



Entrepreneurial Ethics and Business Culture as Informal Governance Mechanisms for Sustainable Development Planning: Evidence from Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

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In the context of rapid economic transformation and increasing sustainability challenges, sustainable development planning in Vietnam depends not only on formal regulations but also on the ethical and cultural orientations of enterprises. This study examines entrepreneurial ethics and business culture as informal governance mechanisms within sustainable development planning. Using qualitative documentary analysis and policy-oriented interpretation, the study reviews academic literature together with policy texts on sustainable development, green growth, environmental protection, and provincial economic governance. The analysis suggests that entrepreneurial ethics may support voluntary compliance, trust-building, and responsible business conduct, while business culture can mediate the translation of planning objectives into organizational routines. Policy-text evidence shows that Vietnam's planning framework emphasizes sustainable development, green growth, environmental protection responsibility, circular economy, green-economy integration, and transparent local governance. The study contributes by clarifying how ethical entrepreneurship and business culture can be interpreted as components of informal institutional capacity in transitional economies. Policy implications emphasize the need to integrate ethical governance into green-growth strategies, ESG-oriented enterprise support, and differentiated compliance assistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of accelerating globalization, climate change pressures, and intensifying international economic integration, sustainable development has become a central organizing principle of national development strategies rather than a purely environmental or sectoral concern. Contemporary development thinking increasingly recognizes that the quality of growth depends not only on technological advancement and capital accumulation, but also on governance effectiveness, institutional capacity, and the behavioral foundations that shape economic decision-making [1, 2]. Within this framework, enterprises-and particularly entrepreneurs-are no longer viewed solely as market actors, but as key stakeholders whose ethical orientation and organizational culture significantly influence the implementation of sustainable development policies.

Over the past three decades, Vietnam has undergone a profound transition toward a socialist-oriented market economy, accompanied by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and deep integration into global value chains.

The business sector has contributed substantially to economic growth, employment creation, and structural transformation. At the same time, this growth trajectory has exposed development challenges such as environmental degradation, uneven labor standards, governance gaps, and short-term profit-driven business practices. These issues are especially relevant where regulatory enforcement capacity remains uneven and where enterprises vary considerably in their ability to internalize sustainability requirements [3, 4].

In response to these challenges, entrepreneurial ethics and business culture have emerged as critical-yet often under-examined-dimensions of sustainable development governance. Beyond their moral or philosophical meanings, ethical norms and corporate cultural values may operate as informal institutional mechanisms that shape compliance behavior, strategic choices, and the capacity of enterprises to internalize sustainability objectives. International evidence suggests that ethical business conduct is positively associated with long-term financial performance, organizational resilience, and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly when embedded within corporate strategy

and governance systems [5-7].

From a planning perspective, these findings imply that sustainable development outcomes are influenced not only by formal policy instruments, but also by the ethical and cultural orientations that guide enterprise behavior. Where entrepreneurial ethics are weak or business culture remains symbolic, sustainability policies risk being implemented selectively or superficially. Conversely, when ethical norms are translated into organizational routines, enterprises may become more likely to engage with environmental regulations, labor standards, and transparency requirements in a substantive rather than merely formal manner [8, 9].

Despite a growing international literature on business ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and ESG practices, much existing research remains focused on firm-level performance, reputational outcomes, or stakeholder relations. Relatively limited attention has been paid to how entrepreneurial ethics and business culture operate as endogenous governance resources within national sustainable development planning systems—particularly in developing and transitional economies. In the Vietnamese context, recent empirical and conceptual studies have examined business ethics development, ethical awareness among working adults and business students, and CSR frameworks, but these studies remain only partially integrated into planning, governance, and policy implementation analysis [10-12].

This study addresses that gap by examining entrepreneurial ethics and business culture from a sustainable development planning perspective. The central research problem is the limited planning-oriented understanding of how informal ethical and cultural mechanisms may support or constrain implementation capacity in Vietnam. This gap is especially important because Vietnam's policy texts already require sustainable development, green growth, environmental protection, circular-economy orientation, and improved economic governance, yet these formal objectives depend on how enterprises interpret and operationalize them in practice [13-17]. The article therefore conceptualizes entrepreneurial ethics as a component of informal institutional capacity and business culture as a transmission mechanism through which ethical values are translated into organizational routines and development practices.

By situating entrepreneurial ethics within the broader framework of sustainable development governance, this study makes three main contributions. First, it extends sustainable development and planning research by incorporating ethical and cultural dimensions as informal yet influential governance instruments. Second, it provides context-specific insights from Vietnam that are relevant to other developing and emerging economies facing similar institutional and implementation challenges. Third, it offers policy-oriented recommendations aimed at integrating ethical entrepreneurship and business culture more effectively into sustainable development planning frameworks. In doing so, the study argues that entrepreneurial ethics and business culture should be treated as planning-relevant dimensions of institutional capacity rather than as peripheral moral concerns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Business ethics and sustainable development: Theoretical and policy perspectives

International scholarship has examined the ethics–

sustainability nexus through management, governance, economics, and development studies. A foundational contribution is Carroll's [18] CSR Pyramid, which conceptualizes corporate responsibility as encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic dimensions. In planning terms, this model implies that ethical responsibility operates as a governance layer linking private value creation to societal expectations and long-run development objectives [18].

Building on this foundation, business ethics has increasingly been framed as an interdisciplinary domain connecting corporate governance, human rights, and sustainability transitions, where firms are embedded in stakeholder systems rather than accountable only to shareholders [19]. Stakeholder Theory further strengthens this analytical orientation by arguing that sustainable organizational performance depends on balancing stakeholder interests and maintaining legitimacy, thereby supporting stable development trajectories under market complexity [20]. Complementing these organizational perspectives, theoretical syntheses of sustainable development trace an evolution from a normative idea to a multidimensional governance framework integrating economic efficiency, social equity, and environmental integrity—suggesting that ethics is best understood as internal to development governance and policy coherence rather than external moral rhetoric [1].

At the policy level, global frameworks have institutionalized ethical expectations through international norms and voluntary standards. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda, OECD responsible business conduct guidelines, and ISO 26000 collectively codify responsible enterprise behavior as a prerequisite for social inclusion, environmental protection, and governance quality [21]. Recent corporate practice research further supports this institutionalization by showing how ethics and sustainability standards are operationalized through corporate procedures, disclosure routines, and benchmarking mechanisms, which can influence the credibility and effectiveness of sustainability strategies [8].

A growing body of evidence also positions ethical governance as a strategic driver of sustainable development rather than a reputational accessory. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses consistently report positive associations between CSR and financial performance, suggesting that ethical conduct can enhance long-term resilience, risk management, and competitiveness [5, 6]. In parallel, research examining ethics and sustainable development across countries indicates that ethical behavior is empirically linked to sustainable development performance in both developed and developing contexts, reinforcing the policy relevance of ethics as a development-enabling condition [2]. Extending the strategy–development linkage, recent work in business ethics argues that ethical commitment embedded in business strategy—particularly through ESG-related factors—can serve as a driver of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals [7]. Taken together, this literature implies that business ethics and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing dimensions that shape enterprise legitimacy, policy effectiveness, and long-term development outcomes.

2.2 Corporate culture, labor relations, and social sustainability

A second strand of research emphasizes corporate culture as an internal institutional factor that conditions how enterprises

interpret and respond to regulatory requirements, stakeholder pressures, and development objectives. Culture has been conceptualized as the “collective programming of the mind” shaping leadership styles, decision routines, and behavioral norms, thereby influencing how sustainability policies are implemented at the organizational level [22]. Human capital-oriented approaches further argue that employees constitute a durable source of competitive advantage, and that investments in training, fair remuneration, and participatory governance contribute to organizational resilience and long-term performance [23]. This is consistent with the International Labour Organization’s decent work framework, which treats labor rights, occupational safety, and capability development as core components of sustainable development.

Recent research strengthens the managerial and implementation logic of this strand. Evidence from organizational psychology and performance management highlights that ethical climates, justice perceptions, and fair evaluation systems contribute to sustainable performance management and organizational viability, providing micro-level mechanisms through which ethical values can be institutionalized [9]. Complementarily, research on sustainable entrepreneurship suggests that entrepreneurial culture and ethics-oriented training influence the diffusion of responsible practices and the capacity of enterprises to innovate without undermining social and environmental priorities [24]. Together, these studies frame corporate culture and labor relations not as “soft” issues, but as organizational governance resources that support social sustainability and reduce implementation gaps in development strategies.

2.3 Empirical evidence on business ethics and enterprise performance

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence for the development relevance of ethical business conduct. Prior research reports positive relationships between CSR practices and outcomes such as brand reputation, customer loyalty, and financial performance, suggesting that ethical behavior can improve access to capital, reduce legal and reputational risks, and strengthen stakeholder relationships [25, 26]. More recent synthesis work confirms these associations with stronger methodological aggregation across contexts, indicating that the CSR–performance relationship holds across countries and institutional settings and is increasingly interpreted as a strategic resilience mechanism rather than a short-term trade-off [5, 6].

Beyond performance outcomes, empirical research has expanded toward governance conditions that shape ethical behavior and sustainability compliance. Studies focusing on Southeast Asia and ASEAN economies indicate that ESG trajectories and responsible business pathways are increasingly influenced by institutional governance quality and regulatory environments, particularly under supply-chain pressures and international market access requirements [27, 28]. At the firm–institution interface, evidence from emerging markets (including Vietnam) shows that political connections, corruption risks, and institutional constraints influence ESG disclosure and corporate risk-taking, implying that ethical governance is partly determined by the incentives and credibility of the institutional environment [3, 4]. Research on innovation also suggests that CSR can catalyze sustainable growth by facilitating responsible innovation and long-term competitiveness, reinforcing the view that sustainability-

oriented strategies can be economically productive when supported by appropriate governance arrangements [29].

Finally, empirical studies on ethical behavior and accountability mechanisms highlight the importance of organizational integrity and reporting systems. Evidence on ethical behavior and willingness to report misconduct illustrates how institutional environments and organizational norms shape the practical enforceability of ethical standards—an issue that is directly relevant to policy implementation capacity in sustainable development planning [30]. Overall, while the empirical literature is increasingly robust on performance and governance correlates, fewer studies explicitly connect enterprise ethics to development planning instruments and implementation processes, leaving space for planning-oriented analyses linking ethical governance to sustainable development outcomes.

2.4 Vietnamese scholarship on entrepreneurial ethics and business culture

Vietnamese scholarship on entrepreneurial ethics and business culture has developed in close alignment with the country’s transition toward a socialist-oriented market economy, with particular emphasis on the role of ethics in maintaining social legitimacy, market order, and institutional stability under conditions of rapid economic transformation. Rather than treating ethics as a peripheral managerial concern, much of this literature conceptualizes business ethics as a normative foundation of market participation in a transitional institutional context.

Vietnam-specific empirical studies show that business ethics is shaped by education, workplace experience, and exposure to market practice. Nguyen et al. [10] examined business ethics development among working adults in Vietnam, indicating that ethical awareness is connected to organizational experience and the broader business environment. Nguyen et al. [11] compared business students and working adults, showing that ethical understanding is not only an abstract moral orientation but also a learned and socially embedded capacity relevant to sustainable growth. In parallel, Nguyen et al. [12] developed a conceptual framework for CSR in Vietnam, emphasizing that responsible business conduct is shaped by stakeholder expectations, institutional conditions, and the interaction between global CSR norms and local business practices.

Culture also affects how Vietnamese enterprises interpret and operationalize CSR. Nguyen and Truong [31] showed that cultural factors influence enterprises’ perceptions of corporate social responsibility, suggesting that business culture can shape whether CSR is understood as symbolic compliance, reputational practice, or a substantive managerial responsibility. From a governance perspective, this supports the argument that culture can operate as an informal mechanism through which formal sustainability expectations are translated into enterprise-level behavior.

Sectoral evidence further shows that CSR implementation in Vietnam is conditioned by enterprise size, resources, and supply-chain pressures. Van and Nguyen [32], in their study of SMEs in the textile and garment industry, highlighted how smaller firms encounter practical constraints when implementing CSR, including limited resources and compliance pressures. This evidence is directly relevant to sustainable development planning because it shows that ethical and CSR commitments require differentiated policy

support, technical assistance, and feasible implementation instruments rather than general moral exhortation alone.

More recent contributions increasingly reinterpret entrepreneurial ethics and business culture through the lens of governance capacity and institutional performance. Systematic review evidence on CSR in Vietnam maps research trends and identifies persistent gaps in institutional implementation, measurement, and strategic integration, issues that are directly relevant to sustainable development planning and policy design [33]. In parallel, systematic review research on entrepreneurial ethics highlights conceptual fragmentation, emerging governance-related themes, and future research agendas, reinforcing the need to treat entrepreneurial ethics as an operational governance variable rather than a purely moral construct [34].

Philosophical and cultural studies are used in this article primarily to contextualize Vietnam’s ethical traditions and leadership norms. They are not treated as direct empirical evidence of contemporary enterprise behavior. Claims concerning CSR implementation, ESG disclosure, compliance, market integrity, and sustainable development planning are instead supported by empirical studies, systematic reviews, official policy documents, and governance-oriented literature.

Complementing these ethics-focused studies, recent Vietnamese and international reviews of entrepreneurship research demonstrate that ethical orientation, governance quality, and institutional learning are increasingly recognized as key determinants of entrepreneurial sustainability in fast-growing economies such as Vietnam [35-37]. These findings situate ethics and culture within a broader system of institutional adaptation and development learning.

From a planning perspective, the analytical relationships identified in this body of literature are synthesized in Figure 1, which illustrates how entrepreneurial ethics and business culture function as informal governance mechanisms mediating the relationship between formal planning instruments and enterprise-level behavior, thereby shaping sustainable development outcomes in a transitional economy context.

Altogether, Vietnamese and international scholarship consistently affirms that entrepreneurial ethics and business culture are relevant to market legitimacy, compliance, and social stability in transition economies. However, this literature remains insufficiently integrated into sustainable development planning analysis. This gap motivates a planning-oriented approach that conceptualizes

entrepreneurial ethics and business culture as informal governance mechanisms shaping policy implementation and sustainable development outcomes, rather than as isolated moral or cultural phenomena.

To clarify the conceptual boundaries of the analysis, Table 1 defines the key constructs used in the study and identifies their main dimensions and observable indicators.

Table 1. Operational definitions of key constructs

Construct	Concise Operational Use in This Study
Entrepreneurial ethics	Normative orientation beyond minimum legal compliance; observed through responsible leadership, transparency, stakeholder concern, and willingness to comply beyond formal requirements.
Business culture	Shared organizational values and routines through which ethical commitments become practice; observed through codes of conduct, labour practices, CSR routines, reporting, and sustainability procedures.
Informal governance capacity	Non-legal norms and practices that complement formal regulation; observed through trust, voluntary compliance, reputational discipline, and cooperation with public authorities.
Enterprise behavioral response	Observable enterprise reactions to planning and market pressures; observed through compliance, ESG disclosure, cleaner production, innovation, and employee-centred policies.
Sustainable development planning outcomes	Policy-relevant implementation effects; observed through green-growth implementation, environmental compliance, labour stability, institutional trust, and implementation coherence.

These constructs are analytically related but not interchangeable. Entrepreneurial ethics refers primarily to the normative orientation of business actors; business culture refers to the organizational embedding of values into routines and practices; and informal governance capacity refers to the broader policy-relevant function through which ethical norms and cultural practices may support or constrain implementation. This distinction allows the study to examine how individual-level ethical orientation may become organizational practice and, in turn, become relevant to sustainable development planning.

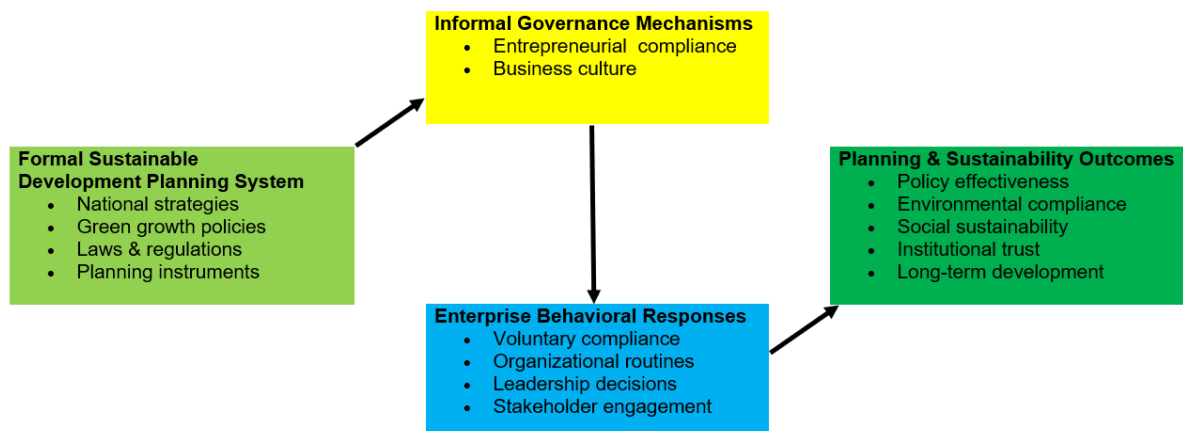


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial ethics and business culture as informal governance mechanisms in sustainable development planning

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, policy-oriented research design grounded in the analytical traditions of sustainable development and planning. The methodological approach examines entrepreneurial ethics and business culture not as isolated normative concepts, but as informal governance mechanisms that may influence the implementation capacity of sustainable development strategies in Vietnam. The design is interpretive rather than causal: it aims to identify policy-relevant patterns, conceptual relationships, and implementation issues from documentary and contextual evidence.

3.1 Research design and analytical framework

The research employs an integrated analytical framework that combines institutional analysis, policy review, and contextual interpretation. Entrepreneurial ethics is treated as a component of informal institutional capacity, while business culture is analyzed as a transmission mechanism through which ethical norms are embedded in organizational behavior and development practice. This framework enables an assessment of how ethical values interact with regulatory structures, market pressures, and planning objectives related to sustainable development.

3.2 Documentary corpus and selection criteria

Table 2. Documentary corpus, selection criteria, and analytical focus

Document Group	Use in the Documentary Corpus
Sustainable development strategy	Resolution No. 136/NQ-CP [13]: establishes national sustainable-development goals, inclusive-development priorities, and the broad planning framework.
Green growth policy and action plan	Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg and Decision No. 882/QD-TTg [14, 15]: translate green growth into targets, tasks, responsibilities, and resources.
Environmental protection law	Law No. 72/2020/QH14 [16]: defines environmental duties, compliance, pollution prevention, and circular/green-economy integration.
Provincial governance and business-environment evidence	PCI 2024 report [17]: provides enterprise-survey evidence on governance quality, transparency, compliance costs, land access, and local dynamism.
Peer-reviewed studies	CSR, ESG, business ethics, corporate culture, governance, and Vietnam-transition literature: supports claim-to-citation matching for ethical governance and enterprise-behavior claims.

The study primarily employs systematic documentary analysis as its core research method. The documentary corpus was constructed through a purposive and relevance-based selection strategy. In addition to peer-reviewed literature on CSR, ESG, business ethics, corporate culture, governance, and Vietnam’s transition economy, the policy corpus includes five core Vietnamese policy and institutional sources: Resolution No. 136/NQ-CP on sustainable development [13], Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg on the National Green Growth Strategy [14], Decision No. 882/QD-TTg on the National Action Plan

on Green Growth [15], Law No. 72/2020/QH14 on Environmental Protection [16], and the 2024 Vietnam Provincial Competitiveness Index report [17]. Documents were included if they directly addressed sustainable development planning, green growth, enterprise development, environmental compliance, provincial governance, CSR/ESG, or business ethics. Documents were excluded if they were purely journalistic, lacked identifiable institutional authorship, or addressed ethics only at a general philosophical level without relevance to planning, governance, or enterprise behavior. Table 2 summarizes the documentary corpus, selection criteria, analytical focus, and role of each evidence group used in the study.

3.3 Search strategy and document screening

The search strategy combined targeted policy-document identification with academic database and reference-chain searching. Policy and legal documents were identified through official government, legal, and institutional sources and were selected because they define Vietnam’s formal planning framework for sustainable development, green growth, environmental protection, and business-enabling governance [13-17]. Academic sources were selected through keyword combinations such as business ethics, entrepreneurial ethics, corporate culture, CSR, ESG, sustainable development planning, informal governance, Vietnam, and transitional economy. The screening process prioritized sources that directly supported claims about governance, planning implementation, enterprise compliance, environmental standards, labor relations, or market integrity. Philosophical and cultural sources were retained only for contextual interpretation, not as direct empirical evidence for contemporary governance claims.

3.4 Coding framework and analytical procedures

The documentary analysis followed a deductive-interpretive coding framework derived from the constructs in Table 1. The first coding stage identified references to entrepreneurial ethics, business culture, informal governance capacity, enterprise behavioral response, and planning outcomes. The second stage coded documentary evidence into five analytical categories: (i) formal planning expectations; (ii) environmental and green-growth obligations; (iii) organizational and cultural transmission mechanisms; (iv) compliance and market-integrity constraints; and (v) planning implications. The third stage mapped each major claim in the Results and Discussion section to at least one policy-text excerpt, official report finding, or higher-rigor academic source. This procedure was designed to avoid unsupported general propositions and to make the basis of the policy-oriented interpretation more transparent.

3.5 Empirical contextual and comparative analysis

The study draws on officially published statistical data, sectoral reports, and documented enterprise practices to assess observable trends in ethical awareness, sustainability adoption, and governance performance. These data are used not for causal inference but for policy-relevant interpretation, enabling the identification of patterns, progress, and persistent challenges in the integration of ethics into development practice. Comparative analysis is also employed to contrast

normative models of responsible business and sustainable development with Vietnam's practical experience, thereby identifying institutional mismatches and context-specific planning constraints.

3.6 Reliability, limitations of inference, and methodological contribution

To strengthen analytical reliability, the study applied three procedures. First, major findings were checked against at least two types of evidence where possible, such as policy documents, official reports, and peer-reviewed studies. Second, the coding categories were applied consistently across the documentary corpus to distinguish formal policy expectations from informal ethical and cultural mechanisms. Third, causal language was avoided unless supported by prior empirical literature; otherwise, findings were presented as interpretive associations, policy-relevant patterns, or plausible governance mechanisms. The study therefore does not claim causal inference. Its methodological contribution lies in making visible how policy texts, institutional evidence, and

business-ethics literature can be integrated into a planning-oriented interpretation of informal governance capacity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature and coding framework described above, this section presents the main analytical findings on the role of business ethics and corporate culture in Vietnam's sustainable development planning. Instead of viewing ethics and culture as general moral ideals, the discussion examines how they appear in relation to policy implementation, business behavior, environmental compliance, social sustainability, and market integrity.

This section is conducted in two steps. First, Table 3 summarizes the evidence base by linking each analytical argument to excerpts from policy texts or data points, their interpretive significance, and planning implications. Second, the following subsections discuss these relationships in more detail, while maintaining the interpretive and non-causal nature of the study.

Table 3. Evidence mapping between key claims, documentary evidence, and planning implications

Analytical Claim	Policy Text Excerpt or Documentary Data Point	Interpretation	Planning Implication
Entrepreneurial ethics operate as informal governance capacity.	Resolution No. 136/NQ-CP frames sustainable development as requiring coordinated participation of the State, enterprises, social organizations, and citizens, while emphasizing inclusive development and the principle that no one should be left behind [13].	Ethical entrepreneurship is relevant because formal planning depends on voluntary participation, responsibility, and trust among non-state actors.	Planning should integrate ethical governance into enterprise-support frameworks and communication instruments.
Business culture mediates planning objectives and enterprise behavior.	Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg states that green growth depends on modern institutions and governance, high-quality human resources, innovation, and the participation of the business community [14].	Organizational routines, leadership culture, and workforce practices are channels through which macro-level green-growth objectives enter enterprise practice.	Planning instruments should address organizational culture, training, disclosure routines, and internal accountability.
Ethical commitments require operational instruments.	Decision No. 882/QD-TTg operationalizes green growth through 18 themes, 57 groups of tasks, and 134 specific activities, including institutions, awareness, green jobs, green finance, innovation, industry, waste management, and green consumption [15].	Policy implementation requires concrete tasks, responsible agencies, resources, and monitoring rather than general ethical declarations.	Ethical indicators, reporting tools, and internal governance mechanisms are needed to translate values into practice.
Environmental compliance and green standards create external alignment pressure.	Law No. 72/2020/QH14 defines environmental protection as the right, obligation, and responsibility of organizations and individuals, requires prevention and transparency, and calls for circular economy and green economy integration in socio-economic strategies and plans [16].	Environmental responsibility is legally embedded in planning and enterprise activity; business culture affects how these obligations are internalized.	Differentiated compliance support is needed, especially for SMEs and less-resourced firms.
Market integrity constraints weaken responsible business incentives.	The PCI 2024 report draws on nearly 11,000 enterprise responses and identifies persistent concerns, including land access obstacles, high compliance costs, and signs of declining local dynamism [17].	Governance constraints can discourage long-term ethical investment and make voluntary responsibility harder to sustain.	Transparency, administrative reform, enforcement consistency, and anti-corruption measures are planning prerequisites.

4.1 Entrepreneurial ethics as an informal institutional component of sustainable development governance

The evidence reviewed suggests that entrepreneurial ethics in Vietnam can be interpreted as an informal institutional component within the broader governance architecture of sustainable development. Resolution No. 136/NQ-CP frames sustainable development as a national task requiring the participation of state agencies, enterprises, social

organizations, and citizens, and it emphasizes inclusive development rather than growth pursued at the expense of social and environmental goals [13]. This policy orientation indicates that formal planning instruments implicitly depend on responsible conduct by non-state actors, including enterprises and entrepreneurs.

In contexts where regulatory enforcement capacity remains uneven, entrepreneurial ethics may play a compensatory but not substitutive governance role. Enterprises with stronger

ethical orientation are more likely, according to CSR and ESG literature, to treat environmental standards, labor obligations, and transparency requirements as organizational responsibilities rather than as external burdens [5, 6, 33]. However, this interpretation should be read as an association derived from documentary and secondary evidence, not as a causal claim established by this study.

From a planning perspective, voluntary ethical orientation should therefore be treated as a potential implementation resource, not as a substitute for regulation. It may help narrow the distance between formal planning objectives and enterprise-level practice when combined with enforceable rules, transparent monitoring, and practical incentives. The policy-text evidence from Resolution No. 136/NQ-CP supports this interpretation because sustainable development is presented as a whole-of-society implementation process rather than as a purely administrative mandate [13].

4.2 Business culture as a mediating mechanism between planning objectives and enterprise behavior

The analysis further indicates that business culture operates as a mediating mechanism between macro-level planning objectives and micro-level enterprise behavior. Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg presents green growth as a pathway for economic restructuring, competitiveness, resilience, carbon-neutral orientation, and the promotion of responsible lifestyles and green living culture [14]. These policy objectives cannot be realized only through formal plans; they require organizational routines through which enterprises translate sustainability expectations into procurement, production, labor management, disclosure, and stakeholder engagement.

Enterprises characterized by a stronger ethical business culture may be better positioned to align daily practices with policy expectations because accountability, stakeholder responsibility, and internal trust provide channels for operationalizing sustainability goals. This interpretation is consistent with corporate culture and CSR studies showing associations between ethical climate, responsible management, and sustainable performance [7-9]. In the Vietnamese green-growth framework, the business community is explicitly treated as a participant in the green-growth process, which reinforces the relevance of enterprise culture for planning implementation [14].

By contrast, where business culture remains symbolic or compliance-oriented, sustainability policies may be implemented formally but not substantively. In such cases, enterprises may produce reports or declarations while delaying changes in resource efficiency, waste management, labor welfare, or environmental disclosure. This does not prove causality, but it highlights a plausible implementation risk: formal planning objectives can remain weakly embedded when internal organizational culture does not support them.

4.3 Institutionalization gaps between ethical commitments and operational implementation

Despite increasing awareness of ethical business practices, the policy corpus indicates that ethical and green-growth commitments require operational instruments. Decision No. 882/QD-TTg translates the National Green Growth Strategy into 18 themes, 57 groups of tasks, and 134 specific activities, including institutional reform, awareness raising, green jobs, green finance, innovation, industry, waste management, green

consumption, and monitoring responsibilities [15]. This structure shows that policy implementation depends on concrete tasks, responsible agencies, resources, and reporting arrangements, not only on broad ethical commitment.

The absence of standardized ethical governance tools within enterprises, such as ethical performance indicators, whistleblowing channels, conflict-of-interest controls, environmental reporting routines, and transparent evaluation systems, can limit the practical effect of ethical statements. Systematic reviews of entrepreneurial ethics and CSR in Vietnam similarly warn that ethics and responsibility may remain fragmented or declarative when they are not supported by institutionalized procedures [33, 34].

From a sustainable development planning perspective, this institutionalization gap is important because Decision No. 882/QD-TTg assigns implementation roles across ministries, local authorities, business communities, research institutions, and social organizations [15]. Such multi-actor implementation requires comparable enterprise-level instruments so that ethical and sustainability expectations can be monitored, reported, and improved over time.

4.4 Environmental compliance and green standards as external alignment forces

Environmental regulations and green standards are interpreted here as external alignment forces that shape enterprise behavior. Law No. 72/2020/QH14 defines environmental protection as the right, obligation, and responsibility of agencies, organizations, communities, households, and individuals, and it presents environmental protection as a prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development [16]. This legal framing provides a formal basis for linking enterprise compliance, business culture, and sustainable development planning.

The policy corpus provides concrete evidence for this interpretation. Law No. 72/2020/QH14 emphasizes prevention, transparency, waste minimization, reuse and recycling, compliance strengthening, environmental protection culture, and the incorporation of circular economy and green economy into socio-economic strategies, planning, plans, programs, and projects [16]. These provisions support the view that enterprise conduct is part of the implementation environment for sustainable development planning.

However, the analysis also highlights disparities in compliance capacity across enterprise types. Small and newly established enterprises may lack the financial, managerial, and technical resources required to meet environmental standards, green-growth targets, and disclosure expectations. This finding supports differentiated planning instruments, including technical assistance, phased compliance mechanisms, green finance access, and advisory support for SMEs [15, 16].

4.5 Employee-centered business culture and social sustainability outcomes

The findings indicate an association between employee-centered business culture and social sustainability outcomes, especially where enterprises treat labor welfare, occupational safety, training, and career development as part of responsible governance. Decision No. 882/QD-TTg includes green human resources and green jobs among the action-plan themes, which suggests that workforce capability is part of Vietnam's green-

growth implementation agenda [15].

From a sustainable development planning perspective, these outcomes are relevant because social sustainability depends on the internal organization of work, not only on external regulation. Ethical labor relations may be associated with workforce stability, productivity, organizational learning, and resilience, but this study interprets such relationships through documentary evidence rather than measuring them directly [9, 15].

The analysis does not claim that employee-centered culture directly causes social sustainability outcomes. Rather, it indicates that internal enterprise culture should be considered a planning-relevant channel through which green-growth and sustainable-development objectives can be supported or weakened at the organizational level.

4.6 Market integrity constraints and planning effectiveness

Despite progress in ethical awareness, weaknesses in market integrity—such as informal costs, unfair competition, opacity, land-access difficulties, high compliance costs, and uneven local dynamism—remain constraints on sustainable development planning. The 2024 PCI report is especially relevant because it reflects the experiences of nearly 11,000 businesses and identifies persistent governance challenges even while recognizing improvements in transparency, labor quality, and online administrative reforms [17].

Such conditions may weaken incentives for responsible business conduct by placing ethically compliant enterprises at a competitive disadvantage. Empirical studies on Vietnam also indicate that corruption risks, political connections, and institutional opacity are associated with ESG disclosure and corporate risk-taking patterns [3, 4]. The PCI evidence therefore provides a concrete governance context for interpreting why ethical entrepreneurship requires supportive institutional conditions [17].

The planning implication is that ethical entrepreneurship cannot be promoted only through moral appeals or voluntary codes. It requires complementary reforms aimed at transparency, administrative simplification, fair enforcement, accessible information, and predictable local governance. Without these institutional conditions, responsible business culture may remain difficult to sustain in competitive markets.

4.7 Integrating ethical governance into sustainable development planning

Synthesizing the findings, this study suggests that entrepreneurial ethics and business culture function as enabling conditions for sustainable development planning rather than as peripheral concerns. The policy corpus shows that Vietnam's planning framework combines sustainable development goals [13], green-growth strategy [14], action-plan tasks [15], environmental obligations [16], and governance-quality evidence [17]. Within this framework, ethical norms and business culture can be interpreted as informal mechanisms that influence how enterprises understand and respond to formal planning objectives.

This interpretation is also consistent with recent Vietnam-specific scholarship, which frames strategic management and organizational adaptation as important for responding to technological, geopolitical, and environmental pressures [35].

For sustainable development planning in Vietnam, ethical entrepreneurship should be recognized as one component of

implementation capacity alongside formal regulatory and administrative mechanisms. Business culture should be incorporated into planning instruments that support green growth, social sustainability, circular economy, environmental compliance, and enterprise capability building. This requires moving from broad normative expectations to practical tools such as internal codes, reporting routines, green training, compliance support, and transparent accountability systems.

At the same time, policy frameworks should avoid assuming that ethical commitment alone is sufficient. The evidence reviewed in this study points to the need for hybrid governance approaches that combine legal enforcement, market-based incentives, administrative reform, technical assistance, and ethical norm diffusion. Such an approach is safer than treating ethics as either a purely moral issue or a complete substitute for formal regulation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined entrepreneurial ethics and business culture as informal governance mechanisms relevant to sustainable development planning in Vietnam. Using qualitative documentary analysis and policy-oriented interpretation, it integrated academic literature with policy-text evidence from Vietnam's sustainable development resolution, green-growth strategy, green-growth action plan, environmental protection law, and provincial governance survey evidence.

The analysis suggests that entrepreneurial ethics may be associated with voluntary compliance, trust-building, and responsible enterprise behavior, while business culture may mediate the translation of formal planning objectives into internal organizational routines. The policy-text excerpts show that Vietnam's planning framework already emphasizes inclusive development, green growth, circular economy, environmental responsibility, business-community participation, and transparent governance.

At the same time, the study identifies persistent constraints. Ethical commitments may remain declarative when they are not embedded in internal procedures, performance indicators, reporting systems, and accountability mechanisms. Market-integrity constraints, including informal costs, compliance burdens, and uneven governance quality, may also weaken incentives for enterprises to invest in long-term ethical and sustainable practices.

The study contributes to sustainable development planning literature by reframing entrepreneurial ethics and business culture as informal governance resources that interact with formal planning systems. It does not claim that ethics or culture directly cause sustainable development outcomes. Rather, it shows that these factors can be interpreted as planning-relevant mechanisms that may support, mediate, or constrain the implementation of sustainable development objectives.

This study has limitations. It relies on documentary and secondary evidence and does not employ primary survey data, interviews, or econometric testing. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as policy-relevant associations and analytical propositions rather than causal conclusions. Future research should test the framework through enterprise surveys, interviews with business leaders and policy officials, sectoral case studies, and comparative analysis across provinces or industries. Such research would help assess more directly how

entrepreneurial ethics and business culture are institutionalized within firms and how they interact with formal sustainable development planning instruments.

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