

**STUDENTS AND BUSINESS ETHICS: AN EXAMINATION OF BUSINESS STUDENTS AT A COLLEGE IN FLORIDA**

Dr. Lam D. Nguyen, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Quan H.M. Tran, University of Economics, Hochiminh City, Vietnam

Dr. Bahaudin G. Mujtaba, H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Ms. Chat N. Tran, Division of International Trade, Foreign Trade University, Hochiminh City, Vietnam

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**ABSTRACT**

Ethics is one of the cornerstones of sustainable growth. An ethical culture provides support to achieve sustainable growth. An ethical business environment is not only critical for the creation of a fair competition in the market but also for the creation of stability and prosperity of a country. Ethical leaders and employees can positively influence the decisions and behaviors that lead to sustainability. Ethical behavior, therefore, is expected of everyone in the modern workplace. The role of business ethics in real-world corporations and the effectiveness of ethics training in business schools have drawn attention in the past. However, recent collapse of global financial markets and the increased number of lawsuits in unethical cases have again brought back the attention to this matter. This study used Clark and Clark's (1966) Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) measure to examine the relationship between age, gender, level of education, management experience, ethics course taken, and ethics training to moral maturity in a business college setting. This research surveyed 286 business students at a state college in Florida to measure their Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES). Statistically significant differences were found in the variables of age, management experience, and ethics training. Gender, however, did not lead to any significant differences. Consequently, Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development theory regarding ethical maturity is supported since older respondents have higher business ethics scores than younger respondents. It is also evident that those participants with more years of management experience have higher business ethics scores. In this study, literature on moral development theory is presented along with practical applications, suggestions and implications for educators, managers, and employees.

Keywords: *Moral development; business ethics; business students; ethics training.*