

THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED UNIVERSITIES AND COURSES IN ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD BUSINESS ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Unfortunate unethical events are continuing in the business arena and now more than ever these business judgmental shortcomings focus attention on the ethics of business executives. Thus, colleges and universities must continue to address business ethics as they prepare and train the next generation of executives. Educational institutions should be concerned with the environmental factors and curricular additions or modifications that may impact their graduating students who will become future business leaders.

The purpose of this study is to examine students' attitude toward business ethics and to determine: (1) if attending a religiously affiliated educational institution impact these ethical attitudes, and (2) if completing ethics courses and/or religious studies courses effects these ethical attitudes.

A questionnaire was completed by a quasi random convenience sample of undergraduate students at six different colleges and universities located in the northeast region of the United States. Completed questionnaires were collected from 771 undergraduate students.

The survey consisted of the Attitudes Towards Business Ethics Questionnaire (ATBEQ) (Preble and Reichel 1988) as well as questions gathering approximate demographic information.

There is evidence to suggest that students attending religiously affiliated colleges and universities may have attitudes about business that are more ethical. Additionally, the argument that ethics can be taught is supported. Business majors who had completed at least one ethics course were found to have a more strict ethical perspective. No differences were found with non-business majors who had one or more ethics courses compared to those students that did not complete such a course.

Results also indicated that business majors with one or more religious studies course were slightly more ethical in their outlooks. The influence of religious studies courses on ethical attitudes was far greater for non-business majors.

The implications are that ethical education and institutional climate may play a role in effectively shaping students attitudes about business ethics. This study suggests that completing ethics courses for business majors and religious studies courses for non-business majors may impact undergraduate students' attitudes towards business ethics. Colleges and universities must continue to focus on the challenges and address opportunities to achieve success in business ethics education.

References Available on Request