{2A}), PASSIVE behavior (H_{2B}), QUEST behavior (H_{2C}), NO-HARM behavior (H_{2D}), and DOWNLOAD behavior (H_{2E}) and a *positive* determinant of RECYCLE behavior (H_{2F}) and DOING GOOD behavior (H_{2G}).

Compassion

Compassion is a positive personality trait that can be defined as an “attitude toward other (s), either close others or strangers of all humanity; containing feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the others” (Sprecher and Fehr 2005, p. 630) or “being moved by another’s suffering and wanting to help” (Lazarus 1991, p. 289). The difference between compassion and empathy is that compassion is an other-directed emotion that often excludes attempts to understand the intensity of another person’s pain or problem. In contrast, empathy is focused on sharing the emotional state of others and understanding their pain or problem (Lazarus 1991; Sprecher and Fehr 2005). Studies have reported a correlation between compassion and increased prosocial behaviors (Dovidio and Penner 2001; Leiberg et al. 2011; Sprecher and Fehr 2005). Developing compassion among individuals brings positive benefits (Hwang et al. 2008). Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggested that compassion is associated with a sense of vocation in helping a person to make a positive contribution to the world. An individual with a compassionate personality will avoid unethical behaviors because that person will understand the unintended consequences of unethical behaviors toward others. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃ Compassion is a *negative* determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding ACTIVE behavior (H_{3A}), PASSIVE behavior (H_{3B}), QUEST behavior (H_{3C}), NO-

HARM behavior (H_{3D}), and DOWNLOAD behavior (H_{3E}) and a *positive* determinant of RECYCLE behavior (H_{3F}) and DOING GOOD behavior (H_{3G}).

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism as a personality construct has its roots in the negative aspects of management and leadership (Christie et al. 1970; Griffin and O’Leary-Kelly 2004; Sendjaya et al. 2016). Machiavellianism can be defined as “a process by which the manipulator gets more of some kind of reward than he would have gotten without manipulating, and someone else gets less, at least within the immediate context” (Christie et al. 1970, p. 107). Dahling et al. (2009) argued that Machiavellianism is a complex set of characteristics that may include several dimensions, such as desire to control and distrust of others. The author defined the desire to control as “a need to exercise dominance over interpersonal situations to minimize the extent to which others have power” and distrust of others as “a cynical look on the motivations and intentions of others with a concern for the negative implications that those intentions have for the self” (Dahling et al. 2009, p. 228).

Various studies have investigated the impact of Machiavellianism on consumer ethics and have shown that people with a high degree of Machiavellian personality traits believe that unethical consumer practices are more acceptable, while people with a low degree of Machiavellian personality traits perceive these practices to be less acceptable (Al-Khatib et al. 1997; Erffmeyer et al. 1999; Rawwas 1996; Vitell et al. 1991). Other studies have found a positive correlation between Machiavellianism and pro-social behavior such as bullying (Pilch and Turska 2015). Individuals with a high degree of Machiavellian personality traits are less likely to engage in helping behaviors than individuals with a low degree of Machiavellian personality traits (Elias 2015; Wolfson 1981). Machiavellian personalities possess a “cool detachment” that makes them less emotionally engaged with others or less concerned with saving face in a potentially embarrassing situation that arises as a consequence of their actions (Christie et al. 1970; Vitell et al. 1991). These consumers are more likely to accept and engage in various unethical behaviors as a result of their personalities (Ruiz-Palomino and Bañón-Gomis 2016). Therefore, when these individuals are being faced by ethical situations, they are more likely to manipulate and use these situations for his/her own purpose (Rayburn and Rayburn 1996). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₄ Desire to control is a *positive* determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding ACTIVE behavior (H_{4A}), PASSIVE behavior (H_{4B}), QUEST behavior (H_{4C}), NO-HARM behavior (H_{4D}), and DOWNLOAD behavior (H_{4E}) and a *positive* determinant of RECYCLE behavior (H_{4F}) and DOING GOOD behavior (H_{4G}).

H₅ Distrust of others is a *positive* determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding ACTIVE behavior (H_{5A}), PASSIVE behavior (H_{5B}), QUEST behavior (H_{5C}), NO-HARM behavior (H_{5D}), and DOWNLOAD behavior (H_{5E}) and a *positive* determinant of RECYCLE behavior (H_{5F}) and DOING GOOD behavior (H_{5G}).

Methodology

Sample

Data were obtained from a convenience sample of undergraduate students at a large private university in Indonesia. The researchers hand-delivered approximately 600 questionnaires to students in their classrooms. Participants returned 576 questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 96%. Incomplete questionnaires were removed resulted in 540 questionnaires, yielding an overall response rate of 90%. A back translation method was used to ensure the reliability of the questionnaires, whereby a professor of linguistics read the translation and discussed any discrepancies with the translator until a consensus was reached. The demographic profile of respondents indicated that there were more female than male respondents (67 and 33%, respectively); most were single (92%), 83% were between the ages of 18 and 20 years, and 14% were between the ages of 21 and 23 years. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents.

Research context—Indonesia

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation in the world (approximately 240 million people) and is the largest country in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is one of the most religious nations with more than 98% of their citizen declared to have a religion (CIA World Factbook 2013). Religious and cultural traditions of Indonesia play a very important role in the daily life and business practices (IOR 2016). With the exception of China, the Indonesian economy is growing faster than any other major emerging market economy, with 6.5% growth in 2011 (CIA World Factbook 2013). The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was estimated at \$5000 in 2012, with an unemployment rate of 6.1%. In addition, 11.7% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2012 (CIA World Factbook 2013). Indonesia scored only 32 on the latest

Table 1 Demographic profile

Demographic	Percentage
Age	
18–20 years old	83%
21–23 years old	14%
24 and above	3%
Gender	
Male	33%
Female	67%
Marital status	
Single	92%
Married	5%
Others	3%

corruption perception index compared to USA (73) and New Zealand (91) (Transparency International Index 2013). In addition, in the context of ethical behavior such as digital piracy, Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest rate of piracy attacks (Statista 2016).

Measures and reliability

Consumer ethics were measured using the updated CES (Vitell and Muncy 2005). The scale consists of 29 items that measure the seven dimensions of consumer behavior: (1) actively benefiting from illegal activities (ACTIVE; e.g., drinking a can of soda in a store without paying for it); (2) passively benefiting (PASSIVE; e.g., not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favor); (3) questionable, but legal, behavior (QUEST; e.g., stretching the truth on an income tax return); (4) no-harm/no-foul behavior (NO HARM; e.g., burning a copy of a CD instead of buying it); (5) downloading or buying counterfeit goods (DOWNLOAD; e.g., downloading music from the Internet instead of buying it); (6) recycling and environmental awareness (RECYCLE; e.g., recycling materials such as cans, bottles, and newspapers); and (7) doing the right thing (DOING GOOD; e.g., giving a larger-than-expected tip to a waiter). The reliability of the seven dimensions on the CES was as follows: ACTIVE (four items), $\alpha = 0.626$; PASSIVE (three items), $\alpha = 0.730$; QUEST (five items), $\alpha = 0.745$; NO HARM (three items), $\alpha = 0.660$; DOWNLOAD (two items), $\alpha = 0.682$; RECYCLE (three items), $\alpha = 0.549$; and DOING GOOD (two items), $\alpha = 0.500$. Respondents rated each behavior on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. A high score indicates that consumers consider a particular action as more acceptable or ethical.

Empathy was measured using the Basic Empathy Scale (BES) developed by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006). The scale is made up of two subscales identifying two different components of empathic responsiveness: affective empathy and cognitive empathy (Albiero et al. 2009; Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). Affective empathy was assessed using 11 items that measure emotional congruence with another person's emotions. One example of such an item on the BES is "my friend's emotions don't affect me much 9r)." Cognitive empathy was assessed using nine items that measure an individual's ability to understand another person's emotions. An example of such an item is "I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me." Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. A high score indicates more empathy toward others. The reliability of the two dimensions on the BES was as follows: AFFECTIVE EMPATHY (four items), $\alpha = 0.797$, and COGNITIVE EMPATHY (eight items), $\alpha = 0.846$.

Compassion was measured by a briefer version of a compassionate love scale known as the Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale (SCBCS) and developed by Hwang et al. (2008). The scale consists of five items that are ideal for use in educational and religious institutions (Hwang et al. 2008). A sample item is "I tend to feel compassion for people, even though I do not know them." Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. A high score indicates more compassion toward others. The reliability of this single dimension was $\alpha = 0.799$ (five items).

A new Machiavellianism scale developed by Dahling et al. (2009) was used to measure two personality traits: control over others and distrust of others. The reliability

of the two dimensions was as follows: DESIRE FOR CONTROL (three items), $\alpha = 0.830$, and DISTRUST OF OTHERS (five items), $\alpha = 0.792$.

Table 2 shows the mean value for each scale and the correlation scores between variables. Table 3 summarizes all scale items used in this study, including factor loadings and reliability scores.

Results

Separate multiple regression analyses were employed to test the relationship between the independent variables (affective empathy, cognitive empathy, compassion, desire for control, and distrust of others) and the dependent variables (the seven dimensions of consumer ethical behavior). Results are shown in Table 4.

Affective empathy

Affective empathy had a positive impact on QUEST behavior ($\beta = 0.093$, $p = 0.026$) and DOWNLOAD behavior ($\beta = 0.207$; $p = 0.000$), which is opposite to that predicted by H_{1C} and H_{1E} . Moreover, affective empathy did not significantly explain ACTIVE, PASSIVE, NO-HARM, RECYCLING, or DOING GOOD behaviors. Thus, H_{1A} , H_{1B} , H_{1C} , H_{1D} , H_{1E} , H_{1F} , and H_{1G} are rejected.

Cognitive empathy

Cognitive empathy had a negative impact on ACTIVE ($\beta = -0.098$; $p = 0.042$), PASSIVE ($\beta = -0.120$; $p = 0.012$), and QUEST ($\beta = -0.133$; $p = 0.004$) behaviors and a positive impact on DOING GOOD behaviors ($\beta = 0.114$; $p = 0.020$). However, cognitive empathy did not significantly affect NO-HARM, DOWNLOAD, or RECYCLE behaviors. Thus, H_{2A} , H_{2B} , H_{2C} , and H_{2G} are supported and H_{2D} , H_{2E} , and H_{2F} are rejected.

Compassion

Compassion had a negative impact on ACTIVE ($\beta = -0.158$; $p = 0.001$), PASSIVE ($\beta = -0.168$; $p = 0.000$), and QUEST ($\beta = -0.113$; $p = 0.014$) behaviors and a positive impact on RECYCLE ($\beta = 0.153$; $p = 0.002$) and DOING GOOD ($\beta = 0.141$; $p = 0.004$) behaviors. Thus, H_{3A} , H_{3B} , H_{3C} , H_{3F} , and H_{3G} are supported. However, compassion did not significantly explain NO-HARM and DOWNLOAD behaviors. Thus, H_{3D} and H_{3E} are rejected.

Desire for control

Desire for control had a positive impact on ACTIVE ($\beta = 0.128$; $p = 0.005$), PASSIVE ($\beta = 0.110$; $p = 0.014$), QUEST ($\beta = 0.158$; $p = 0.000$), and NO-HARM ($\beta = 0.174$; $p = 0.000$) behaviors. Thus, H_{4A} , H_{4B} , H_{4C} , and H_{4D} are supported. Furthermore, desire for control did not significantly explain DOWNLOAD, RECYCLE, and DOING GOOD behaviors. Thus, H_{4E} , H_{4F} , and H_{4G} are rejected.

Table 2 Correlation matrix

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. ACT	1.92	0.63	1											
2. PASS	2.03	0.76	0.52**	1										
3. QUEST	2.32	0.67	0.51**	0.66**	1									
4. NOH	3.13	0.97	0.28**	0.36**	0.53**	1								
5. DL	3.49	0.78	0.16**	0.31**	0.37**	0.46**	1							
6. REC	3.23	0.63	-0.10*	-0.18**	-0.14**	-0.06	0.12**	1						
7. GOOD	3.33	0.72	-0.18**	-0.36**	-0.28	-0.18**	0.05	0.28**	1					
8. AEMP	1.27	0.29	0.04	0.04	0.12	0.04	0.26**	0.08	0.08	1				
9. CEMP	3.67	0.51	-0.14**	-0.17**	-0.13**	0.01	0.12**	0.17**	0.18**	0.18**	1			
10. COMP	3.72	0.56	-0.20**	-0.23**	-0.17**	-0.07	0.02	0.20**	0.20**	0.13**	0.47**	1		
11. DFC	2.86	0.81	0.15**	0.14**	0.21**	0.22**	0.17**	0.06	-0.03	0.16**	0.19**	0.07	1	
12. DOO	2.90	0.75	0.20**	0.24**	0.29**	0.21**	0.27**	0.02	-0.04	0.17**	0.02	-0.08	0.34**	1

ACT actively benefitting, PASS passively benefitting, QUEST questionable behavior, NOH no harm/no foul, DL downloading, REC recycling, GOOD doing good, AEMP affective empathy, CEMP cognitive empathy, DFC desire for control, DOO distrust of others

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 Factor loading and reliability scores

Scale items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Consumer ethics		
Actively benefiting		
Returning damaged merchandise when the damage is your fault	0.655	0.626
Giving misleading price information to a clerk for an unpriced item	0.678	
Drinking a can of soda in a store without paying it	0.669	
Reporting a lost item as stolen to an insurance company in order to collect the money	0.772	
Passively benefiting		
Lying about a child's age in order to get a lower price	0.690	0.730
Not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favor	0.878	
Observing someone shoplifting and ignoring it	0.843	
Questionable behavior		
Using an expired coupon for merchandise	0.669	0.745
Returning merchandise to a store by claiming that it was a gift when it was not	0.745	
Using a coupon for merchandise you did not buy	0.630	
Not telling the truth when negotiating the price of a new automobile	0.754	
Stretching the truth on an income tax return	0.734	
No harm		
Installing software on your computer without buying it	0.727	0.660
Burning a CD instead of buying it	0.786	
Using computer software or games that you did not buy	0.873	
Downloading		
Downloading music from the internet instead of buying it.	0.871	0.682
Buying counterfeit goods instead of buying the original manufacturer's brands	0.871	
Recycling		
Purchasing something made of recycled materials even though it is more expensive	0.775	0.549
Buying only from companies that have a strong record of protecting the environment	0.724	
Recycling materials such as cans, bottles, and newspapers	0.676	
Doing good		
Returning to the store and paying for an item that the cashier mistakenly did not charge you for	0.803	0.500
Giving a larger than expected tip to a waiter or waitress	0.620	
Affective empathy		
My friend's emotions affect do not me too much. (r)	0.813	0.797
I find it easy to know when my friends are frightened.	0.655	
Other people's feelings bother me.	0.777	
I can usually work out when my friends are scared.	0.724	
Cognitive empathy		
I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me.	0.596	0.846
Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings. (r)	0.724	

Table 3 (continued)

Scale items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
I can usually work out when people are cheerful.	0.682	
I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid.	0.754	
I can usually realize quickly when a friend is angry.	0.619	
I often get swept up in my friend's feelings.	0.769	
My friend's unhappiness does not make me feel anything. (r)	0.680	
I have no trouble figuring out when my friends are happy. (r)	0.749	
Compassion		
I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality	0.798	0.799
I am kind to myself when I am experiencing suffering.	0.816	
When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	0.737	
I am tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.	0.597	
I try to be loving toward myself when I am feeling emotional pain.	0.776	
Desire for control		
I like to give the orders in interpersonal situations.	0.844	0.830
I enjoy being able to control the situation.	0.875	
I enjoy having control over other people.	0.875	
Distrust of other		
People are only motivated by personal gain.	0.686	0.792
I dislike committing to groups because I do not trust others.	0.583	
Team members backstab each other all the time to get ahead.	0.763	
If I show any weakness at work, other people will take advantage of it.	0.814	
Other people are always planning always to take advantage of the situation at my expense.	0.833	

Distrust of others

Distrust of others had a negative impact on ACTIVE ($\beta = 0.143$; $p = 0.005$), PASSIVE ($\beta = 0.181$; $p = 0.000$), QUEST ($\beta = 0.217$; $p = 0.000$), NO-HARM ($\beta = 0.413$; $p = 0.002$), and DOWNLOAD ($\beta = 0.206$; $p = 0.000$) behaviors. Thus, H_{5A}, H_{5B}, H_{5C}, H_{5D}, and H_{5E} are supported. However, distrust of others did not significantly explain RECYCLE and DOING GOOD behaviors. Hence, H_{5F} and H_{5G} are rejected. Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis results.

Discussion

Empathy

The results show that cognitive empathy, defined as the ability to understand another person's emotions, had a negative influence on consumers' perception toward most

Table 4 Regression analyses

Model	Standardized beta	<i>t</i> value	Significance
(a) Dependent variable: actively benefiting			
Constant		9.349	0.000
Affective empathy	0.032	0.750	0.454
Cognitive empathy	-0.098	-2.039	0.042
Compassion	-0.158	-3.351	0.001
Desire for control	0.128	2.849	0.005
Distrust of others	0.143	3.205	0.001
$R^2 = 0.10$	F value = 11.148		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.09$	Significance = 0.000		
(b) Dependent variable: passively benefiting			
Constant		8.800	0.000
Affective empathy	0.035	0.817	0.414
Cognitive empathy	-0.120	-2.525	0.012
Compassion	-0.168	-3.604	0.000
Desire for control	0.110	2.473	0.014
Distrust of others	0.181	4.114	0.000
$R^2 = 0.12$	F value = 14.128		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.11$	Significance = 0.000		
(c) Dependent variable: questionable behavior			
Constant		8.835	0.000
Affective empathy	0.093	2.238	0.026
Cognitive empathy	-0.133	-2.853	0.004
Compassion	-0.113	-2.465	0.014
Desire for control	0.158	3.617	0.000
Distrust of others	0.217	5.023	0.000
$R^2 = 0.15$	F value = 12.231		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.14$	Significance = 0.000		
(d) Dependent variable: no harm/no foul			
Constant		6.353	0.000
Affective empathy	-0.003	-0.062	0.950
Cognitive empathy	0.009	0.196	0.845
Compassion	-0.074	-1.548	0.122
Desire for control	0.174	3.824	0.0001
Distrust of others	0.143	3.173	0.002
$R^2 = 0.07$	F value = 8.298		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.06$	Significance = 0.000		
(e) Dependent variable: downloading			
Constant		5.763	0.000
Affective empathy	0.207	4.906	0.000
Cognitive empathy	0.075	1.600	0.110
Compassion	-0.28	-0.600	0.549
Desire for control	0.055	1.244	0.214

Table 4 (continued)

Model	Standardized beta	<i>t</i> value	Significance
Distrust of others	0.206	4.714	0.000
$R^2 = 0.13$	F value = 15.186		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.12$	Significance = 0.000		
(f) Dependent variable: recycling			
Constant		7.995	0.000
Affective empathy	0.037	0.846	0.398
Cognitive empathy	0.085	1.732	0.084
Compassion	0.153	3.162	0.002
Desire for control	0.023	0.495	0.621
Distrust of others	0.018	0.393	0.695
$R^2 = 0.05$	F value = 5.518		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.04$	Significance = 0.000		
(g) Dependent variable: doing good			
Constant		7.497	0.000
Affective empathy	0.051	1.168	0.243
Cognitive empathy	0.114	2.337	0.020
Compassion	0.141	2.926	0.004
Desire for control	-0.063	-1.383	0.167
Distrust of others	-0.019	-0.421	0.167
$R^2 = 0.06$	F value = 6.184		
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.05$	Significance = 0.000		

unethical behaviors and a positive influence on consumers' perception toward willingness to engage in DO GOOD behaviors. These findings suggest that consumers with cognitive empathy are less likely to behave unethically and more likely to perform good deeds toward others.

In contrast, affective empathy, defined as emotional congruence with another person's emotions, positively influenced some unethical behaviors (questionable behavior and downloading). These results suggest that consumers with higher affective empathy are more likely to engage in questionable, but legal, behaviors and to engage in the downloading or purchasing of counterfeit goods. Thus, not all empathy can be viewed as a protective factor that decreases the probability that an individual will engage in certain types of unethical behavior. The conclusion from these results is that cognitive empathy is more likely to reduce consumer unethical behaviors than affective empathy.

Jolliffe and Farrington (2004) suggested that affective empathy often occurs unconsciously; thus, it is difficult to increase or decrease affective empathy (Staub 1987). However, cognitive empathy is a skill that people can learn and develop (Block-Lerner et al. 2007). The present study found that cognitive empathy had a greater effect on consumer ethical behavior than affective empathy, stressing the importance of developing cognitive empathy through various methods. Programs designed to increase

Table 5 Summary of hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Result
H ₁ : Affective empathy is a <i>negative</i> determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding	
(a) actively benefiting behavior	Rejected
(b) passively benefiting behavior	Rejected
(c) questionable behavior	Rejected
(d) no-harm/no-foul behavior	Rejected
(e) downloading/buying counterfeit goods	Rejected
and <i>positive</i> determinant of	
(f) recycling/environmental awareness	Rejected
(g) doing the right thing/doing good	Rejected
H ₂ : Cognitive empathy is a <i>negative</i> determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding	
(a) actively benefiting behavior	Supported
(b) passively benefiting behavior	Supported
(c) questionable behavior	Supported
(d) no-harm/no-foul behavior	Rejected
(e) downloading/buying counterfeit goods	Rejected
and <i>positive</i> determinant of	
(f) recycling/environmental awareness	Rejected
(g) doing the right thing/doing good	Supported
H ₃ : Compassion is a <i>negative</i> determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding	
(a) actively benefiting behavior	Supported
(b) passively benefiting behavior	Supported
(c) questionable behavior	Supported
(d) no-harm/no-foul behavior	Rejected
(e) downloading/buying counterfeit goods	Rejected
and <i>positive</i> determinant of	
(f) recycling/environmental awareness	Supported
(g) doing the right thing/doing good	Supported
H ₄ : Desire to control is a <i>positive</i> determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding	
(a) actively benefiting behavior	Supported
(b) passively benefiting behavior	Supported
(c) questionable behavior	Supported
(d) no-harm/no-foul behavior	Supported
(e) downloading/buying counterfeit goods	Rejected
and <i>negative</i> determinant of	
(f) recycling/environmental awareness	Rejected
(g) doing the right thing/doing good	Rejected
H ₅ : Distrust of other is a <i>positive</i> determinant of consumer ethical beliefs regarding	
(a) actively benefiting behavior	Supported
(b) passively benefiting behavior	Supported
(c) questionable behavior	Supported
(d) no-harm/no-foul behavior	Supported
(e) downloading/buying counterfeit goods	Supported

Table 5 (continued)

Hypothesis	Result
and <i>negative</i> determinant of	
(f) recycling/environmental awareness	Rejected
(g) doing the right thing/doing good	Rejected

empathy have been employed in many prison treatment programs (Ross and Ross 1995; Serin and Kuriychuk 1994). One method used to increase a person's ability to empathize involves role-playing exercises about another person's feelings to help people understand the pain of others (Anderson and Konrath 2011; Upright 2002).

The results of this study shed light on the debate as to whether empathy is best conceptualized as an affective or cognitive construct (Jolliffe and Farrington 2004; Mehrabian 1997; Wispé 1987). The present study shows that both constructs have different effects on consumer ethical behaviors. Nonetheless, in the context of Indonesia, both constructs of empathy had no influence on NO-HARM and DOWNLOAD behaviors. This may be explained by the fact that software piracy is extremely prevalent in Indonesia, especially among young consumers (Business Software Alliance 2011). Most consumers consider pirating software and downloading illegal copies of movies and music as acceptable behaviors. The Indonesian government and business communities need to educate people about intellectual property rights and the consequences of digital piracy on Indonesian music, film, publishing, and other creative industries. These efforts are needed to significantly change consumer perspectives in Indonesia.

Compassion

The results show that compassion has a negative influence on consumers' perception toward most unethical behaviors (except for NO-HARM and DOWNLOAD behaviors) and a positive influence on ethical behaviors. These findings suggest that compassionate consumers are less likely to engage in unethical behaviors and more likely to recycle and perform good deeds toward others. Thus, one way to increase compassion is by educating people about the consequences of their actions. Individuals often believe that their actions, whether ethical or unethical, have no impact on others and, therefore, often ignore a small act of kindness. Educators need to increase compassion by promoting the belief that even a small act of kindness can make a difference and that a small act of harm can produce unintended consequences.

Similar to the case with empathy, compassion did not influence NO-HARM or DOWNLOAD behaviors. As previously discussed, digital piracy in Indonesia is perceived as acceptable and not unethical. Thus, consumers do not feel obliged to buy non-pirated or genuine software, music, and movies. Government, businesses, and education institutions should collaborate to educate consumers about the unethical nature and unintended consequences of digital piracy.

Machiavellianism

The results showed that desire for control and distrust of others had a positive influence on consumers' perception toward most unethical behaviors and had no effect on ethical behaviors (RECYCLE and DOING GOOD behaviors). These findings extend and confirm those of other studies showing that Machiavellianism has a negative effect on consumer ethical behaviors (Al-Khatib et al. 1997; Erffmeyer et al. 1999). Consumers who have high Machiavellianism are more likely to accept or consider these unethical behaviors (i.e., actively benefiting, passively benefiting, questionable behavior, and no harm/no foul) as acceptable. This situation can create a challenge for the society especially within younger consumers. These consumers are willing to steal and cheat in order to accomplish their goal. While nothing can be done to change this type of personality, one way to reduce Machiavellianism behaviors is through prevention (Paulhus and Williams 2002). Clear rules and regulations by governments and businesses regarding consumer ethics may deter Machiavellian individuals from taking advantage of others.

Limitations and future research

Conducting cross-national research is often very challenging, especially in the context of consumer ethical behavior (Erffmeyer et al. 1999). Thus, it is important to discuss the limitations of the present study. This study was conducted in a country that is currently experiencing economic and social problems, both of which may affect the emotions of consumers and the direction of their responses. The study was also conducted within a single metropolitan area in Indonesia.

Future studies should employ experimental methods that use various ethical and unethical scenarios to study the causes and effects of empathy, compassion, and Machiavellianism in these situations. A further limitation of this study is that the sample population consisted mostly of younger consumers and mostly female. As previously stated, 67% of the respondents are female which may affect the result of this study. Studies found that females tend to be more ethical than males (Dawson 1997; Kidwell et al. 1987).

Moreover, the study used a convenience sample of university students from one city in Indonesia which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should attempt to extend the demographic profile of the sample with various age groups, income levels, and geographical locations. This effort will result in a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of empathy, compassion, and Machiavellianism on consumer ethics.

The limitations of this study do not, however, negate the importance of the findings. Indeed, at this exploratory stage of research, generalizations are usually limited. Future research should be conducted to determine the generalizability of the results of this study by investigating older consumers from various geographical locations in Indonesia. In addition, exploring the effects of consumer demographics such as age, income, education, and religious orientation on ethical behaviors would be helpful for understanding consumer ethics across cultures.

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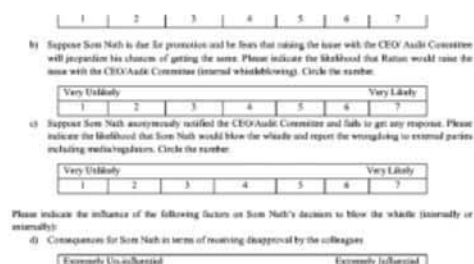
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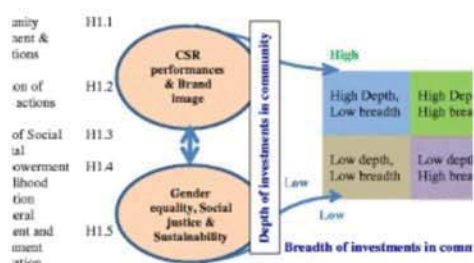
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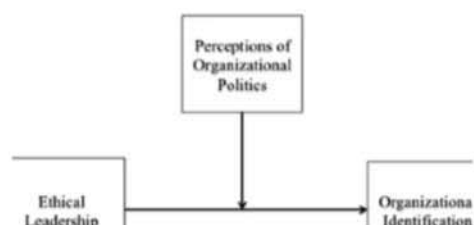


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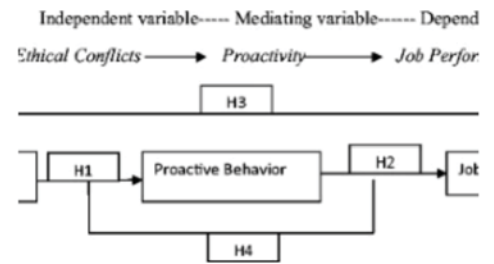
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