INFLUENCE OF FORMAL MENTORING

ON ETHICAL AWARENESS

IN THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Joan Lynnette Whitehall-Kronk

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor

of Philosophy

Omega Graduate School

Graduation Date

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CHAPTER 1

Ethics Awareness in the workplace determines what is right, proper, and just in the decisions that affect other people. How we develop relationships with others become more important in the future than in the past as our society becomes more crowded, our economy more competitive, and our technology more complex in a global society (Hosmer, 2011). "Mentoring relationships, in most cases, have been unquestioningly and uncritically accepted as fundamental to foster learning in the workplace, advance careers, help new employees learn workplace culture, and provide developmental and psychological support" (Hansman, 2002).

The real estate market is ever-changing due to economic factors, challenges with cross-cultural diversity, and technology in the industry. Therefore, the education process should be current and include developing mentoring programs, conflict resolution when negotiating, and strategies to encourage team building. Furthermore, due to technological advances using the internet and universal business ethics for transaction processing from a global perspective, additional methods for developing Global Virtual Teams (GVT) become essential to gain knowledge and an implementation strategy. As these techniques are incorporated into training, due to the technology and GVT cross-cultural diversity of globalization in society, a new level of professionalism could raise the bar in the real estate industry.

Problem Statement

Real estate professionals lack formal mentoring programs to inform their ethical awareness which leads to unethical practices.

The decline of ethical behavior could be compounded by either lack of training or a lack of moral core values due to the corruption of a self-serving society (Segal, 2009). Self-interested behavior can quickly lead to unethical practices, such as deception in negotiation (Ingerson, 2014).

Background of the Problem

The Realtor Code of Ethics provides a minimum standard of services to the consumer. Since the consumer's real estate transaction can be one of the most significant investments, a higher quality of services should be expected from a real estate professional and the company represented (Blackburn & McGhee, 2004). Like other professional industries, some of the common pitfalls consumers experience are either due to lack of (a) training or (b) professional ethics. There are trade-offs with the cost associated with training and downtime of production by the Managing Broker. Most Managing Brokers actively list and sell to supplement the cash flow and stay competitive in the marketplace; they are in direct competition with the agents in the company (Filisko, 2014). Resources, either in-office training staff or outsourcing opportunities for training for implementing a mentoring program, can be crucial to provide the real estate industry with the necessary tools to implement a company culture of ethics awareness.

The pattern of thinking to be able to transform the perception in the real estate industry to that of ethical business practices with integrity must be exhibited from the Managing Broker to the agents as an example for other leaders in the real estate industry and other community leaders to follow. The Broker influences the culture of the organization by setting an example of ethical behavior to transform the real estate industry's perception and establish professional, ethical business practices with integrity (Walker, 2013, p. 460). God has directed the path for those who have the calling to be in the marketplace and start a movement to make changes, so the consumer will trust the professionals to provide service in the best interest of the consumer. When agents can connect to a real estate company with clear core value-driven organizational concepts, including ethical business practices with integrity, only then can they become a model for others to follow in the community.

The setting of this Research

An educational task force has been established in both Real Estate Associations in North Alabama and Middle Tennessee to present to the Real Estate Commission in both States as a recommendation to require formal training to facilitate a higher standard of ethical awareness and professionalism. In addition, a focus group comprised of Brokers, a Past Board President, a current Commissioner, a current Instructor, and three task force members have volunteered to work on the focus group to review the survey sent to real estate professionals in North Alabama Multiple Listing System (NALMLS). A similar survey was sent to all MLS members in 2018 regarding utilizing training resources available to real estate professionals and emailed by the NALMLS board staff with a favorable response. The staff has offered the survey as a model setting a standard of participation for a foundation to review as a baseline for a future survey.

The eXp Realty International Director of Education has encouraged the study of the influence of the formal mentoring program required by all new agents for eXp Realty International organization with less than five transactions in the prior year. . The mentee must be assigned a mentor for the first three transactions, attend a cloud-based Management Learning System (MLS) consisting of ten models, shadow the mentor for listing and buyer presentations, and all contracts reviewed by mentor and management. The comparative statistical analysis will compare individual real estate professionals with formal mentoring with those who do not and the impact on ethical awareness in the real estate industry.

Thesis Statement

This study is designed to compare, based on statistical analysis, individual real estate professionals with formal mentoring and those who do not and the impact on ethical awareness in the real estate industry.

Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis 1

There is a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding ethical concerns when formal mentoring programs are required for real estate professionals.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding ethical consistency when real estate professionals require formal mentoring programs.

Research Hypothesis 3

There is a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding ethical integrity when formal mentoring programs are required for real estate professionals.

Research Hypothesis 4

There is a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding ethical behavior when formal mentoring programs are required for real estate professionals.

Scope of the Research

An email requesting participation will be distributed to the real estate professionals in the North Alabama Multiple Listing Service (NALMLS). There are 125 real estate offices with over 3000 members. eXp Realty International staff will submit a survey of a population of over 65,000 agents internationally. However, it will focus on the Tennessee real estate professionals of approximately 1,000. The data is to be collected from a Survio of the participating individuals as a random sample. The random sample to comprise the anticipated 10% response from the total emailed surveys.

Research Assumptions

The opportunities for technology growth in the real estate industry have evolved. The industry is working with cross-cultural clients and recruiting multi-cultural multi-lingual agents to support international business opportunities investing in the United States. It will take a team of qualified, trained real estate professionals to support the changing industry with specialized communication and technology skills and a universal standard of ethical awareness to provide a corporate culture of integrity locally and internationally with core values of moral leadership.

The formal mentoring guidelines are an essential part of the process. However, the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship is critical to the mentee's success. "Seven Steps to ensure effective mentoring relationship; 1) Choosing a protege (are they teachable), 2) Connecting (communicate informally to establish a rapport), 3) Outlining the relationship (agree on issues to develop), 4) Getting to the bottom of it (what are the roadblocks and priorities), 5)  Concrete actions (questioning them to what is their next step), 6) Following up (good or bad move forward), 7) Get out of the way (mission accomplished cut them loose)" (Merlevede, 2004, p.15).

Significance of the Research

"Making a case for mentoring, once oriented into company values and policies, it is necessary to support their efforts in continuing a mentoring program. The added value is loyalty, retention, and motivates them to keep on learning" (Merlevede, 2004, p. 30). Researching the baseline knowledge of ethical awareness can indicate the education requirements needed to fill the gap to support the future of a global real estate industry. Advanced strategies include a knowledge base of leadership models, the significance of mentoring and coaching, virtual team building, communication skills, cross-culture corporate integrity, and the technology growth of the industry supporting globalization. As a result of the research, new training opportunities in the local community could be replicated nationally and internationally due to the research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this non-experimental research design is to use comparative statistical analysis between real estate professionals that require formal mentoring and no formal mentoring. Exploring the influence of mentoring on ethical awareness and professionalism in the real estate industry would raise the level beyond the base “Code of Ethics Standards." A lack of consistent business ethics in decision-making by leaders has become problematic for contemporary organizations. Business ethics is not a new concept. The literature review revealed the foundation of ethical awareness in developing business ethics in leadership training.

An inquiry into the history of business ethics and the evolution of leadership training will also discover the lack of integrity training in the business curriculum in many institutions. The lack of integrity and core values in the corporate culture impacts the reputation of the business community in the United States and those businesses in the global marketplace.

Technology advances have influenced the evolution resulting in the management of remote teams within many industries impacting the level of communication and development of those individuals working outside of the brick and mortar of an office environment. For example, virtual teams incorporate cross-cultural communication skills with cloud-based technology such as Skype, virtual campus environments, and Zoom conferencing using the internet to connect and collaborate with a diverse workforce and the traditional face-to-face with individuals. Additionally, research indicates that developing trust requires unique communication skills for leadership communication development in a remote work environment.

Reformation in the education curriculum recommendations includes developing a leadership model with technical skills and transformational leadership models, including collaborative communication skills, emotional communication skills, cross-cultural awareness, mentoring, and coaching to develop others to reach their full potential. The core competency of character development by living and leading with integrity can become integrated into the education systems training resulting in authentic leadership to change the corporate culture to integrity with ethical core values. Mentoring programs within these organizations reflect society; thus, they must continually accommodate a changing world" (Hansman, 2002).

Resources Researched

The literature reviewed was obtained from a variety of sources. The Omega Graduate School (OGS) Library provided access to ProQuest, EBSCO, and TEL online. The Library of Congress was visited in November 2017 and resulted in downloading articles, journals, books, and dissertations. Articles, dissertations, and literature were researched from the following institutions: North Central University, Regent University, Washington State University, Oxford Graduate School, and Fielding Graduate School. The journal's resources provided current information, including the Journal of Business Ethics, Communications of the Association for Information Systems, Harvard Business Review, Group Decision and Negotiation, and Educational Technology & Society, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Information Systems, International Journal of Management Research and Review, Management Journal, and Critical Perspectives on Mentoring.

Historical Ethics

Religious Ethics

The Moral Quest (Grenz, 2000) examined "What is ethics? Viewed from the Christian perspective, we could answer, is the study of how humans ought to live as informed by the Bible and Christian convictions. Ethics itself is a broader concept. The English word is the anglicized form of the Creek ethica, which comes from etheos, meaning "related to the character. One does not to be a Christian to engage in philosophical reflection on morality. Nor does this endeavor necessarily draw primarily from Scripture or Christian tradition. Rather, human reason stands at the center of the philosophical ethical enterprise” (Grenz, 2000, p. 23).

Business Ethics

The business ethics documented originally in a dissertation (Abend, 2008) published a book in (2014) of business ethics beginning in the 1850s to the 1930s. According to Abend, morality consists of three levels: the behavioral level, the normative level; and the moral background includes what moral concepts exist in a society.

Business Ethics in Real Estate

Contract Law

Contract law sets out five principles of justice embedded in contract law: 1) Justice as the equal exchange: 2) Justice as the honest wager; 3) Justice as the term that fits; 4) Justice as the deserved return and 5) Justice as the advantage not to be taken—each of this response to a distinct social sense of justice (Rakoff, 2016). Non-attorney professionals utilize standard real estate contract templates. However, there are limitations for individuals adding additional content without an attorney's review before consumers' signatures.

Code of Ethics

The preamble to the Realtor Code of Ethics accepting this standard as their own, REALTORS ® pledge to observe its spirit in all of their activities whether conducted personally, through associates or others, or via technological means and to conduct their business in accordance with the tenets set forth in the Code of Ethics (NAR, 2019). It has become a minimum standard in doing business with the Public, Property, and between REALTORS®. A real estate professional is required to attend a ‘Code of Ethics course every two years. It is the responsibility of the REALTORS® to identify and take steps, through enforcement of the Code of Ethics and by notifying appropriate regulatory bodies, to eliminate practices that may damage the public or which might discredit or bring dishonor to the real estate profession.

Agency Law

The agency law in a real estate transaction defines the legal relationship between real estate professionals and their clients” (NAR). Each state has agency laws that set forth the duties that real estate professionals owe to their clients and what disclosures need to be reviewed by the consumer. Historically the Seller assumed the real estate professional represented them in the transaction. When implementing the agency law in Alabama in 1996, it defines the real estate professional's responsibility to discuss how they want representation with both the Seller and Buyer. Traditionally, most states relied upon the common law of agency to define the scope of the agency relationship. Still, some states have adopted the transactional brokerage model where there is no agency relationship as defined by statute. Most states allow a real estate professional to represent both sides in the transaction as a dual agent if the client's consent to the relationship. However, some brokerages do not allow the dual agency relationship due to the risk of liability if the REALTORS® discloses confidential information between both parties in the transaction without written permission.

Professional Standards

National Association of Realtors (NAR) implemented a guideline for Pathway to Professionalism. While the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the National Association establishes objective, enforceable ethical standards governing the professional conduct of REALTORS®, it does not address issues of courtesy or etiquette. Based on input from many sources, the Professional Conduct Working Group of the Professional Standards Committee of the National Association of Realtors (NAR) developed a list of professional courtesies for use by REALTORS® voluntarily. However, the list is not all-inclusive and may be supplemented due to local customs and practices.

Ombudsmen

Every local and state association of REALTORS® is required to offer, either directly or as part of a cooperative enforcement agreement (consistent with Professional Standards Statement #40, Cooperative Enforcement Agreements), ombudsman services to members, clients, and consumers since January 1, 2016. The ombudsman process usually involves parties who have not filed an ethics complaint or arbitration request but have experienced a breakdown in communication requiring informal resolution (although an ombudsman may also be used where a complaint has been filed). Often the ombudsman functions as an intermediary who communicates the concerns of one party to the other over the phone so that a positive relationship can be restored" (NAR). When the local Real Estate Association is notified of a complaint by the public or another REALTOR®, an Ombudsman is assigned to informally gather information from both sides of the complainant and the offender. Sometimes it could be a misunderstanding or misinformation. If they cannot resolve the issue, the Ombudsmen can recommend going to the next step, the mediation process.

Mediation

"Mediation normally involves monetary disputes (unless the association also offers ethics mediation) where an arbitration request may have been filed. First, parties generally meet face-to-face at a prearranged time with their mediator, who encourages both parties to come to a mutually satisfactory resolution of their dispute (NAR). Next, a third party trained in mediation is assigned to meet and document the issue. If the mediator cannot resolve the issue and a violation of the Code of Ethics is identified, the next step is arbitration.

Arbitration

An impartial panel is selected at the local board association before any litigation. The panel is informed to review any document, meet with the parties for a detailed interview process, and keep details confidential. The parties have agreed to abide by the panel's decision, and any discipline, fines, or commission disputes are then documented for the parties to agree and sign off. The party in violation could be fined, attend required training, or possibly result in losing one's real estate license for major repeated violations.

Training Requirements for Licensee

Pre-Licensing

“To list for sale or lease real estate in any U.S. jurisdiction, the individual must hold a real estate license in the state or territory in which the sale/lease is taking place. State governments grant licenses. Often, each state government will require a certain number of education hours to obtain and maintain a real estate license" (NAR). A minimum of 30 CE classes are required before taking the real estate exam in each state. However, States might vary in their requirements. The major topics include licensing requirements, license status, the responsibility of qualifying broker, associate broker status, disciplinary actions and processing, agency law, handling of funds. The course is in preparation for the State Real Estate exam to become licensed to List and Sell the property.

Post Licensing

An additional 30 CE classes are required to prepare how to do the day-to-day real estate business, marketing guidelines, how to prospect, working with sellers, contract writing, best practices in negotiating a contract, and working with buyers. These are state requirements.

Continuing Education

These courses are required to maintain the license in each state with a minimum of 16 CE hours every two years. The 'Code of Ethics' course is one of the required CE courses. Advanced certification includes Negotiation and Mediation, Military Relocation, Senior Real Estate Specialist, e-Pro (IT expert), etc.

Educational Business Ethics

Business Ethics and Law:

Educational reform documented (Klein & Rice, 2014) the United States' failure to educate its students leaves them unprepared to compete and threatens the country's ability to thrive in a global economy and maintain its leadership role. Rice proposed policy recommendations; to implement educational expectations and assessments; make structural changes to provide students with good choices, hold schools and policymakers accountable for results, and raise public awareness. Due to inadequate education, the proposed policy recommendations could prepare students for a global economy in the workforce.

Transition Religious/Secular Ethics:

The impact of the different leadership styles, such as a transition from transactional to transformational to ultimately a spiritual leadership style of transcendental, might have a significant impact on ethical awareness.

Greenleaf (2002) suggested that moral authority is another way to define servant leadership. If the leader and follower are both principle-centered, they will follow truth, natural law, a common vision, and shared values.

Zsolnai (2011) defines the differences between spirit, spiritual, and spirituality, which separates religious doctrine to adopt secular societal concerns in the education field. The book also uses diverse value perspectives of differing worldviews to extend traditional reflections on searching for meaning, identity, and success to implement spiritual/servant leadership principles.

Burton (2017) "Spirituality and business ethics should not be considered synonymous were providing business ethics in a curriculum or as a surface-level training occasionally does not serve as a sufficient equivalent to leaders who practice spirituality from an intrinsic connection. Consequently, organizations who believe such classes serve as adequate training to effectively influence and prepare leaders decision-making practices are gravely mistaken and are more likely to become suddenly overtaken by self-gratifying business practices that do not improve performance".

Mentoring/Coaching

Strycharczyk & Elvin (2014) addressed various organizational issues, including motivation, performance, staff retention, behavior, trust, attention span, and teamwork. The case studies described the common characteristics of organizations that not only survived but thrived during difficult times. Teamwork could include a system for mentoring and coaching to be implemented for the organization's sustainability. When a complementary fit between mentors and mentees establishes an effective relationship, mentee learning new skills, and improvement of mentee job performance" (Marshall, 2017).

The concept of mentoring and coaching with emotional intelligence (EQ) (Merlevede, Patrick, & Bridoux, 2006) has, unfortunately, been overlooked by many managers and leaders using the excuse of "lack of time. " With the right attitude by the mentor, could result in retention and a motivated individual when top performers take an interest in the success of others in an organization. From the "mentee's perspective the mentor is someone; 1) not in competition, 2) trustworthy, 3) who has been there, 4) who can confide" (Merlevede, 2004, p. 4). The relationship could be established through face-to-face meetings. However, the individuals could be located at a distance from each other, where communication would be with cloud-based technology and social media. Mentoring is a process of change for the mentor and the mentee (Ford, 2017).

Accepted mentoring is practiced in two major industries: 1) educational institutions and 2) nursing. However, there is a lack of academic scholarly research on the impact of ethical awareness with formal mentoring programs for real estate professionals. Some suggestions from the following current dissertation in both the medical and educational industries have implemented face-to-face mentoring and recommended combining more structure and utilizing virtual mentoring programs to assure a strategic guided mentoring program.

The medical industry has face-to-face mentored, and Clement's dissertation (2019) recommendation includes a hybrid method utilizing technology to include virtual mentoring. "Traditional, face-to-face mentoring, with a mentor as a role model and coach, has been utilized by the nursing profession as a strategy to prepare nurses for practice within a variety of settings. A renewed and robust focus on mentoring within doctoral nursing education is needed to support not only doctorly prepared nurse educators but also the quality of future research in nursing education" (Clement, 2019).

In the education field, the results showed mentors promote school culture, are a source of information, build relationships, use data to drive discussion, provide an opportunity for reflection, conduct observations, connect theory with practice, and model professional behavior as effective strategies. Mentor teachers indicated that effective communication is crucial when mentoring new teachers. Like teaching, mentoring should be strategic and guided by effective strategies that will ensure success; instead, it is misguided and lacks structure in mentor practices" (Tominson, 2019). Tominson's study assessed the effectiveness of implementing a strategic and guided structure to the mentoring program as new teachers enter the educational institutions.

Reverse Mentoring

Traditional mentoring is pairing a senior experience individual providing advice and counsel to a younger individual. "However, reverse mentoring also holds promise for building the leadership pipeline, fostering better inter-generational relationships, enhancing diversity initiatives, and driving innovation. For individuals, reverse mentoring is an opportunity for learning by both participants and a creative way to engage millennial employees" (Murphy, 2012).

"Information computer technology (ITC) and reverse mentoring for millennials in today's competitive organizational environment could serve to bridge the gap between needed leadership competencies and building needed innovator skills in the millennial cohort. Reverse mentoring can be a forward-thinking organizational tool that fosters cross-functional generational learning in addition to supporting the millennial preference for a continuous learning environment" (Harrison. 2017).

Corporate Culture

A Decline of Ethics

Crisis of Ethics in Business: The lack of ethical and effective leadership resulted in the collapse of Enron, Arthur Andersen, WorldCom, and Tyco. In addition, other companies across the globe demonstrated chronic problems such as bullying, abuse of power, unethical and corrupt practices, toxic emotions, social isolation, alienation in the workplace, poor work-life balance, and other employees' psychological well-being (Tanno, 2017).

Corporate Reputation

In the Harvard Business Review (Carucci, 2016) reports that companies unintentionally provoke lousy behavior. Some examples of bad behavior either modeled by leaders, setting unrealistic target goals, ethical policy's established; however, the review might not be reinforced, and ultimately focusing on the reprisal of violating ethics policy instead of supporting the positive outcome of the benefits to the reputation of the employees and the company.

There is a fine line between ethical and unethical dilemmas employees face in day-to-day operations (Pepper, 2016). However, when a company communicates core values, leadership must set an example. Hence, periodic training to reinforce ethical choices, corporate culture, and reputation of integrity. According to an American study (Bracey, 2017) indicates there are ten main components of organizational reputation used in reputation measurement systems for core competency; 1) ethics, 2) employees/workplace, 3) financial performance, 4) leadership, 5) management, 6) social responsibility, 7) customer focus, 8) quality, 9) reliability, and 10) emotional appeal.

Leadership Influence

The author (Blakely, 2015) reported based on personal experience within an organization that identifies eight core competencies**;** “(1) interpersonal effectiveness, (2) organizational stewardship, (3) personal mastery/technical competence, (4) results-driven, (5) customer service, (6) creative thinking, (7) systems thinking, and (8) flexibility/adaptability” defined as critical for success in an organization. These are all valid characteristics for those who have the desire to become mentors. The culture of an organization suggested being determined by the CEO, or leadership, whose strength and integrity can foster positive organization values. Conversely, if the CEO or leadership emanates negatively, the organization climate lacks integrity and organizational values.

Empowering Others

Huffaker dissertation (2017) Me to We explored traditional organizational models, including forms of leadership that use top-down, command-and-control hierarchy to steer the direction and an alternative phenomenon observed in practice defined as collaborative leadership culture (CLC). In CLC, organizations collaborate and determine where they are going, coordinate work, and sustain commitment through engagement, participation, collaborative practices. “Evolving technology and networks of supply and demand propel human society to be more connected, transparent, and fast-changing.” Authority tends to be distributed to empower the employees, not from the top-down hierarchy. The traditional leadership role held all the authority; however, in the CLC organizational model, the leader’s role becomes more complex by developing into a mentor and cultural steward, not a top-level manager. The transition to CLC seems to incorporate the characteristics of a spiritual/servant leadership model.

Communication

Learning social media (cloud-based technology) as a communication tool has both benefits and challenges (Lee, 2015). “Extensive research supports the use of social media in business practices in which many companies used tools such as Facebook@Workplace, Twitter, blogs and YouTube for communication and engagement with their customers as well as employees." Introducing new systems can be challenging unless the users realize the benefits of learning new technology as an effective communication tool. The increased communication between associates increased trust, sharing knowledge by sharing information, and increased productivity.

Factors Influencing Ethical Awareness

Ethical Concern (Respect): What does an individual feel and think about an ethical situation as it occurs?

Ethical Consistency (Fairness): Does their behavior support the individual’s consistency to do the right thing?

Ethical Integrity (Responsibility): Is the individual’s integrity supported by a combination of ethical concern and consistency?

Ethical Behavior (Honesty): Is the individual’s ethical behavior consistent with their ethical integrity?

Influence of Globalization on Ethics

Technology

A global survey of over 700 businesses (State of digital business, 2016) recognized that digital transformation is much more than technology alone. “It is a transformation of an entire organization to become agiler and deliver compelling customer experiences.” To operate in a digital world requires changes to the way an organization operates, inside and out. The transformation also impacts an individual’s behavior due to the speed of processing and delivery of information efficiently when communicating.

Riding the Tide of Technology (Cain, Levorchick, Matuszak, et al., 2015) recognized the benefits of emerging technologies to reduce costs and improve process throughput to establish a competitive position in the real estate marketplace. The case study documents how the company adapted to changes when faced with the evolution of “cloud-based computing.” The cloud computing article related to eLoan processing digitally. However, the concept has evolved into an “Agent-Owned Cloud Brokerage” real estate company with eXp Realty International (Press Release, NASDAQ, 2018). A virtual office in the cloud provides technical support, training, formal formal mentoring, and agent orientation in open concept for any team member or prospective agents, client, or vendor accesses for communication. Individuals who embrace the technology and adapt will be introduced to a collaborative culture monitored closely peer-to-peer to establish and maintain the vision and culture core values of integrity. Cloud-based digital technology opens international business opportunities for many industries, including the real estate industry.

**International Business Ethics**: A journal article (Enderles, 2015) analyzed four top-level concepts of international business ethics. The four levels analyzed include; (1) foreign country respecting foreign traditions while disregarding one’s roots, (2) ethical imperialism implied reaching out to the whole world imposing home values and norms excluding host countries values and norms, (3) interconnection where ethics of reciprocity implies finding relevant ethical standards between home and the host country, and (4) globalization implied universal ethical standards applied to all actors on the planet regardless of local traditions and cultures. The term “business and economic ethics” included all three levels of analysis that have been adopted internationally. However, when facing ethical challenges between multinationals, the author recommended forming alliances with like-minded companies and engaging in self-regulation with agreed-upon ethical standards clearly defined and communicated. Building trust is a critical component between the host country and another country.

In comparison to the top-level approach by Enderle, the International Journal of Management Research and Review (Kukreja, 2015) approached the global marketplace. It focused on interpersonal relationships by developing communication skills and techniques to listen and learn with an open mind to interact and reach out to other cultures to understand the different cultural values better. “Three prerequisites for cross-cultural communications include (1) listening and speaking, (2) observation, (3) flexibility, and (4) patience in understanding the new concept that may differ” (Kukreja, 2015). Interpersonal communication skills are characteristics that individuals can improve when institutions and corporate training offer diversity education in preparation for global business organizations. "The more you understand people, the greater your chance of success in mentoring" in a global economy (Maxwell, 2008, p.3).

**Virtual Teams**: With an increasing number of employees working remotely, even team members being worlds apart becomes a challenge for building virtual teams. Those challenges include bridging the logistical, cultural, and communications gaps to develop a collaborative team built on trust and accountability (Zofi, 2011). "Four C's of high-performance teams; 1) the context for the team (organizational environment), 2) The composition of the team (skills and attitude), 3) competencies of the team (communications skills, trust and conflict resolution, 4) change management skills (continuous improvement to find and fix)" (Dyer, 2007).

**Cross-Cultural Diversity with Virtual Teams**: Virtual teams (VT) are recognized as a boon to organizations. Global Virtual Team (GVT) leaders need to contextualize their approaches. Researchers are required to support by including variables and factors related to differences between cultural worldviews and communications technologies globally (Stahl, Bjorkman, & Morris. 2012). The authors recognize that more research is needed, especially regarding cross-cultural GVT building, to identify leadership styles to enable the best team performance. “Virtual Teams differ from traditional teams because of greater diversity reaching across borders and cross-cultures, reliance on technology for communication purposes (cannot rely on face-to-face meetings) and on-going training required for changes in technology, and greater demands on team leader and mentors to effectively communicate to monitor the moral and concerns they may have to become more effective” (Dyer, 2007, p. 179).

Behavior Analysis

Management education and training from a global perspective should “possess humility of character with fair understanding and recognition of human dignity, gender equality, social justice, empathy, morality and vision for inclusive growth for the betterment of society” (Rao, Kumar, & Mishra, (2014). These are characteristics of the integration of spiritual education as a component of executive education that is lacking and debated by the secular society as too religious. The present teaching is more one-sided, intellectually driven, and does not do enough to produce well-rounded individuals producing citizens of integrity and culturally sensitive.

**Self-Evaluation**

A trait called self-monitoring provides a behavior modification skill to adapt to social demands (Cain, 2012). “Situations factors into how flexible our personality traits can be adjusted in any given situation.” The author gave an example of how Asian-American students (introverts) felt alienated from American schools' brash, backslapping atmosphere. She also questioned the dominant values of American business culture (extrovert), where forced collaboration can stand in the way of innovation, and “where the leadership potential of introverts is often overlooked.” The author focused on how to navigate differences between introvert and extrovert personality traits personally and culturally. For example, determining the motivation of a mentor could be a factor in determining their success. The motives include 1) desire for personal accomplishment (checking off your to-do list),  2) desire for quality relationships (want to be liked, but not as efficient), 3) desire for influence (using your influence to motivate others to perform well)" (Broustein, 2011), p.176).

Ethical Evaluation

Ethical relativism is the view that an individual morally does whatever their society thinks is right. However, what is right in one culture might be wrong in another. To be tolerant of others without disregarding one’s integrity with the standard of not harming another person can be one’s moral responsibility (Manning & Stroud, 2009). The authors recommend a cure for personal misconduct by “overcoming ignorance with education, cultivate a sense of pride by doing the right thing.” The authors also explored the cause of group misconduct and examples of cures for misconduct. Some individuals allow one’s concern for self-interest to cloud one’s views about what is right and justify any misconduct as a result. What is essential from the mentee’s perspective is having confidence in the mentor's attitude of someone who is; 1) not in competition, 2) trustworthy, 3) who has been there, 4) who can confide in” (Merlevede, 2004, p. 4)

Worldview Awareness

"Education that integrates faith and learning, that establishes and shapes a Christian worldview, can help restore lost moral accountability."  It builds a foundation of truth when confronted with a culture of differing worldviews. Then we can know what is right and do what is right" (Dockery, 2008).

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Conclusion

Ethics & Leadership**:** Leaders have duties of diligence, competency, and continuous learning (Elegido, 1996). It is not enough for leaders to act with integrity and honesty but to create a culture of integrity and honesty expected in its corporate culture. A good reputation for being widely trusted and a workforce committed to the firm’s success will positively influence the firm’s performance and standing in the community. “The influence of religious teachings added a further significance to business ethics. Business ethics makes the most sense if one who believes with one’s faith would be truly shortsighted if they were to behave as if they lived in two separate worlds; the ‘ordinary’ world of business on weekdays and the special world of religion on weekends, as the case may be” (Elegido, 1996).

Training Opportunities: There is a lack of ethical awareness in leadership training in most educational institutions and corporate training. The three main areas of leadership training focus on competency, career development, and character, at least of which is character. For Rigg's study (2000), representative characteristics of integrity were honesty, trust, kindness, and respect. Another area lacking in leadership education is intercultural education.

When leadership training includes cross-cultural education, it might support a change of perspective that can reduce prejudices, resentments, and unfounded fears of any foreignness one may encounter (Schrangl, Mortensen, & Moser, 2016).

The results in Holland & Albrecht article (2013) suggested the most critical issues facing worldwide business ethics include; 1) quality of teachers and teaching methods in the educational institutions, 2) the general field of business ethics in corporate training, 3) the environment, 4) quality of business ethics research, 5) the decline of ethics in society and business, 6) concept of being in service to the community, 7) globalization, and 8) the actual implementation of ethics into the business culture.

"In the 21st century, the need for global ethical leadership is not merely a desirable option, but a matter of survival” (Pepper, 2016). According to the ethics trainers/facilitators study, employees commit fraud because there is no oversight. What people believe to be right and wrong in their values justifies their unethical behavior in the workplace. Ethics training conducted in either institutions or the corporate environment should be interactive and integrated with actual case studies specific to day-to-day decisions in the workplace. Then a presentation by small groups could include interaction to engage students in discussing alternative solutions from differing cultural viewpoints. The educator’s multi-media technical skills in developing a business ethics curriculum can be challenging when delivering to multi-cultural students.

The digital technology transformation study included (State of digital business, 2016) delivering a superior experience for customers globally and creating new sources of customer value with a corporate culture of ethics and integrity worldwide.

"What if we could get model communities in this country and model institutions, schools, businesses, and government units that would become islands of excellence in seas of mediocrity? What if they could become models and then transport what they learn and become mentors to others so that this whole spirit of stewardship, of servant leadership, of working at the empowerment process through structures and systems could take root and flourish? (Greenleaf, 2002 p. 12). Then, those who have a heart for mentoring could be world changers.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter defines the methodology used in this research project of a non-experimental research design using comparative statistical analysis between participants that require formal mentoring and participants that do not require formal mentoring. In addition, the chapter includes a thesis statement, hypotheses, operational definitions, assumptions about methodology limitations of the study, ethical standards, procedures for gathering data, and procedures for analyzing data.

Thesis Statement

Based on statistical analysis, this study will compare individual real estate professionals with formal mentoring with those who do not and the impact on ethical awareness in the real estate industry.

Research Hypotheses

*Null Hypothesis*

There was no statistically significant difference in ethical awareness between individuals when formal mentoring is required for the real estate professional.

*Hypothesis 1*

H01: Individuals provided with a formal mentoring program will score higher in **Ethical Concerns** of feelings and thinking of situations.

*Hypothesis 2*

H02: Individuals provided with a formal mentoring program will score higher in **Ethical Consistency** with intention supported by behavior to do the right thing.

*Hypothesis 3*

H03: Individuals provided with a formal mentoring program will score higher with **Ethical Integrity** supported with a combination of ethical concerns and ethical consistency predictive.

*Hypothesis 4*

H04: Individuals provided with a formal mentoring program will score higher in **Ethical Behavior** is consistent with ethical awareness and integrity.

Operational Definitions

The focus of the operational definitions was formulated based on the following terms as defined (Ingerson 2014):

EC1 – Ethical Concern (Respect): What does an individual feel and think about an ethical situation as it occurs? The sum of items one through five responses on the five Likert scale results in ethical concern analysis.

EC2 – Ethical Consistency (Fairness): Does their behavior support the individual’s consistency to do the right thing? The sum of items six through ten responses on the five Likert scale results in ethical consistency analysis.

EI – Ethical Integrity (Responsibility): Is the individual's integrity supported by a combination of ethical concern and consistency? The sum of items eleven through sixteen responses on the five Likert scale results in ethical integrity analysis.

EB – Ethical Behavior (Honesty): Is the individual’s ethical behavior consistent with ethical integrity? The sum of items seventeen through twenty responses on the five Likert scale results in the ethical behavior analysis.

Assumptions About Methodology

The first assumption was that the participants had the time management skills to participate in a short segment of time within the one-month time frame. The second assumption will be the honesty in which they answer the questions. Finally, the third assumption is that those participants are highly motivated to improve their leadership skills and eager to adapt to the changing landscape of the real estate industry with both technology and globalization.

Limitations of the Study

Findings drawn from this study may not be directly applicable to other industries. Therefore, the instruments might need to be revised and validated for future research when comparing groups of different industries and cultures.

Ethical Compliance

Each respondent is provided a Detailed Information Letter of the content of the Dissertation Information including how the survey data would be distributed to a population and collected by a random anonymous response to be analyzed and reported statistically using WINKS and Excel graphics. A “Research Consent Form” to be provided will assure anonymity for the data collection process (AERA, 2011). HIPPA Compliant Certification is provided. (Appendix E)

Procedures for Gathering Data

*Population*

The population surveyed were the North Alabama Real Estate professionals affiliated with both franchise and independent offices, affiliate brokers, and team leaders. . The survey was distributed to 18 franchise brokers and 105 independent brokers for 123 brokers by the Huntsville Board of Realtors Staff. Therefore, the total agent count is approximately 3000. The survey is to be distributed in the form using Survio.

*The Sample*

The sample are real estate professionals who randomly responded to the survey, with the results being the basis of Likert scale analysis. Demographics were seven items: gender, age, level of education (high school, college, or graduate), participation in a mentoring program, number of years in real estate, education level, and position in the company who responded to the survey.

*Instrument*

The Ethical Position Questionnaire (EPQ), author Donalson R. Forsyth (2008), is the survey for the statistical research analysis. “Donalson R. Forsyth is the author of this instrument and agreed for it to be included in the MIDSS database by the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 3.0 license.”

“To categorize the ethical viewpoints of individuals, Forsyth (1980, 1993)

developed a Taxonomy of Personal Moral Philosophies, and then, based on this

taxonomy, Forsyth created the EPQ to determine where individuals fall on the two scales

of idealism and relativism. Based on their perspectives, the subjects were then typed into

one of four categories, showing parallels among the four types within an ethical

framework. Items on the EPQ were originally published by Forsyth in 1980 in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.”* (Butler 2008). . The four categories identified include ethical concern, ethical consistency, ethical integrity, and ethical behavior as defined (Ingerson 2014).

*Data Collection*

The survey will be distributed by the Greater Huntsville Association of Realtors (HAAR) Staff by email distribution of a SurveyMonkey to the total population of approximately 3,000 members.

The formal mentoring group at eXp Realty International to distribute the survey as confirmed by the Director of the Education Department. In addition, a SurveyMonkey will be emailed to the total population of approximately 5,000 mentees.

The total surveys emailed with be 3,000 for Greater Huntsville Association of Realtors plus 1,000 for the eXp Realty Tennessee real estate professionals.

*Time Schedule*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Estimate of Date** |
| **Proposal Defense Deadline** | May 16, 2024 |
| **Receive assignment of Dissertation Advisor by the Graduate Research Council (GRC)** | May 2024 |
| **Data Collection prior to IRB** | Prior to Data Collection |
| **Implement Research design and gather data** | April – May 2024 |
| **IRB followed by improvement for data collection** | May 2024 |
| **Get Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Dean: Receive email or letter to proceed with research** | TBD |
| **Submission of Dissertation to GRC (2 Copies)** | June 5, 2024 |
| **Final Dissertation (2 copies) one for Advisor:**  Incorporate and revise based on faculty review**.** | August 28, 20224 |
| **Fall Degree Day** | September 2024 |

Procedures for Analyzing Data

The research methodology is non-experimental, using comparative statistical analysis. A statistical analysis of the difference between the formal mentoring individuals and the individuals that do not require formal mentoring will be analyzed and evaluated using quantitative analysis with WINKS Statistical software application.

*Organization of the Data*

The data will be collected and organized into an Excel spreadsheet and exported into WINKS for the statistical analysis for testing the hypotheses. The participants will be identified anonymously by the last four digits of their social security number.

A Likert scale will be applied to each category identified in the instruments to gather the demographics and characteristics of ethical concerns, ethical consistency, ethical integrity, and ethical behavior.

*Test of Hypothesis 1*

H01: There was a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding **ethical concerns** when real estate professionals require formal mentoring programs.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H02: There was a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding **ethical consistency** when real estate professionals require formal mentoring programs.

*Test of Hypothesis 3*

H03: There was a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding **ethical integrity** when formal mentoring programs are required for real estate professionals.

*Test of Hypothesis 4*

H04: There was a statistically significant difference in ethical awareness regarding **ethical behavior** when formal mentoring programs are required for real estate professionals.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

APPENDIX B: Email Cover Consent Information

Influencing of Formal Mentoring on Ethics and Professionalism

in the Real Estate Industry

J. L Kronk – Omega Graduate School – Dissertation

INFORMED CONSENT - Short Summary of Study

(Please take when you have 15 calm, uninterrupted minutes)

**Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?**

You are invited to participate because, as a working real estate professional, your individual participation in providing information from your perspective will be essential for this academic research. The results of this survey will be analyzed and reported by Principal Investigator (PI), J. Lynn Kronk to complete her Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation on the “Influence of Formal Mentoring on Ethical Awareness in the Real Estate Industry,” a DPhil Candidate of Omega Graduate School formerly Oxford Graduate School. You will have the opportunity to request the report. Instructions will be provided at the survey conclusion (there will be no link to your responses, your responses will remain confidential).

**What should I know about a research study?**

• Whether or not you take part is up to you.

• Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous.

• You can agree to take part and later discontinue the survey.

• Your decision will not be held against you; this is anonymous.

• You can exit the survey and ask any questions you want before you continue.

**Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this survey is to help understand the impact of formal mentoring in the real estate industry on ethical awareness and professionalism as a comparative analysis with those who have not participated in a formal mentoring program. In addition, this survey is directional and will inform future research within organizations.

* How long will the research last and what will I need to do?

You will be in this study just for the time you take this 15-20-minute survey.

* Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

We don’t believe there are any risks from participating in this research. You will not be asked any questions that will identify you personally. Tracking has been disabled, so it is anonymous.

**Will being in this study help me in any way?**

By participating, you will be able to receive a copy of the report. The report should be helpful to you if you are an individual considering the implementation of formal mentoring or aspire to become a mentor or mentee. Instructions for obtaining a report are at the end of the survey. This study is expected to help you indirectly by providing a better understanding of ethical awareness and professionalism by implementing a formal mentoring program.

**Who can I talk to?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the PI, J. Lynn Kronk, at jlkronk@ogs.edu. The Omega Graduate School Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) has reviewed and approved this research (the Omega Graduate School Institutional Review Board.

You may talk to them at (423) 775-6596 or dean@ogs.edu if:

• Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.

• You cannot reach the research team.

• You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

• You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

• You want to get information or provide input about this research.

***Do you understand that this is voluntary, and would you like to continue?***

O Yes O No OK

Appendix C. Demographics Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

|  |
| --- |
| What is your Gender? |
| O Female  O Male  O Other |
| Which category below includes your age? |
| O 18-20 O 40-49  O 21-29 O 50-59  O 30-39 O 60-69  O 40-49 O Over 70 |
| What is the highest level of school you have completed, or the highest degree received? |
| O Less than High School degree O associate degree  O High School degree or equivalent (e.g., GED) O Bachelor Degree  O Some college but no degree O Graduate Degree |
| Which of the following categories best describes your years’ experience as a Real Estate Professional? |
| O Less than one year O 11-15 Years  O 1-5 Years O 16-20 Years  O 6-10 Years O More than 20 years |
| What type of Mentoring Program did you participate in with your Real Estate Company? |
| O No Formal Mentoring  O Formal/Formal Mentoring |
| What type of training have you participated in advancing your Real Estate Career? |
| O FREE Courses  O Required CE Course  O Certifications  O Designations  O Other (Specify) |
| What position do you hold in Real Estate? |
| O Education/Trainer O Team Member  O Licensed Assistant O Sales Associate  O Sales Manager O Managing Broker  O Team Leader O Broker Owner |

Appendix D: Ethical Position Questionnaire

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following items. Each represents a commonly held opinion, and there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your reaction to such matters of opinion. Rate your reaction to each statement by writing a number to the left of each statement where:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 - Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another, even to a small degree. (Code Ethical Concern EC1 = Respect)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

1. Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be. (Code Ethical Concern EC1 = Respect)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

1. The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained. (Code Ethical Concern EC1 = Respect)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

1. One should never psychologically or physically harm another person. (Code Ethical Concern EC1 = Respect)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

1. One should not perform an action that might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual. (Code Ethical Concern EC1 = Respect)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

6. If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done. (Code Ethical Consistency EC2 = Fairness)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

7. Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences of the act against the negative consequences of the act is immoral. (Code Ethical Consistency EC2 = Fairness)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

8. The dignity and welfare of the people should be the most important concern in any society. (Code Ethical Consistency EC2 = Fairness)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

9. It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others. (Code Ethical Consistency EC2 = Fairness)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

10. Moral behaviors are actions that closely match ideals of the most “perfect” action. (Code Ethical Consistency EC2 = Fairness)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

11. There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be a part of my code of ethics. (Code Ethical Integrity EI – Integrity)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

12. What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another. (Code Ethical Integrity EI – Integrity)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

13. Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic; what one person considers moral may be judged to be immoral by another person. (Code Ethical Integrity EI – Integrity)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

14. Different types of morality cannot be compared as to “rightness.” (Code Ethical Integrity EI – Integrity)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

15. Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual. (Code Ethical Integrity EI – Integrity)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

16. Moral standards are simply personal rules that indicate how a person should behave and are not applied in making judgments of others. (Ethical Behavior EB = Behavior)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

17. Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should formulate their codes. (Ethical Behavior EB = Behavior)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

18. Rigidly codifying an ethical position that prevents certain types of actions could stand in the way of better human relations and adjustment. (Ethical Behavior EB = Behavior)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

19. No rule concerning lying can be formulated; whether a lie is permissible or not permissible totally depends upon the situation. (Ethical Behavior EB = Behavior)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

20. Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action. (Ethical Behavior EB = Behavior)

- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

The original response scale used was a 9-point scale, although people often trim it back to an accurate Likert 5-point scale.

“Donalson R. Forsyth is the author of this instrument and agreed for it to be included in the MIDSS database in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 3.0 license.” ……Donalson R. Forsyth

Appendix E: Permission for Ethical Position Questionnaire (EPQ)

Creative Commons Attributions

A screenshot of text

Description automatically generated

APPENDIX F  HIPPA Certification



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