1. A Survey of Previous Work done in the Research Area and the Need for further Research (Review of Literature)

Business and Trade form an important part of human life and existence as everyone is involved in it as buyers and sellers perhaps in a small scale. Though it is an area that affects human life in its entirety, it has not been given due attention from the ethical point of view leading to large scale exploitation and manipulation. There are diverse ethical perspectives and there is more perplexity as to which of these is the best.

Though, there have been certain philosophical traditions which have advocated ethics in trade, Kant’s ethics in business and trade have not been seriously considered. Though we find certain philosophical attempts to apply Kant’s ethics to business under the title of business ethics, they have been only partial efforts. My work is therefore one of unique kind as it employs theoretically Kant’s ethics to business and trade. In this following section, I present a few works which may be partial attempts in this field and then indicate how important it is to undertake further studies in this field.

Fabian Sack has undertaken a research work titled *A Moral law for the Jungle: a Kantian Exploration in Corporate Environmental Ethics.* It calls for a secular revision of Kantian moral philosophy in the context of growing crisis in the corporate world. Though it is referring to the corporate world it specially takes into account the environmental ethics. The author argues that by avoiding subjective preferences as the basis of morality Kant avoids corporate social responsibility. Though the author appreciates Kantian ethics, he does not shy away from pointing out that Kant’s theory excludes our communities and corporations from owning moral responsibility. The author looks into the Kantian imperative as a standard or principle for the evaluation of various issues but excludes moral deliberation about environment and does not make corporations morally accountable for the environmental havoc.

**Jacquie L’ Etang, A Kantian approach to Codes of Ethics**

The author discusses if the codes of ethics are Kantian in its foundations. He does it by analysing the intention and structure. In this article, the author tells that he has focused on the codes of ethics because they are the purest form of ethical guidelines. It also studies the recent definitions of codes of ethics and considers reasons for the proliferation of such codes. It also distinguishes between the codes of ethics and codes of conduct. The author also takes up the justifiability of these codes and analyses the diverse theories in relation to Kantian ethics. We also find an account of Kant's views about the basis of morality and moral responsibility, the construction and nature of Kantian moral law and the role of human person.

**Norman E. Bowie, Business Ethics: A Kantian Perspective**

In this book, Norman E. Bowie, presents an interpretation of Kantian philosophy defending the principle of goodwill in business. He attempts to construct a plausible Kantian theory of the business unit in a capitalist economy. He beautifully articulates the self-defeating nature of immoral actions. He also values the importance of treating stakeholders as persons and their importance for business. He conceives the idea of business firm as a moral community where all

¹ The complete details of the book such as publishers, year and place for all the reviews written here are available in the Bibliography section.
the stake holders are partners in business. The author also relates Kant’s cosmopolitanism with the international business and sees the business enterprise as a single unit where everyone is respected and rights upheld. This is one of the rarest works on this field of application of Kant’s theories to business.

**Krishna Mani Pathak, The Universalizability of the Categorical Imperative: Re-examining Kant’s Maxim of Duty.**

Krishna Mani Pathak, has done a research work titled *The Universalizability of the Categorical Imperative: Re-examining Kant’s Maxim of Duty* for his doctorate in Philosophy. In his research on Kant’s ethics Pathak defends the Kantian theory of morals. He emphasising the demand of duty as a universal principle challenges relativistic ethics. He is keen to consider whether our actions are evaluated by individual moral elements or by universal factors of Kantian moral thought. He vouches for universal moral principles and defends Kant’s approach to duty and ethics. He calls for a common standard of morality which makes sense in understanding the world as a cosmic whole. He appreciates Kantian model of morality, though it is quite hard to find a person in the real world who lives in the spirit of this moral sense. But, he makes it clear that our inability to be faithful to a true moral standard does not make the moral standard in any sense weak. He agrees with the Kantian position that universal moral law is the highest authority and so it needs to be applied at all cases and events of human life.

**Claus Dierksmeier, Kant's Humanistic Business Ethics**

This is an interesting articles, one of the rare that I have come across, presented by Claus Dierksmeier on November 25, 2010 at the Global Ethic Institute titled *Kant's Humanistic Business Ethics*. In this article, the author consolidates and opens up the diverse perspectives of Kant’s universality argument for a human centred business ethics. It explores an extremely important principle of Kant’s humanity formulation of the categorical imperative whereby everyone is assigned a social responsibility. The author argues by relating and associating freedom with responsibility. He calls his application of Kant’s theory to the activities of human life and calls it a humanist business ethics. He underscores the importance of subjective reflection for a sound value centred ethics.
Robert N. Johnson, *Self-Improvement: An Essay in Kantian Ethics*

Robert Johnson, the author of this book applies Kantian ethics for the moral development of human person. It explores the idea that the human beings have a duty to grow in their natural powers but which needs to cultivated. Johnson maintains that a reasonable argument can be formulated for the self-development of human person. He relies on Kant’s ethical theory to show that the self-development of a human person may take diverse forms and ways but it has to be essentially moral. It basically explores why it is a duty on me to develop myself. It is a duty for self-improvement but done for the purpose of humanity.

Suzanne M. Uniacke, *Responsibility and Obligation: Some Kantian Directions*

This article deals with interfacing of right and duty in our moral human existence. It discusses certain clear directions in the Kantian principle of right and its various implications. As it investigates the association between responsibility and obligation, this paper considers the human being as a person of dignity and worth. It considers the human action and its subsequent responsibility which is an important aspect of human life.

Scott R. Stroud, *Defending Kant’s Ethics in light of the Modern Business Organization*

This essay comes as a defence of Kant in the application of his theories to business. It is also an article that defends against some of his critics such as Luban, Strudler, and Wasserman. And in the process of defending Kant, it argues that the modern organizations need Kantian theories for the wellbeing of human society. It brings the usefulness of Kantian ethical system in addressing cases of organizational irresponsibility. It also refers to Kant’s doctrine of rights and virtues and the role of freedom in Kant’s approach. Indeed, Kant’s analysis of right and virtue has the resources that can help modern ethicists to deal with modern problems of business organization which is well brought out in this work.
Dan Kidha Kidha, *Implications of Kant's Moral Doctrine to Organizations*  

**Moral Doctrine to Organizations**

This essay begins to analyse the Kantian theory of imperatives and applies the categorical imperative as a measuring yard whereby the implications for the business organizations are considered. It also studies the responsibility of business organizations from a Kantian perspective. It also makes use of important points of Kant’s major works like the *Critiques* and *The Metaphysics of Morals* to support Kantian relevance for business organization. It argues that the categorical imperative urges everyone including the business organizations to act morally. It also states that evaluating corporate responsibility from a Kantian perspective does not exclude individual responsibility. It concludes by stating that, “research should investigate the place of Kantian education in developing greater work ethic and consequent productivity in organizations: both corporate and public.”

Denis G. Arnold and Jared D. Harris eds., *Kantian Business Ethics: Critical Perspectives*

It is a collection of essays where a group of distinguished scholars use the lead given by Norman E. Bowie on applying Kant’s ethics to business. They bank on the expertise of Bowie to deal with contemporary issues from a Kantian perspective. They treat subjects such as normative foundations of capitalism, Kant’s understanding of virtues, managerial ethics and corporate social responsibility. They also take a critical approach towards egoism and similar business approaches. It includes both articles which support Kantian position and those which do not. The work concludes with a response from Bowie himself who responds to his critics. It is really a good supplement to reading and understanding Kant from the perspective of Bowie.

Jens Timmermann, *Why Kant could not Have Been a Utilitarian*

In this essay, Jens Timmermann takes a step to reassert Kant’s philosophical position that his theory is not utilitarian in character. He argues that even if we may trace certain utilitarian traits in the applicative consequences, the theory as such cannot be utilitarian even in a remote sense. His
reasoning is that there cannot be rational contradiction in a moral imperative and the apparent contradictions are basically in the consequences. Besides he also resists the common utilitarian distinction between actions and their motives, since right action implies right motivations.


This work by Robert E. Frederick is a collection of articles by scholars on different issues pertaining to business ethics. This work contains several references to Kantian ethics and brings out its different implications. In this work, we find the contributions of some of today's most renowned writers on business ethics and their reflections on the key areas of business. It also tries to understand the dynamics between business ethics and theory. This is one of the best works which deals with trying to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This work has clear Kantian overtones which are important for a fair ethical policy formation. Thus, though it is not purely a work on Kant, it brings several Kantian principles to business ethics.

**Seel, Gerhard, *How Does Kant Justify the Universal Objective Validity of the Law of Right***

The author of this article addresses an important question: Is it possible to justify the Kantian law of right which is presented in *The Metaphysics of morals* by the categorical imperative. He brings to light the difference between two different groups of scholars who argue in favour and against it. Therefore he clarifies those terms which are related to Kantian theory of morals and shows that these distinctions are due to misunderstanding of Kantian terms and not real conflicts. He clarifies these terms and principles by introducing distinctions that have been neglected earlier. Then he reiterates that the Law of Right can in fact be justified purely by the method of the categorical imperative only.

**1.2 Relevance, Significance and the Newness of My Research***

Thus we have just glanced into some of the studies and researches undertaken on Kant’s ethics. Though these studies have enabled us to understand and apply Kant’s ethics for different areas of human living, they have not completely been explored and especially the application to business
and trade has been scarcely carried out. Moreover, there haven’t been genuine efforts to apply his
categorical imperative to business and trade in its multiple formulations.

Though Kant has been deeply studied by different schools and scholars, the effort to view it in
terms of being applicable to different activities of life have been limited. None of the above
reviewed works have adequately explored the Kantian themes of fairness, benevolence and
goodness. For instance, corruption and lying which are common occurrences in business practices
are rationally disposed by Kant’s ethics. Therefore Kant’s ethics provides an excellent platform to
build an ethical theory to deal with these issues. As I have not come across Kant’s ethics being
studied in relation to these issues, this venture fills the vacuum by providing a solid theoretical
base to counter these practices.

Therefore, this research will facilitate the process of interpreting Kant’s ethics to one of the most
important human activity; *business and trade*. I am confident that a correct interpretation of
Kantian ethics in business will bring about a new transformation in the way we treat each other. It
will help us to alter our approach to each other as managers, customers, sellers and members of
this world.

1.3 Research Problem

As we have stated above, it is beyond contention that business and trade form a vital aspect of our
life today. We could be either the beneficiaries or the victims depending on how they function. If
they are situated on a sound philosophy they would enhance human living or otherwise they can
be a threat to the very fabric of humanity. Therefore, by involving me in this research titled,
*Immanuel Kant’s Ethics for Business and Trade: Application and Relevance*, I am confident that
a genuine and legitimate philosophical foundation would be laid. This would provide an impetus
for further research and study in the future.

1.4 The Aims and Objectives of the Research
• To highlight the role of philosophy in the field of Business and Trade

• Though every system runs on a philosophy of its own, my research aims to present an objective and a reliable philosophy which would have a universal relevance.

• To bring Immanuel Kant to the forefront and to recognize his contributions for the world of Business and Trade.

• To make Kant appealing to the modern world through contextual interpretation of his philosophy.

• To emphasize the urgency of regulating the ethics of Business and Trade in today’s context, which is guided by the principles of egoism and profit-making.

• To project the importance of an appropriate ideology to the policy-making bodies of Business and Trade industries, and to recommend Kant’s ethics to be the basis of such enterprises.

### 1.5 Research Concerns / Questions

• Can philosophy be adequately applied to Business and Trade?

• How to replace the existing egoistic philosophies of Business and Trade Industry with genuinely altruistic ones?

• Does Kant’s philosophy of ethics provide a full proof principle for a fair and open Business and trade policies?

• Are we open to establish a value-based society discarding all those patterns of life which we have been living so far?
• How can Kant’s ethics of the 18th century be effectively passed on to the present day generation?

• How do I objectively read the pulse of the society while interpreting Kant’s ethics for the competitive world of Business and Trade?

1.6 Hypothesis

Business and Trade affects our living and those involved in it seem to have only profit as their prime agenda. And in the process they dare even to compromise with all the values and priorities. Their responsibilities towards the society have taken the back seat. As a result, there is a disparity in the social living pattern of the people where the rich amass wealth and the poor suffer every sort of inconveniences in the society. This disequilibrium needs a balancing act. The major issue concerned in this project is to insert values of fraternity, sharing and a spirit of unity in to Business and Trade industries which is usually considered to be purely a profit-making affair. It is definitely acceptable to make profit but it cannot be done at any cost. Profit making should abide by certain precise ethical norms. We are in a society, where our confidence in the social order has been shattered with repeated news of scams and scandals. This shows how profit making becomes a priority ahead of all other values. It leads the society to a greedy world narrowing down the gap between the irrational and the rational. Money which only has an exchange value becomes an ultimate value and sadly often the only value.

Many solutions have been attempted in the past to solve but of no avail and that does not take us to a conclusion that there is no way to find a solution. In my assessment, the ethics of Kant hypothesises to provide an approach which I would like to unearth in this project. Kant’s presentation of the moral law definitely offers a way to deal with this issue. While the numerable external laws have failed to check this sort of amassing wealth by a few, it is only an awareness of the internal law alone gives us hope. Kant’s moral law leading to the Categorical Imperative perpetuates a process of human centred ethical practices in business and trade which is the hypothesis of this research.
1.7 Research Methodology and Techniques

The research is an attempt to present a viable philosophical system which would lay a solid foundation for a business and trade policy that aims at the holistic development of the society. Therefore the nature of the research is descriptive which involves extensive desk-work, interpreting the ethics of Immanuel Kant for the world of Business and Trade. It would involve an elaborate reading of the primary works of Kant and also the available secondary sources so as to demonstrate my hypothesis. It is not the scope of this work to enter into an empirical study as it is a theoretical descriptive philosophical study. As mathematical formulas are applied to finding solutions at a theoretical level, so also the Kantian formulations are applied to different fields such as politics, sociology, Religion etc… This work is basically an evaluation of the functioning of business and trade from a Kantian paradigm at a theoretical level.

1.8 Procedural Division of the Work

It is a six-part research which aims to systematically consolidate the findings of the research in a logical and coherent manner. The first chapter consists of the literary review which reveals the limitedness of the works done in this area and presents a vision for the future. It also presents the method, hypothesis, objectives and the research concerns of this work.

This second chapter is an opening into the basic ethical principles of Kant. It explicates the major ethical notions in the philosophy of Kant such as; Good and Evil, Maxim, Imperative, Goodwill and the principles of Moral Obligation. Therefore, this is an important chapter which will present an overview of Kant’s ethics and at the same time serve as a great aid and a solid foundation for the forthcoming sections.

In order to apply Kant’s ethics to business and trade, we need to be acquainted with the business-economic thought that shaped business and trade during the time of Kant and the theories and issues which were dominant at that time. So, in this chapter, we make a brief study of the prominent economists of Kant’s time, theories of business and trade, different trade practices and their effect and impact on the society. We will also analyse the various allied issues such as; advertising,
consumer protection and the role of ethics in the process. Applying Kantian foundations, a philosophical response to these issues will also be deliberated.

Business, Commerce or trade move with one point agenda: profit. And in doing so, they become accustomed to employ unethical and unwanted means in order to maximise profit. They adhere to wrong methods and policies which are a threat to the very fabric of the society. It is not always virtues that take upper hand rather vices prevail as evil makes its way overriding the good. In this chapter, we explore Kant’s theory of virtues and suggest possible ways of integrating it into business and trade. The virtue ethics of Kant can be a force that guides and upholds moral values and protects the interest of common man.

Kant’s ethics culminates in his exciting ethical principle; the categorical imperative. It is the culmination of Kant’s theory of morals where Kant invites everyone to act on a universal maxim as responsible legislators treating everyone as an end in him/herself. In my opinion, a realization of this principle by everyone will bring forth meaning to purposeful existence of humanity. An understanding of this imperative would make acts like lying or promise-breaking an impossibility which is a vital principle in all business dealings. I firmly believe that this imperative would function as a benchmark for all trade and business transactions, we would treat this chapter in some depth.

The final chapter attempts to highlight certain concrete suggestions and personal reflections for the application of the ethics of Immanuel Kant for a humanitarian society. It would present an engaging response to the issue where a larger social responsibility shared by all may be visualized. The aspect of social responsibility of business in the light of Kantian ethics would be stressed in this chapter. Profit making while being tolerated, should not be the prime interest of business and trade. We would evolve at certain specific proposals using Kantian principles for the benefit of all in the society. We try to establish certain justifiable business and trade practices for an anthropocentric world. Finally, Kant’s famous notion of Kingdom of ends would be discussed to provide an ideal moral world community in which the corporate citizens would have a decisive role for the enhancement of humanity. Thus this research offers immense scope for the progress of our society. With such thrilling prospects and perspectives, Kantian theory of ethics will make itself relevant in the various issues pertaining to the society.
Kant though lived an unassuming life at the remote town of Konigsberg and not having travelled beyond the breadth and width of his small town, he could still influence philosophical thought of most thinkers since his time to this day. His impact is still inevitable, even for those who detest his works. The eighteenth century world was greatly distinct from our times, yet his thinking penetrates into a whole range of philosophical works. From his epistemology to his ethics, metaphysics to Science and Aesthetics to Religion Kant is all-pervasive. A versatile thinker with a whole range of varieties and depth alone can adequately reflect on vital issues of human life. Therefore, the choice of Kant’s ethical theory as the paradigm for undertaking a study on business and trade is definitely promising as our research would further substantiate it.