

**KEY DRIVERS FOR THE PERCEPTION OF ACCOUNTING ETHICS IN  
UNDERGRADUATES OF RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ethics play a critical role in accounting, underscored by recent high-profile fraud cases that emphasize the need for integrity within the profession. The Professional Accountant Code of Ethics, which is based on international standards, is vital for maintaining trust and credibility in accounting. Effective ethics education is essential for shaping the character and professional behavior of future accountants. This study examined the key drivers of the perception that influences accounting ethics among undergraduates at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Using a deductive approach and a quantitative method, the study population consisted of 504 final-year undergraduate students from Rajarata University's 2020 Faculty of Management Studies. A sample of 219 students specializing in Accountancy and Finance was selected using Morgan's sampling method. A 5-point Likert Scale was primarily employed in the questionnaire, and multiple linear regression analysis and Multicollinearity Analysis were used in the model. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25, utilizing descriptive statistical, regression, and correlation analyses. Primary data collection methods ensured a thorough examination of the students' ethical perceptions and their implications for future accounting practices. The study used a questionnaire platform to explore the factors influencing ethical perceptions, including ethics education exposure, internship experience, and awareness and understanding. This suggests that current students' ethical views can predict their future professional behavior. Demographic factors, such as age, gender, experience, and cultural background, significantly impact ethical attitudes. The study emphasizes enhancing accounting ethics education by integrating ethics into the curriculum, promoting integrity through institutional policies, partnering with professional organizations, leveraging technology, and developing ethical leadership. These strategies aim to guide educators and businesses in shaping future professionals' ethical attitudes and addressing past scandals. According to this study's findings, some factors need to be considered when evaluating the perception of ethics in accounting among university undergraduates. The researcher aimed to enhance accounting education and promote ethical behavior among undergraduates to foster a solid ethical foundation for future accounting professionals.

**Keywords:** Accounting, ethics, awareness and understanding, education exposure, internship experience.