

A Survey of factors Affecting Students Ethical Attitude toward Medical Disobedience

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Introduction

- Government regulations, particularly post-Roe v. Wade, create ethical conflicts for physicians between patient care and legal constraints.¹
- Decisions influenced by external pressures can negatively affect patient health.¹

Importance

- Limited research exists on factors influencing medical professionals' willingness to engage in or avoid medical disobedience.
- Findings could inform programs that empower medical professionals to prioritize patient well-being over external pressures.

Goals

- Identify key factors—political ideology, religiosity, and ethical educational experiences—that influence ethical attitudes toward medical disobedience.
- Assess whether ethical education, such as the study trip to Auschwitz, influences medical students' ethical attitudes toward medical disobedience.

Hypothesis

- We hypothesize: Students who attended the a study trip to Auschwitz will more often favorably rate actions or agree with ethical disobedience in cases where it improves patient care compared to those who did not attend, after accounting for other variables.

Aims and Objectives

- Quantify how political beliefs, religiosity, and ethical education impact medical students' attitudes on medical disobedience.
- Survey medical students using standardized measures of religiosity and political ideology, then analyze correlations with their approval or disapproval of physician medical disobedience in hypothetical scenarios.

Methods

- We conducted a prospective quantitative survey-based study.
- Medical students currently enrolled at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine were contacted and asked to complete a 10-minute online survey via Qualtrics.

Survey Components

- Basic background info
- Political Placement measure
- Religiosity Measure
- Hypothetical cases of physicians disobedience
 - Students were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with disobedience cases.
- Attendance of study trip to Auschwitz

Rational for Methods

- Political ideology and religiosity measures and multiered agreement/disagreement provide quantitative data.
- Study trip to Auschwitz attendance was asked at the end to prevent response bias.

Analysis Methods

- Cronbach's α was used to measure internal validity of:
 - Religiosity
 - Political ideology
 - Ethical disobedience
- Multivariate regression was used to examine potential associations between religiosity, political ideology and study trip participation on attitude toward disobedience.

Results

Descriptive

- 44 Respondents
 - 21 Male
 - 23 Female
- Trip Attendance
 - 15 attended
 - 29 did not
- Year at OUWB
 - 21 from 2025
 - 9 from 2026
 - 8 from 2027
 - 6 from 2028

Reliability

- Cronbach's α
 - High internal reliability for religiosity ($\alpha = 0.873$)
 - High internal reliability for political ideology ($\alpha = 0.974$)
 - Low internal reliability for ethical disobedience ($\alpha = 0.126$)

Multivariate Regression

- Conservative political ideology was significantly negatively associated with ethical attitude toward disobedience on vignettes 1 ($\beta = -.760$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .659$), 3 ($\beta = -.435$; $p < .01$; $R^2 = .262$), and 4 ($\beta = .690$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .430$)
- Conservative political ideology was significantly positively associated with ethical attitude toward disobedience on vignette 2 ($\beta = .373$; $p < .05$; $R^2 = .152$).
- For religiosity and holocaust trip attendance variables in the vignettes 1,2,3,4 ($p > .05$), after political ideation was standardized
- For all variables in Vignette 5, ($p > .05$)

Conclusions

- The vacillation of ethical attitude toward medical disobedience across case types illustrates that students do not have a principled view of disobedience. Rather, their ethical attitude toward disobedience appear highly situational and primarily influenced by political beliefs rather than consistent ethical principles. That is, students appear to support medical disobedience only when they agree substantively with the actor's perceived ideology or motivations
- The 5 item scale and 3 item scale we used to measure religiosity and political ideation respectively, were highly internally reliable and gave a accurate measure of individuals religiosity and political orientation.
- The holocaust in medicine trip and religiosity did not significantly impact individuals view of medical disobedience when political ideology is controlled for.
- For vignette 1,3, & 4 the more conservative individuals scored, the less positive view of ethical disobedience they had.
- For vignette 2, the more conservative people scored, the more positive view of ethical disobedience they had.

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Acknowledgements

None