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ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

- 1. Name of thesis:** Professional Ethics Issues of Corporate Communications Practitioners in Vietnam Today
- 2. PhD Candidate:** Tao Thanh Huyen
- 3. Major:** Public Relations
- 4. Code:** 9320108
- 5. Research aim and research subject:**

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a theoretical framework for the professional ethics of communications practitioners in enterprises, including a conceptual system, a set of core professional ethical criteria suitable for the Vietnamese context, and an analytical framework integrating the KAB model with the Person - Situation Interaction Model. The dissertation also aims to measure and analyze the current state of ethical awareness, attitudes, and behaviors, and to propose a multi-level system of solutions at the individual, organizational, and societal levels to enhance the professional ethics of communications practitioners in Vietnamese enterprises today.

The research subject is the issue of professional ethics among communications practitioners in Vietnamese enterprises today.

The primary research participants are communications practitioners working in Vietnamese enterprises of various sizes. These participants were invited to take part in questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

In addition, the study included the following groups in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews: leaders of communications associations in Vietnam,

leaders of business associations in Vietnam, lawyers specializing in corporate law, and experts in corporate communications training.

6. Research Methodology

The dissertation employs a sequential mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Content analysis was applied to examine 40 documents, including international professional ethics codes and Vietnamese legal documents, thereby constructing a set of 10 professional ethical criteria. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 631 communications practitioners from enterprises across the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam, using a 5-point Likert scale and regression analysis to test the KAB model. In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 participants from four groups: training experts, leaders of professional associations, legal experts, and experienced communications practitioners. Focus group discussions were conducted with two groups consisting of 15 corporate communications practitioners. Case study research was also employed to analyze seven representative ethical violation cases during the 2024-2026 period.

7. Theoretical and Practical Significance:

Theoretical Significance

This dissertation is the first study in Vietnam to systematically develop a theoretical framework for the professional ethics of corporate communications practitioners as an independent research subject, distinct from journalism ethics and professional ethics in general. The dissertation constructs a set of 10 professional ethical criteria through the systematic analysis of 40 documents, including international ethical codes and Vietnamese legal documents. This is the first set of criteria of its kind in Vietnam and has the potential to become a standard reference framework for the field. The dissertation also experimentally applies the integration of the KAB model and Trevino's (1986) Person–Situation Interaction Model to research on communications ethics in the context of

Vietnamese enterprises, thereby overcoming the linear limitations of the KAB model alone. In addition, the dissertation contributes methodologically by experimenting with a sequential mixed-methods design in the study of communications ethics in Vietnam.

Practical Significance:

The dissertation provides the first comprehensive empirical overview of the current state of ethical awareness, attitudes, and behaviors among communications practitioners in Vietnamese enterprises with a sample size of 631. The findings identify an “ethical gap” between attitudes and behaviors; demonstrate that organizational factors, particularly leadership integrity and reward/sanction mechanisms, exert a stronger influence on actual ethical behavior than individual factors; and identify five prominent systemic ethical issues in Vietnamese corporate communications practice. The dissertation proposes a multi-level system of solutions at the individual, organizational, and societal levels, specifying responsible stakeholders and a three-phase implementation roadmap. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening the connection between educational institutions and professional associations in order to standardize ethical competence from the university level onward. The findings and recommendations of the dissertation provide a scientific foundation for enterprises, public relations training institutions, professional organizations, and regulatory agencies in building a transparent, responsible, and professional communications environment in Vietnam.

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