

Business Ethics Perspectives of Thai Law Students: a Study of Age and Gender in Moral Development

Bahaudin G. Mujtaba
Nova Southeastern University

Pawinee Pattaratalwanich
Ramkhamhaeng University, Institute of International Studies

Chaowanee Chawavisit
Surindra Rajabhat University

Decisions regarding right and wrong are naturally impacted by learning and experience. Other factors might be age and gender which may influence one's decisions regarding ethical dilemmas. This research surveyed 145 male and 72 female law students to measure their Personal Business Ethics Scores (PBES) and to determine whether age and gender make a difference in ethical maturity. The PBES is used by researchers to measure individual commitment to integrity and observance of the laws regulating current business activities. This study contributes to the theory of moral development as it is tested with future lawyers in Thailand. The results of this research suggest that age and gender are statistically significant factors in the moral maturity of law students. Suggestions and implications are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics is an important part of effective leadership. Without integrity and ethics, a person is not able to become a good leader in his/her profession, industry or culture. Rassameesukhanon explains that “different industries may need different types of leadership” (2008, p. 91). Different industries might require diverse traits and skills from their leaders; however, it is a fact that all industries and professions need effective leaders. Leaders gain the respect of their employees by being ethical and good role models. “The employees’ respect in their leaders, according to the Thai culture, is fundamental and this aspiration connects leaders and employees” (Rassameesukhanon, 2008, p. 91). As such, it is imperative that the future leaders of the legal industry in Thailand understand their perspective regarding business ethics as they are likely to face many ethical dilemmas in their decision-making in the workplace.

Ethics has been the subject of study and research for many years (Mujtaba, Cavico, McCartney, DiPaolo, 2009; Cavico and Mujtaba; 2009; Clark, 2008; Crary, 2008; McGill, 2008;